

ARTICLE

IT'S NOBODY, IT'S THE TEACHER! ABOUT THE FIGURE OF THE TEACHERS AND THEIR ROLE¹

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to examine how efforts that seek to replace the *personality* of the teaching action by the *impersonal technicality* of its activity affect the teacher and the teaching profession. The *discourse of technicization of education*, a discourse structured around the intended completeness, centrality, and autonomy of the technical and methodological dimension of education, conceives education as an activity that does not require the presence of *someone*, the presence of a subject to whom it is possible to enjoy a place of action and enunciation. What does the teacher do in the face of efforts to reduce teaching to an activity guided by the logic of factory production, marked by the automated repetition of processes that are independent of the uniqueness and personality of the one who performs it? Would this condition be related to the complaints, illnesses, feelings of devaluation, and impotence frequently mentioned by teachers? The examination of these questions will be done in the light of a phenomenology of human activities, as conceived by Hannah Arendt, and of writings that seek to understand education from the contributions of psychoanalysis.

Keywords: teaching craft, technicization of education, Hannah Arendt, philosophy of education, psychoanalysis in education.

NÃO É NINGUÉM, É O PROFESSOR! SOBRE A FIGURA DOCENTE E O SEU OFÍCIO

RESUMO: O presente artigo visa examinar de que modo os esforços empreendidos no sentido de substituir a *pessoalidade* da ação docente pela *tecnicidade impessoal* de sua atividade afetam o professor e o ofício docente. O *discurso de tecnificação da educação*, discurso estruturado em torno de uma pretendida completude, centralidade e autonomia da dimensão técnica e metodológica do educar, concebe a educação como uma atividade que prescindir da presença de um *alguém*, de um sujeito a quem se faz possível o usufruto de um lugar de ação e enunciação. O que resta ao ofício docente diante dos esforços que visam reduzi-lo a uma atividade guiada pela lógica da produção fabril, marcada pela repetição

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automatizada de processos que independem da unicidade e personalidade daquele que a realiza? Estaria essa condição relacionada a queixas, adoecimentos, sentimentos de desvalorização e impotência frequentemente enunciados pelos professores? O exame desses questionamentos será feito à luz de uma fenomenologia das atividades humanas, tal como a concebe Hannah Arendt, e de escritos que buscam compreender a educação a partir dos aportes da psicanálise.

Palavras-chave: ofício docente, tecnicização da educação, Hannah Arendt, filosofia da educação, psicanálise na educação.

IT'S NOBODY, IT'S THE TEACHER! ABOUT THE FIGURE OF THE TEACHERS AND THEIR ROLE

ABSTRACT: This article aims to examine how efforts that seek to replace the *personality* of the teaching action by the *impersonal technicality* of its activity affect the teacher and the teaching profession. The *discourse of technicization of education*, a discourse structured around the intended completeness, centrality, and autonomy of the technical and methodological dimension of education, conceives education as an activity that does not require the presence of *someone*, the presence of a subject to whom it is possible to enjoy a place of action and enunciation. What does the teacher do in the face of efforts to reduce teaching to an activity guided by the logic of factory production, marked by the automated repetition of processes that are independent of the uniqueness and personality of the one who performs it? Would this condition be related to the complaints, illnesses, feelings of devaluation, and impotence frequently mentioned by teachers? The examination of these questions will be done in the light of a phenomenology of human activities, as conceived by Hannah Arendt, and of writings that seek to understand education from the contributions of psychoanalysis.

Keywords: teaching craft, technicization of education, Hannah Arendt, philosophy of education, psychoanalysis in education.

¡NO ES NADIE, ES EL MAESTRO! SOBRE LA FIGURA DOCENTE Y SU OFICIO

RESUMEN: Este artículo tiene como objetivo examinar cómo los esfuerzos realizados para reemplazar la *personalidad* de la acción docente por la *tecnicidad impersonal* de su actividad afectan al profesor y a la profesión docente. El *discurso de la tecnificación de la educación*, discurso estructurado alrededor de lo completo pretendido, de la centralidad y autonomía de la dimensión técnica y didáctica pretendidas, concibe la educación como una actividad que no requiere la presencia de *alguien*, de un sujeto pasible de usufructuar de un lugar de acción y enunciación. ¿Qué queda de la docencia frente a los esfuerzos encaminados a reducirla a una actividad guiada por la lógica de la producción fabril, marcada por la repetición automatizada de procesos independientes de la singularidad y personalidad de quien realiza la actividad? ¿Estaría relacionada esta condición con los malestares, enfermedades, sentimientos de desvalorización e impotencia frecuentemente mencionados por los docentes? El análisis de estas cuestiones se hará a la luz de una fenomenología de las actividades humanas, tal como la concibe Hannah Arendt, y de escritos que buscan comprender la educación a partir de los aportes del psicoanálisis.

Palabras clave: trabajo docente, tecnificación de la educación, Hannah Arendt, filosofía de la educación, psicoanálisis en la educación.

PRESENTATION

[...]

I drink my coffee with stale bread, which isn't that bad. And as I drink coffee, I remember a modest man I knew in the past. When he came to leave the bread at the door of the apartment, he would ring the bell, but in order not to disturb the residents, he would shout:

— It's nobody, it's the baker!

I asked him once: how did he come up with the idea of shouting that?

“So, you're nobody?”

He smiled broadly. He explained that he had learned it by ear. Many times, it had happened to him that he would ring the doorbell of a house and be answered by a maid or someone else and hear a voice coming from inside asking who it was; and hear the person who answered him say inside: “it's no one, no ma'am, it's the baker”.

This way he would know that he was nobody...

He told me this without any hurt feelings and said goodbye still smiling.

[...]

