

## CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION: CONTEMPORARY DILEMMAS AND CHALLENGES

*PEDAGOGIA CRÍTICA DA EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA: DILEMAS E DESAFIOS NA ATUALIDADE*

*PEDAGOGÍA CRÍTICA DE LA EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA: DILEMAS Y DESAFÍOS EN LA ACTUALIDAD*

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**Keywords:**  
Physical Education.  
Teaching.  
Language.  
Body.

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to discuss some dilemmas and challenges in critical pedagogy for Physical Education regarding the contemporary cognitive and political landscape. Three main themes organise our discussion. The first one is the status of the notion of “critical” and its possible effects in the social and epistemological sphere. The second topic problematizes the conditions of the normative knowledge in critical pedagogy. The last theme provides a reflection on the “cultural dilemma” of the critical perspectives in Physical Education, represented by the “problem of articulation” between language and body.

**Palavras chave:**  
Educação Física.  
Ensino.  
Linguagem.  
Corpo.

**Resumo:** Este artigo objetiva discutir alguns dilemas e desafios da pedagogia crítica da Educação Física, considerando, para tanto, a paisagem cognitiva e política contemporânea. Assim o faz a partir da eleição de três temas condutores. O primeiro deles discute o *status* da própria noção de crítica e seus reflexos no plano social e epistemológico. O segundo problematiza as condições da normatividade no âmbito da pedagogia crítica. O último deles reflete sobre o “dilema culturalista” das perspectivas críticas em Educação Física, representado pelo “problema da articulação” entre a linguagem e o corpo.

**Palabras clave:**  
Educación Física.  
Enseñanza.  
Lenguaje.  
Cuerpo.

**Resumen:** Este artículo tiene por objetivo discutir algunos dilemas y desafíos de la pedagogía crítica de la Educación Física, considerando, para esto, el paisaje cognitivo y político contemporáneo. Se desarrolla a partir de tres temas conductores. El primero discute el status de la propia noción de crítica y sus reflejos en el plano social y epistemológico. El segundo problematiza las nociones de la normatividad en el plan de la pedagogía crítica. El último reflexiona sobre el “dilema culturalista” de las perspectivas críticas en Educación Física, representado por el “problema de la articulación” entre lenguaje y cuerpo.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In this article, in line with the motivations that stimulate the dossier, we discuss some challenges of critical pedagogy, considering the current cognitive scenario, also known as: postmodern, post-metaphysical, post-foundational, post-critical, post-linguistic turn, etc.

More precisely, our text is structured around the problematization of themes that, on the one hand, have questioned the relevance and validity of critical theories in education in general and, on the other, have challenged the specific pedagogical thinking of Physical Education. The first of them discusses the status of criticism and critical pedagogy today. The observations offered shall include comments about post-critical pedagogy, an educational perspective that is very influential in Brazil and that has repercussions in Physical Education.

The second of them analyzes the conditions of normativity within the sphere of critical pedagogy. In this regard, we ask: is it possible/desirable to uphold its normative ideal in post-metaphysical times? If so, on what grounds and/or circumstances? We will present two opposing solutions: an anti-foundationalist one, and a non-representationist foundationalist one.

The third aspect discusses the “absent term” in the critical perspectives of Physical Education, based on what Jans Joas (2002) called the “articulation problem”, which, in this field, is manifested by the need to articulate the “discourse about the body” with an “organic knowledge”, using Betti’s well-fitting expression (1994).

Our intention with these problematizations is not as much solving the intrinsic dilemmas of these challenges as it is an invitation to reflect on the expectation of renewing and/or rewriting the critical tradition of the field. Each of the themes will be analyzed in topics that are independent of each other, followed by the final considerations.

## 2 “EXHAUSTION” OF CRITICISM AND/OR RENOVATION OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY?

Since the 1990s, the concept of critical pedagogy in Brazil and abroad has been in “crisis”, which has demanded efforts to reinvent its foundations, but also the very definition of being critical. There are many reasons and consequences for the future of this tradition associated with this crisis.

