

Societies of Control and Psychodramatic Pedagogy

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Abstract

With the intention of presenting the reasons why Psychodramatic Pedagogy has become an appropriate pedagogical instrument to face the characteristics of modern society, and it invites to find the hole in the detail. In order to do so, it offers concepts which require a clarifying proper nomenclature and micro analysis. This article constitutes a composition that includes the knowledge of not only the educational science but of other social sciences as well attuned to the fraternal voices of teachers. The author deals with the educational practice she defines Psychodramatic Pedagogy, venturing opinions on the social system we live in which among other names can be called Control Society. She offers brief stories that show concrete learning situations reaching, in this way, the conclusion founded on the principles exposed in the body of the article.

Keywords: Control Society, Psychodramatic Pedagogy, education, micro analysis, fragments of meaning.

“More important than evolution of the creation is the evolution of the creator.”

(Divisa, L. MORENO, J. L.)

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS

Among the thinkers that have marked the second half of the 20th Century, Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) has, with his ideas, offered to a society overloaded with frustration and skepticism, a horizon that, by inverting concepts and knowledge that were apparently immutable, could bring it closer to a lost optimism and to guide it through a new way. Proceeding through this path, especially regarding communicability and its contradictions, I hope to clarify some aspects that allowed a pedagogic proposition to face the suffocating network of the society of control. Adorno stated that one should resist the unrestrained tendency of immediately communicating everything that we consider true, having only this argument as a principle. Communication requires selectivity (which produces one of its contradictions), as well as a reflection in order to determine when and through which medium this communication must be made. And, to complete the initial panorama, we cannot forget that he also draws attention to the fact that as we criticize the ruling system (which he called “existing”), we should take into account that we are inevitably contaminated by its ideology, its practices and its vices. I intend to write about the “existing” that, at this time, triggers my reflections and my actions.

FRAGMENTS OF MEANING

To grant importance to the fragments has to do with the need to think about alternatives to a tendency that impregnates a big part of our reflections, reaching the point of it appearing as the only possible expectation. I am referring to the tendency of getting satisfied only when we reach the harmonious and conciliatory whole, often overlooking the evidences of incompatibility of the terms to be settled. In other words, there are occasions in which one chooses to enforce or to impose the solution that was idealized, before accepting that there are situations, beings, or phenomena that are simply different. According to the dialectical logic (considered the most appropriate method to analyze contradictions), everything could be solved by going through three moments or movements: thesis, antithesis and synthesis (abstract universal, concrete particular and absolute spirit or reason). It is precisely the moment of synthesis, or absolute reason, that is being questioned in postmodernity. It is thought to eliminate the subject's subjectivity and freedom by favoring the universe of ideas. This mindset of seeing synthesis as the only way of reaching an answer favors homogeneity, a forced equity and repetition, so much so that by denying its presence as indispensable, we would rescue the different, the singular of every being, thing or of every situation. That rest that rebels against the absolutism of the idea (which we can call fragment) denies to affirm, opening new possibilities of creating tools for personal and social transformations. This is how, in the post-modern times, an articulation with the negative appears, without offering the weight of the rejected, but recovering the right to think about the other. With this other being either a thought yet not thought about, another concrete and different human being, or a non-cataloged phenomenon.

DENYING TO AFFIRM

This is how the concept of negative dialectics, introduced by Adorno in 1966, that is complemented by the concept of non-place by not self-imposing limits and precise profiles to the factic and technological world in which we are submerged.

The term identity offers several meanings such as: nationality, evidence of belonging to a particular family, geographic place, culture or society; as a document, classification or place within a specific scale. Using identity with the latter meaning, it is possible to compose a world organized to our taste, which happens only in the realm of ideas, not in reality. In this situation, the thing, the being or the phenomenon might not yet be cataloged or might share several of them in its own identity composition. When this happens, especially in art, the term hybridization is used (CANCLINI, 2008). And in case of accentuating the lack of identification, not forcing its existence, we could say, as Deleuze (1925-1909), in non-identity. The system's logic asks us to constantly attribute a specific place for every being, for every set of ideas, for everything or existence. However, the place to which the system refers is already predetermined by it. Since everything must find its place within the "already existing", the system exerts the maintenance of its stability. The non-place is more of a rift than a space (DI PAOLA y YABOWSKI, 2008).

