

The lesson ritual in pedagogy: performative aspect¹

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Abstract

In the pedagogy field, one recurrently treats lessons as tools for teaching and learning. In this article, I argue that, beyond that aspect, the lesson translates into one of the most important rituals of the educational process due to its performative character. Under the assumption that it is in the field of pedagogical discourse that the stabilization of the lesson ritual occurs, I have developed a study in which I analyze the ritualistic aspect of this educational practice, that is, as a ritual and a research path which observes the importance of understanding current discursive school practices focusing on discursive practices, produced in the context of modernity. I have chosen an analysis corpus arising from two discursivities: Jesuit pedagogy and modern pedagogy, which greatly impacted on the educational discourse of the twentieth century, in the texts *Ratio Studiorum*, of the Society of Jesus (1599-2009), and *Primeiras lições de coisas* [*Primary object lessons*], by N. Calkins, adapted by Rui Barbosa (1861-1886). In these texts, analyzed as discourses, I have given visibility to the lesson ritual in its performative aspect, that is, to what marks positions, gestures and behaviors. Analysis indicates a regularity which remains with regard to the rectorial utterances of these ritualistic aspects, one of the first sacred aspects arising from the Christian religious discourse. Another aspect of these discursivities is the ritualistic function in the production of the discourse of truth.

Keywords

Lesson – Ritual – *Ratio Studiorum* – Lições de Coisas – Performative action.

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O ritual da lição na pedagogia: o aspecto performativo^I

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Resumo

*No campo da pedagogia, é recorrente tratar a lição como uma ferramenta para o ensino e a aprendizagem. Neste artigo, argumentamos que, para além desse aspecto, traduz-se em um dos rituais mais significativos do processo educacional por seu caráter performativo. Sob o pressuposto de que é no campo do discurso pedagógico que se dá a estabilização do ritual da lição, desenvolvemos uma investigação na qual analisamos essa prática educativa em seu aspecto ritualístico, ou seja, como ritual e um caminho investigativo que observa a importância de se compreenderem práticas discursivas escolares atuais com foco em práticas discursivas, produzidas no contexto da modernidade. Elegemos um corpus de análise advindo de duas discursividades: a pedagogia jesuítica e a pedagogia moderna, de grande impacto no discurso educacional do século XX, em seus textos *Ratio Studiorum*, da Companhia de Jesus (1599-2009), e *Primeiras lições de coisas*, de N. Calkins, adaptação de Rui Barbosa (1861-1886). Nesses textos, analisados como discursos, deu-se visibilidade ao ritual da lição em seu aspecto performativo, ou seja, naquilo que marca posições, gestos e comportamentos. A análise indica uma regularidade que se mantém no que se refere aos enunciados reitores desses aspectos ritualísticos, um dos primeiros aspectos sagrados oriundos do discurso religioso cristão. Outro aspecto nessas discursividades é a função ritualística na produção do discurso da verdade.*

Palavras-chave

Lição – Ritual – Ratio Studiorum – Lições de Coisas – Ação performática.

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Introduction

From the etymological point of view, the word *lição* (lesson) is associated with word *leitura* (reading), from which it originated (*lectio*). The expression *lección ex cathedra* is known for referring to lesson in the official or infallible sense when it refers to the Pope's speech. Lesson is present in Lectionaries with the Lessons of the Jewish Scriptures, of epistles and gospels. In Aristotle, lesson is known for the political lesson (*politike akroasis*) and physics lessons (ABBAGNANO; VISALBERGHI, 1992). In the Middle Ages, the lesson is present in the commentary practices of a text and in *disputatio*, an exam of a problem through the discussion of arguments (ABBAGNANO; VISALBERGHI, 1992). In the Renaissance, the lesson is presented in the schools of reformers, such as *Gimnasio* of Strasbourg, both an elementary and a middle school, with *lecciones obligatorias y continuas*, and in university with *lecciones públicas y libres* (ABBAGNANO; VISALBERGHI, 1992). The consolidation of the lesson as a recurring action in the schooling discourse occurs in the nineteenth century through the tripod read-write-count associated with the use of didactic materials such as school notebooks (HÉBRARD, 2007).

Since the lesson was individualized in the body of pedagogical practices, one can say that there is an interpretation that considers that, in its regularity, it has remained an important didactic tool for teaching and learning. From this perspective, it is referred to as class (LEITE, 2006); as a presentation by a teacher in the context of the schooling of children and youth; as what the teacher establishes students should study, remember, as a teaching, a standard of conduct. It is related to a time, a discipline, a part of a text taken from a manual, a class, or a notebook which a student must learn, memorize and recite (ARÉNILLA et al., 2001; DUARTE, 1986; HOZ, 1970). In a way, there is a naturalization of the lesson in an existence *ad aeternum*. From the pedagogical perspective,

visibility is given to a strictly operative function of the educational process. Teaching manuals, primers, textbooks, paradidactic books, and school notebooks have been the main cultural artifacts for the dissemination of lessons in the educational field.