On the broader societal level, for example, we have been experiencing a sort of trivialization of criticism, which has been leading to the loss of its effectiveness. For Bauman (2001), today’s society is more prone to criticism than that of our ancestors, because it made the critique of “reality” the expression “[...] of dissatisfaction with ‘what is there’ and the expression of that dissatisfaction an inevitable and obligatory part of the work of each of its members”. Despite this more widespread acceptance, according to the sociologist, this kind of criticism is “toothless” as it proves unable to affect the agenda defined by contemporary capitalism, that is, it is ineffective in “[...] achieving the complex mechanisms that connect our movements with their results and determine them, and even less the conditions that keep these mechanisms in operation” (BAUMAN, 2001, p. 31).

Criticism no longer follows the model of a “shared house”, with institutionalized norms and rules, assignment of duties and supervised performance. It is henceforth a criticism of “consumer style” and one’s freedom to consume. The causes of this “domestication” of criticism

are associated with changes in the configuration of public space, the most evident result of which is its invasion by the private sphere and the colonization of politics by the extraterritorial powers of the capital.

The corresponding trivialization of criticism is also observed in education, as it seems that “critical” education has become a recurrent jargon in many educational policies and programs (TINNING, 2010; THIESEN, 2015; LOPES, 2015). Teachers are required to be “critical”, reflective, researchers, autonomous, innovators, etc. This scenario, although threatened by recent conservative political movements in Brazilian education,<sup>1</sup> seems to indicate the functionalization of criticism, causing the idea of critics as opposed to the “system”, to domination and to the *status quo*, which is the typical representation of progressive intellectuals in the 1980s, to appear useful to order when the opposition between freedom and criticism, on the one hand, and power, on the other, is already part of the manner in which society is organized (BRACHT, 2016).

On the epistemological level, the concept of critical pedagogy found the need to defend and, therefore, to renew itself, leading to the advent of post-critical pedagogy, which is an educational perspective influenced by different theoretical traditions, from postmodernism to post-structuralism, including neopragmatism, gender, cultural and postcolonial studies, multiculturalism, etc. Although the origin of this tendency can be found in the early 1990s, when the educational field intensely absorbed analytical traditions that are today considered “post”, it was at the end of those years that the book of Silva (1999) consolidated, in Brazil, the distinction between critical and post-critical pedagogy.<sup>2</sup> His text, however, is ambiguous in relation to critical pedagogy, as it sometimes states that it was not overcome by the “post” movement, and at other times, that “[...] postmodernism marks the end of critical pedagogy and the beginning of post-critical pedagogy.” (SILVA, 1999, p. 116).

For some reasons, we regard this designation of adjectives as fruitless. If we consider the etymological origin of the word *critical*, we will learn that it comes from the Greek *kritikē* (κριτική) and means “the art of judging”, discerning, deciding, analyzing and reflecting. Criticism is thus the art of “slow rumination”, the practice through which we question the limits of our most certain modes of knowledge with permanent reasoning. Understood literally, however, the *post* prefix indicates the idea of a later stage that would dispense with this “art of judging.” This effect is certainly not intended by those who, after Silva (1999), adopted the term, especially since this consequence does not match the “critical attitude”<sup>3</sup> of authors such as Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, among others, whose theories offer the tools to justify the advent of post-critical pedagogy. Incidentally, these philosophers did not write about the subject, nor did they use the expression “post-critical” to characterize their own work. Moreover, as pointed out by Lopes (2013), the term “post-critical pedagogy” is vague and inaccurate, aiming to bring together a set of different studies, with their own particular issues and problematizations that often oppose each other.

Another problematic aspect of this denomination is the static and homogeneous way in which Silva (1999) — and others after him — characterized pedagogy and/or the critical

1 The “Escola sem Partido” program, for instance.

2 Although without the same impact as on the broader educational field, the arguments in favor of post-critical pedagogy reverberate in Physical Education. In Brazil, Marcus Garcia Neira is its main representative. In Anglophone literature, we can cite the works of Bruce (2013, 2015). There, too, it does not appear to be a trend in this field.

