

The Aura of Professing: detrterritorialization of authority towards *communitas* and enthusiasm

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ABSTRACT – **The Aura of Professing: detrterritorialization of authority towards *communitas* and enthusiasm** – The article characterizes the teaching authority as a product of patriarchal and Christian tradition, according to which the teacher's performance would establish discipline and silence. Just like the aura (Benjamin, 2017) of a work of art decays through technical advance, so would the teacher's aura: the democratization/secularization of education, by unlinking knowledge from the divine, generates detrterritorialization of authority. In response, means of dialectically reverting the aura in teaching are sought here in works of art and philosophy. These point toward the construction of *communitas* in learning, in which professing becomes an aesthetic and collective experience, marked by the presence of an embodied enthusiasm.

Keywords: **Aura. Teaching Authority. *Communitas*. Enthusiasm. Critical Pedagogy.**

RÉSUMÉ – **L'Aura du Professeur: déterritorialisation de l'autorité envers les *communitas* et l'enthousiasme** – L'article décrit l'autorité enseignante comme fruit de la tradition patriarcale/chrétienne, dans laquelle la performance du professeur établissait discipline et silence. Mais comme l'Aura (Benjamin, 2017) des arts tombe par l'avance technique, le même se produira pour l'aura de l'enseignant: la démocratisation/laïcisation de l'éducation, en dissociant le savoir du divin, engendre la déterritorialisation de l'autorité. En réponse, des œuvres d'art et de la philosophie sont recherchées pour revenir dialectiquement l'Aura dans l'enseignement, indiquant la construction de *communitas* d'apprentissage, dont le professeur soit une expérience esthétique, collective, marquée par l'enthousiasme incarné.

Mots-clés: **Aura. Autorité Enseignante. *Communitas*. Enthousiasme. Pédagogie Critique.**

RESUMO – **Auras do Professor: desterritorialização da autoridade no sentido da *communitas* e do entusiasmo** – O artigo caracteriza a autoridade docente como fruto da tradição patriarcal e cristã, na qual a performance do professor instaurava a disciplina e o silêncio. Mas, tal como a Aura da obra de arte entra em decadência pelo avanço técnico, o mesmo ocorreria com a aura do professor: a democratização/laicização da educação, ao desvincular o saber do divino, gera desterritorialização da autoridade docente. Em resposta, busca-se em obras de arte e na filosofia formas de reverter dialeticamente a Aura e o Sagrado no ensino, apontando para a construção de *communitas* de aprendizado, cujo professor seja experiência estética e coletiva, marcada pela presença de entusiasmo nos corpos.

Palavras-chave: **Aura. Autoridade Docente. *Communitas*. Entusiasmo. Pedagogia Crítica.**

I

It is necessary to affirm one's presence and have it prevailing over a group of naturally turbulent young people whose goodwill is not granted in advance. Not everyone has the temperament of a tamer (Gusdorf, 2003, p. 37).

The teacher shouts. He waves his arms: *look at me, listen to me, I AM HERE*. His voice rises, with maximum effort from the vocal cords. The teacher strains, his voice cracking in an attempt to overcome the noise of a crowd of anxious students. The teacher's arms, swaying beside his body, create a kinetic sphere around him. Vocal and hand gestures try to restore an aura, in the relationship between bodies, through the amplification of physical, sonorous, spatial presence; to become bigger, to be noticed. If there were aura, none of this would be necessary. The teacher's simple presence would establish authority. But the aura has been lost, so improvised means are sought; there are those who avail themselves of lapel microphones. Irrespective of whether they achieve their goal, after such absurd vocal and gestural juggling authority has been lost. The teacher is now disheveled, their vocal apparatus callused, arms are tired, sweaty, and their legs (especially the knees) throb from having to withstand all the acrobatics.

II

In Benjamin (2017), the word *aura* is used in several senses. Sometimes aura is a technical attribute, perceived by observing the play of light and darkness at the edges of the early photographs, something that would be lost with advances in daguerreotype. At other times, aura is associated with the apparition/appearance of truth in a work, rejecting the dichotomy between essence and appearance, and instead understanding the aura as something associated with the beautiful and the true. In other situations, aura is associated with the decadent and the aristocratic (although Benjamin does not use this word) in a bourgeois work of art. This would, on the one hand, confer values of authenticity and oneness but, on the other, it is what allows the aura to be appropriated by more reactionary forces, like fascism.

Among all these, sometimes paradoxical, conceptions, the common denominator is its emergence in the benjaminian work as a useful concept to designate a relationship, now in decline, between a work of art, invested with aura, and its spectator. That is, aura defines a specific kind of reception experience. According to Hansen (2011, p. 107), the benjaminian aura is not inherent in the thing from which it emanates but is established in the relation between the auric thing and the subject who observes it. It is therefore the gaze (beyond the strict sense of vision, but including it), the fundamental form of reception, that establishes the existence of aura. Reception is weaved in time and space, in the game between the one who owns the aura, or from whence it emanates, and the one who sees and perceives it.

However, the weaving of this auric relation is given by a particular type of distancing effect, since the benjaminian aura is defined as: “the unique appearance of something distant, however close it is” (Benjamin, 2017, p. 17). The aura is established around the auratic thing precisely because it is unique, authentic, special, true or divine, or it is invested with such power by the eye of the recipient and, in turn, by the culture that formed it, that it is accorded an elevated place above common things. By conferring aura on what they observe, the receiver makes the object distant from him/herself.

In Benjamin, the aura manifests itself both in works of culture and in nature: “While at rest on a summer’s noon, to trace a range of mountain on the horizon, or a branch that throws its shadow on the observer, until the moment or the hour becomes part of their appearance – this is what it means to breathe the aura of those mountains, that branch” (Benjamin, 2017, p. 17). In this quote, there is a religious clamor in the contemplation of nature, of the horizon, or of the manifestation of God in all these unique things.

III



Image 1 – Comnenus mosaic. Unknown author, 1122. Source: Saint Sophia Church, Istanbul, Turkey¹.

