

EMANCIPATORY EDUCATION ACCORDING TO ANTONIO GRAMSCI AND  
CÉLESTIN FREINET

*EDUCAÇÃO LIBERTADORA SEGUNDO ANTONIO GRAMSCI E CÉLESTIN  
FREINET*

*EDUCACIÓN LIBERTADORA SEGÚN ANTONIO GRAMSCI Y CÉLESTIN FREINET*



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**ABSTRACT:** Antonio Gramsci and Célestin Freinet conceived a democratic and liberating education aimed at meeting the needs of the working classes. Despite sharing the same objective, Freinet's modern and Gramsci's unitary schools presented different methodologies. This article analyzes and compares their writings, drawing on other research to highlight their pedagogical methods about their practical application. The study explores how the criticisms of both authors complement each other in their proposals. The practical challenges and the relevance of their educational criteria are addressed in line with the historical reality of Brazil and its social needs so that education can provide adequate support. The reflections on the theories of Gramsci and Freinet are based on their shared goal of identifying education as a path towards an egalitarian society, achieving liberation through the development of critical thinking.

**KEYWORDS:** Célestin Freinet. Antonio Gramsci. Modern school. Unitary school. Teaching methods.

**RESUMO:** Antonio Gramsci e Célestin Freinet conceberam uma educação democrática e libertadora, voltada para atender às necessidades das classes populares. Embora compartilhassem o mesmo objetivo, a escola moderna de Freinet e a escola unitária de Gramsci apresentavam metodologias distintas. Este artigo analisa e compara seus escritos, além de recorrer a outras pesquisas para destacar seus métodos pedagógicos em relação à realidade de sua aplicação. O presente estudo explora como as críticas de ambos os autores se complementam em suas propostas. Os desafios práticos, bem como a relevância de seus critérios educacionais, são abordados em consonância com a realidade histórica brasileira e suas necessidades sociais, para que a educação possa fornecer apoio efetivo. Reflete-se sobre as teorias de Gramsci e Freinet com base em seu objetivo comum de identificar na educação um caminho para uma sociedade igualitária, alcançando a libertação através do desenvolvimento do senso crítico.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Célestin Freinet. Antonio Gramsci. Escola moderna. Escola unitária. Método pedagógico.

**RESUMEN:** Antonio Gramsci y Célestin Freinet concibieron una educación democrática y liberadora, destinada a satisfacer las necesidades de las clases populares. Aunque compartían el mismo objetivo, la escuela moderna de Freinet y la escuela unitaria de Gramsci tenían metodologías distintas. Este artículo analiza y compara sus escritos, además de basarse en otras investigaciones para poner de relieve sus métodos pedagógicos en relación con la realidad de su aplicación. El presente estudio explora cómo las críticas de ambos autores se complementan en sus propuestas. Se abordan los desafíos prácticos, así como la pertinencia de sus criterios pedagógicos, en consonancia con la realidad histórica brasileña y sus necesidades sociales, para que la educación pueda prestar un apoyo eficaz. Se reflexiona sobre las teorías de Gramsci y Freinet a partir de su objetivo común de identificar en la educación un camino hacia una sociedad igualitaria, alcanzando la liberación a través del desarrollo del sentido crítico.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Célestin Freinet. Antonio Gramsci. Escuela moderna. Escuela unitaria. Método pedagógico.

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## Introduction

Célestin Freinet and Antonio Gramsci were European thinkers of the 20th century, concerned with democratic education aimed at practical life, providing an uplifting and liberating formation to the working classes. Despite attributing similar goals to education, linked to their Marxist ideals and the objective of an egalitarian society, they opposed each other regarding the educational methods they deemed most appropriate for this purpose.

One theory saw the other as a pedagogical approach that could compromise the critical development of students, hindering their true liberation and autonomy. While Freinet advocated for student-centeredness and the teacher's lateral support in their intuitive process of discovering the world, Gramsci criticized the teacher's detachment as a characteristic of rhetorical education that failed to fulfill the promise of essential formation. Conversely, as Gramsci emphasized the need for a solid and educated foundation for grounding critical ideas, Freinet criticized the teacher's authority as regressive, believing in the benefit of freedom and self-expression in learning and development.

As both are aimed at the same objective - the liberation of the working classes through the development of critical thinking and a sense of community - it is precious to consider ways to reconcile their disagreements and understand the unique contribution of their respective ideas to the field of education. The discussion in this article seeks to contrast their methods and, through that, investigate a kind of agreement that simultaneously values the criteria both prioritize in elaborating their praxis. We identify, thus, a wealth of preparation that their contributions offer for a potential pedagogical project.