(Excerpt from *O padeiro*, of Rubem Braga)

The literary figure in *O padeiro* of Rubem Braga, when asked to identify himself—for example, to pronounce a name that singularizes him, highlighting him as the unique person he is, with his story—disidentifies with his subjectivity and pronounces himself as a “nobody”. The scene could show literary or sociological interpretations that link this figure to mass society, to the abandonment to which urban workers in metropolises are relegated, etc. However, in the reflections that follow we will take it as a metaphor for the vicissitudes of the teaching profession subjected to technicization, bureaucratic normalization, and the fetish of reducing the challenges of teaching activity to the application of supposed redemptive pedagogical methodologies. In short, the scene shows, by analogy, the efforts we see today to replace the personality of teaching action with the impersonal technicality of its activity, to strip the figure of the teacher of its singular narrative identity. As in the case of the baker, he is expected to act as a “nobody”, avoiding *disturbing his interlocutors*. When entering the scene, someone can always get in the way, mess up what was expected, and escape what was contracted and what was planned. This is because a “someone” could come in to have a coffee, narrate an event they had witnessed, or even tell an anecdote about the contents of their delivery. No one, however, must be present there just so that the machine does not stop working so that the content (or the bread) does not stop being delivered.

In the following reflections, we will support the hypothesis that this abstract figure— the “nobody”— emerges because of the *discourse on technicization of education* and its impact on representations of the teaching profession. Such discourse, in general, is structured around an intended completeness, centrality, and autonomy of the technical and methodological dimension of education. We will argue that the success of this discourse would imply the loss of fundamental elements of educational training since it consists of a rejection of the possibility that something of the unforeseen, the new, subject may emerge in educating. We ask ourselves, even more specifically, about the implications of this process for the possibility of action and enunciation of the teacher in his/her job. What remains for the teaching profession in the face of efforts to technicize education that seek to reduce it to an activity guided by the logic of factory production, marked by the automated repetition of processes that are independent of the uniqueness and personality of those who carry it out? Would such an attempt be related to the various complaints, illnesses, feelings of devaluation, and impotence frequently expressed by teachers? The examination of these questions will be carried out based on a phenomenology of human activities, as conceived by Arendt, and of writings that seek to understand education based on the contributions of psychoanalysis.

ABOUT THE CONTOURS OF SOMEONE AND NOBODY

How had he come up with the idea of shouting that he was nobody? Faced with a figure apparently without contours, we wonder about the relationships and elements mobilized in his enunciation. Would this figure be capable of producing and leaving stories² [*stories*] behind him? The scene narrated in *O padreiro* encourages us to think about the diffuse and imprecise features of the *nobody* and how this apparent non-character participates in a human event. Using a markedly Arendtian strategy, we will initially seek to examine the figure of the *nobody* from the perspective of what he is not, conceiving him in opposition to the concept of a *somebody*.

Unlike explaining what someone is – that is, characteristics shared with other subjects, such as their profession, nationality, etc. – the question about who someone is turns to the uniqueness of each human being. *Who someone is*, proposes Arendt (2015), is revealed through acts and words, done, and spoken in a common world. Rooted in the soil of uniqueness and singularity, human acts and words allow an agent to actively reveal their personal, unique, and singular identity. In this revelation, to a face with characteristics shared by so many others that are similar, distinctive features are added. “Of this someone unique it can truly be said that there was no one before him” (ARENDRT, 2015, p. 220).

Action and speech, points out Arendt (2015), are always closely linked since *someone's* revelation, which is expressed in the answer to the question of *who someone is*, “is implicit in both their words and their deeds” (p. 221). This link is so constitutive that, according to the author, “unaccompanied by discourse, the action would lose not only its revealing character but also, and for the same reason, its subject” (p. 221). Without the speech,

Instead of men who act, we would have to execute robots carrying out things that would remain humanly incomprehensible. The silent action would cease to be action, as there would no longer be an actor; and the actor, the performer of deeds, is only possible if he is, at the same time, the pronouncer of words. The action he initiates is humanly revealed by the word, and although his act can be perceived in its raw physical appearance, without verbal accompaniment, it only becomes relevant through the spoken word in which he identifies as the actor, announces what he does, has done and intends to do (ARENDRT, 2015, p. 221).

Someone's actions and speech emerge into the world as new threads that are immediately integrated into the web of human relationships that exist wherever human beings live together. The new threads added to it invariably interfere – directly or indirectly – with those that were already there. To a greater or lesser extent, human history changes its course, and new passages are added to the great storybook of humanity (ARENDRT, 2015). The implications of the existence of a *web of relationships* in which new threads are included as we act and speak are not, however, reduced to the integration and interference of someone in the vast legacy of human deeds and words. The existence of such a web implies that the consequences or effects of our actions are always unlimited and unpredictable:

every action triggers not just a reaction, but a chain reaction, and every process is the cause of new unpredictable processes. This illimitability is inevitable; it cannot be remedied by restricting our actions to a limited, palpable framework of circumstances, or by storing all pertinent material on giant computers. The smallest act, in the most limited circumstances, carries the germ of the same illimitability and unpredictability; one act, one gesture, or one word can be enough to change any constellation (ARENDRT, 2005, p. 192-193).

It is precisely this movement that occurs with stories, with what someone leaves behind: the singular story, produced by someone who acts and speaks in a human world, affects uniquely “everyone’s life stories with whom he comes into contact” (ARENDRT, 2015, p. 228).

² Hannah Arendt makes a distinction in her work between the terms story and history, maintained in Adriano Correia's review of *A condição humana* (2015). Correia points out that despite the term *story* being somewhat old-fashioned in Portuguese, this distinction is fundamental since Arendt uses each of the terms in specific contexts. The following excerpt seems quite clear to us about this distinction: “That every individual life between birth and death can ultimately be narrated as a story with a beginning and an end is the pre-political and prehistoric condition of history, the great story without beginning or end” (ARENDRT, 2015, p. 228).

These initial considerations about *someone* and their radical link with action raise reflections about what could have inspired the *O padeiro* to say that he was nobody. What does this ‘nobody-ness’³ say about him and his walk to the door? Before being a figure to whom it is possible to attribute clear contours, nobody seems to constitute a stripped version of someone: a subject stripped of what essentially distinguishes him as human.