One can see in the image above how the emperor and his son are encircled, just as the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus are, a sign of the justification of power by force of the divine (Image 1). In the Christian religion, the aura appears in the manifestation of the divine among humans, being religion the means of reconnecting the sacred and the mundane. The auras appear in this context as a graphic representation marking the distance between the auric bodies and their observers. In other works, as in Giotto's, it is possible to observe that some characters in the same picture have a halo and others do not, which serves as an indicator of those vested with the sacred aura. In this sense, as in Benjamin, the aura is what vests a human body with a sacred power or, to use a benjaminian term, a cult value:

The primitive mode of integration of the work of art in the context of tradition found its expression in worship. As we know, the first works of art emerged in the service of a ritual, at first magical, then religious. What is most significant is the fact that this auratic mode of existence of the work of art is never completely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the 'authentic' work of art is grounded in the ritual, in which it had its original and first use value (Benjamin, 2017, p. 18).

In the work that illustrates this fragment, however, it is not only the work itself that is vested with aura, but also the characters represented in it.

IV

[...] the legitimacy of the actions carried out by teachers no longer has a type of representation that regulates professional attitudes, a representation that was able to impose the will of teaching within the community based on the figure of a professional body that was proud, unified and selectively recruited (Pereira; Paulino; Franco, 2011, p. 28).

The body surrounded by an aura is a “proud, unified and selectively recruited” body. It is also grand and majestic, for the aura is not only what the halo represents, that is, a mere outer shell, peripheral to the body. Rather, this envelope is the emanation of a force that comes from within, which fills it with meaning and authority and which is so powerful that it transcends and overflows the limits of the skin, creating an auric sphere, the aureole. Here the sense of transcendence is literal: it crosses the body and promotes its ascension to a higher field. The auratic bodies of saints, popes, kings, artists, priests, and teachers feel, with the decadence of the aura, nostalgia for that which filled and transcended them. In Raul Pompeia's *O Ateneu*², a character, Sérgio, characterizes Professor Aristarco, the principal of the boarding school after which the novel is named, as follows:

Dr. Aristarco Argolo de Ramos, from the well-known family of Viscount of Ramos, from the North, was renowned as a pedagogue across the empire. [...] Aristarco, everything about him was an advertisement. The gestures – calm, sovereign – were of a king, the exalted autocrat of syllabaries; the hieratic pause of his gait made one feel the effort, at every step, that he made to push forward the progress of public education; his gleaming gaze, beneath the rough crispness of his eyebrows, like that of a Japanese monster, penetrating the surrounding souls with light – it was an education of the intelligence; his chin, severely shaven from ear to ear, reminded one of the smoothness of a clean conscience – it was a moral education (Pompéia, 1996, p. 3-4).

Aristarco's auric body corroborates the idea of “regulatory representation” found in the quotation from Pereira, Paulino and Franco that opens this fragment. At the time of *Ateneu*, the auric body of the educator, Aristarco, was still enveloped by that aura, conferring upon him the authority of a king, in the words of the author.

V

In the modernizing mystique, marked by Enlightenment ideals and Republican revolts, both God, as conceived in medieval times, and the Father, his greatest representative and legislator, are no longer recognized as such (Pereira; Paulino; Franco, 2011, p. 28).

The feudal aristocracy and then the modern one would lend the idea of aura to kings to substantiate the idea of the divine origin of monarchical power. In this sense, the aura is the establishment of a divine presence in the human, which thus gives them authority or authorship, and indeed the duty and the right, to write the laws that govern human life. The word of the one endowed with aura has more value and therefore must be listened to in silence.

But the church's loss of power meant, with the passing of time, the gradual disappearance of the aura from many spheres of social life. The French revolution, in cutting off monarchs' heads – heads around which the solar aura hung – meant the climax of the modern process of delegitimizing of the divine status of kings, passing power to the *people*. It is well known that, historically, *the people* would hardly mean the totality of the people that form a society, given that the bourgeoisie would become the new aristocracy, whose power, formerly emanating from a spiritual God, now emanated from a material God, money.

Still, the removal of God's spirit as the driving and organizing force in social life would have aura fall into decay. It would now be fragmented, divided, shattered before and among the common. This process, of course, was not linear, nor can it be observed in an evolutionary manner. Signs of auric authority are still found today in regimes and countries scattered across the globe, especially those under centralizing governments, where the boundaries between religious and scientific/political dimensions are blurred.

VI

It is not for nothing that the priest and the old-fashioned professor performed their professing in a similar way. According to Gusdorf (2003, p. 43), “during the time when the Church truly had a monopoly on teaching, the priest who taught found himself naturally vested with all

transcendence”. Indeed, “our culture was constituted in the school of Christian professing” (p. 62). Priests and teachers, holders of distant knowledge, of the true word, professed doctrinally. This meant their presence would be surrounded by an aura, the authority of tone who knows how to read the scriptures. The two figures were invested with power by the father – both by the Father-God, writer of maximum knowledge established in the Bible, and by the father of the family, he who would tell his son to respect the teacher during the week, and led him to mass on Sundays to hear the sermons. The following paintings both represent the priest and pedagogue Jean Baptiste de La Salle (1651-1719), later canonized as the patron-saint of professors (Images 2 and 3).



Image 2 – La Salle teaching. Cesare Mariani, 1898.
Source: Museum of the Vatican³.



Image 3 – Visit of the Saint Sulpice priest to the schools of Jean-Baptiste de La Salle Brotherhood.
Giovanni Gagliardi, 1901. Source: Museum of the Vatican⁴.

In the works above, one can see the deeply hierarchical and patriarchal auric structure of divine power, which retains authoritarian verticality in the transmission of knowledge. Mariani's work (Image 2) shows the height difference between the planes of La Salle's throne and the children's desks, which imitate a church's pews, and shows the priest-teacher in low-to-high perspective, in order to enlarge his divine stature, confirmed by the image of Christ on the cross above his head. Gagliardi's work (Image 3), which has less realistic features, uses the auratic representation around the head of the pedagogue to indicate his holiness. Both works are contemporary to La Salle's beatification process, who would be made Saint by Pope Leo XIII in 1900. This explains why the works were painted at that time, almost two hundred years after the life and death of the pedagogue, and also why Gagliardi's work (1901) is the only one depicting a halo around La Salle's head.