The aim is to contextualize the idea of critical thinking as an educational objective, as Gramsci advocates, and introduce the conflict between the authors. We will compare their pedagogical methods based on their writings, extending the conflict between traditional teaching authority and active methodology. In conclusion, we intend to relate the relevance of their ideas to the Brazilian reality, crystallizing what we can learn from the shortcomings that one author identifies in the theory of the other. Thus, we extract from this reflection a general panorama that combines education needs with the ideas of Gramsci and Freinet.

The valid critique of excessive authority in the classroom can coexist with the importance of the teacher's role in transmitting knowledge and providing a solid repertoire, as advocated by Gramsci. On the other hand, the fundamental critique of the lack of scientific method can coexist with an active way, interested in science but also focused on addressing the psychosocial needs of students, engaging them in learning connected to practical and collective

life, as applied by Freinet. In summary, the mutual criticisms between the theories of Gramsci and Freinet have laid the groundwork for considering a way of reconciliation that prevents the alienating risks of an exclusively expository method and also avoids reduced teacher participation.

## **Understanding the Pedagogical Ideals of Gramsci and Freinet**

### **Critical thinking according to Gramsci**

In the "Prison Notebooks," Gramsci referred to cultural hegemony as the order of ideas that impose cultural and social control over a given society, using various resources to propagate its universality continuously. This hegemony can be identified with its ideology, used as a tool for domination, as discussed later.

In his study, Perrusi (2015, p. 419) asserts that ideology, according to Gramsci, lacks a specific theoretical structure but can be identified in his work through other words that achieve an equivalent conceptual meaning in context. This is because Gramsci elaborated his work under the censorship of fascism, seeking to circumvent it. Thus, through Williams' definitions, Perrusi explains that Gramsci's conception of ideology varies between "the system of beliefs of a class or group" and the notion of the "general process of producing meanings and ideas" (WILLIAMS, 1979, apud PERRUSI 2015, p. 418, our translation).

For Gramsci, ideology constitutes the "ideative and axiological field of society and, at the same time, is grounded in class positions" (PERRUSI, 2015, p. 418, our translation), encompassing numerous categories of ideas and cultural values, linked to their historical materiality. The broad concept extends to its various manifestations and social functions inherent to the human being about oneself and reality:

Ideology is not, in fact, a "form" of the material structure but rather an ontological dimension that reproduces, through social practices and actions, the system of society. Gramsci attributes a positive sense to ideology when perceiving it as an ontological dimension, although he highlights the negative character of doctrine in several passages of his work (PERRUSI, 2015, p. 420, our translation).

When employed by the ruling class in pursuit of their interests, ideology becomes hegemonic, supporting power relations (PERRUSI, 2015, p. 419) among different groups by reinforcing beliefs that maintain the logic of domination. Building on Gramsci's ideas, Forti (2023) emphasizes the importance of freedom in teaching as a prerequisite for education to

foster critical thinking and the ability to confront the world's problems, thereby transforming it socially. Hence, she argues that hegemony (as a set of ideals organizing society) could potentially evolve into:

[...] a new hegemony based on popular support, that is, [...] grounded in the interests of the people rather than solely benefiting a small fraction of individuals who profit from the degrading exploitation of an immense majority (FORTI, 2023, p. 237, our translation).

In a capitalist system, hegemonic beliefs serve the bourgeois class, aiming to maintain social inequalities, thus distorting the causes of these problems and hindering or compromising their understanding. These beliefs are sustained and perpetuated through unreflective reproduction, which Gramsci described as "common sense," while "critical thinking" would be its counterpoint. While critical thinking involves investigating the origin of socially and culturally learned conceptions, common sense, for Gramsci, is a set of socially conceived and reproduced conceptions without challenge "when conduct is not independent and autonomous, but submissive and subordinate" (GRAMSCI, 2010, p. 73, our translation). The effort to understand the past formation of prevailing thoughts, combined with an understanding of oneself as a part of society and the intrinsic connection of one's ideas with the historical and philosophical development of collective thinking, contributes to critical self-analysis:

The beginning of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what we are, that is, a 'know thyself' as a product of the historical process developed until today, which has left in each person an infinity of traces received 'without a detailed account' [=without knowing their origin]. This inventory must be made initially (GRAMSCI, 2010, p. 71, our translation).

As ideology is used as a mechanism of power to ensure the persistence of hierarchies, Gramsci pointed to education as a crucial role in combating the ideological imprisonment at hand:

The analytical and normative strength of Gramsci's notion of ideology lies precisely in its descriptive capacity of social practices of domination. It allows, therefore, the concrete description of power relations through mapping hegemonic constructions in contemporary society (PERRUSI, 2015, p. 416, our translation).