DISCIPLIN AND CONTROL: SOCIETY'S PRIORITIES

After World War II, it was introduced in America a social structure intended to restrain the citizenship affected by conflagration. This model, called New Deal, offered a certain level of protection from the state regarding healthcare, social assistance, work, housing, subsidies and acknowledgement of trade unions. Later, Europe incorporated the New Deal with adaptations of its own, legitimizing the conquests of citizenship. The social roles were strengthened and the places for their development were better fixed. Generally speaking there were no doubts about what was a family, a school, a hospital, and what was the place for the villains, the crazy and the rebel. Likewise, there was no doubt about what one could expect from parents, teachers, physicians, police officers, etc. Michel Foucault (1926-1984) showed that these places' structures were the reproduction, on another scale, of the same principles of repression and punishment that had been fought. In this case, the New Deal was optimizing the system's discipline, while the discipline legitimized the New Deal.

However, the so organized world went through geopolitical transformations without solving base problems along with technological acceleration, the rhythm of capitalism's evolution and the impossibility of absorbing the sequels of the Cold War. Thus, by solidifying the neoliberal race, the so praised discipline was getting disqualified. Society, once again undisciplined, with an avid and destructive global market, began to operate various forms of control: real, symbolic and virtual. And the subjectivity was once again postponed in the name of other interests.

SIDE EFFECTS OF CAPITALISM

One of the reasons why approaching the structural aspect of any situation or object of reflection becomes difficult, to the point of often being avoided, is the fact that it demands a study (even if elementary, such as this one) of capitalism and of its evolution, as a pattern of human relations' organization in today's society. Albeit the term capitalism is quite undefined, we can try a few approximations to provide it with more consistency. Its appearing is situated in Europe, in the 14th Century, organized at first, in a rudimental way and later (using current terminology) through three axes: to support the biggest commercial companies, to favor several manners of speculation and to make the financial system more sophisticated. Later facts came to favor these expectations:

1. The age of exploration that turned the 15th and 16th centuries into times of discovery of new territories and opportunities, invigorating the competition between different markets (a not always peaceful competition).
2. The Industrial Revolution that, in the 19th century, opened new horizons to trade with mass production, eradicating at once the social frontiers for consumption.

At this point in our explanation, we can begin to associate the educational phenomenon to the existence of the capitalist system, since the whole social structure suffers the consequences of its hegemony. Capitalism associates decisions regarding the use of natural resources, the creation of internal and external policy of the nation-states and, currently, the territorial configurations, to the point of intervening on the development criteria (progress wise) of cultural aspects, and among them, of education. We have to remember that the first stage of the capitalist evolution is expansion (HARDT

e NEGRI, 2002), taking this yearning to the need to discover renewed nests for production and consumption. During the first phases of its evolution, the capitalist regime demands a starting point (capitals, harbors, countries or regions) from where the most appropriate places for the reproduction of its ideology are sought. As the production grows in importance, it advances to the accumulation stage. The subsequent dependence of consumption and submission to the market rules become increasingly complex, diversifying ways of capitalizing profits. The model thus disseminated is not satisfied with a mere economic result but seeks to insert itself in ways of viewing the world and of individuals to fulfil themselves in it. Therefore, capitalism enters the colonization stage and its advances in imperialism, looking for a global amplitude for its expansion. Globalization is the most recent formula, transforming the global structure into a marketplace society, also known as empire (HARDT e NEGRI, 2002), a name attributed due to its lack of centers from which to operate, taking its entire territory as a possible capitalist area. It is this current structure that earns the title of late capitalism (DI PAOLA y YABOWSKI, 2008). To complete these considerations, it is always good to remember that the economy and capitalism are not one and the same. Capitalism is one way of conducting the economy, successful in its aspirations of favoring profit and control, but with side effects that are often destructive and not unusually perverse.