3 We purposely use this Foucaultian expression (1999) to refer to a certain way of thinking, saying and acting, to a type of relationship with what exists, what is known and what is done, typical, according to him, of modern civilization.

tradition. He states, for example, that for post-critical pedagogies, knowledge is an inherent part of power; therefore, it is not external or opposed to it, putting it at stake. With this assessment, we are led to believe that critical tradition (and the pedagogy inspired by it) disregarded the association between knowledge and power. Thus, emancipatory practice would be exempt from the desire for power; science (knowledge) would be separated from ideology (power). In this case, it would be necessary to assess whether this conclusion applies to any and all critical traditions — perhaps, at best, to orthodox Marxism, which is indeed still in force in some areas of critical pedagogy (also in Physical Education). But by reading, for example, the “Dialectic of Enlightenment”, which changed the direction of the critical theory of Adorno and Horkheimer (1985), it could be easily concluded that power and knowledge are synonyms or, if you prefer, that Enlightenment itself has become totalitarian political power under the conditions of instrumental rationality. Instead of Adorno and Horkheimer, however, post-critical pedagogy preferred Foucault (1987) and his well-known maxim that there is no power relationship without the associated constitution of a field of knowledge, nor knowledge that does not constitute, at the same time, “power relations.”

At another point in his analysis, Silva (1999) argues that critical pedagogies limited their analysis of power to the economic relations of capitalism, while with post-critical pedagogies the map of power is expanded to include processes of domination centered on gender, ethnicity, race and sexuality. We may ask, however, whether this conclusion holds true in relation to critical theories that have not limited their analysis of power to economic issues. Turning once more to the Frankfurtians,<sup>4</sup> the question we ask now is: have their theories not extrapolated economic issues in the analysis of power? Could this not be one of the reasons why this tradition, in electing Freud and Nietzsche as privileged interlocutors, distinguishes itself from classical Marxism? Did the critical theory of the Frankfurt School not theorize about racial issues in Nazi Germany? What if we say that the theme of the non-identical or of difference (one of the banners of post-critical pedagogy) was an object that stimulated a considerable part of Adornian philosophy, particularly in “*Minima Moralia*” and “*Negative Dialectics*”? That is, are there any typically “post-critical” themes that have not been addressed by critical theorists?<sup>5</sup> We do not mean to imply that the arguments of this version of the critical theory or any other cannot be criticized. Its problems and the issues it never answered need to be addressed. Incidentally, heirs of this tradition have been doing so (see the works of Habermas, Welmer and Honneth, among others). The problem here is of a different sort, more related to the scope and/or limit of classifications and/or labels for expressing a field of knowledge in all its epistemological, political and methodological complexity. Any attempt to characterize this multiplicity with a unifying concept is under the risk of not representing it to its full extent.

Some scholars of Physical Education abroad use the expression “big tent” to characterize the plurality that configures the universe of critical pedagogy in the field.<sup>6</sup> Distinct theoretical trends, such as Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology or post-structuralism, are conceived as part of the semantic and emancipatory territory of this pedagogy. Race, ethnicity, gender and difference, all typically “post” themes, have been incorporated into critical discourse, resulting in the celebration of pluralism as an opportunity for self-criticism and the redefinition of critical pedagogy itself. Devis-Devís (2006) goes so far as to say that it is difficult to tell the difference

4 We “insist” on Frankfurtians, as they were also important references in the constitution of critical pedagogy, both in Brazil and abroad.

5 Not surprisingly, some analyses identify similarities between Adorno’s philosophy and postmodern themes.

6 See Tinning (2010), among others.

between critical pedagogy and other paradigms that do not identify with a “*stricto sensu*” critical theory (such as post-structuralism), as they are constantly interacting with one another.

In Brazil, despite the initiatives in favor of its redefinition based on irreversible plurality, a fruitless opposition was established between the new references used in the field, here represented by the prefix “post”, and critical pedagogy, as if it were not able to dialogue with other theoretical and political perspectives and, in the process, renew itself.<sup>7</sup> Under these circumstances, it may be better to recognize that the critical field of Education and Physical Education, rather than as “post”, is better characterized by a plurality of critical perspectives, leading us to use and be faithful to this condition of plural expression. In these areas, therefore, instead of just one, there are different versions of critical pedagogies. Their objects, objectives and conceptual tools for reading reality are, thus, multiple. However, the commitment to social change in favor of a fairer world in economic, racial, ethnic and gender-related terms, among others, is common to all of them.<sup>8</sup>

