

PAULO FREIRE OR/AND MICHEL FOUCAULT: RELATIONS BETWEEN POLITICS AND EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to carry out a comparative analysis between Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault regarding the relations between politics and education. With this objective, the vital and intellectual trajectories of the selected authors will be briefly exposed. This will show that we deal with very different profiles regarding their origin, training, interests and trajectories. However, there is an important theme in common: the relationship between power and knowledge, between education and the formation of subjectivity. We will show how, through different paths, they come to think deeply about the same problem. We postulate that it is not just a common interest but, even starting from different theoretical frameworks and with different practical interests, they carry out similar and extremely critical analyzes regarding the disciplinary role of education in modern societies. We will see that, too, there is a different response from the authors regarding the criticisms formulated, one more skeptical, typical of philosophical thought, another more practical and optimistic, typical of pedagogical thought. The article concludes by succinctly compiling the differences and similarities indicated, to finally highlight the relevance that both authors maintain, to think about education in the current Latin American context.

Keywords: politics and education; power and knowledge; critical pedagogies

Paulo Freire o/y Michel Foucault: relaciones entre política y educación

RESUMEN

El artículo tiene como objetivo realizar un análisis comparativo entre Paulo Freire y Michel Foucault respecto de las relaciones entre política y educación. A tal fin se expondrán brevemente las trayectorias vitales e intelectuales de los autores seleccionados. Esto mostrará que tratamos con perfiles muy diferentes respecto a su origen, formación, intereses y trayectorias. Sin embargo, existe un importante tópico en común: la relación entre poder y conocimiento, entre educación y formación de la subjetividad. Mostraremos cómo a través de caminos diferentes llegan a pensar en profundidad un mismo problema. Postulamos que no se trata apenas de un interés común, sino que, aun partiendo de marcos teóricos distintos y con intereses prácticos diferentes, realizan análisis semejantes y sumamente críticos respecto al rol disciplinario de la educación en las sociedades modernas. Veremos que, también, hay una respuesta distinta de los autores respecto a las críticas formuladas, una más escéptica propia del pensamiento filosófico, otra más práctica y optimista propia del pensamiento pedagógico. El artículo concluye recopilando de manera sucinta las diferencias y semejanzas señaladas en el cuerpo del trabajo, para finalmente resaltar la relevancia que conservan ambos autores, sus respectivas perspectivas y propuestas, para pensar la educación en el contexto latinoamericano actual.

Palabras clave: política y educación; poder y conocimiento; pedagogías críticas

Paulo Freire ou/e Michel Foucault: relações entre política e educação

RESUMO

O artigo tem como objetivo realizar uma análise comparativa entre Paulo Freire e Michel Foucault a respeito das relações entre política e educação. Para tal fim serão expostas brevemente as trajetórias vitais e intelectuais dos autores selecionados. Isto mostrará que tratamos com perfis muito diferentes a respeito de sua origem, formação, interesses e trajetórias. Entretanto, há um importante tópico em comum: a relação entre poder e conhecimento, entre educação e formação da subjetividade. Mostraremos como, por intermédio de caminhos diferentes, pensam em profundidade

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um mesmo problema. Postulamos que não se trata apenas de um interesse comum, mas sim que, ainda que partindo de marcos teóricos distintos e com interesses práticos diferentes, realizam análises semelhantes e profundamente críticas a respeito do rol das disciplinas da educação nas sociedades modernas. Veremos que, também, há uma resposta distinta dos autores a respeito às críticas formuladas, uma mais ascética, própria do pensamento filosófico, outra mais prática e otimista, própria do pensamento pedagógico. O artigo conclui recopilando de maneira sucinta as diferenças e semelhanças assinaladas no corpo do estudo, para finalmente ressaltar a relevância que conservam ambos os autores, suas respectivas perspectivas e propostas, para pensar a educação no contexto latinoamericano atual.

Palavras-chave: política e educação; poder e conhecimento; pedagogias críticas

INTRODUCTION

his article aims to conduct a comparative analysis of two authors who, at first glance, seem quite different, both in their professional interests, the theoretical and practical fields in which they worked, and even their origins. As the title suggests, it seeks to compare aspects of the works and thought of Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault.