The nobody, we propose here, is the figure that in each situation reduces its presence and appearance to a specific purpose, to a previously established function. Nothing is expected from him beyond what is expected, from what is stated in the contract. We know in advance the precise reason why and for what reason he is there, whether to press buttons, deliver a loaf of bread, or, in the logic we examine here, to teach, reduced to the execution of an impersonal activity. His figure and appearance are not considered in the succession of scenes that make up the great work in which he appears.

What is operated by a *nobody*, what would be a kind of enclosure of the action, Arendt (2015) names *behavior*, in contrast to the personality of the action. The author discusses this concept when examining what would be the way mass society works – and more specifically, employee society –, in which its members are required to function purely automatically,

as if individual life had been submerged in the global vital process of the species and the only active decision required of the individual was to let oneself go, so to speak, to abandon one's individuality, the pains living still felt individually, and acquiesce to a functional, numb and “tranquilized” type of behavior (ARENDR, 2015, p. 401).

The maintenance of a *functional, numb, and calm type of behavior* corresponds precisely to that necessary for the adaptation of subjects to the conditions of life in a world that sees, every day, the desert advances. Behavior is a central element of the process of uprooting and human superfluity in which the common world tends to disappear.

Behavior confines action – and speech – by robbing it of spontaneity, freedom, and the extraordinary feat that it always entails (ARENDR, 2015). By operating in this way, he deprives the subject – who then transfigures into a nobody – of his revelation in the world uniquely and singularly. All he is left with is a face with characteristics shared by so many others who are like him. From this perspective, it seems possible to affirm, therefore, that a nobody is an actor who in each circumstance behaves instead of acting and who reduces his enunciation to a mere communication devoid of the roots that thought – a judgmental reflection of experience everyday – could give. What a nobody does and says is just a *means* to a certain end. It is important to emphasize here that this is an analytical and not an ontological distinction, as it manifests in specific conditions, which do not prevent *someone* from manifesting in other circumstances.

Without the unveiling of the agent in the act, the action loses its specific character and becomes an act like any other. It becomes just a means to achieve an end, just as manufacturing is a means to produce an object. [...] the speech turns, in fact, into “mere conversation”, just another means of achieving an end, [...] in this case, *the words reveal nothing* (ARENDR, 2015, p. 223, our emphasis).

Articulating these reflections based on the psychoanalytic writings, we could also add that the word, under the logic of ‘*nobody-ness*’, becomes a speech devoid of a condition that distinguishes it as human: the condition of *address* (DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2021). The addressed word, *someone's* word, as opposed to empty and anonymous statements, carries a singular mark of belonging to a story, to a tradition and, as such, “carries within a dose of existence, a share of know what to do with life, that is, a *savoir vivre* or existential knowledge that cannot be reduced to knowledge about any of the possible worlds – those of letters, numbers, etc.” (DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2014, p. 50). The addressed mark of origin is embedded in the addressed word, that is, *who he is and what his story is with others*. The addressed word says (of the world) where it came from and the name it was addressed (FANIZZI; DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2023). The addressed word presupposes a subject, someone, in its addressee.

³ Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch - 1950-1973*, p. 523 (Journal XXI, n. 26, April 1955).

Operating in this way, the addressed word, as proposed by Lajonquière (2021), is exclusive to those in a human condition, the “only beings capable of giving the word and demanding it from another ‘parlêtre’, according to the Lacanian neologism. [...] This addressing presupposes the subject, just as it implies any human subjects” (DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2021, p. 18-19). This implication, the author points out, translates into the fact that “from our subject position we are always responsible” (LACAN, 1965 apud DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2021, p. 19).

In the opposite movement, behavior – and the deformations it imposes on action and enunciation – creates deserts, and leaves the threads of the web of human relationships to perish to the ruin of time, since it is an attitude of renunciation of its fabric. When behaving, the subject withdraws from the human scene and assumes a position of indifference and alienation about the world and humanity. He becomes an uprooted and superfluous figure, as he declines to enjoy a singular place in the course of human history.

To close this first section, it seems relevant to add yet another subtle but fundamental aspect to the examination of the distinction between action and behavior. Despite the radical importance of action for human existence, it would be illusory to consider that humans act all the time. Despite the unique way in which each person can carry out a given activity, there are many of them – especially those that are essentially technical, bureaucratic, or labor-related – and all we need to do is follow a certain set of rules and operations to carry them out, to achieve their goal. They do not call us to action, but precisely to behavior. These situations do not add up to or relate to the process of uprooting and human superfluity that we examine here. Note that *O padeiro*, in that punctual and specific activity of delivering the bread, talked about his ‘nobody-ness’ without any regret, and said goodbye smiling. *O padeiro*, in the same way as the teacher or any other person, behaves, communicates, and, sometimes, *acts and speaks*. Being someone is not a stable and acquired condition, it is not a fixed and conquered identity; we reveal ourselves as someone in an always fleeting and irruptive way, we reveal ourselves as someone in the precise moment of an act or a word that affirms the uniqueness of the subject. The problem occurs, in turn, in the recurrent imposition of behavior to replace action, in the spread of the logic of manufacturing in a context of factory production – which is very close to labor – which overlaps with the activities specific to the domain from action to political and intersubjective relations. The risk consists of the shuffling of the *modus operandi* of the activities of the *vita activa* – labor, work, and action (ARENDDT, 2015) –, as well as the imbalance of the incidence of each of them in human existence.

It seems to us to be precisely at this point, in the spreading of the domains of one human activity over another, that the central question of the problem examined here is that the technical logic that governs education today seems to ignore the boundaries of each of the activities that make up the office of educating – in which there is labor, there is work and there is also action – and advances indiscriminately across all its territories. Thus, when we seek to examine the implications of the discourse on technicization of education concerning the possibilities of teaching action and enunciation, we do so motivated by the fact that this discourse understands education as an activity similar to that of factory production and, as such, aims to impose on it – and on the subjects who undertake it – the logic specific to manufacturing activity in its industrial modality⁴.