Critical perspectives on the lesson have been developed in different fields of knowledge. For example, the action of repeating the leafing through a book, the way of sitting, of assuming the asymmetry of the relationship between who asks and who answers, as expressed in the historical play *A Lição [Leçon]*, by Eugène Ionesco (1951). There is also a critical perspective about its function of lenses through which we can see us and normalize us, as Nietzsche (1996, p. 290) says when he asks “why do I live? What lesson have I to learn from life? How have I become what I am and why do I suffer from being what I am?”.

In the specific field of education, there has been criticism of the lesson as a synonym for task in the context of a curriculum since the 1920s (DEWEY, 1978). Saviani (1991, p. 56) criticizes the traditional school and its methods, in which such practice as an exercise is a referent to knowledge assimilation. The lesson in its purely didactic aspect and the possibility of the lesson as an act of reading in friendship and freedom are questioned (LARROSA, 1999, p. 173-174). Criticism is directed to lessons in teaching manuals “on the education of bodies and souls of their students, lessons on how to sit and walk, on how to place notebooks and pens, feet and hands, which ultimately produce a schooled body” (LOURO, 2010, p. 61). Although I acknowledge the importance of such approaches, the object of my analysis is not the lesson itself, but the ritual in which it operates in the context of its individualization in the field of pedagogical discourse.

The lesson ritual has visibility in the field of sociological and aesthetic studies. The lesson, as a class, in its noble and solemn connotations, as Perrone-Moisés (1988) says in the book *A aula [Leçon]* by Barthes; in the manner of a “rite of incorporation and investiture”, as Bourdieu

(1994, p. 3) mentions in *Lições da aula* [*Leçons de leçon*]. In this case, he emphasizes the authority of legitimate discourse, uttered by those who have the right and its relational sense of the status of the speaker and of the hearer, of the place of enunciation and of the ritual itself in the institution of who utters the lesson.

Little present in the field of education studies, this ritual can, in my view, better indicate its educational function, particularly when such function is related to the processes of production of the subjects of education, that is, to what the lesson ritual can perform in the options of values, gestures and behaviors. Is there anything more meaningful than the binomial punishment/reward in the pedagogical action, such as the ritual of punishment for an incorrect lesson or an award for a well-taught lesson? How can one not identify the kinship of these elements arising from religious ceremonies in school education if much of the educational discourse in modern times has been institutionalized by the interpenetration of the rules of the discourse of the Counter Reformation (Jesuit pedagogy, pedagogy of the Brethren of the Common Life, Pedagogy of the Moravian Brethren) with the rules of the scientific discourse of modern school?

It is understood that the lesson ritual disseminated by those lines of thought has undergone significant changes over recent centuries as a consequence not only of the loss of the sense of the sacred but also of the social, cultural, political struggles and of the development of science, school and curriculum. It can be inferred, however, that the predominance of these approaches remains and is translated not necessarily into what we teach, but especially into how we teach through rituals.

Ritual, performativity, profane ritual

Ritual is a word of Latin origin which derives from *ritus*, refers to a prescribed order, associated to Greek forms, just like *artus* in

the sense of prescription, of *ararisko* in the sense of harmonizing, adapting, and *arthmos*, which means link, joint, and whose root *ar* derives from the Indo-European Vedic (*rta*, *arta*) and refers to the order of the cosmos, to the relationship between gods and men and between men themselves (RIVIÈRE, 1996, p. 29). Ritual is associated with a set of individual and collective conducts, which are relatively coded, with body (verbal, gestural or posture) support with repetitive character and a symbolic dimension (RIVIÈRE, 1996, p. 30).

The concept of performativity comes from the distinction made by J. L. Austin between constative utterances (describing a fact or situation) and performative utterances (which perform the action) (SILVA, 2000). The relationship between ritual and language is in the analysis of this practice as a performative action (PEIRANO, 2002). In this regard, the functioning of language matters not in denotative, but in performative terms. From this perspective, in dialogue with Tambiah (1995), ritual is seen as a culturally built system and as a communicative system in specific contexts. In this version, rituals should be viewed as a complex of words and actions, and in this sense it is important to know how the interconnection between words and actions occurs.

In addressing performativity, Peirano examines the effectiveness of rites in their performative character in three senses: in that proposed by Austin, according to whom to say is to do as a conventional act; in the sense of performance, which uses various communication media through which actors experience the event; and, finally, in the sense of referring to the values related to or inferred by the actors during the performance (PEIRANO, 2002, p. 27).