One of Foucault's main areas of interest is power, and he has become a classic of contemporary political thought. His primary role was that of a critical intellectual, a philosopher who critically examined the society in which he lived, participating in the debate of ideas in the most prestigious institutions in France and the world. He is an intellectual from a developed society, and his sphere of thought and action is essentially academia and intellectual discussions on matters of interest in first-world countries. Freire, on the other hand, is primarily interested in education. He is a pedagogue, an intellectual, but with a central focus on educational practice, on intervening in the realities of students' lives. He works alongside unions and social movements, and his activity is primarily focused on developing countries, starting with Brazil, then expanding to Latin America and Africa.

But in addition to the differences, there are also interesting points of convergence. First, the French thinker places special emphasis on the relationship between power and knowledge; perhaps his most significant contribution to political thought has been to elucidate the workings of the power-knowledge dyad. This leads him to pay attention to the educational apparatus in modern societies and even to articulate his analyses with concepts from the educational field such as "discipline" or "examination."

For his part, Freire is particularly interested in the political dimension of education. That is, in how education is a way of exercising power. In his framework, "banking" education becomes a device for disciplining and oppressing, for domesticating students. Therefore, Freire also considers how power operates in the field of knowledge transmission that we call education. There is a common ground from which points of contact and convergence can be identified. The aim of this work is to clarify differences and similarities.

To this end, the text will first present a brief summary of the authors' thought and trajectory, dedicating

sections to the themes of education and power. The next step will be to point out similarities and differences between the authors' thinking on the selected topics, and finally, to arrive at the conclusions.

MICHEL FOUCAULT

Foucault's work was influenced by Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Gilles Deleuze, Georges Canguilhem, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Edmund Husserl, among many other authors. Dussel (2013) demonstrates that Foucault was a prolific author, publishing 15 books during his lifetime (1926-1984) and more than 360 articles, chapters, and interviews, published posthumously. Foucault's works continue to be produced, as several of his courses at the Collège de France are still in the process of being published. "He was also the subject of countless books and articles, enough to fill entire libraries" (Dussel, 2013, p. 45).

Becoming a widely recognized author also brought consequences, in the sense of resistance and superficial readings, since Foucault's work raises concerns by questioning the totalizing discourses of the social sciences. Foucault calls us to denaturalize what is taken for granted, to question unquestionable truths, and to look from other perspectives and toward other places. He also invites us to view the same scenario from different angles or through different lenses. According to Gallo, Foucault's work is usually presented in three phases: the first marked by *The Order of Things* in 1966, the second by *Discipline and Punish* published in 1975, and the third by *The History of Sexuality*, published in three volumes, the first of which, *The Will to Knowledge*, in 1976. The first, epistemological phase seeks to unravel the ground from which knowledge springs; the second, we might say, is political, since Foucault seeks to show the intimate relation between knowledge and power; the third turns toward ethics when, anchored in Nietzsche, the Frenchman proposes that each person make their life a work of art (Gallo, 2004, p. 80).

Gallo, a Foucault scholar, highlights that Miguel Morey, a Spanish author, emeritus professor of Philosophy at the University of Barcelona, and specialist in contemporary French philosophy, proposes articulating Foucault's work around three axes: "Being-knowing, being-power, and being-with-oneself, affirming that their unity lies precisely in the ontological dimension" (Gallo, 2004, p. 81). Veiga-N Eto (2003), for his part,

operates with Morey's criterion, but adopts the term "domains of Foucauldian thought" rather than "axes," in order to avoid a connotation of spatiality and escape from the temporal-historical domain, so prevalent in Foucault's work.

Foucault and Education

There are differing opinions regarding the relation between the French philosopher's thought and the specific topic of education. It is true that Foucault did not write directly for or about education, so pedagogy, unlike Freire's, was not a direct object of his concerns and research. However, his impact on educational thought is profound, both in the field of sociology and in the philosophy of education. His philosophy

is a bitter pill for educators to swallow, as it shakes most of the foundations upon which modern teaching was built: truth, knowledge, vocation, enlightenment, and salvation. It is not surprising that his denunciation of the injustices committed by educational institutions transformed his own work into a cornerstone of critical pedagogy from the mid-1970s onward (Dussel, 2013, p. 45).

Veiga-Neto and Lopes (2012) emphasize that, although education is not central to Foucault's studies, his theorizations allow us to "problematize the foci of experience and the discursive dramas that, having the subject as the articulator of experience, make education and pedagogy itself productive fields for social analysis, especially concerning the school institution" (p. 66).