EDUCATION AND PSYCHODRAMATIC PEDAGOGY

In this contradictory context, what is left for education to do?

If the decisions remain on a superficial plan (which happens in most cases), technologies are replaced, programs are changed with the intention of updating and new disciplines are set, trying to diversify the professional specialties, but faintly changing the nature of teaching. In other words, facing the impossibility of handling the transmission of the knowledge accumulated by mankind, mistakes are accentuated. Among them are segmentation of matters, pre-fixated and repeated knowledges, learning based on rational activity, neglecting the areas of senses, affections, body and sociability, that compose subjectivity. Exaggerating and abusing the use of nominalism (each thing with its proper name, fitting in its proper places, definitions, bureaucracies) and of “*quantificism*” (quantities, values, statistical evaluations), particular of the 20th century, are very difficult to overcome on a teacher’s day-to-day life. To work in depth becomes a daily battle for the educator who aspires to provide their students with subsidies so that they are able to learn how to think properly (clearly and tracing significant relations), before anything else (FREIRE, 1996). The significant relations are fundamental for them to compose future creative actions that are indispensable for their survival as adults.

Inspired by the morenian Psychodrama (MORENO 1889-1974), by what is has of original and revolutionary, the Psychodramatic pedagogy (ROMAÑA, 2010) provides concrete tools to face the society of control, regarding education, showing an alternative to is aspiring repetition, reproduction and to the homogeneous. The Psychodramatic pedagogy holds psychodrama’s own theory as its main foundation (identity matrix, role theory, cultural conserve, spontaneity-creativity-tele theory, concepts of here and now, of *locus nascendi* and elements of sociometry). As resources of its participative didactics, basic and secondary techniques are used (ROMAÑA, 2004). The exercise of Psychodramatic roles comprehends an answer that integrates feelings, emotions, thoughts and actions. The word recovers its meanings, summons arguments, produces responsibilities. The inclusion of values becomes natural instead of something necessarily programed in advance. It opens a two-way channel between imaginary and reality. It

socializes information and allows the creation of knowledges unthought in school curriculum. The calm to reflection, also a natural result, the tensions and violence can be overcome through a careful use of sociometry. As a complement, it incorporates references to Vygotsky's (1896-1934) and Paulo Freire's (1921-1997) thoughts, conforming a bio-political pedagogical complex that aspires to strengthen human beings, by adding the component of historicity to thought.

LIFE, HEALTH AND LEARNING

ACCOUNT I – THE EXODUS OF JUJUY (EL ÉXODO JUJEÑO)

We are at Gabriela Mistral elementary school, a public school in Santa Rosa de Calamuchita (Cordoba – Argentina). The Social Sciences teacher is explaining to the 6th graders that the governors of the recently emancipated *Virreinato Del Rio de La Plata* (1810) had to spread revolutionary ideas throughout their whole territory and, at the same time, had to face the military forces willing to suppress those rebels in the name of Spain. The most powerful was the *Virreinato do Alto Perú*, against which was sent a more or less improvised military convoy, by the orders of General Manuel Belgrano, a lawyer by trade, who happened to become a military man by force of events. Argentinian national history spares special page to the fact that Belgrano had to choose to either battle a powerful army located close to the town of Jujuy, in the north (neighboring the current Bolivia) and be defeated, or to ask the inhabitants to leave the town to save their lives, along with some animals, documents and provisions. The teacher (trained in Psychodramatic pedagogy) tells the facts according to the official history. She proceeds within the parameters of classic didactics. Next, however, she opens room to investigate the facts in another dimension, by asking the students to choose the significant scenes of that story and to reenact what happened in 1810, taking the roles of the protagonists of that time. The classroom is mobilized and promptly there is a Belgrano (H) and a girl (M), leading the crowd's organization. H surprises the teacher because, despite being a boy who greatly struggles with verbal expression, just as Belgrano, he walks from one side of the class to the other performing soliloquies about his hard decision, and then faces the crowd speaking smoothly and with conviction.