As the last theme of this topic, the conversation about the future of this tradition needs to consider changing the status of the notion of criticism itself. It is difficult to sustain, in the post-linguistic turn cognitive scenario, any strong epistemological and/or regulatory connotation for the term (HONNETH, 2009). Criticism would no longer be characterized by the unveiling of a hidden truth (as understood by correspondence theory), but rather deflated, weakened, made humbler and more modest. Deflating the truth (criticism, therefore) means “denominalizing” it or stripping it off its essence, eliminating any trace of metaphysics. In making this shift, the political dimension of the notion of criticism has been exacerbated.

Under these conditions, it may even be possible to reconcile different epistemological perspectives of critical pedagogy under one roof (“big tent”), because the difference in status between them would be more rhetorical and political than epistemological. Thus, a critical pedagogy inspired by post-structuralism is no more “true” or “substantive” in epistemological terms than one based on Marxism. The dissonances between them should not be measured by their “approximation” to what reality is, but, we repeat, are rhetorical and political. Some may be more “complex”, more difficult, with more or less argumentative flourishes, with these or those political strategies and consequences, but they cannot be assessed for their “correspondence with reality”. It remains unclear, however, whether this undecidability of knowledge makes any epistemic propositions with a pretense of truth unfeasible in the context of critical pedagogy, a discussion that brings us to the next theme, which deals with the normativity of the foundations of critical pedagogy.

### 3 (ANTI)FOUNDATIONALISM AND NORMATIVITY IN CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Under the conditions of the hyperpoliticization of the notion of criticism, one of the challenges that arises concerns the normativity of the knowledge (of critical pedagogy) intended to be applied to politics. Should critical pedagogy provide any basis for political-pedagogical action? Is it possible to expect some kind of normative foundation (should be) in favor of social justice (one of its main claims) from it? Does critical pedagogy, according to Biesta (1998), need standards, criteria, normative references or a utopia, even if only provisional or negative?

7 Not only the advocates of post-critical pedagogy were responsible for this opposition, but also Marxist pedagogy itself, which interpreted theoretical and political plurality as a fad, an irrationalism, a retreat from theory, a form of relativism, etc. (GAMBOA, 2010; TAFFAREL; ALBUQUERQUE, 2010).

8 Defining social justice is part of the challenges to be faced. This will be addressed below.

There are a few ways to answer these questions. One of them can be defined as anti-foundational, because it relativizes the role of knowledge, including of critical knowledge, when providing the bases and/or foundations for pedagogical action. Although present in other perspectives that adopted the post-critical and/or postmodern discourse in education, this position has recently surfaced with Lopes (2012, 2015), who advocates the need for a groundless curriculum, without a standard, without basic content or a set of defining criteria that might restrain the signification of the term. For her, a curriculum with these characteristics leads us to the realization that there are no absolute principles defined by some scientific-pedagogical theory, by any rational principle or foundation that is external to the educational-political game, and therefore, unrelated to the negotiation of meanings. The content of objectives such as emancipation, social justice and freedom cannot be established *a priori*, but only in the context of political struggle. Living “[...] with the uncertainty of the political game seems to be all we have left” (LOPES, 2015, p. 462) if we want to contribute to the democratic process (LOPES, 2012). Influenced by Laclau (2008), Lopes (2013) argues that under the conditions of hyperpoliticization, rationality (truth, therefore) must be politically negotiated, since it cannot be logically solved.

According to the author (2015), an unsubstantiated curriculum corresponds to the admission of politics in an indefinable scenario, a condition that obliges us to always act politically in the expectation of seeking “[...] to dissolve the possibility of a pre-programmed intervention with a project of universalizing pretense, despite the political game” (LOPES, 2015, p. 461), which is, for her, characterized by agonistics, conflict, and events, “[...] without definitions that guide us, no goals that prescribe (pre-write, pre-inscribe) a path; we only have commitment and responsibility” (LOPES, 2015, p. 448), instead of seeking consensus from the definition of rules or goals that are common to all contexts. Such norms will always be disputed and modified in the radical context of curriculum policy. Democracy, the author continues (2012), will expand if we work toward multiple differences and radical contingency.