According to Dussel, one of Foucault's great merits was to rewrite historical aspects of pedagogy, emphasizing intervention on bodies. In the 20th century, pedagogy and education, based on rational pedagogies, conceived of bodies "as the site of sinful inclinations, or in the modern scientific version, of pathologies and diseases" (Dussel, 2013, p. 49).

The third phase of Foucault's work, "marked by the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, is perhaps the one that can offer the most elements for considering possible futures for education" (Gallo, 2004, p. 95). These works manifest a concern for ethics, understood as a form of life production. "Following in Nietzsche's footsteps, Foucault returns to the ancient Greeks to characterize ethics as a stylistics of existence, that each individual should shape their life as if producing a work of art" (Gallo, 2004, p. 95). According to the author, if we accept Foucault's challenge, an education that goes far beyond disciplinarization and technique will be necessary to establish the possibilities of such an ethics. "An education oriented towards the care of oneself and others, enabling new forms of self-production and relations with others" (Gallo, 2004, p. 95).

Gallo (2015) states that Foucault's ethical concern is not a late development, since from the beginning of his work in the field of philosophy, the subject has been

at the center of his concerns with knowledge and with knowledge and power. While he directly addressed the question of the constitution of the self only in his later works, the subject was already present in his research.

As we see it, these authors point out what is commonly accepted and, to some extent, we believe to be true: Foucault does not directly address the topic of education and pedagogy; however, his reflections on the relations between power, knowledge, and the constitution of subjectivity permeate these fields, and thus his incisive thinking has a broad influence in this area. But there is another opinion that we believe is more insightful and not necessarily incompatible with the previous one. This school of thought maintains that, while the topic of education is not explicitly raised, it is a core theme in the French thinker's thought. It even asserts that Foucault is, nothing less, than an educational theorist hidden behind the façade of a political thinker.

Keith Hosking supports this position in an article with the suggestive title *Foucault a examen. El criptoteórico de la educación desenmascarado* (1997). We believe this observation is very perceptive and hits the nail on the head regarding Foucault's thought. This author points out that Foucault discovered something very simple, though unusual: the central role of education in the construction of modernity. He tells us that the fundamental problem presents throughout Foucault's work, the relation between power and knowledge, is always analyzed in educational terms: discipline, exams, grades, etc. His analysis of the term "discipline" is particularly interesting:

[...] it comes from the Latin word *disciplina*, and in Latin it has the same double meaning it retains today, referring both to the ancient arts of knowledge, such as philosophy, music, and rhetoric, and to the problems of power, for example, in *disciplina militaris* (military discipline). Etymologically, the word comes from the term is an abbreviated form of *discipulina*, related to the achievement of the child's "learning" (*discz*) (*puer/puella* represented by the syllable *pu* of *pulina*). Therefore, in terms of its etymological roots, the term has an educational connotation and, even then, manifests both aspects of the power-knowledge equation, because it refers from the outset to the dual process: the discipline involved in presenting certain knowledge to the learner and the discipline of maintaining the learner in the presence of that knowledge. It is related to control techniques, whose highest expression was *disciplina militaris*: it remains connected to the teaching process and the objects of instruction. [...] *Disciplina* derives from its educational principles and appears intimately implicated in what Foucault calls from the beginning power-knowledge (Hosking, 1997, pp. 33-58).

Regarding the term "exam," Foucault argues that,

among all techniques, the exam is the most obviously educational, even more so than discipline, which is often superficially interpreted as an exclusive technique of power and control. Both should be considered techniques of power-knowledge, but Foucault (2000, p. 171) asserts that the overlap of power and knowledge relations reaches its peak in the exam.

This seems central: the power-knowledge pairing always requires an educational element to be articulated. Power constituted and legitimized in a field of knowledge needs some pedagogical instance to be exercised over the individual to whom that power is directed: discipline, the exam, grading, and the corresponding classification are the mechanisms through which power-knowledge is channeled.

This is quite evident in the educational field, where the exchange of power from the powerful to the powerless is traditionally carried out through these mechanisms. However, these devices are necessary in all spaces where subjectivity is formed: factories, offices, hospitals, barracks, prisons.