H had lost his father not long before, in a motorcycle accident, on a rainy day, on which he didn't want his father to leave (intuition? Premonition? Tele?). He had even deflated the motorcycle's tires to stop him and was grounded for it. M also surprised the teacher, because she was a shy and lonely Bolivian girl the, by default, disappears within the group. She belonged to an underprivileged family of Bolivian immigrants, who had just arrived in that region, and only cared about taking care of her younger siblings¹. What I want to point here is how facts that took place two hundred years ago, within a schooling that brings the opportunity of expressing feelings and emotions, aligned with a thought strengthened by action, allow the elaboration in some measure, as added value, of life experiences embedded with a heavy load of pain and violence.

Fragments of sense to small lives.

¹ The leader of coke workers and current president of Bolivia, Evo Morales, went as a child to a public school in northern Argentina.

ACCOUNT II – 30 THOUSAND MISSING

We are at the Dalmácio Vélez Sarsfield high school, a public school of Santa Rosa de Calamuchita (Cordoba – Argentina). I am facing an unprecedented situation in my life. It is 2007 and I am taking part, along with others, in an event that marks the implementation, by a national congress law, of March 24th as Memory Day, so that we don't forget the state sponsored terrorism and the crimes against humanity committed by the military dictatorship that ravaged the country between 1976 and 1983. Among those, there is the disappearance of 30 thousand people, mainly young, throughout the whole Argentinian territory. We had to speak to the students (from 13 to 18-year-olds) and their teachers gathered at the school patio, on chairs they had brought there. On my turn, I began by explaining the political-ideological precedents that, in my understanding, had provoked that terror. The audience was listening closely, but, as I spoke of the difference between the recognized hero and the anonymous-martyr hero, I started to feel that they should no longer be considered completely anonymous. That is how I had the idea of using mathematical knowledge to assume that if we brought up our common names, we, about 150 people, it would be very likely that, proportionally, a big part of those 30 thousand missing would have had those names. The proposition was made, everyone was standing up, timidly at first, but soon after strongly, we said: - *Carlos, Marcelo, Ana Maria, Francisco, Elsa, Ricardo, Susana...* At a certain point, those words sounded like music and a teacher dared to say – “PRESENT”, and others said so in their hearts, remembering those who we had actually know; colleagues, friends of relatives among those 30 thousand. We thought that the more remembered they are, the less missing they will be.

Fragments of history, memory and justice.

ACCOUNT III – THEATRE LESSONS

We are at *Acre* school, a municipal public school in Rio de Janeiro. In the article “Brazil is Here”, Raquel Freire Zangrandi, reporter and film producer, tells *Piauí* magazine #53, about her experience of living during one semester the school's daily life. Among her comments, there stands an account of a theatre class that begins with an original roll call (Zangrandi, 2011):

– Reginaldo? – golden lion tamarin.

– Rosinha? – turtle.

The students have to reply by giving themselves the name of an animal. They cannot repeat an animal that was already chosen by a colleague. This way, the teacher can recover discipline by training attention span and memory. The reporter adds that, unfortunately, the acting space is very small, even though *Acre* has a sports court and a large auditorium. Rare things on a municipal school. That happens because the court can only be used for sports and the auditorium is closed, since it has become a storage room for broken furniture. Even facing those difficulties, *Acre's* students are approved at least with an R, for *regular*; the I, for *insufficient* barely exists. From our side, we can add that when the interest in animals fade, they can instead say the names of cities, rivers or fruits, and so on:

– Reginaldo? – Campo Grande

– Rosinha? – Juazeiro.

Or add adjectives such as:

– Reginaldo? – purple lion tamarin.

– Rosinha? – white turtle.

And after roll call, they could keep dialogues such as:

– Why is the tamarin purple?

– It is angry because it will be extinct!

By proposing to enter the “*as if*”, the theatre class incorporates the children’s spontaneity allowing, without a doubt, a follow up to an unexpected exercise. However, on second thought, doesn’t the teacher already do that? There is in all teachers a huge creative potential that is asleep and waiting to be activated and channeled (LEAL, 1993).