In the school context, ritual is treated as profane, everyday, as a micro rite of passage to school. Rivière speaks of rites of arrival at school when greeting teachers and saying farewell to parents, rites of order with compartmentalized times, queues and activity rites, such as going to the courtyard, talking

and listening (RIVIÈRE, 1996, p. 119). All micro rituals attach to everyday life a sacredness whose main function, in my view, is to regulate human action. One can also observe the sacredness of micro rituals in their protective function of “our inner self [...] because they [micro rituals] remind us that we are human only because other human beings constitute us as such” (CHARAUDEAU; MAINGUENEAU, 2004, p. 437-438).

The lesson ritual refers to pedagogical discourse, that is, the discourse that formulates the rationalization of the educational processes related to the subject to be educated, the objectives of education and educational modalities.

In my view, ritual is implied in the order of discourse in a given society and operates through power relations. This perspective is evident in the way Foucault treats ritual. For him,

[Ritual] defines the qualification which must be possessed by individuals who speak (and who, in the interplay of dialogue in interrogation or recitation, should occupy a certain position and formulate a certain type of utterance); it defines gestures, behavior, circumstances and the whole set of signs which must accompany discourse; finally, ritual fixes the effectiveness assumed or imposed, of words, their effect on those to whom they are addressed, the limits of their constraining value. Religious discourse, juridical, and therapeutic [and educational], as well as, in some ways, political discourse are all barely dissociable from the functioning of a ritual that determines the individual properties and agreed roles of the speakers. (FOUCAULT, 1999, p. 12).

Since ritual is a social operator as it is expressed in its etymology (RIVIÈRE, 1996, p. 29), doesn't the lesson ritual have elements of the order of ceremonies and prayers that make up the religious service expressed in Lectionaries – mandatory readings in Sunday masses and in the masses on celebration days? Also, doesn't

this ritual, as profane rituals (of everyday life), have reference elements such as rhythm, scene, asymmetry relation which provides safety in social and cultural relationships and in social and cultural practices? Aren't these elements themselves a condition for the maintenance of discursive practices in the field of education? Rivière (1996), in his study of profane rituals, identifies in these rituals, including school rituals, this mark of the sacred, of ceremony. For him, rituality, even that said profane, preserves religious residues, which before were sacralized, such as dance, body expression, party, because “there are forms of sacredness outside religion in which several of our everyday rites are included” (RIVIÈRE, 1996, p. 36).

Under these problematizations, I analyze the lesson in its ritualistic aspect, that is, as a ritual of the lesson and a research path which observes the importance of understanding current school discursive practices, in this case, the lesson ritual, focusing on discursive practices, produced in the context of Modernity. This is one of the paths of reappropriation of enunciations of the past to understand the conditions of production of discursive practices in the educational field today (FOUCAULT, 1996; VARELA, 2000). It is assumed that the stabilization of the lesson ritual practice takes place in the field of pedagogical discourse. In the educational field, by the mode of dissemination and the field of use. From this perspective, I have chosen two founding discursivities, Jesuit pedagogy and modern pedagogy. It can be said that they are founding discursivities in the sense given by Foucault, discursivities which reflect a discourse that produced “something more: the possibility and the rule of formation of other texts” (FOUCAULT, 1992, p. 21). The corpus of analysis comprises: *Código Pedagógico dos Jesuítas – Ratio Studiorum da Companhia de Jesus* (1599-2009) and *Primeiras lições de coisas: manual de ensino elementar para uso de paes e professores* by N. Calkins (1861-1886). In these particular texts, visibility was given to the lesson ritual, that is, to what marks positions,

gestures and behaviors, and to recurring grammar, observing its effectiveness, i.e., its effects on performative action (FOUCAULT, 1999; RIVIÈRE, 1996; PEIRANO, 2002).

School micro rituals do not reflect all school actions, since the existence of a ritual is associated with an instituted enactment with symbolic meaning which refers to values, to an action that has the appearance of coded communication, which follows a well-defined order and gives rise to repeated behaviors. These micro rituals can be rites of arrival and reception, rites of order, activity rites in sequential order and those associated with important and festive occasions (RIVIÈRE, 1996).

The lesson ritual in the discourses of Jesuit pedagogy and modern pedagogy

Jesuit pedagogy emerges in the Catholic Church and its institution is the religious order Society of Jesus, founded by Ignatius Loyola in 1540, in the context of the Counter Reform. This order is committed to propagating the faith through missions, fighting the infidels and heretics and educating the youth (ABBAGNANO; VISALBERGHI, 1992, p. 177). This institution founds schools, seminaries and universities for its members and for lay people and follows the model of Protestant gymnasia, resembling the pedagogical practice of The Brethren of the Common Life (MIRANDA, 2009, p. 23).