We cannot deny La Salle's great contribution to the formatting of Western education, especially regarding the massification of education of the poor – a task from which public authorities would exclude themselves – which was now carried out in the common language rather than in Latin, for groups and not only individually in the homes of a privileged few, and based on both the Christian principle of charity and in order to catechize.

However, it is also to La Salle – and his contemporaries – that we owe the highly rigid and disciplined format of teaching, arranged in desks and in silence; the transmissive, vertical and *banking* concept of education, based on the professing of the One and Divine Truth. For, even if the professing of the word of the priest and the teacher could (sometimes) involve different subjects, it always took the same form: the performance of sermon-prayer-speaking on one side, and silence imposed on the other.

The aura of the priest-teacher-king guaranteed discipline and the major sign of this, until recent times, was the students' obligation to stand to attention when the teacher entered the room, a performance identical to that still carried out today for the arrival of heads of state or priests and bishops to mass. According to Gusdorf, "the teaching function in its full relevance is never better expressed than in this initial *homage*, whereby the teacher enters, students are silent, and they stand for a moment" (2003, p. 40, our emphasis). Peter McLaren, in describing the words of a teacher nostalgic for a time when he was respected by the class, testifies that "[...] his whole argument sounds like a plea for the return of the days when all teachers were 'men of *stature*' and when students servilely venerated escutcheons, goblets and coats of arms, banners and uniforms..." (1991, p. 61, our emphasis). In both sections, the words *homage* and *stature* open the way for the worship of an auric image of the teacher.

VII

To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose 'sense of the universal equality of things' has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction (Benjamin, 2017, p. 63).

In Benjamin, the aura of the work of art falls into decay in the era of technical reproducibility, due to the loss of its uniqueness through the advancement of reproductive techniques, replacing its ancient (auric) worship value with its exposure value. When there is only one copy of a painting, which is unrepeatable and irreproducible, and every copy a forgery, being in the presence of the original auratic object invests it with the value of worship. In Benjamin, the reasons for the decline of aura consist in overcoming the distance between the work and the human. That

is, “to bring things closer to oneself, spatially and humanly, represents both a passionate desire on the part of the masses of the present as well as their tendency to surpass the unique existence of each situation through the reception of its reproduction” (Benjamin, 2017, p. 17).

Benjamin exemplifies this process by describing how the prehistoric cave drawings were invested with worship value, much more than value of exposure. As they were made for the gods, those drawings had less value in the game that their presence established with spectators than due to the magical force which their existence established in altering the details of destiny. In the Modern Age, something similar can be said of paintings in churches and palaces, whether frescoes or canvases, which were not intended for visitation by the general public, but which existed for their cult value within the closed systems to which they belonged, retroactively giving, confirming and extolling the power of those who held, sponsored, and were represented in the works. It was in the 19th century, with the emergence of museums, great exhibitions and galleries – the result of the embourgeoisement process of art as well as of the formation or consolidation of national states – that the operation of the meaning of art in favor of its value of exhibition was modified. In other words, a work began to be valued insofar as it circulated, either as an image-commodity or as an object-commodity.

The very notion of artistic talent and divine inspiration, two fallacies of the modern Christian bourgeoisie, is based on the myth that the (unique) artist found in his (unique) work of art a vehicle for the highest manifestation of his genius. The unattainable work, both in its technique and in its indecipherable hidden meanings, is another example of the auric distancing effect. However, as long as art can be repeated, engraved, reproduced or distributed – in other words, democratized –, the aura of the work vanishes, along with its uniqueness. Indeed, as access was widened to anyone learning art, due to the dissemination of schools in the 19th century beyond the narrow circles of the studios of the master artists themselves, the abyss between the work and the public, previously insurmountable, became smaller.

For Benjamin, “[...] the technical reproduction of the work of art emancipates it for the first time in universal history from its parasitic

existence in ritual” (2017, p. 19); “with the emancipation of various artistic practices from the heart of rituals, the opportunities for exposure of their products increase” (Benjamin, 2017, p. 21). The value of worship (religious, unique) becomes less important than the value of exposure, i.e., the work gains value the more it is exposed, distributed, viewed, and accessed.

VIII



Image 4 – Mural and Graffiti. Unknown artists.

Source: Facade of E.E. Profª. Marina Cintra Public School, Rua da Consolação, São Paulo⁵.

In the mural (Image 4), it can be seen an idealized scene from the beginnings of Christian education in Brazil. The image reveals a very particular point of view regarding the type of teaching that is intended, on a Catholic confessional basis, with the Jesuit-teacher holding the cross in one hand and, with the other, pointing something out in the book to the child. The image, on the school’s outside wall, reveals the kind of education/submission that is expected inside, a message to those who work and study in it.

In the photo, however, what is in evidence just as much as the mural, is the graffiti (the blog from which the photo was taken is from 2009). The defacement of the mural features, alongside the *tags* and other graphics in the foreground, three small red splotches, suggesting shots fired at the image, reminding us that the education represented there occurred in the

context of violence. What the at least two overlapping layers of art reveal is a historical process in which the struggle of classes and ethnic groups passes through educational issues.

In the first layer, the mural, we find not only the process of acculturation/ethnocide by which the native people of Brazil have passed, through cultural colonization justified on sacred bases, but also the point of view of the artist or of those who paid for the work. The fact that the expression of the Jesuit-teacher is that of someone calm, who teaches with serenity, and the students in question are physically submissive and obedient, reveals the attempt to erase the real and symbolic violence that this pedagogical performance perpetrated.