Fragments of knowledge with creativity, love and happiness.

PRODUCING ANSWERS

The reports have been incorporated to the text as samples of fragments of sense. In the fragment, in the detail, we will find the whole, if we can make the necessary connections. There we can observe that the referred facts comprise non-places to learn a knowledge still unidentified, in a dialectics that does not operate with the expectation of conciliating, but to confronting the “otherness” (ROMAÑA, 2010 b).

Poetically and always showing love for his complementarians, J. L. Moreno said that each answer provokes one hundred questions, from which one can surmise that the richness of thought is a consequence of the new answers that arise for those one hundred or more questions. As a rule, questions are bound to the unknown, to doubts, to curiosity or to what has become problematic. The conservative mindset seeks solutions, preferring those that were tried and successful. There is a well-known pastime that consists of connecting nine dots displayed as a square, three on each side and one in the center, with only four lines. The problem lies in the fact that the lines cannot go twice through the same dots. It seems impossible to solve, however, the answer lies in allowing oneself to imagine two dots strategically located outside the square. This game becomes a metaphor of situations where reality or the “existent” presents us, asking us to look for an answer outside of where the problem lies. In no way, the solutions lead to looking within the problem itself, since they no longer intend on dealing with it. The answer is more ad hoc and flexible, even if it demands ethical principles and cohesion in the sense that each one will have to share the same preconditions of the former answers and to open a new path to the following ones, in order not to lose track of its ideological and/or methodological line of thought (MORIN, 1998). This is the kind of thought that the Psychodramatic pedagogy aims to develop in the students, stimulating them so that from each answer, new and multiple questions arise. It is clear that this aspiration pushes us to a territory opposite from what the society of control has chosen to establish itself. It, always seeking

definitive solutions, enhances its controls and, when is unable to find peaceful paths, appeals to violence, aggression and intolerance, becoming the main propagator of those ingredients that contaminate every environment. It is not about weakening the other, identified as an adversary, most times in an unrestricted and arbitrary way, but about strengthening ourselves within the systematic and critic practice of the principles in which we believe. We can make ours the words of Michel Foucault, that proposes men not to seek refuge on another world or another life, but to build a different life and world (Foucault, 2011). Answers have to be created day after day without dithering. Ideas are like rivers, that adjoin and form an estuary. It is just a matter of optics. Yes, the Psychodramatic pedagogical practice requires training for the teachers, but, on the other hand, they will have spontaneity (and therefore will always be open to the possibility of new answers), with them throughout their professional performances (VILASECA, 2010).

And, while we learn, we should not forget that the new generations' mental health is one of the grater treasures of mankind, and therefore should be preserved without being subject to the oscillations of market's levies (ETCHEVERRY, 2008)

THE PATH TO A BIO-POLITICAL EDUCATION

Today, March 11, 2011, I am writing this conclusion and Japan is being devastated by one of the biggest environmental catastrophes of our world. Land, sea and nuclear power, in a macabre synthesis, tell us that they are superior to technological controls and to some solutions of human knowledge.

I remember that the parable *De La salvación por las obras*, by Jorge Luis Borges, tells that on a given fall, 8 million deities of Shinto, gathered at Izumo, had decided to punish men for he had not obeyed the imperative peaceful essence of his creation. Facing the threat of History's end if things remained that way, it was men that should be extinct. However, one of the deities said that nevertheless, he had also been able to compose a short poem called *haiku* with only seventeen syllables and because of that, at least on this occasion, mankind deserved forgiveness.

I had not imagined that "the existing" would ask of me with such intensity. Facts, however, have entered my writing without asking for permission, demanding my attention and their documentation. I cannot look away and pretend that the catastrophe in Japan didn't happen and so many other facts that provoke our indignation. This is not the *make believe* that we practice.

Maybe now it is our responsibility to compose new *haikus*, new paradigms inscribed in a bio-political conception of education, in order to provide better conditions for psychodramatic pedagogy to become more efficient as an alternative instrument to the unrestricted practice of codes and expectations of post-industrial capitalism and its devices of control.

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