Ratio atque Institutio Studiorum Societatis Iesu, better known as *Ratio Studiorum*, materializes the educational philosophical discourse of the Society of Jesus with a displacement of Erasmian pacifism (Christian humanism) to assume unconditionally the philosophy of Aristotle and the scholastic philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas (ABBAGNANO; VISALBERGHI, 1992, p. 177). As a school regime and a study curriculum, *Ratio Studiorum* is recognized for its pedagogical and didactic skills. It is emphasized how it proposed a regulation of

studies, in which it systematically resorted to the feeling of emulation as an important way to convince to work, study, by means of public distribution of awards and by encouraging denunciation by class leaders and decurions (ABBAGNANO; VISALBERGHI, 1992, p. 178). This practice was also the main disciplinarian instrument (MIRANDA, 2009, p. 34-35).

Based on the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Ratio Studiorum* is a prescriptive and normative manual of collective and individual pedagogical actions primarily aimed at the youth. This pedagogy had strong support of public opinion at the time due to the realization of solemn ceremonies, the awarding of literary prizes in public lessons (disputes), inaugural prayers, and great theatrical performances. Families of students, members of the universities and of the civil and ecclesiastical hierarchy participated in these events (MIRANDA, 2009, p. 24). In *Ratio Studiorum*, the lesson appears in the context of the thirty sections in which it sets the rules for the Provencal, the rector, the prefect of studies and teachers of different colleges and disciplines, rules for exams, rules for students and rules for academies. These are lessons of the Holy Scriptures, private lessons, public lessons, lessons of dispute, ordinary lessons, homework. It is worth mentioning that this study program reached several European countries and also countries from other continents, such as China and Brazil. Indeed, "by means of this document, Jesuits effectively institutionalized the teaching of *studia humanitatis* and made them the badge of their pedagogical action" (MIRANDA, 2009, p. 25). This pedagogy prevailed until 1773, when the Society of Jesus was dissolved and expelled from various locations, such as Brazil. The philosophy underlying *Ratio Studiorum* has maintained strong influence on versions of modern pedagogy.

Modern pedagogy emerges in the Industrial Revolution scenario, in the late eighteenth century and mid-nineteenth century and, with it, the lesson is consolidated as an

important tool in the transmission of culture and in the civility process. In this scenario, the American and French revolutions lead to the break with feudal practices in different aspects and the predominance of the Enlightenment ideas. Morality in Kant's thought, in convergence with the thought of Rousseau and Locke, argues that education is a condition for raising real men. In turn, the bonds of interdependence between different parts of the world enable events in a continent to reverberate in others, particularly between America and Europe, and thus allow the circulation of this new discursive network on education. This discursive network is one of the positive aspects in the institution of what is recognized as modernity. In this context, modern pedagogy seeks a methodical requirement of inclusion of new scientific methods in teaching and, in this sense, intuitive methods, such as the one that came to be identified as Object Lessons (ABBAGNANO; VISALBERGHI, 1992, p. 202).

These are changes that occur in the context of discontinuous transformations, in the sense given by Foucault in his thesis on different epistemes and discontinuous processes. This thesis is based on the "fact that, in a few years, sometimes a culture ceases to think as it had been thinking until then and begins to think other things in a new way" (FOUCAULT, 1996, p. 66).

In this scenario of changes, modern pedagogy is produced and, with its different discursivities, it simultaneously produces modernity. Among these discursivities, I highlight two which are the backbone of the intuitive method materialized in *Lições de coisas: Didactica Magna* of Comenius and intuitive education of Pestalozzi. Although the intuitive method is part of the educational context of the nineteenth century, it has the discursive constellation of the work of Protestant pastor Comenius in the seventeenth century, with his fruitful work *Didactica Magna*, and the works of Giovanni Enrico Pestalozzi, with his philosophical arguments

about the relationship between intuition and knowledge. With Comenius, the idea that nothing can be the object of intellect before it has been the object of the senses is applied to education. Pestalozzi is a reference of this text because of his arguments in defense of the idea that shape, number and name are the elements of intuition, which can be understood as something that resembles the *a priori* form of knowledge, as in the Kantian perspective. Therefore, shape corresponds to space; number to time; and name to concept (ABBAGNANO; VISALBERGHI, 1992, p. 323).

The fortieth edition of *Primeiras lições de coisas: manual de ensino elementar para uso de paes e professores*, by N. A. Calkins, published in 1861 in the United States, was translated and adapted in Brazil by Rui Barbosa and published by Imprensa Nacional do Rio de Janeiro in 1886. For Barbosa (1886), the main pedagogical justification for adapting this teaching manual to education in Brazil was the wish to replace the form of teaching in its practices, which he considers mechanical and sterile, and which make children, instead of being "the most active collaborators in their own instruction, as required by rational and scientific canons of elementary education, play the role of passive recipients of formulas, definitions and sentences, embedded in childhood by more or less understanding means" (BARBOSA, 1886, p. VI). In contrast to the verbalistic, formalist school, Barbosa proposes teaching that considers aspects such as reality, intuition, the exercise of senses, observation. Barbosa turns to F. Buisson to make explicit in the best way the method which he is associated with as something to be used in all the teaching practices in Brazil then:

1. Objective teaching has to adapt to the special character of means of educating the senses. This education will consist of exercises of observation, which develop the latent energy of each sense, particularly that of sight.