In this context, the role of (knowledge) theory would not consist in offering fundamentals, but in questioning what is stabilized in curriculum policy:

Why think in this way, which is presented as the only possibility, as a universal and naturalized way, without discussing the contextual conditions that made this proposal possible? It is not a matter of adopting a right or wrong stance to create a new foundation, but rather trying to understand what a given perspective makes possible and what it prevents. It is not a question of should or should not, but rather, of can or cannot. It relates to problematization, that is, provoking other possibilities of thinking, conceiving other ways of objectifying, destabilizing discourses, knowing that this implies stabilizing other discourses and, therefore, that it is important to always be suspicious of stability (LOPES, 2015, p. 451).

Another anti-foundationalist position is that of Biesta (1998). For him, the idea of critical pedagogy as a positive program, as something that needs to be implemented, is unsustainable, either because it may result in a form of totalitarianism, or because a program conceived as such may eventually cause damage to the public sphere, which is a space of plurality, difference and politics. According to the author, the only consistent path which critical pedagogy can follow (and that is politically and pedagogically consistent, not theoretically) is to perpetually challenge any claim to authority, including that of itself. This implies that such a task cannot be carried out in the name of a superior knowledge, of a privileged insight that bears the truth, but should be grounded in a lack, that is, in the recognition of ignorance, which is not synonymous with innocence or skepticism, but with the consciousness of not knowing what the future will or

should be like, without however straying from the path — an emancipating sort of ignorance, concludes Biesta (1998), because the critical pedagogue, rather than dictating what should be thought about something, asks others (his students, for example) what they think of it.

Extrapolating this reasoning to the analysis of social justice, the theme of critical pedagogy par excellence, Biesta (1998) argues that justice goes beyond calculations and programs. It is not a regulatory ideal, or a normative criterion, but the experience of an impossibility<sup>9</sup> that cannot be predicted, which is always to come, with no way of being decided upon. Justice, therefore, is not an issue addressed by some theory of knowledge deciding on a certain way of using it under a given circumstance, but refers to the ability to judge, which is incalculable. But how to judge without knowing what justice is beforehand? Critical pedagogy must affirm its commitment to social justice by paradoxically recognizing this impossibility. In other words, critical pedagogy needs to recognize the impossibility of justice in its own pursuit of justice. This means, according to the author (1998), admitting that critical pedagogy cannot previously know where to draw the line between what is tolerable and what is intolerable, what is just and what is unjust. This requires decision-making that, in the name of justice, cannot wait, but is at the same time “impossible” in the sense that it has no prior foundation.

On the level of practice, concludes Biesta (1998), critical pedagogy cannot simply say, “This is what is just, do as I do.” The only thing it should do is invite judgement by asking, “What would you do about it?” This question is non-repressive in that it does not prescribe how to judge, but opens possibilities for judgment itself.

These two anti-foundational “answers” to the relationship between knowledge and normativity can be contrasted with another that is closer to our own theoretical contributions, known as non-representationist foundationalist. In this case, the challenge is to substantiate the normative character of the knowledge of critical pedagogy without appealing to a substantive concept of truth or the perspective of the Archimedean point, that is, a theoretical point so strong that it would explain any reality, whether political, moral, educational or otherwise.

This conception shares some principles with the previous position, but differs from it in important aspects. For example, it advocates the need for a vocabulary, represented in this case by critical pedagogy, which would serve as a critical reference or background to political-educational practices or to a curriculum. This corresponds to expecting some competence to answer fundamental questions of common normative life, especially just political life, from critical pedagogy. It can thus collaborate with subjects in the decisions they need to make in their daily lives, guiding them normatively, but without intending to be a superior, “extraordinary” discourse, because it is based on some previous “transcendent”, on a program or theory with a normative basis that presupposes a more “correct” reading of the world. On the contrary, critical pedagogy is aware that its normativity cannot be grounded once and for all or in a “correspondence with reality,” but because it is self-referenced, fallible, and assimilated to guaranteed affirmability, it must remain debatable and open to constant revisions. The notion of criticism that supports this claim to normativity needs to be consistent with democratic postulates and therefore with the principles of plurality, equality and freedom (BRACHT, 2016).