Following this interpretation, we wish to assert that Foucault is not merely a brilliant political thinker who indirectly influences the field of education and pedagogy. Rather, in his exploration of power and its articulation with knowledge in contemporary societies, he becomes a keen (crypto)theorist of education, discovering that pedagogical mechanisms are needed to channel power in all areas. His reflection about power leads him to the central core of educational thought: the mechanisms for the formation of subjectivity. We will see that Freire undertakes a reverse process, reflecting on education and the formation of subjectivity in schools, which also leads him to power: understanding how educational mechanisms can be used to oppress or liberate, to create the oppressed or to articulate processes of liberation. It is worth clarifying at this point that Foucault does not necessarily have a negative view of power; on the contrary, power relations can be positive and productive without them, there would be no society, cooperation, or interaction. In his later works, he clearly distinguishes between power relations and relations of domination. The first type of relations is those between people (romantic, economic, educational, institutional, etc.) in which some try to guide, direct, and influence the behavior of others. These are fluid, unstable, not predetermined, and modifiable relations that can even be reversed. The individuals involved have some level of autonomy. Relations of domination are a specific type of power relation, permanently asymmetrical, in which one party can modify the behavior of the others without the others being able to resist or modify their actions. In a relation of domination, the autonomy of some participants is severely limited or practically eliminated (Foucault, 1984). This bears a certain basic resemblance to Freire's distinction between education for oppression, where power relations tend toward domination, and

education for freedom, where power relations tend toward autonomy. We will explore these similarities in the following sections.

PAULO FREIRE

Based on the work of Moacir Gadotti and Carlos Alberto Torres (2001), we will extract the most relevant passages from the life of the Brazilian educator. Paulo Reglus Neves Freire was born in 1921 in the city of Recife, one of the poorest regions of Brazil. At the age of 10, he moved with his family to Jaboatão, where he began his studies of the popular and erudite syntax of the Portuguese language, but also learned about the realities of Brazil. Freire states that he was a middle-class child who suffered through the Great Depression (1929), who experienced hunger, and who knows what it is to go hungry.

With an entirely innovative philosophy of education, he proposed that adult education had to be founded on an awareness of the daily reality experienced by the population and never reduced to the mere acquisition of letters, words, and phrases. Freire understood knowledge as that which is learned existentially by confronting one's own problems and those of the community. Special attention must be paid to the context in which he worked. In the 1960s, in Northwest Brazil, half of its 30 million inhabitants were illiterate and lived within what he called a culture of silence; it was necessary to "give them a voice." Thus, he developed the method that would become known worldwide, founded on the principle that the educational process must begin with the reality surrounding the learner.

While Freire was in Brasília, actively involved with the National Literacy Program, the government was overthrown following the military coup of March 31, 1964. Freire went into exile, passing through Bolivia and Chile, where he worked for the government of Eduardo Frei. In this context, he re-examined his method, assimilating the practice, systematizing it theoretically, and radicalizing it. The fruit of this work was his most famous book, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," published in 1968. The radicalization of his thinking forced him to leave Chile again and resume his exile. In August 1979, under a climate of political amnesty, he returned to his country where he had to start over once again and "relearn Brazil." He traveled giving lectures, publishing, and engaging in dialogues with students and professors. He received honorary doctorates from universities around the world and numerous awards, including the UNESCO Peace Prize in 1987.

The description of his life reveals that Freire's primary interest was practical. Of course, he theorized, but always with a concrete purpose; he worked on possible projects and tangible realities. Theoretical reflection complemented his pedagogical action; there was truly praxis: a back-and-forth between theory and practice. The nature of his work and his reflection stems from

contexts, realities, and needs clearly different from those of the French thinker who is the subject of this article. But this does not preclude the existence of commonalities, similar reflections, and assimilable reasoning in terms of both, which we will explore in later sections.

Freire and Power

Freire's written and published work is complex because it was produced in and for specific and changing contexts. Freire himself, as we have already stated in previous articles (Santos, 2017), acknowledges that he moves among different theories and currents without much hesitation. A superficial reading of his work might lead one to think that his reflection lacks a homogeneous theoretical framework. However, from our point of view, there is a core element present throughout his work: The Latin Americanism and Third World Christianity of his reflection, deeply rooted in his practices as an educator, first in northern Brazil and later in other developing countries after his exile. His thought carries the new ideas that emerged in Latin America in the second half of the 20th century. Berisso (2011, p. 74) states that the affinity between the philosophy of liberation and Third World theologians is typical of the intellectual climate in which Freire developed the most important part of his work.