The graffiti therefore announces itself as revolt. It covers the Christian mural with tags, frontally attacking that first layer and thereby composing, with it, a kind of historical-educational palimpsest. And even if the authors of the (many) tags and the red splotches are distinct, there is no doubt that this second layer can be read, by the spectator, as a unique set of interventions, criticism and response to the first layer. The red spots are around the Jesuit-teacher, indicating that he is the target of criticism, and the tags around him indicate the desire of an oppressed class to also be represented there. It would not be exaggerated to think that, in one way or another, the social class responsible for the graffiti descended from the same Native Americans represented there, or at least from people who have suffered similar oppressions.

It is striking that the mural is painted in soft lines, curved, in a graphic style that resembles children's books, emphasizing the sense of kindness and submission, while the graffiti appears in undisciplined and coarse lines as a second layer, and ends up revealing the hidden violence in the former. If there is a process of decay of the sacred aura, as occurs in art and teaching, examples like this reveal how this decadence inheres in the expression of contempt on the part of taggers for the mural, as much for it as an artform that does not represent or include them, as for the historical oppression that the mural's narrative brings to light.

IX



Image 5 – *Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois*. Monet (1867). Source: Staatliche Museen, Germany⁶.

The phenomenon of *the masses* is essentially modern. The Impressionists were the first ones to capture it in their late 19th century works, as evidenced in Monet's painting (Image 5), which concerns itself with portraying the huge number of passers-by in front of the cathedral after which the work is named. By *mass*, it is meant a large agglomeration of people who are in the same place, at the same time, for different reasons, anonymous to one another – that is, they are not gathered there by any agglutinative event. The Impressionists were pioneers in depicting the masses because Paris was, at the time, the great capital of the world, with the effects of accelerated urbanization that the industrial revolution drove on display.

Benjamin, who analyzes the decay of the aura at the beginning of the 20th century, observes how this social phenomenon precipitates itself in an artistic form: technical reproducibility is made possible simultaneously by the technical advances represented by the invention of photography, cinema and radio, and by a necessity imposed by mass society. According to Benjamin (2017, p. 35):

A picture could only offer itself to contemplation by an individual or a small group. The contemplation of paintings by many people simultaneously, as in the nineteenth century, is one of the first symptoms of the crisis in

painting, which was not triggered solely by photography but rather emerged relatively independent of this, due to the tendency of taking works of art to the masses (2017, p. 35).

It follows that the decadence of the aura of works of art owes much to the emergence of the masses and their need to access art, which could no longer be that individual and unique art of worship that inhabited the palaces of centuries gone by. A similar phenomenon is seen in education:

If the craft of the master seems to come to us from a distant past, the history of the teaching profession does not exceed four hundred years. The advent of modernity brought with it the need to educate the masses, to assert the anthropocentric, liberal, and bourgeois project of ensuring the civilizing process reached the maximum possible number of people (Pereira; Paulino; Franco, 2011, p. 20).

The figure of the preceptor and the first Christian schools are the birthplace of the modern western school, whose first steps can be seen in the educational project of Jean-Baptiste de La Salle. Its emergence, therefore, was as a literacy project, destined for the few, most of whom were men, and all of whom were white. There were also few professors, and religion was undoubtedly *the* theme, over and above the questions of morality, science, and crafts. The pedagogic relation was established on a one-to-one basis, echoing the educational patterns of the archetypal master-disciple relationship, except in an aristocratic environment. By aristocratic it is meant that teaching occurred within the home and for a small number of students, and not necessarily that all students belonged to the nobility, as this class had in fact been in decay since the Renaissance. The students also belonged to the bourgeoisie, who could pay for this education and valued it as means of social ascension.

The French and Industrial Revolutions of the late 18th and 19th centuries would, in addition to advocating for human rights in the spirit of liberalism, promote modernizing and democratizing projects, which included the massification of the school, and even the need for literacy and specialization with the advent of large machines. This project, although still incomplete today, no doubt already demonstrates its victory: at least in the Brazilian constitution of 1988, the school is for everyone, and there are sanctions against families whose children do not attend.

The massification and democratization of the school has led, as a side effect, to the loss of auric unity, concerning both knowledge and teachers: many today teach, everyone receives an education, and access to university was being extensively democratized in Brazil, at least until 2016. At the same time, digital technologies allow access to knowledge, books and, more generally, information (even disinformation), which disallows the teacher from his place as sole holder of knowledge, thereby deterritorializing it. Distance Learning allows us to reproduce technically, in the same terms as Benjamin uses this expression, a *class* as information, making it available online, and at progressively lower cost. Due both to positive tendencies (the progressive secularization of the school, the non-acceptance of any one single truth – be it religious or political, and the democratization of knowledge), and negative ones (the dissemination of disinformation and the decreasing value of educational work in the market), even knowledge itself loses its aura as it approaches the masses.

X

[...] institutions have become the organizational and distributive terrain of our centers of experience. This is due to the fact that they had multiplied into an infinite number of apparatuses, in which the most different orders of knowledge and techniques of conduct were materialized, processed, applied and diffused, in view of certain living conditions for the constitution of their subjects: correctional apparatuses, educational apparatuses, administrative and bureaucratic management apparatuses, hospital apparatuses, in short, standardization apparatuses of the most different forms. In each of them, albeit with an embedded coincidence, distinct types of procedures were integrated, in order to obtain a practical effect of human conduct (Carvalho, 2014, p. 1).

The quotation from Carvalho synthesizes the meaning attributed by Foucault to institutions, in the sense of them becoming apparatuses, ones that have arisen in modernity and are directed to the social control of bodies, to instituting discipline; apparatuses that bureaucratize, formalize and standardize contracts, among others, of authority. The institutionalization of education can be seen as the modern way of reinventing and replacing forms of authority that were lost with the decline of the auric authority of religion, although some of these archaic forms

survive parallel to modern institutions. In the school-institution, instead of respect being achieved on the basis of the hierarchy of distant, sacred aura knowledge, inherited from the father and from the Father, respect in the institution is bargained for through bureaucratic mechanisms, as found in the school regiment.