In addition, the non-representationist foundationalist perspective still sees meaning in establishing some principles that aspire to universality in curriculums and education programs,

<sup>9</sup> Impossible is not that which is not possible, but what cannot be calculated as a possibility that precedes the calculation, the rules, the programs.

thus not being limited to the local signification policies on which the curriculum is based. This universalism and the concepts that support it (emancipation, justice, freedom, etc.) are not decided *a priori*, they are not absolute, nor do they disregard the context and the interpretations and/or translations that school subjects make of it, but are the result of agreements and/or a consensus that can be reached in the political game, which is marked by differences, plurality, conflict of ideas and, therefore, freedom. The agreements reached constitute provisional truths, procedurally established in conversation practices, their only foundation.

In short, this non-representationist perspective still wants to ensure, amid the hyperpoliticization and epistemological disinflation of the concept of truth, some usefulness for knowledge deemed as critical. The aspirations for truth and claims to rationality made by critical pedagogy remain socially relevant as its judgements are subjected to criticism from a large community (including teachers, researchers, school community, etc.), which makes an always incomplete effort to identify and enforce the best arguments, qualifying it to be considered. This discourse is, however, not superior, nor is it opposed to other types of discursivity or forms of knowledge, though it can be an important ally in political decision-making, without replacing them (BRACHT, 2019).

It should be noted that critical pedagogy still plays an important role in the deepening of democracy, of the possibility of social justice (BRACHT, 2019), since it can act not only by denouncing how some normative pretensions, including its own, can become practices that result in domination in the contexts of their application, as Biesta (1998) warns us, but also by identifying, within the scope of democratic politics, normative ideals that can serve as reference for criticism and social transformation.

#### 4 THE “ARTICULATION PROBLEM” IN CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Nietzsche (2001) said that what is “truly” happening to us is not eloquent. If we wanted to convey it, we would lack the words, for language was invented to inform mediocre, vulgar, and communicable things, with every discourse bearing some kind of contempt. In his analysis, this contempt is also expressed in the body, which is the reason for the German philosopher’s inversion of the dualism that dominated the history of philosophy and that assigned to the body, from Plato to Descartes, the fallen condition of man, being conceived as that which would prevent thought, knowledge and truth. With Nietzsche, the body will be a new matrix of subjectivity (incarnate, libidinal, drive-oriented), but also the starting point from which culture must begin: “[...] not in the “soul” (as was the fateful superstition of the priests and half-priests): the right place is the body, the gesture, the diet, physiology; the rest follows from that.” (NIETZSCHE, 2001, p. 91).

The critical pedagogy of Physical Education in Brazil suffered from the “misunderstanding of the body” criticized by Nietzsche, because it was based on a logopoiesis, in which consciousness and language appear disincarnated. In an effort to remove the body from “nature” and place it within “culture”, critical pedagogy showed its “contempt” for the unspeakable (the “nature” of the body, “what the body can do” according to the classic Spinozan definition,) in favor of a rationalist and/or culturalist discourse about it. To this end, it assumed a redescriptive sort of linguicism for which the body does not differ from the imperative discourses of all genres that shape its movements. The body is thus passive, dead substance, object of some action; in what concerns the reading of the world, we should expect nothing of it.



Since the body and the experiences it creates will never result in anything on their own, something that “comes from outside” is necessary to make them capable of criticism. This external asset is “[...] discourse, which can be sociological, anthropological, political, etc. The core known as movement is enveloped by a guise of rationality, in the hope [...] of turning Physical Education classes [...] into an ally of the avant-garde educational project” (GHIRALDELLI JÚNIOR, 1990, p. 197).<sup>10</sup> Under these circumstances, the discipline runs the risk of becoming a “[...] class about movement and no longer a class with movement” (GHIRALDELLI JÚNIOR, 1990, p. 198) or, as stated by Betti (1994), a discourse on the body culture of movement rather than a pedagogical action including it.