It turns out that the factory logic of production on an industrial scale does not support the presence of agents capable of changing, at every moment, the direction of their production. To achieve the previously determined ends, all subjects involved in the process must limit themselves to their behavior. Teaching becomes, in this logic, a job supposedly capable of being exercised by *anyone*, by a *nobody*, as the planners of the apostille systems dream of. In other words, the aim is to transform teaching into a job that does not require the presence of someone capable of proposing the new and the unlikely,

⁴ We specifically mention the logic of factory production in its industrial modality. Even though the artisan's work is also governed by the logic of manufacturing, it implies, to some extent, personality, singularity, and changes of direction. Thus, although the manufactured object gains independence from its producer, its unique marks are imprinted on it, so that the *potter's hands are marked on the clay of the vase* (BENJAMIN, 2012).

of *someone* capable of welcoming and managing the unexpected. For teaching, a good set of materials and methods and a capable applicator who *behaves appropriately* would be enough. It is, after all, precisely the uniform behavior that “lends itself to statistical determination and, therefore, to scientifically correct prediction” (ARENDDT, 2015, p. 53), fundamental attributes to the discourse of technicization of education.

The aim, in similar logic, is a process in which there are no threads that come loose due to someone's action, nor unforeseen events that require a new route calculation or imply a delay in deliveries. The system (educational or any other) seeks to become immune to subjects when it takes them as superfluous, as “cogs in a gear”. Entangled in his job by discourses and mechanisms that compel him to behave, the teacher is then transformed into the abstract figure of nobody. He is, therefore, a non-character in the narrative that is told about education, a non-character in his profession. This certainly does not happen without consequences, since a person who sets out to teach “does not simply do something, he also makes something of himself: his identity carries the marks of his activity and a good part of his existence it is characterized by its professional performance” (TARDIF; RAYMOND, 2000, p. 210). The ‘nobody-ness’ of a teacher, we propose here, operates a kind of rupture in the thread of his narrative (RICŒUR, 2021) and participates profoundly in what makes a subject suffer (FANIZZU, 2023). After all, as Ricœur (2021) proposes, “life is the *story of this life*, in search of narration. Understanding oneself is being able to tell stories about oneself that are at the same time intelligible and acceptable, above all acceptable” (p. 21-22, emphasis and our translation).

MANUFACTURING LOGIC AS AN ANSWER TO EDUCATIONAL FRAGILITY

It is as if they had said that it would be enough for men to renounce their capacity for action – which is futile, unlimited, and uncertain of results – for there to be a remedy for the fragility of human affairs.

Hannah Arendt

Human existence on Earth would not be possible just with the fleeting and unproductive appearance of action. The three main activities of the *vita activa* examined by Arendt in her work *A Condição Humana* (2015) complement each other and are of equal importance in the general movement of conservation and renewal of the world, life, and human existence. It turns out that each of them has a series of specificities and, we could even say, incompatibilities so that the overlapping of these activities or the transposition of the *modus operandi* from one of them to another does not occur without important losses and subversions to the characteristics that essentially distinguish them as *labor, work or action*.

Before examining how the logic of labor incorporated by industrial production seems to have today spread over education and, more specifically, over teaching activity, let us briefly look at some of the contours that Arendt attributes to labor and the process through which it is manufactured. Let us first think about the distinctions that Arendt (2015) proposes between the activities of labor and work, and then examine the action. While work is the activity that corresponds to the biological process of the human body, work is related to the non-naturalness of human existence and, in this way, is freed from the ever-recurring life cycle to which work is conditioned. The work, through fabrication, provides the construction of an “artificial” world of things, a concrete home for human life capable of transcending and surviving it. By producing objects for use – and not for consumption, like work – the work gives the world “the stability and solidity without which it could not be counted on to shelter the mortal and unstable creature that is man” (ARENDDT, 2005, p. 183).

Another essential aspect that the author highlights when distinguishing these activities is the fact that manufacturing always has a defined beginning and a predictable end, that is, the object intended to have in hands at the end of the activity. “Durability and objectivity are the result of fabrication, the work of *homo faber*, which consists of a reification” (ARENDDT, 2005, p. 184). Work, trapped in the cyclical movement of vital activities, “has, strictly speaking, neither a beginning nor an end – only pauses, intervals between exhaustion and regeneration” (ARENDDT, 2005, p. 185). The activity of work never comes to an end if life lasts, it is infinitely repetitive.

Now, considering some of the main characteristics of the activity of the work – it produces objects of use, has a defined beginning and end, aims at durability, objectivity and is guided by the logic of means and ends –, how could we justify the statement about the movement that seeks to reduce education to a manufacturing activity marked by automated work processes? The attempt to apply the logic of manufacturing to education can be identified in different discourses, strategies, and mechanisms currently mobilized around education; and this process, among several others that aim to strip it of its intrinsic meaning, today places the school and its subjects in a place in which *they need to be defended* (MASSCHELEIN; SIMONS; LARROSA, 2022). This is because the success of such an endeavor means the loss of constituent elements of education, as we will discuss below.

Education becomes a means. We frequently observe in our society indications of the desire that education be reduced to a means to achieve certain ends. Such purposes are supported – sometimes patently – in the most diverse material supports produced today for education. Whether in bills, teacher refresher courses, or teaching materials, it is possible to grasp certain conceptions about what the “role of education” would be in our society: producing good results in international assessments, promoting economic and social development, creating qualified labor, create a new future that is already carefully planned and whatever else the discourses that understand education based on modern utilitarianism can dream of.