Examples of this include the exchange of respect for grades within evaluation systems, such as when marking students on behavioral factors such as participation, posture, punctuality and presence; the negotiation of discipline through sanctions, such as being taken to the principal's office where the student will be given a lecture, or through a warning to be signed by the parents; and the exchange of good discipline for rewards, such as allowing early departure for recess, being able to choose the next activity, gaining free time, being excused from homework, etc. Irrespective of the extent to which these are fair (determined as they are by intense daily negotiations within the context of each school), the fact is that, in all these examples, what the institution engenders is a system of exchanges in which respect for authority becomes merely one value among many. The perversion of turning the classroom into an explicit trading floor, within the limits of a bourgeois institution, is that it equates the subjects' ways of life and their relations with the exchange of commodities.

Respect for others ceases to be an ethical duty, rooted in principle, to become an object that I, as an individual, may or may not put on display in the shop-window in the fair of vanities, cynicisms and bargaining, as I may desire. It is in this context that Pereira, Paulino and Franco (2011, p. 25) claim that "through the promotion of standardized, predictable and programmable behavior, pedagogy becomes one of the strongest illusions of modern mysticism", because this institutionalized pedagogy disregards the dimension of the lesson as experience, when it comes to structuring, schematizing, and rationalizing processes. The way that class hours become credits is evidence of this process of the reification of the school, which turns everything into values-commodities.

However, neither raising grade averages nor increasing disciplinary measures will change the systemic structure of the institutional bureaucracy. As already widely demonstrated by researchers, the only effect of this would be to increase fail rates and consequently school dropouts. On the contrary,

it is important to reevaluate the logic of the bureaucratic and capitalist institution which, applied to education, transforms educational values into values-commodities: grades, credits, class hours, warnings, repetition/failure, exclusion from the classroom, dismissal, dropouts.

The teacher's rule over the class becomes increasingly bureaucratic as it is secularized and, as the right to power loses its divine origins, it must seek in institutional logic the sources of its authority. For educators who understand the need for the secularization of teaching and the exercise of democracy in school – as a practice that constitutes the ways of functioning of the school, rather than as a subject to be taught –, it is important to create strategies to overcome the bureaucratization of the institution. These strategies should, at the same time, allow for the exercise of student criticality and their effective participation in the conduct of their own learning process, as well as institute ways that allow the teacher to exercise their authority. This need not be confused with any kind of authoritarianism, whether of divine or bureaucratic origin.

XI

Cinema responds to the minimizing of the aura through an artificial build-up of the personality outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by cinematographic capital, maintains that spell of the personality that has long been reduced to only the rotten spell of its mercantile character (Benjamin, 2017, p. 30).

Benjamin had already indicated in this quotation a kind of artificial creation of the aura by the spirit of capitalism. His example is Hollywood's star system, which generates around the artists, or more precisely, around their image, an aura of mystification and rapture. Taking advantage of the old fallacies of talent, divine inspiration and artistic genius, already in vogue in the worship of divas since the 18th century, coupled with increasingly aggressive investigations into the personal lives of artists which turned them into caricatures of themselves, the logic of the star system can be seen as an attempt to save the aura or, even, to preserve it within the logic of the commodity. Here it is the artist who becomes their own commodity and, more specifically, the image of their body is the main value associated with

their labor power. The aura of spectacle is the imposition of a distance, between artists and spectators, by the cult of the commodity.

In the field of education, we can see in recent years the exploitation of the form of Show-Classes or Show-Lectures by capitalism. It is a structure that, taking advantage of the eminently performative character of the pedagogical act, artificially increases the degree of spectacle, using the artifice of theatrical machinery, to create around the teacher an aura of showman, which Peter McLaren (1991) called a teacher as entertainer, propagandist or evangelist. It is to this phenomenon, widely diffused in the United States and now propagated throughout the world, that how-to manuals of teaching performance are dedicated. The logic of a pedagogy of theater as applied to teacher-training is then diluted to its most superficial element: training in vocal and body techniques to improve performance vis-à-vis audiences, based only on the charisma and on the personalistic and libidinal force of their speeches. In these manuals, what is observed is a perversion of the logic of the performativity of the teacher, in favor of a spectacular exploitation of their image as a keeper of knowledge or of the secrets for a successful life.

Gusdorf (2003) named this phenomenon the *pathology of mastery*, in reference to its epidemic and unhealthy character. The author bell hooks (2018, p. 215-216), in dialogue with Ron Scapp, agrees that there is a perversion of engagement and of liberating pedagogy when the teacher becomes a star:

BH: This has disturbed me a lot. The more the engaged classroom becomes overcrowded, the more it runs the risk of becoming a show, a place of fun [...]

RS: We have to resist the tendency to be transformed into spectacles. That means resisting the status of 'star', resisting to play the role of actor. I'd say that one of the downsides of fame might be the fact that you lure certain people into the classroom to watch you, not to engage with. [...]

BH: When we have star status, iconic teacher status, people stop coming to class simply because they want a participatory education. They come to see bell hooks performing.

In these contexts, there is a risk that catchphrases take the place of knowledge. These phrases, displaced from their context and taking the form of metaphorical pedagogical abstractions, can, much like newspaper

horoscopes, apply to any situation in life. The criticality and complexity of thought is replaced by the logic of seduction in a show-lesson, a relationship built between teacher and student based on generic, seemingly anti-ideological, secular and universal knowledge that, in fact, is quite white, Western, patriarchal and Christian. The authority of the teacher is filled with a cult of personality, ignoring Socrates' teaching that the cult of the teacher should be replaced by the cult of what is taught: "you do not listen to Socrates, but to the truth" (apud Gusdorf, 2003, p. 81).

XII

For Gatti, a commentator on Benjamin's work, a fundamental feature of Benjamin's reflection on aura concerns the capacity of cinema to approach what would be the main characteristic of fascism, namely, their ability to provoke emotional reactions in the audience. But, in inverse relation to authoritarian logic, cinema would not become a force appropriable by reactionary forces because it uses this emotional capacity in an emancipatory sense. This is what Gatti (2009, p. 299) would call a dialectical reversal:

[...] the process by which thought mimetically approaches its object of criticism, assimilating itself dangerously to it, to the point of almost succumbing to its regressive force, as if it were the only strategy still available to sustain a minimum critical distance capable of saving its liberating potentialities.