2. The primary purpose of intuitive teaching is to develop the ways of observing the

conditions of application to the laws of thought. These will be called exercises of reflection.

3. Another of its essential institutes is the development of language, all the lessons of this order consisting of exercises of speaking and writing. Everything lies, in short, (and therein lies the general intent of this method) in gathering the cultivation of the senses, the cultivation of reason, of the words, and direct them all at the same pace. In the fundamental basis of all, the culture of senses stands out, and we should resort to it as the main instrument of all teaching. (BARBOSA, 1886, p. XII).

The rules of the discourse of the philosophy of the spirit, of the laws of evolution, of objective teaching, of the characteristics of childhood and child development in the enunciations of *Lições de coisas* by Calkins are interpenetrated with Christian religious discourse, as we see in the following passage: "If we assumed as a standard in education these laws which God prescribed [...] we would have to start studying objects, passing from them to words, [...] as God wanted the acquisition of knowledge to be" (CALKINS, 1886, p. 7-8). This interpenetration is translated in ritualistic elements as indicated in the following sections.

Positions of individuals in the lesson ritual

In the structure of *Ratio Studiorum*, with its set of explicit rules, the practice of the lesson ritual is one of the procedures of imposing such rules on the teachers to whom they are addressed as active subjects and on students as subjects who receive their action. The pedagogical manual *Primeiras lições de coisas*, by Calkins, brings the rules of education in the guidelines, in the advice to parents and teachers, and such rules bring the function of the subjects in the educational relationship according to the circumstances, that is, this aspect refers to what can be said and what cannot under each circumstance and also by what privileged entitled party (FOUCAULT, 1999).

Agreed roles are produced in a game of truth experienced through asymmetric relations for which rituals are key elements (FOUCAULT, 1984, p. 66). These relations based on a game of truth are woven by the enunciative function of different forms of discourses that "convey, in a kind of incessant coming and going, forms of subjection and schemes of knowledge" (FOUCAULT, 1984, p. 101). In classrooms, for example, the subjects of education, challenged by teachers to produce specific repetitive ceremonious gestures, exercise the lesson ritual.

In different educational practices, the lesson ritual operates as the rule of the relationship of asymmetry, of authority in the definition of roles. The one who guides the action and the one who obeys. Before the class, the sign of the cross and the recitation of a prayer, composed for this purpose, and which should be heard by the teacher and all the students carefully and bareheaded (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 102). For some subjects, the rule of review: "Students go over what they have just heard for half an hour among themselves in groups of about ten, with one of their Jesuit fellow students put in charge of the decuries" (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 140). In these relationships, at the moment of the ritual of ordinary lessons, there are silence practices by the students at the appropriate time when listening to the lesson, when knowing when to speak, to ask, and to approach the teacher. For others, there are days when, at a given time, when the lesson has finished, the teacher stays in the room, or near it, for at least a quarter of an hour, so that students can approach him and ask him and so that sometimes he himself may also question them about the lesson and make them repeat it (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 104).

Students always repeat the lesson of the day before and repeat the lesson of the present day in the same way; the teacher listens, analyzes, evaluates. Each lesson is done by a single student in its entirety or in pairs distributed to several students, but with an evaluative

ordering: “first the best, and then also the others repeat the most important and useful points, in continuous response or interrupting after every question of the teacher” (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 186). In daily lessons, in the academy, and especially in the public ones, of dispute and theater, the roles of each one in the educational process are observed by means of the reservation of distinguished places, separated from the external ones, for Jesuits and other religious (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 244).

In a ritualistic and almost ceremonial action, rhythmically, daily, with a posture of observer and recorder, teachers and decurions operate differentiation in the pedagogical relationship. The teacher observes “those who seem most suitable for each subject, more learned, more diligent and assiduous, and better able to ensure the progress of students” (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 58). The decurions appointed by the teacher of the subject play a unique role of intermediaries between their colleagues and the teacher, because their task is not only to listen to their companions recite the lessons, and then deliver their compositions to the teacher, and write down all the cases in which each student has failed to memorize something, to do a written task, or to bring a second copy, but also to observe all that the teacher prescribes to them (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 192). These actions indicate the asymmetrical relations which are made explicit in the set of techniques of power, like other actions that complement them: discipline of customs, teaching of Christian doctrine, awards, disputes (debates, defending a thesis or matter), supervision of students’ notes and daily homework in the case of *Ratio studiorum*.