However, reflection is marked by history and experience, transforming itself as the world in which it takes place transforms. This is key to interpreting it, which is why we have already proposed in previous works a three-stage classification of his political-pedagogical thought and practice, according to the historical events and personal experiences that influence his reflection:

1) Early Freire: This stage spans from 1946 to 1964, beginning with his initial experiences in adult education and culminating in his exile following the 1964 military coup in Brazil due to his work in the National Literacy Program of the overthrown democratic government of J. Goulart. Early Freire still believed that science and education were relatively neutral; the political relation did not appear as an explicit protagonist in his understanding of the educational experience. However, the political effects of literacy in the Brazilian context but these changes were immediate because literacy was a necessary requirement to exercise the fundamental political right: to vote. In a sense, this early Freire has a more developmentalist profile; education is seen as an instrument to lift Brazil out of underdevelopment.

2) The Second Freire: This stage spans from his exile in 1964 until his return to Brazil in 1980. His most representative work is *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The most significant change, from our point of view, is the explicit affirmation of the political nature of education. The Freire of the 1950s and 60s did not clearly see what he would later see: the political nature of education, the inherent political quality of education (Torres, 1986, p. 38). In the Brazilian educator's thinking, concepts of a more clearly Marxist genealogy appear: classes,

modes of production, structure, and superstructure. However, from our perspective, Freire's conception of the political nature of education stems from his growing awareness of the political and pedagogical experiences he had immediately prior to his exile. We believe that the core of Freire's conception lies in the Third World or Latin American perspective of his experience and in his character as a militant radical Christian. During this period, his thinking became radicalized as a result of his experience of exile and his work in other Latin American countries and other parts of the developing world. From this experience also emerged another of his paradigmatic works, *Letters to Guinea-Bissau*.

3) The Third Freire: The third Freire is linked to his return from exile, the consolidation of democracy in Brazil, and the emergence of a new adversary: neoliberalism. There is a reinterpretation of the works from his second period in order to adapt educational reflection and practice to the struggle in a context where revolution and radical change were no longer a more or less immediate possibility. On the contrary, the hegemonic power of neoliberal discourse extended its presence to all contested territories. The most representative books of this stage are *Pedagogy of Hope* and *Pedagogy of Autonomy*. The school is no longer necessarily seen as part of the structure of oppression, modifiable only by a revolution fueled from informal educational spaces. In the new context, the classroom is transformed into a territory of struggle that must be reinvented in the face of neoliberalism, which seeks to turn it into an economically profitable space for the formation of individuals fit for the market. In this new context, Freire also intervenes in the modernity-postmodernity debate, reworking categories, *resignification* of concepts, engaging in self-criticism, and reinventing his thinking (Freire, 1996, p. 189).

In order to recap, we distinguish three stages or "three Freires" who are simultaneously one and the same. There are differences, perspectives, and approaches new, original, or alternative in each stage, but a core concept remains constant. This plurality of possible interpretations of the same author, far from being a drawback, is a virtue, as it makes his thought vital, re-readable, and adaptable, or, as the Brazilian philosopher would say, "inventable," in different historical, political, social, and cultural contexts. The core concept we are referring to consists of three nodal points that, from our perspective, articulate his thought throughout all stages and are always present, whether or not he explicitly stated them in his work. The first of these, which underlies the following two, is the intrinsic political nature of education:

The Paulo Freire of yesterday, a yesterday I would place between the 1950s and the early 1960s, did not clearly see something that the Paulo Freire of today sees very clearly. And that is what I call 'the

political nature of education.' That is, the inherent political quality of education. Because the nature of educational practice is political in itself, and therefore it is not even possible to speak of a political dimension of education, since all of it is political. (Torres, 1986, p. 38).

What do you mean by "political nature"? The concept has different levels and definitions, but what it fundamentally points to is the following:

Who knows in educational practice? By asking this question, I think we begin to perceive that its answer is not exclusive to the field of pedagogy. [...] When we ask this first question, it seems that there is something that begins, at least, to be nuanced by politics. We begin to see that there are different ways of answering this question. And these carry with them the first part of the answer, a certain ideological bias and a certain political stance.