### **Escape from subordination: issues of excess and lack of authority**

One of the main critiques of the Freinetian theory towards the Gramscian pedagogical approach addresses the characteristic of its practical application: authority. According to Gramsci, for the construction of critical thinking, it would be essential for the teacher to hold a position of power over the student, as they would be responsible for imparting scientific knowledge to foster critical thinking. For the same reason, Gramsci opposed the intuitive principle of the new school, which aimed to soften the teacher's intervention by centralizing the child in their education. Gramsci's objectives were centered on the construction of critical thinking, and for this purpose, the active participation of the teacher in the pedagogical process was fundamental.

Culture, which is fundamental in his theory, would represent the repertoire acquired by the young to develop critically, and the teacher would serve as its transmitter. Without the teacher's intervention, the young would end up passively reproducing common sense without understanding their place in society, precisely what his ideal of education sought to combat.

For example, the child would bring their own life experiences to school, and it would be the teacher's role to demystify them, providing them with a solid foundation. Hence, the communion of instruction and education was crucial, where education relied essentially on such guidance, managing each student's bias, without which well-founded knowledge would not be separated from common sense.

In contrast, Freinet advocated for an active and intuitive education to achieve a formation focused on life, where all scientific teaching was based on practice. His pedagogical method, therefore, was a combination of popular education and the new school approach. He identified problems in educational principles, such as the condemnation of work and the application of academic methods detached from any liberation of the child. The methodological and values revision should be based on the notion that "preparation for work occurs through work, in both school and a society of work" (FREINET, 2010a, p. 48, our translation).

Both authors acknowledged that adults and children had different repertoires and conditions for learning, but they approached this discrepancy differently. While this assumption pointed to the necessity of the teacher's authority for Gramsci, for Freinet, the distance between teacher and student should be diminished to favor learning. Empathy with the child in their respective position would then be the means to correct this hierarchy, enabling a relationship of equality and mutual understanding. By reliving their childhood, the teacher would recall their previous conditions in light of a comparison with the present and, with the help of this

understanding, combined with that of contemporary childhood, would enable the development of appropriate education through techniques that best facilitate the child's learning (FREINET, 2010a).

This approach suggested overcoming authoritarian pedagogy through "reconsidering the problem of teacher-student relationships, a reconsideration of respect and work, and a new adjustment of the classroom atmosphere" (FREINET, 2010a, p. 49, our translation). It was necessary to revise, as an inheritance of old school methods, the verticality of teaching, in which the teacher held all the knowledge and did not allow space for the child's criticism, treating them as a passive vector of the process.

The insistence that Gramsci considered elementary in the renewal of old conceptions - "repetition is the most effective didactic means to act on popular mentality" (GRAMSCI, 2010, p. 88, our translation) –, could, for Freinet, lead to brutality and elicit "a kind of physiological aversion to intellectual nourishment" (FREINET, 2010a, p. 43, our translation). For him, instead of forcing the child into an unnatural path, they should be accompanied according to their needs and inspired to desire knowledge. He compared such pedagogy to the allegory of not forcing a horse to drink water without thirst but letting it gallop towards the watering hole, and for such guidance, in the case of the child, a method that "stimulates the appetite for knowledge and encourages the powerful need for work" would be essential (FREINET, 2010a, p. 43, our translation). According to him, this aspiration would guide the acquisition process at a pace unmatched by classical norms.

Gramsci advocated spontaneous and autonomous effort from the student only in the final phase of the unitary school: "In the creative phase, based on the already achieved 'collectivization' of the social type, one tends to expand the personality, making it autonomous and responsible but with a solid and homogeneous moral and social conscience" (GRAMSCI, 2010, p. 112, our translation). For him, this pursuit could not occur without the prior shaping, by the teacher, of common sense into well-founded knowledge, which constitutes the student's critical sense: "A creative school does not mean a school of 'inventors and discoverers'; it indicates a phase, a method of investigation and knowledge, and not a predetermined 'program' that forces innovation and originality at any cost" (GRAMSCI, 2010, p. 112, our translation). He believed active schooling needed to overcome its then-romantic phase to address a lack of method.

On the other hand, Freinet argued that experience, coupled with physical and sensory development, could not be replaced by a false image of life as mere theory, as it would act as a

barrier between the child and genuinely helpful learning, which, for him, was practical. It was argued that a teacher who anticipated a student's contact with the world through excessive theoretical and scientific approaches would introduce concerns that could obstruct the learning process, both for the teacher in understanding his pupils and the children themselves.

The intention was to enable interaction and active incorporation of the child into their environment, through which they would mature, tending to continue participating in their surroundings with the impulse for progress and improvement. Thus, it was argued that scientific knowledge should be a consequence of experimentation, not the cause or an antecedent but arising from necessity (FREINET, 2010b). Science should not cut across education but flourish within it, together with it, through exercise and work. It was advocated that the ideal scenario should not precede the formation of consciousness; instead, it would happen immediately through the child's active use of the methods.