With this interpretation, critical pedagogy has led us to believe that all our experiences (including bodily ones) are based on linguistic systems and that there can be no new experiences in the world, but only new combinations of existing elements. In so doing, it did not question the origin of the new validity assigned to claims before they become rationalized discourse. Would they be, in the words of Joas (2002, p. 509), “[...] only reaching random mutations or a purely irrational sphere, making their genesis completely irrelevant to the explanation of their validity?”; or, as in the case of Marxist critical pedagogy, this new claim to validity would be naught but an epiphenomenon, the determining basis of which is the movement of capital.

Critical pedagogy, therefore, did not properly address the explanation of what Joas (2002) called the “articulation problem”. It disregarded the tension between what can and cannot be said, and/or the “transit” between what happens within the experiences the body is capable of and the ways of talking about these experiences. In Brazilian Physical Education, this “articulation problem” that GhiraldeLLi (1990) and Betti (1994) warned of is explicit in the neologism created by Bracht (1999) when she claims that a critical pedagogy of Physical Education cannot be “movement without thought,” neither “thought without movement,” but “movement-thought”.

The thematization of this articulation challenges any discussion about the future of the critical pedagogy of Physical Education.<sup>11</sup> For her, the investigation of our experience of articulation, of the tension between what “has already been said” and what “has to be said”, which has not yet been properly articulated, should be crucial. This investigation should not, on the one hand, take a step back in the so-called linguistic turn, for the existence of a pure experience or constituted pre-linguistic meaning, an understanding of body gesture independent of language, as if it exhausted all its meaning in the movements of the body and in its “symbology”, is unsustainable. On the other hand, linguicism, which subordinates a poor, fixed and ahistorical material background to the magical circle of language should be avoided. It is therefore necessary to preserve the achievements of the linguistic turn while avoiding the perspective of a linguistically closed universe that offers only a finite repertoire of experience. In other words, it is necessary to “become open to the body”, incorporating language, but without forgetting that it is language what allows us to articulate the experience for which the articulation found is inadequate. Without language, it would be impossible to articulate the limits of our language skills. We do now even acknowledge them. It is not simply a tension between language and intentions of speaking, but a tension that can itself be articulated by language and become a unique experience, as it can be articulated (JOAS, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> GhiraldeLLi Júnior (1990) was referring to the Marxist pedagogy of Physical Education. Other traditions, however, suffer from the same “social constructionism of the body” (ORTEGA, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> This challenge seems to not be limited to the reality of critical pedagogy in Brazil, as it is possible to notice, within the scope of “international” literature, the need to articulate reason with corporeality within critical pedagogy (“incorporating” subjectivity and learning, as it were). See: Tinning (2010), Standal, (2015), Kirk (2019), Moreno, Gómez-Gonzalvo and Toro-Arévalo (2018).

The meaning available in a given language game (a body movement practice, for instance) results from the sedimentation of previous attempts at articulation. In this case, we are talking about the articulation of new meanings and not a simple recombination of certain established meanings, a fact that is reminiscent of the process of emergence of the new described by Betti (2007). The new meaning (such as, once again, of a body movement practice) results from the experience of a gap, a silence, a void

[...] that swells in that which has already been expressed, a void that is determined in the sense that the person who is about to speak knows that there is something different and that there is much more to say than what has already been said, but knows nothing positive beyond that, other than the fact that it is not to be spoken with what has already been spoken (CASTORIADIS, 1984, p.132).

A silence or a body movement that is foreign to the codes that have already been established always precedes the articulation of the new until it makes sense in a sentence, theme or gesture. The role of articulation consists precisely in bridging the gap between what has and has not been said. We articulate them in a form that can be communicated, publicly discussed and rationalized, for example, by critical pedagogy.

This process, according to Joas (2002), has no obvious direction. We move back and forth between our feelings, our interpretations, and those publicly established. There is no complete coincidence between these levels. If it is difficult or impossible to express one's own feelings in the vocabulary available in a given culture, innovative and often metaphorical forms are invented or can be borrowed from other cultures for this purpose. This results in the interaction between the lived situation, our pre-reflexive experience, our individual articulation and the cultural repertoire of interpretative patterns. It is in this context that new meanings (new significations of movement) can be produced, as they are articulated.