[...] For example, [...] if one answers that the teacher is the one who knows in educational practice, one must immediately ask: then what is the role of the student? Whoever says that the teacher is the one who knows in educational practice will also say, to be consistent, that the student's role is to learn. Understanding the act of learning as receiving knowledge from the teacher. The teacher teaches, and the student studies and learns. (Freire, 1988, p. 16).

As we can see, he understands the political nature of education in relation to how power circulates according to who does or does not possess knowledge, and here we see a core point of contact with the other author studied: the power-knowledge dichotomy reappears. The dichotomy is developed from a different perspective, fundamentally pedagogical, and with eminently practical interests, but it is the same. It analyzes how the power circulates according to who possesses knowledge and how this structures a different political-pedagogical relation depending on who is legitimized to possess knowledge and, therefore, who has the power to transmit it and to educate or even discipline in the educational process.

We previously stated that there were three key points in Freire's thought; it is worth mentioning two that are intimately related to the first: dialogical way on the one hand, and starting from the student's existential-experiential context on the other. If education is political, then power circulates within it. For a liberating education, the logic of "banking" education must be replaced by a dialogical education where the word is knowledge and power circulates horizontally.

The most interesting aspect for our article is the emergence of power as a fundamental element in the transmission of knowledge, the explication of the

political character of education, or, in other words for us, the reappearance of the power-knowledge duality from the perspective of the pedagogue.

PAUL FREIRE AND MICHEL FOUCAULT

The first thing that stands out when comparing these two intellectuals is their differences. First, their backgrounds: Freire grew up and was educated in one of the poorest regions of South America. His interests were intimately linked to the reality in which he lived; there he had the experiences that would determine his life and intellectual destiny. As a good pedagogue, his reflection is essentially linked to the reality in which he acts. Foucault, on the other hand, is the son of an eminent French physician. He studied and then taught at the best French educational institutions. He is a brilliant intellectual and academic, and his books and texts are already classics of Western political thought. He is a keen analyst of the reality of his time and of European political history, and to that end, he distances himself from his object of study. His field is much more political theory than concrete political practice.

Another notable difference is the structure of their works. While distinct stages and a certain variation in interests can be identified in the Frenchman's work, it is evident that it is organized around a systematic structure, demonstrating conscious planning and a clear thematic and methodological articulation. It is a work of such depth, acuity, and order that it is clear it is not intended solely for its context, but rather has a vocation to endure, to pass into posterity; it aspires to universality.

On the other hand, Freire's work has facets that make it complex in terms of its structure and systematic. First, in addition to his written work, there is his immense practical work as an educator, as an organizer or participant in countless popular political-pedagogical projects. Second, we find the breadth and diversity of his output: dozens of books, essays, lectures, and seminars in which he expounds his thought, all disseminated across different countries, continents, and contexts to which his exile took him. This gives his work an unsystematic quality and a seemingly heterogeneous theoretical framework. His reflections have an open, contextual, and heterogeneous texture. He cites K. Jaspers and K. Marx, without adhering to either existentialism or Marxism, simply because he finds interesting points in them. His thinking evolves and changes over time and through the profound political and pedagogical experiences that marked his life as an educator and intellectual committed to the reality in which he lived. His primary interest is practice, or rather, reflection on practice and practice based on reflection. Theory in itself is meaningless; his thought becomes clearer when we manage to contextualize it and understand it as linked to action. However, beneath this apparent unsystematic, there are three central points that give solidity to his thought and are, at the same time, the core of Freirean

reflection, the key to interpreting his work, and the most original contribution the Brazilian makes to pedagogy: political, dialogic, and the learner's context.

It is true that they have different histories, interests, intellectual traditions, and methods. However, Foucault, a philosopher whose interest in the relation between power and knowledge leads him to address the topic of education to analyze how the power-knowledge dichotomy functions there, and Freire, an educator whose interest in education leads him to perceive that the transmission of knowledge is based on and intertwined with a power relation. In other words, they arrive at the same problem through different paths, and their specific analyses and critiques of how power circulates and its relationship to knowledge are similar; here we find an interesting and intense point of contact.

In other words, just as Foucault clearly perceives that the power component in educational relations is intimately linked to the possession of knowledge (Foucault, 2000), Freire perfectly understands that power relations between teacher and student are established through a discourse that determines who has knowledge and who does not (and therefore who has power and who does not). The possession of knowledge determines the relations and roles among participants in educational practice; power and knowledge, politics and education are intrinsically linked.