Gramsci agreed with scientific knowledge arising from practical experience, equally criticizing pedantic intellectualism focused on the whims of small groups. He believed a philosophical movement deserved this name only when it went beyond common sense through scientifically coherent and unified thinking, without ever losing contact with the "simple" and their needs, using them as the starting point for investigation and problem-solving (GRAMSCI, 2010, our translation). Despite considering all men as philosophers, he still deemed it necessary to distinguish intellectual philosophy from vulgar philosophy:

"These popular expressions could be grouped with similar expressions of popular writers; [...] and it can be seen that these have an exact meaning, namely the overcoming of purely animal and elementary passions through a conception of necessity that gives action itself conscious direction. This is the sound core of common sense, what could rightly be called good sense, deserving to be developed and transformed into something unitary and coherent. Thus, the reasons that make the separation between so-called 'scientific' philosophy and 'vulgar' and popular philosophy impossible become evident, the latter being only a disaggregated set of ideas and opinions" (GRAMSCI, 2010, p. 75, our translation).

Simultaneously, as the pedagogue Michele Costa investigates, it is possible to identify in Freinet a risk of drifting away from his goal of popular liberation due to the practical and methodological proximity to the new school - which, in turn, is criticized by him for maintaining bourgeois interests. By prioritizing the development of children's potential for their formation, shifting the focus from transmitting historically constructed knowledge of humanity,



it becomes a circuitous and ambiguous means to achieve Marxist ideals. Costa argues, by problematizing the disharmony between Freinet's pedagogical and political objectives:

It is worth noting that Freinet's Pedagogy, in line with the New School, generates negative conceptions about teaching. And the transmission of culture and education is fundamental when we think about human formation from historical-dialectical materialism from Marxism. [...] The goal of overcoming an alienating education presupposes the transmission of knowledge in the historical-cultural updating of human beings. Thus, we can conceive that the educational process is allied with the struggle for a radical restructuring of society when we allow individuals to appropriate the set of knowledge produced throughout history, ensuring the progress of human development in the production of their existence (COSTA, 2008, p. 150-151, our translation).

Despite the criticism of adherence to these principles, and precisely through them, Freinet was also concerned with the intellectual emancipation of his students, as he believed that authoritarian education resulted in dullness, passivity, and conformity and was, therefore, contrary to the liberation of the working classes. In his writings, he denounced that an education focused on rigidity and repression of freedom prepared students to face servitude in society with exact obedience and tolerance:

Later, you will be amazed to see them miserably offering their arms to exploitation and their bodies to suffering and war, just like sheep offer themselves to the slaughterhouse! Servitude makes us weak; it is lived experience, even dangerously, that forms men capable of working and living as human beings (FREINET, 2010a, p. 50, our translation).

He denounced the risk of a problematic pedagogy that did not prioritize the child's psychology, not only in its goals but also in applying its methods. Making an analogy with religion, soldiers' marching songs, he accused that the suffering of children could be appeased with distractions that did not address the natural causes of their educational problems (FREINET, 2010a). The numbing effect would only be a palliative of a pedagogical failure whose consequences would continue, culminating in alienation.

The child's commitment to their education, facilitated by adapting the method to them, would project itself in the future through their dedication to social struggle and the construction of a better society. In his writings about the school newspaper, adopted in his method, Freinet problematized that traditional education "maintained and reinforced the individual forms of the economy and, therefore, of culture" (FREINET, 1974, p. 65, our translation), while group work would develop cooperation, contributing to an organized collectivity. Furthermore, he argued

that the creation of newspapers would lead to the development of critical thinking by the child, rather than just accepting and reproducing hierarchical adult thinking, as well as future journalism:

And it is not of minor importance that, with such foundations, we have given our students the decisive idea that everything they are taught can be reconsidered, that the most important thoughts can and must be subjected to the test of their own experience, that knowledge is conquered, and science is made (FREINET, 1974, p. 67, our translation).

He claimed there was a duality between school and student, marked by a school with norms, conceptions, culture, and morals too different from the student's experiences outside the pedagogical space. In his denunciation of the consequent difficulty of the child's adaptation, he argued that active methods correct this disparity:

We take the child as they are and, using work techniques similar to those of the family and social environment but with greater experimental richness, we strive to enable them to go further and higher on the paths of truth and humanity. [...] The individual who works and lives in a normalized environment is relaxed, better balanced, and, therefore, more efficient. The absence of normalization, on the other hand, poses a greater or lesser number of artificial problems to solve, techniques to master, and barriers to overcome and break down - which gives rise to perfectly unpredictable reactions, conflicts, or neuroses in the individual who are victims of it, of which psychoanalysis gradually uncovers the incidences (FREINET, 1974, p. 65, our translation).