Put differently, in benjaminian philosophy, cinema has the ability to mimic the emotive potentials of fascism, imitating its reactive effect on the masses, but using it for politicization and awareness, rather than its opposite, political manipulation. The dialectical reversal, then, is this conversion of what would normally be a regressive force to its advantage, as in martial arts where the force of an opponent's strike is used against them.

It is in this same sense that I propose a dialectical reversal of aura and sacred concepts in teaching, reversing their original sense (of detachment, of access to the single truth, of authoritarianism), to seek a new possibility for aura, a new experience of the sacred in education through what bell hooks (2018) calls engaging, transgressing and exercising the collective, through the creation of a learning community. The writer describes her contact with

Paulo Freire as being in a “holy atmosphere”, quoting Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn:

[...] ‘Great human beings bring with them a kind of holy atmosphere, and when we seek them, we feel peace, feel love, and feel courage.’ [...] When you [the master, the teacher] come and stay with us for an hour, you bring this atmosphere with you ... It's as if you bring a candle into the room. The candle is there; you bring a kind of light zone. When a sage is there and you sit near him, you feel light and feel peace (Hahn apud hooks, 2018, p. 79).

If there may be similarities in the imagery (atmosphere, light zone) between this aura, described by Hahn and hooks, and that of Christian works, in the establishment of the relationship between teachers and students, there is fundamental divergence between that aura and this one. This aura will depend on reversing the sign of the traditional aura, reverting it dialectically in favor of education as a practice of freedom.

XIII

If the ‘deaths’ of the Father and God are a maxim of our times, it will be necessary to establish new forms of social bonding so that something of the political authority of the teacher may be restored or that, once displaced, it be reconsidered in experience (Pereira; Paulino; Franco, 2011, p. 29).

We would invoke, in the debate on the deterritorialization of authority, a form of theatrical practice quite common in Brazil since the 1980s, called the collaborative process. The roles of theater director and teacher share countless resonances, both in their definitions and in their crises of authority. If the director can assume, in some theatrical creation processes, a single, absolute, autocratic authority (and indeed – why not – one invested with that patriarchal auratic power), they can also be deterritorialized, moved from their place at the epicenter of the process of creation. They can instead assume a catalyzing figure that is neither central nor protagonist in the process of creation:

Staging in the collective refers, therefore, to any theatrical system of creation in which the function of the director is present and assumed but operates in a multiple and collectivized field of creation. It provokes a creative polyphony. It is a scenario that is contaminated and marked by relative autonomy. In it, we do not find ourselves, not by a long shot, close to the

‘end of the staging’, but rather to a deterritorialized staging (Araújo, 2008, p. 209).

Likewise, I do not believe that we are denying the need for the teacher or advocating the end of teaching, but rather rethinking their place, their territory of action and speech. Unlike the processes of collective creation, inspired by a hippie and anarchic ethic that was very common in the 1960s and 1970s in which the roles of director, actor, set designer and playwright were abolished in an *everybody does everything* scheme, in a collaborative process the functions of each artist are well defined. What is abolished, borrowing from the anarchic ideology of collective creations, is merely the hierarchy of functions. And *hierro*, the root of the word hierarchy, has the same etymological root as *aura*, referring to the sacralization that distances and ranks subjects in well-defined social structures.

In the collaborative process, decisions are made collectively, and voices are heard on an equal footing, even if decisions do need to be made by one or another member of the group. For the field of pedagogy, borrowing this idea of collaborative artistic creation processes can be an important path between the stereotypes of authoritarian and transmissive education on the one hand, and teachers as mere “‘facilitators’, ‘instructors’, ‘mediators’, ‘tutors’, among other terms that seem to want to soften a difference that is there at the very start: the difference between the master and the non-master” (Pereira; Paulino; Franco, 2011, p. 25). That is, to reevaluate authorities, to displace the places of agents, does not mean erasing or denying the difference between the functions of a process. For hooks (2018, p. 204-205), this collaboration between members creates what it calls a learning community, without signifying the teacher’s loss of authority:

When I enter the room at the beginning of the semester, it is my job to establish that our purpose should be to create together, even if only for a short time, a learning community. It positions me as a student, as a learner. But, on the other hand, I do not say that I will no longer have power. And I’m not trying to say here that we’re all the same. I’m trying to say that we’re all the same here because we’re all committed to creating a learning context.

Notice how the ideas of *repositioning* (analogous to deterritorialization) and *relative equality* are recurrent in the quotation from bell hooks, as are the expressions *displaced* or *reconsidered* in the quotation from Pereira,

Paulino and Franco that opens this fragment. For this reason, the path to rejecting the theory of the auric and transmissive authoritarianism of the education of the past is not to be done through the simple antithesis by which the teacher's role is de-characterized, falsely equating it to that of the student, and looking for terms that, as in the citation from Pereira, Paulino and Franco, *soften* the difference between who teaches and who learns, even if the roles do naturally invert themselves in the dynamics of classes. The fact that teachers also learn and that students also teach, and teach themselves by learning, does not nullify the differences of age, experiences, and education – an otherness that is characteristic of the schooling process.

Freire indicates this dialectical overcoming in a famous passage in which he narrates the anguish of a teacher, of democratic inclination, who felt to have been authoritarian when interrupting the dialogue of a student who was disrupting the class. Freire (2011, p. 102) explains that this is not authoritarianism, because “it would have been licentious if they had allowed the indiscipline of an ill-centered freedom to unbalance the pedagogical context, thus harming its functioning.” To Freire, freedom is not beyond any limit, “because I know that without it, existence only has value and meaning in the struggle for it. Freedom without limits is as negated as freedom asphyxiated or castrated” (Freire, 2011, p. 103). Gusdorf (2003, p. 70) approaches the teaching authority in the same sense when saying that:

The master is there: if he is truly a master, to the height of his mastery, he attests with his presence that he is someone. And because this person is someone, he imposes on the disciple the duty to be someone, not in the likeness of the master, but according to fidelity to himself.