Strikingly, the results of their analyses and conclusions on this topic are also similar; we can easily draw a parallel between them. Foucault, especially in *Discipline and Punish* (2000), points out that in institutions of confinement such as schools, mechanisms for exercising power (classification, examination, grades, discipline) are implemented, legitimized by a body of knowledge, in order to create economically useful and politically docile subjectivities. Freire, perhaps with a less sophisticated theoretical arsenal, argues that the educational system implements and legitimizes a type of education he calls "banking education," where someone possesses knowledge and is entitled to transmit it to a passive recipient who has no knowledge whatsoever. This is based on a power relation whose purpose is to create oppressed individuals—that is, economically useful and politically docile subjectivities.

Foucault is a political thinker who perceives the relationship between power and knowledge and how this pairing is articulated in our society and in the educational sphere. He also shows how the exercise of power, due to its intimate relationship with knowledge, always requires some pedagogical device to be articulated: grades, exams, discipline. Freire is a thinker and activist in education who also perceives the intimate relation between the transmission of knowledge and power. Depending on how power is articulated in the legitimization and transmission of knowledge (and vice versa), oppressed or non-oppressed subjectivities

will be formed.

However, despite this similar diagnosis, the proposed responses and action strategies differ, possibly due to their distinct origins, interests, and profiles. The Frenchman is somewhat skeptical about the possibilities of the educational system. While he doesn't necessarily hold a negative view of power and its exercise, he proposes a response linked to an individual ethic he calls care and the production of the self. This skepticism and critical stance are typical of an intellectual of his caliber, who is interested in influencing reality, but from his role as a critical intellectual rather than through direct action in the educational field. Foucault was interested in how individuals understand themselves within each culture and, seeking to understand how Western civilization considered and signified "[...] what was radically 'other' in human beings, he turned to the systems that influence the self-understanding of Western thought, generated through reflection on the aspects of the human being that were most accessible to them" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 2010, p. 22).

The Brazilian, for his part, has a different vision. His method of adult literacy and post-literacy is a practical response to the diagnosis. He proposes, develops, and continually refines practices, strategies, and methods for an education that does not oppress but rather liberates those who participate in it. Optimism and hope, rather than skepticism, are Freire's personal and intellectual characteristics, undoubtedly due to his radical, militant Christian faith and, why not, his typically Brazilian and Northeastern idiosyncrasies.

Paulo Freire or Michel Foucault?

By changing the connective "or" to "and," we pose a dilemma: if we have to choose between the analysis and responses of the Frenchman and the Brazilian, which one do we choose? It is a difficult choice, and in reality, the dilemma may be a false one, but it is worth analyzing. In terms of analyzing how power functions in modern societies, and particularly in education and schools, the French thinker is more astute and systematic than the Brazilian. He possesses a series of highly sophisticated concepts and ideas, a theoretical framework, and astonishing intelligence and creativity to articulate them in his exceptional analysis of the societies in which we live. But he is not only more astute and sophisticated than Freire; Foucault has become a classic of contemporary political thought and is one of the most influential philosophers of the last century.

However, if we consider how ideas are articulated with action, how analyses and critiques become transformative practices, I believe Freire has an advantage. He constantly articulates and reworks his ideas according to practical needs political-pedagogical spheres in which he works. And sometimes he does so with great success; his method of adult literacy and post-literacy is already a classic due to the astonishing results

he achieved in a short time. Another advantage of Freire's thinking over Foucault's is its optimistic and hopeful character. The result of reading the Frenchman is often a certain skepticism, and even anguish and paralysis, in the face of his sharp but frightening descriptions of the social reality in which we live. In contrast, Freire knows, because of his focus on action, that even after the most devastating critique, we must have an optimistic horizon that allows us to act and break the paralysis to which critical theory leads us. The Brazilian never loses sight of this horizon and always paints a picture of hope within it. So perhaps it is not Freire or Foucault, but rather, Foucault and Freire. One at the moment of reflection and critique, the other at the moment of action, construction, and hope.