Although a proponent of authority in the classroom, as already explained, Gramsci also fought against the intellectual subordination of the masses. In his educational projections, there was a clear intention to exercise an authority aimed at mental liberation. His method of combat sought not the renewal of the authoritarian approach but of the school curriculum. According to him, the perpetuation of the submission of the working classes occurred through technical schools, where the children of proletarian parents were driven by necessity to seek immediate entry into the labor market through education, while young bourgeois individuals enjoyed the privilege of an education geared towards university entrance:

The proletariat needs a disinterested school. A school in which the child is given the possibility of acquiring an education, becoming a human being, and acquiring those general criteria that serve for character development. [...] A school that does not mortgage the child's future nor constrains their will, intelligence, and developing consciousness to move along a path with a predefined goal. A school of freedom and free initiative, not a school of slavery and mechanical guidance (GRAMSCI, 2010, p. 66, our translation).

Thus, for Gramsci, praxis would verify the interests of the masses and then self-verify:

The philosophy of praxis does not seek to keep the 'simple' in their primitive philosophy of common sense but, on the contrary, seeks to lead them to a higher conception of life. Suppose it affirms the need for contact between intellectuals and the simple. In that case, it is not to limit scientific activity and maintain unity at the lower level of the masses but precisely to forge an intellectual-moral bloc that makes mass intellectual progress politically possible, not just for small intellectual groups (GRAMSCI, 2010, p. 80, our translation).

Philosophical and scientific instruction in school would not hold without purposes aimed at the benefit of the student and the collective, in line with their real needs, for personal and social development. Therefore, for Gramsci, the role of the teacher went beyond mere authority, acting as an intellectual of the masses, effectively realizing the Marxist ideal of his proposal.

[...] in school, the instruction-education nexus can only be represented by the living work of the teacher, to the extent that the teacher is conscious of the contrasts between the type of society and culture they represent and the type of society and culture represented by the students [...]. If the teaching staff is deficient and the instruction-education nexus is dissolved, aiming to resolve the issue of teaching according to paper schemes that exalt educability, the work of the teacher will become even more deficient: it will be a rhetorical school, without seriousness, as the material corporeity of the true will be lacking, and the truth will be valid only in words, that is, rhetorical (GRAMSCI, 2010, p. 117, our translation).

### Final Considerations

Genuinely, it is unfeasible to think of a liberating education without the teacher as a solid mediator of a counter-hegemonic repertoire - regardless of their level of participation in didactic activities. Without this counterpoint, the student is vulnerable to all social constructions that imprison them without their knowledge or understanding. Understanding how the world works is only possible due to the effort to demonstrate it.

As the young student crawls to accumulate this knowledge, they are surrounded by a framework of alienating notions that the unitary school aims to combat, always vulnerable to the stagnation of their common sense. The teacher's participation in enlightening the student is indispensable, and Gramsci demonstrates the importance of thinking about their responsibilities and competencies rigorously, precisely for the intended educational goal, in its challenging yet rich quality.

As we have seen, the maintenance of power relations and capitalism occurs through various means and extends deep roots in common sense in a way that does not reveal its intentions. Thus, the relevance of Gramsci for educators who currently occupy or will occupy the school becomes evident. The school, in turn, is a terrain of ideological disputes, which requires preparation on the part of the teacher. Perrusi explains that, for Gramsci, people become aware of the conflicts in their society through the contact of their cognitive plane with the ideological plane, and he states: "Affirming the role of consciousness is, as a consequence, establishing a function for knowledge" (PERRUSI, 2015, p. 421, our translation).

Forti (2023, p. 237) emphasizes the importance of autonomy for school practice, as it allows providing the student with the construction of their critical thinking:

[...] under the dominance of capitalism, with the historical centrality that the school gains in people's education, [...] ensuring the freedom to teach for teachers is a sine qua non condition for the emergence of a new hegemony or, in the words of Semeraro, the "social, cultural, and political elevation of the masses and the excluded, until their transformation into autonomous protagonists of a truly democratic society" (SEMERARO, 1999, p. 15, our translation).

Considering the conservative fronts that currently seek to impose values on schools, proposing (and even approving) bills that open the door to arbitrary and deliberate punishment of teachers, the Brazilian reality faces difficulties. Silva, Dutra Júnior, and Santos, in their analysis of such bills, identify apparent similarities between these and the decrees approved during the Brazilian military dictatorship (SILVA, DUTRA JÚNIOR, SANTOS, 2023, p. 12-14). By pointing out that Brazilian re-democratization occurred "within the order established by the elites, with accommodations and agreements that led to no punishment for those responsible [for the military dictatorship]," and also identifying the adoption of laws compromising the "implementation of social policies, a project undertaken by the elite," they conclude that "the resurgence of ultra-conservatism in Brazil at the beginning of this century carries within it ruptures and continuities with the period of the civil-military dictatorship" (SILVA; DUTRA JÚNIOR; SANTOS, 2023, p. 11, our translation).