All these purposes, however, could immediately seem quite justified and positive for education and society in general – as commonly happens with the ideas advocated by the discourse on technicization of education. And this, above all, if the specificities of what happens within a school institution are ignored – something that also commonly occurs in such discourses. It turns out that education cannot just be a means to an end that is extrinsic; education, as said by Carvalho (2017, p. 26), is, above all,

a link between the world, common and public, and the new people who arrive there through birth rates. In this sense, teaching and learning are justified not exclusively by their functional character or by their immediate application to the demands of life, but by their ability to constitute themselves as a symbolic experience of relationship with the common world. Thinking about education as a symbolic experience means going beyond the technical, utilitarian, and functional dimensions of learning reduced to the development of skills to think about it in its formative potential.

In this way, argues Carvalho (2017, p. 110), reducing the school experience to a means whose end would be “the mere functional adaptation of individuals to the demands of production and consumption of contemporary societies” implies expropriating it of its intrinsic meaning: “the initiation of the youngest into symbolic inheritances capable of giving intelligibility to the human experience and durability to the common world” (CARVALHO, 2017, p. 110). Reducing the meaning of education to a fixed purpose external to its achievement disinvests and empties the power of the school to be configured as a time-space where something *can happen* (MASSCHELEIN; SIMONS, 2018). The aim is to replace events with a set of programmed events.

Processes and activities are standardized. As in most manufacturing activities – especially if we think about large-scale ones – objectivity and effectiveness are the determining aspects of their processes. Thus, to achieve the previously and objectively defined purposes, school education becomes guided by discourses and devices that aim to guarantee the governability and standardization of its activities. Such claims are reified in the establishment of rigid and abstract school norms and procedures, in the strict adoption of certain teaching materials, in the widespread dissemination of textbook teaching systems, and in the creation of hermetic scales supposedly capable of attributing a numerical magnitude to teaching and student performance, as in the case of the constant submission of students and institutions to standardized and large-scale national and international assessments. Most of these instruments and strategies see standardization as a way of controlling not only what happens in education, but also its effects or products.

Carvalho (2016) points out, specifically in the case of assessments, something that adds an important nuance to the reflection on the standardization of educational processes. According to the author, it is not about denying

the need for large systemic assessments that, if done well, can help in the creation of public policy goals. However, believing that they can replace the painful, but necessary, singular process of a teacher's judgment about their students' performance is a pipe dream. A dream – or nightmare – of technobureaucracy whose goals are the disregard of contingency, the ignorance of singularity, and the affirmation of the superfluity of the human (CARVALHO, 2016, p. 41).

In line with the previous proposition by Carvalho (2016), in this reflection, we do not advocate the abandonment of strategies or instruments that to some extent can provide a certain standardization to what happens in teaching. All those who have already embarked on the adventure of educating would probably agree with the statement that certain activities would be unrealizable without some measure of standardization. As we previously pointed out regarding *behavior* – which on many occasions guides our activities without this meaning the attestation of human superfluity –, the risk of standardization lies in its overlap with other educational activities, including those that demand the capacity of judgment and discernment proper to someone.

Abstract models are adopted that guide and validate educational processes. The intention to standardize educational processes and activities necessarily implies the adoption of models, and standards so that they can serve as a guide for those who put them into practice. It is precisely this model that makes it possible, in the final stages, to evaluate the supposed quality and effectiveness of the processes developed. It turns out that these models do not only concern the activities and procedures that must be applied but also the subjects they target – whether teachers or students – during and at the end of the process. Education is transformed into an activity that aims at objectification effects and no longer at subjectivation processes.

Despite the contours attributed to this model being contingent, since it is a synthesis of what a society or group intends and values at that moment, a *model* is always an *abstract figure*. This cannot be forgotten, under penalty of all flesh and blood subjects becoming inadequate, insufficient, and non-existent. It is precisely this abstraction that Azanha (2004) points out when reflecting on the training of teachers in basic schools. The author observes that “the discussions and proposals that arise at congresses, seminars, and other events have focused on characterizing the abstract figure of a professional endowed with certain qualities as a training ideal” (AZANHA, 2004, p. 369). Expressions as a model or ideal, especially when presented as a unique and possible destination to be achieved – if each of the steps that lead to it is correctly completed – are often conceptions that are refractory to experience, desire, the unforeseen, in short, they are conceptions that ignore and reject the subject in his uniqueness and openness to contingencies.

Lajonquière (2008, 2010) names the student targeted by discourses guided by the logic of educational fabrication in his works as *The-Child (A-Criança)*. The category he suggests is based on a unique creature that, despite its name, bears no resemblance to the children we encounter daily. She is a natural, a-temporal, and a-historical being, endowed with special educational needs (DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2010). He is the ideal child, from which all others start to be evaluated and, therefore, put at risk. In it, there is no remainder, nor lack. Everything in *A-Criança* is predictable and controllable: “When everything works as if deluded, everything flows ‘naturally’” (DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2009, p. 73). Such a Child is “manufactured by the expertise of knowledge” (DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2021, p. 28) and finds fertile soil in an adult world that dreams of assertive and definitive pedagogical formulations, allegedly guaranteed by science and its experts. It seems to us that she is, precisely, the perfect student for the *The-Teacher* intended by the discourses about what would be the ideal – and abstract – teacher training. The universalizing claim of such models, by seeking a valid and good answer for everyone, drives us “toward the sameness; (...) it drives us to accept differences and singularities less and less” (LEBRUN, 2004, p. 110-111). Sameness is possible – and sometimes even desirable – in the manufacture of objects, but certainly not in educational training. Mobilized by such models and aspirations, the mechanisms could not, then, be limited to programs and content; standardization, in this model, goes beyond matter “to inscribe in the soul, to transform into the governability of individuals and their ways of being” (CARVALHO, 2016, p. 70).