The dogmatic aspect of the true is given by the status of who sets the order in the lesson ritual:

[...] after reading the title, the teacher should briefly indicate Saint Thomas’s conclusion, or say “Does Saint Thomas reply denying

or affirming” [...] say the main conclusion of Saint Thomas and finally also the others. To each conclusion add one of Saint Thomas’s reasons, and explain it so that the disciples understand that Saint Thomas’s distinctions and reasons have more meaning than sometimes appears at first sight. (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 126).

About ritual and order, Peirano (2002), inspired by Tambiah (1995), indicates how ritual can be identified even by “an ordering that structures it”, an aspect very present in *Primeiras lições de coisas*. In this approach of the lesson, there is a ritualistic relationship of the lesson and order. In the lesson, one learns not only teaching content, but what it means to wait for one’s turn to speak, to ask, to head to the master (CALKINS, 1886, p. 227), the order of the proposition, the master’s mode of enunciation, children’s instant response (time and space). In the lesson, the author recommends:

Talk to children one by one. When called by the master, they should rise instantly, and pronounce the name of one of the objects visible in the school premises. [...] Students should be trained, so that no interval elapses between the sitting of one and the getting up of another [...] Prepare it, so that each one answers immediately after rising, sits down soon after, and is followed by the next student. (CALKINS, 1886, p. 43).

The lesson ritual involves an order in a time; in this sense, Calkins (1886, p. 56) proposes to observe and follow “a natural order, thus showing the specific opportunity of each lesson”. The author presents the steps to follow in the exercises in order to understand figures, and also warns: “*In no case may the order in which the steps of each subject are graduated be changed, or may exercises of the second or third step be entered, until students have*

become familiar with *the first step* of the subject” (CALKINS, 1886, p. 56). In this order, the author presents the master who points, shows, asks, makes read, makes write, draws attention; the student responds, reads, writes, obeys. Calkins identifies who asks and who answers and the appropriate way of doing it in the asymmetrical power relationship. Who chooses the content, the form, who says it is correct or wrong: “*Master* (holding a pocketknife before the class): What is this? *Students*: a pocketknife. *Master*: What can I do with it? *Students*: You can cut, trim, whittle several things” (CALKINS, 1886, p. 37).

Another aspect is the habit and action of reviewing already consolidated in the lesson ritual in *Ratio Studiorum*:

Having the children become familiar with most of the forms of exposing we have seen in previous lessons, ensure you habituate them to practically apply the notions acquired, describing shapes of objects. These exercises serve to review shape lessons, and make them more useful to students for when they have left school and are involved in the tasks of ordinary life. (CALKINS, 1886, p. 158).

Repetition is taken as a practice of the lesson ritual operating in the way of learning. Accordingly, the author advises: “Repeat three or four times the lesson about each color group, so that the boy is taken to expand his observations, and be prepared to provide him with more extensive lists of objects of each color (CALKINS, 1886, p. 206).

In the lesson ritual, recalling, reviewing is a way of teaching, “Be this teaching varied and complete teaching as in the other numbers, reviewing them carefully by means of questions concerning concrete numbers” (CALKINS, 1886, p. 266). The author adds:

Review of combinations – Teach combinations well and review them in

several orders. This review is an appropriate task for the class after the one in which these combinations were first taught. The following tables indicate a suitable plan for the review which is now alluded to. (CALKINS, 1886, p. 282-283).

There is also review and variation as a way of capturing students for learning, that is, as a technique of power: “reviews should not be simple repetitions of the multiplication table, in the same form in which it was taught. Without variety one does not capture children’s attention” (CALKINS, 1886, p. 320).

The lesson ritual requires a rhythm. In this sense, Calkins (1886, p. 270) recommends: “Be most careful not to accelerate or precipitate teaching in these first steps [in this case, the addition lesson]”. She also states:

Whoever knows the complexion of children’s spirit and processes for acquiring knowledge, will not try to make children gain a lot of ground at once. Such system would deprive teaching of its *educational power*, of its effectiveness as the culture of understanding children. In the first steps of all primary education, the rule should always be: to present ideas, facts, difficulties, each one at a time, so that each embarrassment is naturally resolved in its turn. (CALKINS, 1886, p. 270).

This ritualistic aspect of order informs not only about the arrangement of skills to be taught as a field of knowledge, but also about the arrangement of the subjects of such skills in relation to knowledge. This matter shall be discussed in the following section.

Gestures, behavior and performativity

Sontag (1987) notes how ritual works close to what is understood as game. In this sense, ritual can be conceived as a set of norms

– and the game follows the scheme of these norms, such as language –, understanding that all behavior “is a language, a vocabulary and grammar of order” (SONTAG, 1987, p. 97). In this game, the lesson is perceived as a pedagogical discourse tool in the normalization of knowledge and subjects. This normalization occurs by the performative action of language, which, in turn, takes place by the operation of language not in denotative terms but in performative terms, according to Peirano (2002). In this respect, ritual is seen as a culturally built system, as a communicative system in specific contexts; in other words, ritual can be understood as a complex of words and actions in interconnection.