Today, movements dangerously similar to the authoritarian antecedent in the country are gaining strength while presenting themselves as ideologically neutral - even though every stance is ideological, endowed with its values and ideas. It is a strategy that suggests a supposed universal morality in its interests, opposing them to what they accuse of being "doctrinaire,"

thus concealing the intention of their agenda, aiming to make it hegemonic. Silva, Dutra Júnior, and Santos explain, based on Chauí:

[...] ideology is the exercise of social and political domination through ideas; not an ideology per se, but the set of ideas of the ruling class of a society that does not present itself as such, concealing its particularity and imposing its universality as a general value for all classes (CHAUÍ, 2014, apud SILVA; DUTRA JÚNIOR; SANTOS, 2023, p. 18, our translation).

The phenomenon of fake news, present in electoral scandals not only in Brazil but worldwide, is another example of how the ruling classes reinvent strategies and appropriate new technological tools to reinforce their ideological representations and preserve their interests. Today, technology permeates reality, incorporating such speed that the flow of information consumed, produced, and shared is uninterrupted.

Freinet expresses a sensitive and cautious interest in the role of technology in people's education: "It's not [...] that I have prejudices against innovations: I am against the misuse that can be made of them. After all, aren't these techniques an improvement, or rather, an extension of human hands?" (FREINET, 2010b, p. 74, our translation) Moreover, he emphasizes the importance of combining these new resources with pedagogical work and not leaving students at the mercy of innovations but informed about their impact on their development:

If children, teenagers, men have not been accustomed, led to the humanly desirable use of these means in the service of knowledge and progress of the mind; if they have not been alerted against these mechanical extensions of their hands; if the worst must annihilate the good, then how much suspicion should we have of these possibilities that science has placed at our disposal without indicating their use, like delicate and dangerous machines delivered without the necessary instruction manual? (FREINET, 2010b, p. 74, our translation).

Considering the centrality that technology occupies in the lives of young people today, and in the face of the resurgence of extremist discourses marked by the trivialization of violence and the challenges of misinformation, an education that not only defends students from these forces but also combats them becomes necessary. Forti, in analyzing the impositions on schools and teaching practice, describes:

[...] there is a strong attack to limit the actions of teachers [...], and this implies the pressing task of deeply understanding both the objective and subjective conditions of this process [...] [and] not shying away from the investment that allows the consideration that History is built by concrete subjects in concrete situations, necessary for the projection and realization of any professional guideline substantially referenced in a new hegemony, pertinent and effective,

in favor of the real interests of subalternized classes and, therefore, in favor of humanity (FORTI, 2023, p. 236, our translation).

Silva, Dutra Júnior, and Santos also demonstrate how hatred and ignorance are linked when they observe that the first groups in the US condemning the teaching of Marxism were also simultaneously identified as deniers of science and discriminators of minority groups:

[...] Christian fundamentalists, ultraconservatives, and supremacists. The Dark Enlightenment movement, an avowed antithesis of the Enlightenment, advocates for the Victorian moral values of the 19th century, a traditionalist and theocratic order; it openly declares war on all scientific knowledge and cultural Marxism (SILVA; DUTRA JÚNIOR; SANTOS, 2023, p. 16, our translation).

The condemnation comes from an imprecise and generalized definition of Marxism, which is not based on the actual theory but on socially constructed stigmas, aiming to distance people from Marxist studies. This represents a discouragement to access a specific body of knowledge that offers room for reflection and understanding of how society functions:

The ground of postmodern irrationalism is fertile terrain for advancing conservative and reactionary policies and practices, responding to the urgent need to produce atomized, isolated individuals, *parts of machinery that cannot appear to its members* (SILVA; DUTRA JÚNIOR; SANTOS, 2023, p. 16, emphasis ours, our translation).

Silva, Dutra Júnior, and Santos point to the replacement of *logos* with *doxa* (SILVA, DUTRA JÚNIOR, SANTOS, 2023, p. 17) that is, the rejection of knowledge based on ideas that are shallow and disguise themselves as natural and apparent truths. This process corresponds, for example, to the adherence to conspiracies over science, in the form of unfounded discourses or beliefs that are rapidly disseminated and learned, supported by the identity-based foundation that reinforces the unity of conspiracy groups.