An analysis by Arendt (2015) about the approach that Greek philosophy makes between the ideas of contemplation and fabrication (*theōria e poiēsis*) inspires us to add yet another layer to the discussion about the models supported in educational fabrication. In Greek philosophy, Arendt (2015)

points out, “contemplation and fabrication have a close affinity and are not positioned in an unequivocal opposition such as that which exists between contemplation and action” (p. 374). According to the author's reflection, the crucial point of similarity between contemplation and fabrication in Greek philosophy is the fact that

Contemplation, the observation of something, was seen as an inherent element also in manufacturing, insofar as the craftsman's work was guided by the 'idea', by the model he contemplated before starting the manufacturing process and after it had finished, first to know what to produce and then to judge the final product (ARENDR, 2015, p. 374, emphasis added).

It seems quite interesting to us, in the reflection we seek to develop here about the attempt to reduce education to a manufacturing activity, the consideration, highlighted by the author, of the attitude required, at certain moments, from those who conduct the manufacturing process: it is not about of action, but of contemplation, of observing something, even if it is an abstract construction. In the *modus operandi* of contemplative activity, unlike action, the centrality does not seem to be placed on the subject, who then contemplates something, but on the object that is contemplated (and, in the case of fabrication, on the object assumed as a model in the process and desired as a product when it ends). At this point, we briefly present some data obtained in a study carried out by UNESCO (2004), with 5000 teachers from all over Brazil, which seems quite representative of the ideas currently prevalent in our pedagogical imagination. According to the report produced at the end of the research, 79.2% of the teachers interviewed considered their role to be ‘facilitating student learning’. Only 17.3% perceived themselves as a ‘transmitter of culture and knowledge’, and 3.4% did not identify with any of these roles. The “renewed” idea of the teacher as a facilitator, mediator, and tutor of the learning process seems to flirt with the activity of contemplation – as a kind of observation –, constitutive of fabrication since in this conception, it is assumed that immediate contact is enough for the child “with social practices and their languages so that they reveal themselves in the complexity of their uses, their meanings and their intersubjective validation mechanisms” (CARVALHO, 2017, p. 61). From the perspective that bets on “spontaneity” and “child autonomy” in the process of apprehending different aspects of the human legacy, the reference to someone to whom the responsibility for initiating children into the symbolic inheritance of which the world is constituted becomes if something unnecessary (CARVALHO, 2017). The presence of a figure capable of behaving according to a prescription would be enough to produce the least possible interference in a child's relationship with the world, reiterating, in pedagogical discourse, the old liberal precept that conceives freedom as the absence of interference.

The means (and subjects) become interchangeable if the ends are preserved. Since it is the desired final product that guides and justifies the manufacturing process, its means – or the subjects who set the process in motion – have a strictly utilitarian role. The characteristics that distinguish them as unique and singular beings are erased amid the operation of the great machinery. What is only valued is what many people can have in common: the ability to effectively keep the system moving.

Likewise, the final product organizes its manufacturing process and decides on the necessary specialists, the degree of cooperation, and the number of assistants or collaborators. Therefore, everything and everyone is judged here in terms of suitability and usefulness for the desired final product, and nothing else (ARENDR, 2005, p. 187).

In this logic, the meaning of activities and subjects is not in their existence and performance, as in the case of action (*praxis*), but always subject to the dictates of the desired final product. If it is preserved, its intermediaries are superfluous and interchangeable.

To add more concrete contours to this issue, it seems relevant to make a brief mention here of the experience lived by a teacher – which possibly echoes that of many others – on her departure from a school where she worked for several years. “Nobody is irreplaceable,” the institution’s coordinator told her. The coldness and reality of such a statement resonate with special strength when uttered within the walls of an institution in which relationships, time, and space are covered with the privilege of being able to operate under logic distinct from those of consumption and productivity; in an institution invented for subjects to receive and welcome into the world – in an always and unique way – other subjects. The moment a teacher, or any other subject, is transformed into a piece – exchangeable – from which only good functioning (or behavior) is expected so that it does not affect the movement of the great

mechanism in which it is inserted, we are sure of that something was lost in education. “Everything can work, but nothing makes sense. It’s as if we lost *love* [to the world and new generations] somewhere along the way” (MASSCHELEIN; SIMONS, 2018, p. 139).

What then remains for the teacher, for the daily practice of the teaching profession? The transposition of the logic of factory manufacturing to education, we propose, mischaracterizes, and empties the teaching profession as it robs it of one of its most important activities. It robs him/her of the activity of action, precisely that which gives him personality and dignity. Precisely the one that allows the teacher to reveal himself/herself as someone. Trapped in a condition in which he sees his ability to act reduced, the teacher is left to “take care of the maintenance of the various gigantic bureaucratic machines, whose processes consume their services and devour their products as quickly and mercilessly as the biological process of endless and repetitive work activity” (ARENDR, 2015, p. 114). The core of the teaching profession is then reduced to “a daily and necessary routine: teaching work. A work that does not invent anything new, and does not deal with major ethical issues, but rather a repetitive effort to preserve some basic behaviors as part of coexistence at school” (ALMEIDA, 2021). It remains for him/her to carry out activities as necessary, to maintain *school life*. He/she must correct exercises, notebooks, tests, control attendance, make reports, fill out documents, stamp, cut, paste, and fold. He/she must, numerous times, remind students “that the day and time for submitting a task are non-negotiable, that a poorly done task must be redone the next day, that this, and that” (PENNAC, 2008, p. 134). He/she is left with activities of little or no permanence – since even those small tasks in the teaching routine are quickly consumed by the academic calendar. There are activities left that are unlikely to leave traces or big stories behind them. If education is understood and ordered as a factory production process, the only thing left to the teaching profession is *work*.

TEACHING ACTION OR TEACHING FREEDOM, BECAUSE BEING FREE AND ACTING ARE THE SAME THING.

Men are free [...] while they act, neither before nor after, because being free and acting are the same thing.

Hannah Arendt

On the opposite ground to that of manufacturing, Arendt (2015) places action, as the only activity that occurs directly between men, without the mediation of things or matter. Action – together with enunciation – is an activity that makes it possible for someone to appear in the world as a unique and singular being among all those who preceded them and those who will come.