According to Peirano (2002), the effectiveness of ritual derives from the performative character of the rite in three senses: in the sense that to say is to do as a conventional action; in the sense of performance with the use of several means of communication through which participants intensively experience the event; and in the sense of referring to values that are linked or implied by the actors during the performance (PEIRANO, 2002, p. 27).

In the lesson ritual, gestures are important, a type of knowledge that must be learned. Gestures must become familiar and regular – by habit, by repetition and by approval – and must be incorporated in their daily lives. Gestures, such as Foucault analyzes (1984, p. 74), are part of the economy of power that has developed between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in the context of great transformations, as a power mechanics which in “its capillary form of existence [...] touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes, and everyday lives”.

In the lesson ritual, the aspect of performativity in *Ratio Studiorum* is present in the dramatization and symbolization of public lessons with praise, rewards, punishments, awards, badges of honor, in the encouragement of leadership and rivalry relationships.

In public lessons, the ritualistic practice of the lesson gains strength and visibility. To the sign of the cross gesture before starting ordinary lesson, the eloquent and elegant way in public lessons is added. In one of the guidelines of *Ratio studiorum*, it is stated: “from time to time, instead of a regular lesson, ask one of the students to expose, in an elegant and developed form, some better known passage of the Holy Scripture” (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 116). “Eloquence aims at not only the usefulness of discourse but also its elegance” (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 198). These lessons have regular principles of ritualistic action: dramatization, symbolization, performativity.

Public lessons took place monthly or bimonthly. In these lessons, ritual required elegance and eloquence for the public solution of a mathematics problem or the recitation of a poem, always in the presence of a wide audience of philosophers and theologians. After the presentation, it is submitted to oral examination (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 146). On the days of public lessons with greater solemnities, emblems and poems are posted in public places and previously read by two persons designated by the Rector, who select the best (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 148). At these times, when there was a spectacle, which includes the care of the garments, elegance is recommended, and the tone of voice is improved. The attributes of those who present, those who judge, those who are seen, those who are looked at are highlighted. Spectators judge, observe the scene and enactment, in the game of enactment. An appropriate semantics indicates the order of relations. Public lessons, often held in theaters, played an important role in colleges and universities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but in particular in the history of education of Society of Jesus. These public lessons express more than the passion which dramatic representations aroused, in colleges and in society (MIRANDA, 2009, p. 84); in my view, they express the ritualistic aspects of the lesson.

For example, public lessons of Rhetoric students, with the presence of not only rhetoricians and humanists, but also of the students of higher classes (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 162). In these lessons, all had a role in the main pedagogical strategy: punishment and reward. Errors against the rules are indicated so that they can be fixed and are publicly corrected by pairs of opponents. While this correction is conducted publicly, “students should read to themselves and correct the first copy of their written work (which always ought to be brought to class, in addition to what is copied out for the teacher)” (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 184). For those who have done good jobs, rewards. Here, the symbolization of values in tests, taking ordinary lessons to a public venue, evaluation endured in silence, and the correction of errors in public recall the torture by errors, emulation and the desire to be the Other. Waiting for the insignia, badges received in public, the praise, the reward. Facing the moment with dignity. In these lessons, the ritual of the students under the guidance of the teacher regards not only the work to be presented in public, but also aims to make “students control in a dignified way their voice, their gestures and every feature of their acting” (CÓDIGO PEDAGÓGICO DOS JESUÍTAS, 2009, p. 190).

In ordinary lessons, ritual works to induce learning and the control of human personality by indoctrination. The method celebrated the ritual of memorization, word for word, of the material to be assimilated. The motto *repetitio mater studiorum* (the ritual of repetition is the mother of learning) is confirmed. Here is, then, the lesson ritual and the relationships between instructors and students marked by submission to instructors, in a game of sense of duty, love for parents, desire of praise, fear of disgrace, rewards and punishments, respectful behavior, silence and decorum. These behaviors and gestures are part of the ritual of everyday or ordinary lessons.

In *Primeiras lições de coisas*, behavior is guided in ritualistic practices, that is, the lesson ritual of the look not as one of the senses (sight) to be explored, but as a behavior under the

justification: “the eyes are the window of the soul” (CALKINS, 1886, p. 161). The discursive memory of these statements can be identified: the civility of Erasmus of Rotterdam by including how to look as one of his lessons on correct and incorrect attitudes, reminding with the ancients that “The seat of the soul is in the eyes” (ROTTERDAM, 2008, p. 125).