We can understand that the relationship between discriminatory behavior and the rejection of science, as seen in the reduction of ideas (like Marxism) to the surface and the acceptance of unfounded convictions, is associated with the maximization of learned views and values above reason and often, also above human lives, marked, therefore, by solid individualism and alienation. Silva, Dutra Júnior, and Santos emphasize the importance of prioritizing *logos* over *doxa* (which we can call, based on what we have seen, "common sense"):

[...] Only knowledge, which is concerned with transcending minimally the appearance, in seeking the rational connections between the mediations of social production, sustained by reason (*logos*), is capable of producing a fruitful encounter with the concrete place of being in the world and its

becoming (SILVA; DUTRA JÚNIOR; SANTOS, 2023, p. 17, our translation).

Education focused on citizenship simultaneously considers the accumulation of scientific knowledge and the individual's understanding of their social position in relation to their community and the world, both locally and temporally. By appropriating the knowledge produced by humanity throughout history, the individual develops an understanding of how scientific knowledge is formed and gains discernment about the information they receive (which is crucial given the current challenge of misinformation). They also become more inclined to critically interpret conceptions that construct and lead to prejudices, a reasoning also encouraged by pedagogical activities that stimulate social solidarity.

In Brazil, the underfunding and devaluation of education, as well as the teacher and their role, compromise the school infrastructure and how it is experienced by students, making it difficult to engage them in the pedagogical relationship. The challenge of implementing the liberating potential of education extends from the entire social and political context to the individual sphere, where it is not always guaranteed that the student recognizes the importance of their learning. This is one of the reasons why active methodology proves to be an ally, despite the criticisms of its potential emptiness.

Furthermore, more than being allies, it is possible to affirm that pedagogical methods that involve both the ludic and cognitive dimensions are indispensable, given the challenge of putting educational intentions into practice, which naturally depend on the participation and collaboration of the students (an external factor beyond the control of the teacher and, as such, another challenge). Regarding the effort to condition children aiming for inert discipline above investigative autonomy, and hypothetical notions of what the teacher "should" do in theory, Freinet (2010b, p. 112, emphasis ours, our translation) states: "I don't like to talk about what should be. I prefer *to consider what is, and then, always keeping reality in mind, advance without illusion, but without apriorism.*"

Perrusi (2015, p. 423, our translation) analyzes that Gramsci's theory, despite relating the unconscious to ideology, gives priority to the conscious aspect and, therefore, "would be insufficient to address some problems faced by the sociology of domination" because it does not cover "the *institutional* conditions of mystification" and also "limits the understanding of *unconscious and concealed mechanisms* of domination," failing to grasp when alienating beliefs are incorporated to the point of being naturalized (and vice versa). However, it should be noted that Gramsci considers this dimension:

Ideology [according to Gramsci], therefore, is a "lived relationship" that connects worldview with norms of conduct. This connection brings to the fore the affective core of ideology or its passionate aspect, which effectively allows for its diffusion (the mass character of ideology) (BURAWOY, 2011, BOURDIEU, 1997 apud PERRUSI, 2015, p. 423, our translation).

As for Freinet, as we have seen, the teacher's lateral participation raised doubts about the practical outcome, specifically concerning the development of critical thinking. However, it also deals with circumstantial obstacles in the classroom, which are a challenge for any pedagogical method. The conditions for applying them - teaching - are not isolated from the results and, on the contrary, influence them by determining their realization requirements. The available time and structural support to launch and achieve educational goals are limited, even to the extent of thinking and developing one's own or interdisciplinary projects.

In this sense, it is possible to question equally the results of less and more authoritarian teaching practices and the space available for building critical thinking through Freinet's and Gramsci's methods. Although Gramsci is correct in emphasizing the importance of the teacher in creating a crucial repertoire, his method encounters a limitation in practice, specifically at the "receiving end" of the pedagogical relationship - the students - which calls into question the effectiveness of the traditional school approach.

At the same time, while Gramsci highlighted a fundamental criterion for developing critical thinking, based on understanding and overcoming dominant ideology, Freinet, by acting as a teacher and mutually enhancing his theory and practice, closely approached the actual learning conditions of each student. These factors constitute additional variables that cut across and influence the practical application of pedagogical methods: each student's intrapersonal and interpersonal particularities in development.

Freinet (2010b) reflects on the importance of the teacher embracing the responsibility of their position, given the extent of their influence on the development of the human lives they are entrusted with educating. They should not neglect the formative power of their actions:

Any gesture, any act, any training becomes exceptionally important in you, precisely because of the extreme sensitivity of the beings they are responsible for. One must not act thoughtlessly, following fashions and theories, and then excuse oneself from the consequences of one's intervention or try to correct them with useless sermons and superfluous punishments (FREINET, 2010b, p. 7, our translation).