The action, however fragile, unproductive, and fleeting, “‘produces’ stories, intentionally or not, with the same naturalness that fabrication produces tangible things” (ARENDR, 2015, p. 228). This ability to produce stories, to leave traces behind for a narrator willing to put them into words, seems to mark an important distinction of the behavior carried out by a nobody. Is it possible to create new history – and stories – without the *extraordinary* that action and enunciation entail? Is it possible for a subject, someone, to exist without there being spaces for the imponderable, without voids and loose threads that call for action and appearance? The illusion of completeness and control, which inspires the imposition of behavior over action, as well as the reduction of education to the logic of manufacturing in its factory modality, ignores being precisely on the *margin of indeterminacy* (of events, actions, and relationships) where the possibility of unveiling someone is located, as well as the human power to create and maintain a common world.

Action, unlike manufacturing, is not mobilized by a purpose, but by a principle. Even though it is preceded by the judgment of the intellect and initiated by the empire of the will, an action always springs from a principle (ARENDR, 2014). A principle, proposes Arendt (2014), does not operate within the self as motives do, nor is it linked to a particular person or group. The validity of a principle is universal (ARENDR, 2014) and they are too general to prescribe goals or modes of operationalization. A principle is also inexhaustible, that is, it can be repeated indefinitely without losing its vigor and validity in the execution of an action. An action can have as its principal honor, glory, and love of equality, but also fear, distrust, or hatred (ARENDR, 2014). The attempt to replace the principle of action with a

purpose seems to be the most consistent way to confine it and mischaracterize it. When an action is robbed of a principle, it easily turns into behavior – precisely that aimed at and necessary for the spread of the logic of manufacturing over the various human activities.

In addition to not being tensioned by a purpose, the action also does not conceive the elements articulated in its appearance as means. It sheds light on precisely what manufacturing hides, disinvests in, and makes exchangeable. *Who, how, and why someone* acts are inseparable aspects of the action itself. Thus, what in the logic of manufacturing are means – contingent, variable, superfluous –, in action constitutes its nuclear element. The elements that are articulated in the appearance of an action are always singular and essential: the most imperceptible change in the arrangement that composes it would immediately result in another action, as singular and irreplicable as the first.

Action is free, says Arendt (2014): being free and acting are the same thing. The freedom that resides in human action, however, does not concern “an inner disposition of the spirit, through which I am free to think what I want regardless of what happens in the world” (ALMEIDA, 2008, p. 476). Freedom of action is not a gift capable of separating one from the world, of granting someone the authorization and ability to do whatever they want. Freedom is what roots and intertwines an action in the world, in the space between humans; freedom is that which places the action about the world. Thus, it turns out that intertwining with the world is precisely the condition that allows us to verify freedom in a human act or word: it is because an action or enunciation was carried out in the world, amidst the web of human relationships and the conditioning forces that living together and existence on Earth impose on us, that we can verify the outbreak of something that goes in an opposite direction to what was expected and operates “infinitely improbable” (ARENDRT, 2014, p. 219). An event is infinitely improbable when examined about what, with a certain automatism, operated in the world before its appearance. Therefore, there is no freedom, conceived as a tangible attribute of common life, outside the world, outside the public space.

In this sense, freedom occurs the moment someone causes acts and words to emerge in the world that testify to their liberation about previous events, tendencies, automatisms, propensities, and expectations. In this way, freedom is not revealed as an abstract and unattainable ideal that hovers on the human horizon: when it appears in public space, freedom is a concrete reality, it becomes “tangible in words that we can hear, in deeds that can be seen and in events that are commented on, remembered and transformed into stories” (ARENDRT, 2014, p. 201). Through action and enunciation, the agent can propose a new beginning, freed from the need – and often the “alibi” – of coherence or continuity with what already existed. Freedom is exercised not to others, but with others and about the constraints of the past.

From this perspective, it seems possible to affirm that the power that animates birth rates – the fact that new beings are born into the world (ARENDRT, 2015) – remains latent throughout our existence, since it is possible for someone to, at all times, update and verify the human capacity to start something new, to act, to present to the world something that was not there before. As beings who are never absolutely shaped by tradition, culture, or our history (by our past actions and words), there is always the possibility that the direction of the narrative of life will be changed, that someone new will be introduced to the world, with unique and singular features.

What appears in the world through action and enunciation and that establishes a new beginning in the succession of events, Arendt (2014) calls a miracle. And this idea, however religious or transcendent it may initially sound, is secular and worldly: it is human beings who perform miracles. It is human beings who “can establish a reality that rightfully belongs to them” (ARENDRT, 2014, p. 220) and establish a difference in the world, a before and an after. Every act, states Arendt (2014, p. 218), “considered, not from the perspective of the agent, but from the process in whose frame of reference it occurs and whose automatism it interrupts, is a 'miracle' - that is, something that could not be expected.” The miracle is the very possibility of freedom, of breaking into the world, through acts and words, as an infinite improbability.

Where does this sort of miracle work? Contrary to what religious thought could lead us to believe, miracles, in the Arendtian sense, can be witnessed at every moment in which someone decides to act and speak despite what their condition – and identification – could suggest or, even, supposedly determine. Absolute conformity or *identificação* to a place, group, or a specific form of behavior usually

seeks its justification in the most distinct elements that somehow intend to attribute certain conduct or destination to each subject. Identification can be based on what is attested about a subject - or predicates attributed to him or her, such as family and social origin, gender, ethnicity, occupation, level of education, or even, more modernly, a reported doctor, a cognitive test, or a neurological exam. Breaking with such identifications, interrupting automatic chains, and refusing to conform absolutely to what surrounds us, through action and enunciation, are profane ways of working miracles.