The way to read, in the lesson ritual, which states the place of the body, body movements, gestures, and interaction with the other, is recommended just as the advice to the master: “Teaching the child to pick up the book; to pass it to others; to hold it, in a reading attitude; to look for pages, and especially to find known words in the text; [...] to locate the place of the lesson” (CALKINS, 1886, p. 449). There is a proposal of how to read the lesson, not just its content, but how to behave with spontaneity and independence:

Continue the same exercises to teach how to *read the lesson*. Never start the lesson by reading it to the disciples, a habit that makes pupils become accustomed to expect from master the thought expressed in the words and the art of reading them. Teach how to read so that pupils acquire the habit of spontaneity and independence, the willingness to rely on themselves, which will soon develop, progressing in the *ability to read at sight* new lessons, woven, for the most part, of words already studied. (CALKINS, 1886, p. 451).

They are not only ways of doing the lesson, but also proposals about the way of being and living in the world, as they indicate lessons such as: “*Careful*. I must be careful with my books. *Obedient*. I am obedient when I do what my mother tells me to do. *Attentive*. I try to be attentive to my lessons” (CALKINS, 1886, p. 453). This is the lesson ritual and the discourse of performativity of the actor, the teacher, a teacher by gift, with the gift of seduction and enthusiasm.

In the lesson ritual, there is the ritual of the students' word, of the narrative of the self to speak about one's senses and experience: to speak about what they eat, what they smell, what they touch, what they do, where they go, how they go, what they dress, and also about what they do not like to see, what they do not like to hear, what they do not want to savor, what they do not wish to smell, appreciate to touch, what they are not pleased to do, where they are pleased to go, etc. (CALKINS, 1886, p. 45). Is there anything stronger in the process of subjectification than the narrative of the self, reflecting on oneself? Foucault, in his studies of the writing of the self, notes that such practices, important in the autonomy in the Greco-Roman civilizations, were assumed "in disciplinary societies by religious, educational, or medical and psychiatric institutions" (FOUCAULT, 2004, p. 265). In other words, not with the same enunciative function of the Greek practice, but rather with a disciplinary function.

Final remarks

This analysis was intended to enable examining the ritualistic aspects of the lesson and their relation with the educational processes of the subjects of education. Taking as reference the way Foucault, Peirano and Sontag problematize rituals, in their broader aspects, and the way Rivière analyzes school rituals, I have dialogued simultaneously with the debate on Jesuit pedagogy and modern pedagogy, and I have trodden a path in seeking to draw attention to the discursive practice of the lesson, which is so valued and naturalized in the educational field. For this purpose, I have analyzed two important discursivities in the pedagogical field, Jesuit pedagogy and modern pedagogy in its reference texts: *Ratio Studiorum* and one of the versions of *Primeiras lições de coisas*.

The lesson is not only a pedagogical tool in the transmission of content. As a discursive practice in the educational field, it has a ritualistic function, both in the sense of order,

of activity and of performativity by operating in the education of individuals. By saying this, I intend neither to establish a relationship of cause and effect nor to state that the experiences of the lesson in schooling processes have continuity, similarity. What is possible to say is that, in the discursivities analyzed, one can observe a regularity that remains in what regards the rectorial enunciations of these ritualistic aspects, one of the first sacred aspects originated from the Christian religious discourse. In the lesson ritual, there are elements of religious ritual practices, such as the sign of the cross, silence, preparation practices, the gesture of lowering one's head, punishment, reward, and insignia. Another aspect in these discursivities is the ritualistic function of the lesson in the production of the discourse of truth. Truth is understood here as "a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which have become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and which after long usage by a people seem fixed, canonical, and binding" (NIETZSCHE, 1997, p. 221). I have also observed rituals that have been transformed, updated, such as repetitions, reviews resulting from other ways of thinking about knowledge, other ways of operating in the educational process, other discursive articulations.

Practices of performativity, for example, are different in the discursivities analyzed: one moves focused on the game of punishment and reward and on emulation games, whereas the other focuses on practices of talking about oneself repetitively. It is worth saying that the lesson ritual, with its games and rules, remains in didactic texts in the enunciative scene of tasks, in which narratives of the self based on models are proposed. In recent times, these rituals have been enhanced in the schooling process by means of curricular devices such as life stories, letters to friends, personal stories, both by means of stories that speak of customs, arts of being and living of ancestors or stories of characters. In addition to life narratives,

there is a grammar focused on situations of recovery of self-esteem, self-image, autonomy and of direct relationship with the construction of subjectivities. The ways of working on the lesson, even if one moves from a desk to a personal computer, require a unique ritual that operates in the way of organizing the time of schooled subjects and simultaneously place them in the ritual of the true in the lesson.

It should be noted, however, that this is not about valuating these practices, let alone say that they are bad for the pedagogical practice. It is more about showing school rituals as operators of differentiation, identity and subjectivity, which means that what is presented in this article should be understood as one of the movements for future analysis of the lesson in its different aspects.

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