With the term “presence”, the author attests to a performative characteristic inherent to teaching, thereby building the path to democratic authority, the authority of dialogue, a collaborative authority.

XIV

In the master's mouth, truth has the flavor of invention, it blossoms. Repeated by the disciple, this same truth is nothing but decaying and waning truth, because in it there is no longer the impulse (Gusdorf, 2003, p. 146).

The power of creation is also linked to the possession of aura, a product of the distancing effect of the one who knows how to do, of the one who has the gift of craftsmanship. The gods or the orishas, representing the anthropomorphic auric force, are those who create the world. The artist, seen in certain cultures as a demiurge or a promethean usurper of divine power, is the one who creates. Authority and authorship here recover the meanings that approximate their etymology. But today, the teacher's actions, according to Derrida (2001, p. 38), depart from the idea of creation: "[...] to know how to profess, or to profess a knowledge, or even how to produce a knowledge is not to produce oeuvres. As such, a professor does not sign an oeuvre. His or her authority as professor is not that of an author of an oeuvre, a work". Derrida refers in this passage to the modern-western tradition, which he refutes, in order to restore to professing the performative sense of creation:

What happens not only when one takes into account the performative value of profession but when one accepts that a professor produces 'oeuvres' and not just knowledge or pre-knowledge? To make our way toward the defense of this type of particular action that is the act of professing, and then the act of profession of a professor, and then finally of a professor of Humanities, we must pursue further our analysis of the distinctions between acting, doing, producing, working, work in general and the work of the worker (Derrida, 2001, p. 41).

The modern school, the institution, confiscated creative power from the teacher. The models come ready, the didactic sequences are given, the skills and abilities to be achieved are structured in such a way as to limit error, improvisation, daydreaming, moments of silence and emptiness, procrastination and idleness, which are so inspiring and necessary for artistic and pedagogical creation. The performance of the bureaucrat-teacher comes ready, like a role that is given to an actor, about which he can do nothing, other than reproduce the model of a video actor who created the role before him.

That which is the most anarchic and powerful in performances, be they artistic or pedagogical, is their impossibility of repetition. A class is never the same in two distinct groups of students, although the subject may be the same, even if they are taught on the same day and by the same teacher – just as a theatrical presentation is never the same, even if done on

consecutive days, by the same well-rehearsed company. To restore the creative, inventive, and performative power of the teacher and the student is to give autonomy to their decisions as well as the authorship /authority over what they teach and learn.

XV

Peter McLaren believes that there are rituals that occur at various levels of school life, from explicit macro-rituals to daily micro-rituals, within the space of the classroom. One of McLaren's sources for the study of the school as a rite is the work of Turner, for whom the rites of passage can be divided into three phases,⁷ characterized as separation, *limen* and aggregation. That is, the subject in transition, in the rite, goes through a process in which they distance themselves from their social state prior to the rite (separation), experience a liminal experience of transformation in the heart of the rite (*limen*), and then they are reinstated into society as a new subject (aggregation). For both Turner and McLaren, in their studies of school rites, the focus of interest is precisely on the liminal phase, which has the characteristics of being situated between territories. It has been situated “neither here nor there; they are in the middle and in between the attributed positions ordered by law, habits, conventions and ceremonials” (Turner, 2013, p. 98). At this stage of the liminal transition of the rite, the injunction is simultaneously at the margin (peripheral) and in the center. “Thus, liminality is often compared to death, being in the womb, invisibility, darkness, bisexuality, wilderness, and an eclipse of the sun and the moon.” (Turner, 2013, p. 98) The absence of territory or the act of self-assumption in an ephemeral space, of transitoriness, is inherent to the concept of deterritorialization, as utilized by Araújo (2008).

And it is at the heart of ritual liminality that, according to Turner, there is a profound and religious experience that deconstructs social foundations, and which can be characterized as an anti-structure insofar as the roles, hierarchies and status of that society are suspended. In it, subjects are socially undifferentiated, since they are involved in an experience of communion, camaraderie, homogeneity. Turner (2013, p. 99) names this social state *communitas*, and, for him, social life in general “is a type of dialectical process that encompasses the successive experience of the high

and the low, *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality”.

The anarchic absence of structure of the *communitas* can still serve as a relief for the structure and, in cycles that alternate dialectically, change the structure itself. It is, in this sense, revolutionary. This is because the structure in which society finds itself after *communitas* is not the same as it was before. *Communitas* can be lived as laboratories of another society since, with social roles in suspension, other relations can be tried out. In *communitas*, there is still a profoundly sacred and religious experience, to the extent that one experiences an essential reconnection between people, and people with the nature that surrounds them, a religious experience beyond institutions.

Peter McLaren (1991, p. 164-165) offers, in turn, an analysis of three essential types of teachers' performances⁸, namely: that of the teacher as a hegemonic master, a figure of autocratic (and aural?) authority; the teacher as entertainer, referring to the aforementioned image of teacher-showman, wrapped in a spectacular artificial aura; and the performance of the teacher who would be able to create this anti-structural space, *communitas*, in the classroom. This would be the shaman-teacher model, a liminal server whose performance gives

[...] a figurative meaning to the learning process, and the class context turns from indicative (emphasis on mere facts) to subjunctive (emphasis on the quality of the “as if” of learning), from resistance, to undifferentiated humanity, and from within the confinements of social structures to the sowing of creativity, located in the antistructure (a receptive mode of consciousness in which we exist in a state of human wholeness) (McLaren, 1991, p. 166).