Comparing pedagogical work to planting, Freinet addresses the teachers: "You also do not have the right to sow the seed without knowing what will happen to it" (FREINET, 2010b,



p. 75) Elaborating on the metaphor, Freinet describes the act of practicing agriculture without concern for the seasonal conditions of each crop and the consequence of climatic seasons destroying the vegetation. Based on this, he reflects on the importance of carefully evaluating and treating the didactic encounter with students, asserting that the reception of teaching is not immediately apparent to teachers, who risk not taking it into account:

[...] reactions to our teaching are more complex and less clearly probative than nature's reactions to your mistakes and wrong maneuvers, and we can, with the best goodwill in the world, not be sensitive to them (FREINET, 2010b, p. 75, our translation).

We have seen that Gramsci retrieves and reinforces the importance and indispensability of grasping theoretical knowledge for youth's critical - and liberating - formation. However, we can reiterate from Freinet's writings that learning is not a simple goal nor an immediate consequence of the act of teaching; for the student to be engaged in the classroom beyond all circumstantial and conjunctural noises, in addition to the content, practical didactics are required. The overcoming of the traditional method precisely involved questioning the effectiveness of the teacher's expository transmission of knowledge.

In the Brazilian reality, where overcrowded classrooms assign a single teacher to dozens of young people immersed in their microcosms, it is valuable to rethink the means for the ends intended by Gramsci. Ensuring that the teacher's knowledge occupies a position of authority and centrality is not synonymous with ensuring that this knowledge is absorbed correctly and critically processed by the students.

In summary, Gramsci demonstrated the importance of the teacher as an organic intellectual who engages in dialogue with their students and participates in their transformation. It is essential to hold on to this fact and think of ways to mobilize the authority of scientific knowledge to students without losing them to distraction, disinterest, or even boredom about school.

The absence of an expository method, centered on the teacher's knowledge, does not indicate a lack in Freinet's approach to providing a foundation for critical thinking - he built and applied his method with this objective in mind. Despite the pertinence of the criticism of the intuitive process, in the sense of dispensing or getting rid of expository teaching for the construction of scientific knowledge, we also saw its immediate counterpoint: Freinet's affirmed and consolidated concern regarding these same contents while centralizing the student in the acquisition of their ability.

If only educators also knew how to break and dissolve the veneer of a false culture in their teaching, to reach the core of essential truths, to let its powerful ferment act, and humbly put science at the service of its revelations! (FREINET, 2010b, p. 68, our translation).

In Freinet's approach, the active methodology does not contradict the objective of realizing scientific knowledge that would liberate through critical thinking. Kanamaru (2014) points out how the presence of the Marxist ideal is a little-explored aspect in Freinet's pedagogical method, even though it is present in its foundation, "[in aspects] related to the centralities of the concepts of free work, as well as free expression, which, along with free cooperation, free research, and their respective techniques (life techniques) constitute, as a whole, the means and ends of Freinet's pedagogy" (KANAMARU, 2014, p. 769, our translation).

Combined with this, his praxis gave significant consideration to the cognitive dimension, providing a perspective to complement the Gramscian understanding of how to prevent and pedagogically transform unconscious beliefs of subordination in students. Kanamaru (2014) exemplifies this:

Freinet advocated for the psychological concept of work-play, whose foundation lies in the concrete objective of labor, the construction of sensible knowledge, and work as a playful means in itself, based on the natural needs in the psychology of the student (KANAMARU, 2014, p. 773, our translation).

The Freinetian method, while centralizing the student and guided by its liberating ideals, also encourages the development of a united and integrated collectivity among young people, marked by solidarity and the exercise of their autonomy. Experimental empiricism, which mobilized discovery through work, and the consequent creation of independence, is a "natural method by the needs, intuitions, interests, impulses, and motivations of the learner" (FREINET, 1977, apud KANAMARU, 2014, p. 774, our translation).

His methodology answers many pedagogical questions as a union between form and essence, seeking to incorporate liberating values into acquiring knowledge. He constantly criticized the "separation, of an intellectual and dogmatic nature, between didactic content and form on one side and the real needs of learners on the other" (KANAMARU, 2014, p. 773, our translation). He argued that they should not be separate paths "since one should lead to the other to make it more powerful and clearer" (FREINET, 2010b, p. 67, our translation).

The school is a space where it is possible to honestly think about a project against alienation and social fragmentation, to which the ideas of Gramsci and Freinet have much to

contribute. Each one highlights fundamental points in the plan for a liberating education. The fact that they disagree provides an even broader coverage of the social problem they seek to address through education, as well as the issues within the school itself, in the path of forming supportive young people who possess critical autonomy.

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