This process is not unique to geniuses, artists, or special people, but rather, the constitution of the new expression is dependent on the anonymous, daily creation of all, in which, through constant transformation, the vitality of language is preserved. It is thus a return to the subjectivity of articulation, that is, to the corporeality of the subject acting on the world (JOAS, 2002). This is because, according to Joas (2002), articulation is a specific case of what he called the "non-teleological interpretation of the intentionality of action" (JOAS, 1996), according to which intentionality is not a purely intellectual and non-corporeal activity, but any goal must involve the corporeality of human action and the creativity of the agent. According to this view, goals are set by reflecting on pre-reflexive aspirations and tendencies that have always operated in the body, but which we are unaware of. Human perception is thus founded on our dispositions in intentional physical movements, in a pre-reflexive intentionality of the body. It is the body's abilities, habits, and means of understanding the environment that create the background for intentionality; the body is thus the structure of the relationship between the organism and the environment.

Understood as such, cognition, perception, and self-reflection are like a phase of an action that is always (re)directed to a situated context, given that, as the fundamental forms of capacity of human action rest, in Joas' words (1996, p. 158), "[...] in the intentional movement of our body in connection with locomotion, object-manipulation and communication, our world is initially structured according to these dimensions." In these terms, there is no opposition between language and the body, but language is itself embodied, since it is conceived as

closely associated with sensitive bodily human action, the manifestation as action of knowledge that is linked to the contexts of the acting subjects.

This should be the starting point of the critical pedagogy of Physical Education, that is, no longer a thought/discourse about the body in motion, but the sensory/corporeal action of those who move. This is the meaning of the incorporation of subjectivities and experiences in the learning practices that take place in Physical Education classes. It would be the teacher's role, on the one hand, to stimulate the creation of new bodily actions by the moving subject, thus broadening/reinventing the plan of the body culture of movement in directions that have not yet been properly articulated by sensitive body language. In other words, he should encourage these experiences of movement, not yet articulated by words, but which can help understand (and transform) the world. That is certainly a challenging task. On the other hand, the teacher would play the critical role of questioning the normative validity of the new and existing nuclei of meaning, turning them into instruments of justice and social progress. He would be concerned with questioning whether they are more "democratic" and inclusive, whether they foster feelings of joy or sadness, repressive or sensitive education, etc.

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Following on from previous studies on the current condition of critical pedagogy in Physical Education, this article offered an analysis of three challenges that "compromise" the debate about its future. Regarding the first one, we discussed some dilemmas of criticism in the contemporary cognitive scenario, which have led, on the social level, to the functionalization of critical thinking and, on the epistemological level, to a de-centralized understanding of criticism, resulting in the hyperpoliticization of its "internal quality." Also in this context, we questioned the relevance of the term "post-critical" for characterizing the plurality of perspectives and objectives that today structure the agenda of critical pedagogy, which led to the conclusion that this expression is not the most appropriate for grasping it in its diversity. Next, we presented two modes (anti-foundationalist and non-representationist foundationalist) that justify a critique of society and its institutions, at which point we argued in favor of imputing the role of "guardian" of normativity (and therefore, of a given discursive, epistemic rationality) to critical pedagogy, even though this role is increasingly bothersome and free of epistemological privileges. As for the last theme, by grounding our investigation in the work of Hans Joas, we analyzed an important challenge found at the core of several critical perspectives in the field, namely the need to think about the processes of mediation between what can and cannot be said, between reason and emotion, between "thought" and "movement" in the production of knowledge in Physical Education, a challenge to which scholars have been drawing attention since the 1990s and which has recently been studied based on distinct theoretical frameworks, such as Pierce's pragmatism, Adorno and Benjamin's "Critical Theory", Gadamer's hermeneutics and the philosophy of Spinoza, Deleuze, Agamben and José Gil.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, there is still much to be understood about this "articulation problem", which is so important, we believe, for the future of critical thinking in the field.

<sup>12</sup> We suggest seeing: Betti (1994, 2006), Bracht (2012), Almeida (2012), Fensterseifer and Pich (2012), Pich, Silva and Fensterseifer (2015), Costa and Almeida (2017), Correia (2017) and Pich, Ghidetti and Bassani (2019).

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