If the lesson can be lived as a deep creative experience, and the teacher can profess, performing this shamanic role that McLaren assigns them, each lesson can be lived as a micro-ritual and reach this moment of *communitas* in which roles are put in suspension and teachers and students can truly collaborate, learn and teach. According to McLaren (1991, p. 167), the performance of the shaman-teacher or the liminal server

[...] does not prioritize structure and order (although their classes can be highly structured and organized) and is able to ‘arrange’ conditions conducive to the occurrence of *communitas*, the flow. He knows that he

should not merely present knowledge to the students; he must transform students' awareness, allowing them to 'incarnate' or embody knowledge.

It is important to recall here that McLaren writes from a materialist, progressive and revolutionary point of view, with Paulo Freire as one of his main references. Thus, the religious associations made by McLaren are undertaken in a truly secular sense, and the intended connection here is with truth, with knowledge, in the very same sense that Derrida (2001) speaks of the professing of truth.

These are experiences in which students and teacher are so completely absorbed in the work they are doing, so enthusiastic and interested in the paths and discoveries that they are making together, that social roles (structure) enter into suspension. The teacher has authority over the room once students have joined in the pedagogical proposal and are immersed in it. But the truth is that the teacher's authority does not matter then, because all are partners in trying to unravel a common problem. In these moments of *communitas* in a class, one forgets the time, the bell rings and class is suddenly over. Some might argue that the teacher lost control of the lesson – in fact, they really did! – but control does matter here. Although bell hooks (2018, p. 269) does not use the term *communitas*, she addresses the idea of a learning community, and describes a type of analogous experience:

But the truth is that engaged pedagogy, in some of its versions, is the only kind of teaching that really engenders enthusiasm in the classroom, which enables students and teachers to feel the joy of learning. [...] It is this passion for ideas, critical thinking, and the dialogical exchange that I want to celebrate in the classroom and share with the students.

Similar moments are found in theatrical experience, in the process of rehearsals, in which the director's role is suspended, because we are all together producing art, concerned with the work to which we are dedicated (Araújo, 2008). In these moments, a new aura is established, but not that which Benjamin witnessed decay, nor that aura artificially produced by the spectacle of capital. It is still however an aura, because we are dealing with rite and oneness, provided these are unrepeatable and irreplaceable pedagogical experiences. But here, the old authority need not be exercised anymore: we witness the dawn of a completely new aura, one which is not

just in one person or another, but in the space between. This is not felt as an individual experience, nor as distance, but as proximity of affects between subjects in physical presence. It is a religiosity that we can recognize both in Derrida's (2001) idea of professing, and in the atmosphere sensations of bell hooks. It is a mutual feeling of trust and companionship in which the joy of being together, producing together, surpasses the need for the exercise of power.

XVI

End of class.

The experience of *communitas* needs closure, people need to go their separate ways. That which has been experienced as antistructure, as a crisis of the institution, as a rupture, needs to be structured again, and the social roles of teacher and student need to be re-performed. The teacher needs to reassume control and say: *clear the tables, keep the materials, do this, do not forget that, remember to do this, bring that to the next class...*

The teacher's body is tired, but it is the fatigue of one who was enthused by the pleasure of movement, like the exhaustion after dancing at a party all night. Their arms and legs throb and they feel the need to sit down and take a deep breath. This body has once again distinguished itself from the rest in taking up the position of teacher, a position which is no bigger or better than that of any other, but which is undoubtedly distinct. However, the new structure that is now established, after *communitas* has been experienced, is different.

Enthusiasm means having God within. This was what was felt by actors in the performances of tragedies and comedies in antiquity, as well as that of their audience in the feasts to Dionysus, all to a greater or lesser extent drunk on that wine: enthusiasm, deification. The new aura, dialectically reversed, is not that of patriarchal hierarchy, nor that of the individual, haloed like the head of the kings. Rather it is this new and at the same time ancient one: collective enthusiasm in search of a common truth, the desiring fury of creation, that electric current which effects moods in collaborative work.

As bell hooks (2018, p. 17) states, "enthusiasm in higher education was seen as something that could disturb the atmosphere of seriousness

considered essential for the learning process”. Inversely for her, teaching as a practice of freedom must to be based on enthusiasm not only for ideas, but “for our interest in each other, for listening to each other's voice, for recognizing one another’s presence” (hooks, 2018, p. 18.). The author insists that this enthusiasm needs to be built by collective effort.

Finally, before the students leave the classroom, before the teacher welcomes the next class and is still taking a breath – because they know that will mean the start of a next experience – the teacher imbues themselves with the humility of the master and says: *thanks, guys, for today's class.*

Notes

- ¹ Available at: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Comnenus_mosaics_Hagia_Sophia.jpg>. Accessed on: 20 Apr. 2019.
- ² T. N.: *O Ateneu* is a classic fiction novel by the Brazilian writer Raul Pompéia, first published in 1888.
- ³ Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lasalle_org/34840061506/in/photostream/>. Accessed on: 14 Mar. 2019.
- ⁴ Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lasalle_org/34840089096/in/photostream/>. Accessed on: 14 Mar. 2019.
- ⁵ Available at: <<https://girame.wordpress.com/2009/08/18/tire-sua-fe-do-caminho/>>. Accessed on: 14 Mar. 2019.
- ⁶ Available at: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Monet_Saint-Germain-l%27Auxerrois_Paris_1867.jpg>. Accessed on: 20 Apr. 2019.
- ⁷ Turner borrows the classification of the three phases of rites of passage from Von Gennep.
- ⁸ As these performances are verified on the basis of practical analysis of the school’s daily life, and not on ideal models, McLaren sets these three types as categories of work, of doing, that is, practical possibilities of embodied enactment for the teacher. Still, it is important to note that, in his thought, any teacher would be acting as the liminal server, the hegemonic or the entertainer all at the same time. On the contrary, these performances were alternating with each other, in the teacher’s daily life, in different proportions,

depending on many factors, exogenous or endogenous, in each class experience.

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This original text, translated by Alex Hochuli and proofread by Ananyr Porto Fajardo, is also published in Portuguese in this issue of the journal.

Received on April 22, 2019

Accepted on September 25, 2019

Editor-in-charge: Marcelo de Andrade Pereira

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