And this last point is extremely important for those of us dedicated to both intellectual pursuits and teaching. Even if, as intellectuals, we critique, analyze, and reach apparent dead ends, there will come a time when we must act: we will have to go to the classroom, we will have to stand before or among our students. Then, sooner or later, we will need a strategy for action. We cannot allow our theoretical skepticism to lead us to deliver a lecture that merely repeats, explains, and reproduces the discourse of Foucault or Freire. A lecture without questions, without dialogue, without desires, without fun, without joy. With a theoretical and repetitive (banking) lecture, we will recreate the dilemma that makes education for freedom impossible: we will be presenting authors who criticize the forms, modes, and structures of the transmission of power and knowledge, reproducing the very scheme they criticize: do as I say, not as I do. We know that this doesn't work and that it only perpetuates what we intend to transform.

It is true that the inertia of the educational system doesn't usually help us break free from the banking model. However, as pedagogues and educators in the classroom, we know that the system leaves us significant room to create a more liberating, creative, and stimulating education—one that doesn't stifle desires but rather stimulates the desire to learn and to teach. One way out of the previous dilemma can be another dilemma, this time a positive or virtuous one, with which we believe Freire would agree: "The only way to copy Freire is not to copy him." If I don't copy him, I am creative, and if I copy him (without copying him), I am also creative. That is to say: we shouldn't merely repeat him, simply reproduce what he said, because what the Brazilian actually did was innovate based on the possibilities offered by his context. This paradox offers us a way out: to be creative time and again, to always dare to innovate in order to abandon the banking model of reproduction that is educating for freedom.

For his part, while Foucault doesn't indicate a single, guaranteed path, he helps to question established practices and challenge what seems natural. He urges

us to look through different lenses and to act differently from what is established by supposed untouchable truths. Again, in the field of education, it's not Freire or Foucault, but Foucault and Freire.

CONCLUSIONS

We achieved our objective: to make an approximation/comparison between two seemingly distant authors, contemporaries but born in very different countries and regions, with different challenges, practices, and histories, but who share a strong point of contact: an interest in the relation between power and knowledge, among teaching, knowledge, and politics (or micropolitics).

The critiques of the educational system made by Freire and Foucault coincide on many points; one is more sophisticated, systematic, and incisive, the other more focused on action and the practical consequences of theoretical development. Both see that behind the apparent neutrality of knowledge transmission there is power and politics, and that this cannot be absent.

In human relations, power is always at play; knowledge is legitimized by positions of power and vice versa. There is no such thing as apolitical or neutral education. Education always aims for a specific type of society and shapes a particular kind of subjectivity: education is an intrinsically political activity; there is no knowledge without power, nor power without knowledge. Those who claim the neutrality of education conceal their own ideology, their own model of society that they want to impose without democratic thought or discussion, behind the word "neutral." I believe that is one of the most interesting conclusions of this study.

The other is that in education, in addition to the curriculum content, there is another equally or even more important aspect: the relation established among the actors in the pedagogical process. Power is at play in this relation, and subjectivities are formed there. Our own daily practice as educators is the most difficult aspect to objectify, discuss, and change. Foucault recognizes this difficulty when he speaks of how political changes at structural levels often fail to change micropolitics, that is, the relations in which subjectivity is constructed. Freire repeatedly insists on reinventing education to make it liberating, because a relation that can be reinvented is one in which roles are not immutable, and therefore power and knowledge can flow horizontally among the actors in the educational process.

There is no such value to improve the curriculum or modernize methodologies and topics of study if, when we enter the classroom, only our authoritative voice as teachers is heard and never that of the students, if we repeatedly repeat the theories of Foucault or Freire using a banking model, where we impart knowledge we give it to those who don't have it. Thus, we fall into the paradox that obstructs the educational process and that both the French and Brazilian thinkers denounce in their own way: we speak of freedom while oppressing. The way out of

this dilemma is the other paradox mentioned, which is worth reiterating: the only way to copy Freire is not to copy him. Or, more succinctly, don't just do what Freire said, do what he did: always be creative and dialogical in your classrooms. Likewise, Foucault inspires us to carry out our own analyses, not to copy him, because the author does not intend to make generalizations. As Veiga-Neto and Rech (2014, p. 72) state, adhering to Foucault does not mean maintaining the same rhythms he left us. On the contrary, we need to forge our own paths. "We examine his concepts and the direction he gave to his research, to follow them where they may be useful and important for our own research. Being relevant does not imply copying and reproducing. Enough with imitations."

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