Despite inhabiting a large part of human activities, some of them seem to be deeply rooted in the possibility of the outbreak of miracles, activities that, to some extent, depend on them so that they can occur. Education seems to be one of them – and perhaps also politics and the process of analytical healing, Freud's three impossible jobs. We propose the rooting of education in the soil of miracles since we can conceive it as a bet that something new, something of the unexpected – of the subject, of desire – may emerge from the welcoming of newcomers into the world. After all, education is not an activity that “is carried out on the subject to imprint on it a final, previously conceived form, but rather involves interaction with a plurality of singular subjects whose responses to our actions and words are of the order of the unpredictable” (CARVALHO, 2017, p. 105). Unpredictability and improbability are essential characteristics of a *miraculous event*.

Someone's action leaves traces behind, like tips of mysteries (ROSA, 2001), and from it, many others can unfold, equally unpredictable and unlimited. When can we say that a teacher acts? To examine this question, we were inspired by the answer presented by Pereira (2016, p. 21) about the moments in which someone could be considered a “good teacher”: “This will only be so when he acts contrary to what the technical rationality of the countless pedagogical compendia around us”. A teacher acts at the exact moment he/she refuses mere behavior – evident, predicted, prescribed, predetermined – in the face of what he encounters in his job. A teacher acts when he/she interrupts the automatism of a reaction and begins to judge the singularity of an event, a subject, or a response coming from where he did not expect it. A teacher acts when he/she decides to take the risk involved in temporarily abandoning the activities foreseen in the booklet system to dedicate to what the experience of the moment seems to demand. A teacher acts when, despite the incapacity supposedly attested in a medical report or standardized assessment, he/she maintains in his/her address to the child the possibility that something of the order of desire may emerge. A teacher acts when driven by the principle of equality, he/she ignores any identification that may arise from his/her student's social or family origin. All these actions can be considered, to some extent, miracles, and from all of them, others probably emerged, as unexpected and unlimited as the first.

Let us also remember, at this point, the interesting analysis that Lajonquière (2010) proposes about the film *The Miracle Worker* (1962), by Arthur Penn. The film tells the story of the meeting of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan, in 1887, in Tuscomb, Alabama, United States. Helen, still a baby, was struck by an illness that left her blind and deaf. At the age of seven, she meets Anne, sent to her house to be her teacher. Even though she stated that she did not know where her involvement in Helen's education could lead her, Anne's arrival marked the little girl's departure from the isolation imposed by her disability, the departure from her life as a ghost – a feeling that Helen would later describe in her book titled *Fighting Darkness*. Lajonquière (2010) highlights the different translations made of the American title of the film, which in a literal translation would be “*A trabalhadora miraculosa*”. In Brazil it was released as “*O milagre de Anne Sullivan*”, in Portugal as “*O milagre de Helen Keller*” and in France as “*Miracle en Alabama*”. The author uses different translations to bring the question about the *agent of the miracle* into discussion. Who or what seems to have operated it in the story in question? From a psychoanalytic perspective, Lajonquière (2010, p. 167) proposes that it is “the miracle of the word, its mastery”. The miraculous work of the word states the author, “the signifying function – is that of installing, again and again, the possibility of living an experience or a difference between a before and an after in temporal becoming” (DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2010, p. 167). It was how Anne addressed the word to Helen “that she once and for all decided the very emergence of the word in Helen or, if we prefer, of Helen's subjection to speech” (DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2010, p. 169).

Note that the miraculous event operated by the word was made possible not by the scientificity or adequacy of the method chosen and adopted by Anne in Helen's education, the miracle was made possible because “Anne wanted to speak to Helen. She had something to say, just as there was

something she wanted to hear from her” (DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2010, p. 171, emphasis added). Anne wanted to hear *something* from Helen, and not *a specific* thing planned in her pedagogical endeavor. Anne supposed a subject, a someone, in Helen.

Education, in a movement contrary to that aimed at by the technicist discourse and the logic of educational manufacturing, must be able to support the fact that it is always oriented towards the constitution of “someone who is inserted uniquely in the plurality of the world” (CARVALHO, 2017, p. 105). It must be able to support openness, lack, and incompleteness as the “only and paradoxical possibility – therefore, unmethodical – of sustaining the conditions so that something of the order of a desire can come as the rest of every educational proportion” (DE LAJONQUIÈRE, 2009, p. 120-121).

BRIEF CONSIDERATIONS

There are no remedies, prescriptions, or definitive answers to educate someone. To deal with the impossibility that exists in education, the presence of a subject who continually welcomes what emerges unexpectedly and looks at the educational relationship is essential: educating depends on the readiness of someone willing to act. Not just to act, but to reflect and judge what he/she experiences daily in his/her job so that he/she assumes “the place of the 'arbiter' of the multiple and incessant occupations of human existence in the world, of the judge who never finds a definitive solution to these enigmas, but always new answers to the question that is really in question” (ARENDT, 2019, p. 232, emphasis added).

In technical logic, whoever occupies the 'place of the referee' is strictly reserved for the role of monitoring and keeping the 'educational process' moving. It is up to him/her to check whether there is any malfunction (or bad behavior) in the intermediate stages of the process, as well as whether what is produced at the end is sufficiently like the model established at the beginning. There are no riddles, nor the need for judgment. The teacher is compelled by nobody to remain at the door, *who he/she is* should be left outside. The teacher is no longer expected to have a word in his office.

This condition in which teachers must carry out their work – that of nobody – seems to us to be deeply related to the large number of teachers who suffer in the exercise of teaching (FANIZZI, 2023). Someone's suffering, proposes Ricœur (2021), emerges from the threats and constraints inflicted on the exercise of their capabilities as a human agent, among them the capabilities of acting, saying, and (being) told. Without someone there is no action, there is no enunciation nor the possibility of narrating. From this, we support the proposition that a teacher's complaints are a way of enunciating the existence of someone who suffers from being trapped in mechanisms that rob them of the possibility of action and enunciation. From someone who sees, every day, his/her job being stripped of the various layers that constitute it and reduced to the endless, impersonal, and repetitive activity of work. Activity that leaves no traces behind, nor stories and characters.

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