Risky thinking: the relation between philosophy and education

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Abstract

This article was produced for a special session of Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação (ANPED – National Association of Graduate Studies and Research on Education) about the relationship between philosophy, history, psychology and sociology of education. It first discusses the familiarity between philosophy and education, pointing their original bond, initiated in the Greek world under the rubric of foundations of education, and then explains a movement of withdrawal caused by the scientification of pedagogy. As a result of the advancement of modernization processes and the success of scientific knowledge, the area of foundations suffers the impacts of scientific rationality, which produces increasingly indisputable results and deprives metaphysical knowledge. Although this impact has not disallowed the dismissal of philosophy, it has led to a conceptual change and altered its role in relation to education and culture. The area then takes a more humble position in the face of science and other symbolic expressions, dialoguing about and interpreting the paradoxes and tensions generated by our relations with the world. From this approach, the article offers two suggestions for the relation between philosophy and education. Based on the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and on the transversal rationality of Wolfgang Welsch, the first suggestion resumes the perspective of the new scientific dialogues called interdisciplinarity as a way of overcoming the limits of specialization and meeting the complexity of educational issues. In the second suggestion, I indicate Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's position on the relevance of the humanities to develop risky thinking that is able to produce complexities in the analyses that illuminate educational issues.

Keywords

Philosophy of education – Human sciences – Interdisciplinarity – Humanities.

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Pensar arriscado: *a relação entre filosofia e educação*

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Resumo

Este trabalho foi produzido no âmbito de uma sessão especial da Associação Nacional de Pós-graduação em Educação (ANPEd) a respeito das relações entre a filosofia, a história, a psicologia e a sociologia da educação. Discute, primeiramente, a relação de familiaridade da filosofia com a educação, apontando seu vínculo originário, iniciado no mundo grego, sob a rubrica de fundamentos da educação, para, então, explicitar um movimento de afastamento provocado pela cientificização da pedagogia. Com o avanço dos processos de modernização e o êxito do conhecimento científico, a área dos fundamentos sofreu os impactos da racionalidade científica, sendo os resultados cada vez mais incontestáveis e que destituem o saber metafísico. Tal impacto, contudo, não desautorizou a despedida da filosofia, mas provocou uma mudança conceitual e de seu papel na relação com a educação e a cultura. A área então assume uma posição mais humilde diante das ciências e de outras expressões simbólicas, dialogando e interpretando os paradoxos e as tensões geradas pelas nossas relações com o mundo. A partir dessa abordagem, o artigo encaminha duas sugestões para a relação entre filosofia e educação. A primeira, apoiada na hermenêutica de Hans-Georg Gadamer e na racionalidade transversal de Wolfgang Welsch, retoma a perspectiva dos novos diálogos científicos, chamados de interdisciplinaridade, como um modo de superar os limites da especialização e de atender a complexidade das questões educacionais. Na segunda sugestão, indica-se a posição de Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht a respeito da relevância das humanidades para desenvolver um pensamento arriscado, capaz de produzir complexidades nas análises que iluminem as questões educacionais.

Palavras-chave

Filosofia da educação – Ciências humanas – Interdisciplinaridade – Humanidades.

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This article originated from the analysis of the relation between philosophy, history, psychology and sociology of education, and was prepared for a special session of ANPED held in October 2013. It discusses in particular the inclusion of philosophy in education, a change in its very concept and the perspectives glimpsed in the relation to the other human sciences. Philosophy of education is the oldest knowledge of this dialogue and, unlike sociology, psychology, and history, it is not a science in the modern sense, but a discipline in the curricula. In this work, I seek to address the relation between these disciplines, at first briefly situating the history of sciences and how philosophy is part of this movement.

Philosophy has established an original link with education since the Greek acquired philosophical conscience, around the fourth century BC. This is the period when sophistry began questioning the educational practice and theory, which Socrates and Plato continued, with a "deep awareness of the complexity of human and social issues" (SCOLNICOV, 2006, p. 16). This movement set a trend of familiarity of philosophy and education, expressed in the idea of foundations, and gradually produced a withdrawal due to the new social, epistemological and cultural contexts and especially due tothe emergence of sciences, since the modern period, when only the knowledge that follows the limits imposed by reason's self-certainty and self-grounding is considered scientific knowledge.

From that starting point, using Gadamer's hermeneutics and transversal rationality, as advocated by Welsch, I intend to present a perspective that has gained ground around the search for "new models of cooperation and scientific dialogue" (FLICKINGER, 2010, p. 46), which are called interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity. I have no desire or time to expose here the main parts of this debate or offer a reconstruction of the rich literature on the boundaries between epistemology and hermeneutics that the problem raises. I will dwell on a common point of the contemporary debate "surrounding the possible rebuilding of bridges between disciplines"(FLICKINGER, 2010, p. 46).

First, we need to distinguish between the history of science and philosophy in the educational field. Since modernity, science has assumed the character of description of reality using its own method, first as developed by Galileo, who emphasized the role of experience and observation in the production of knowledge, and then as reasoned by Descartes, who proposed the adoption of a rational procedure, which grants validity to knowledge.Due to these assumptions, the positivist strand of the theory of knowledge staked in the objectivity of knowledge, bringing the rigid separation between subject and object, reaffirming the dominance of empirical procedures. Only later, due to the contemporary discussion of the theory of knowledge (MATURANA, 2004) and the theory of systems (LUHMANN, 2009), did it become clear that there is no radical separation between reality and the observer.

Anyway, with its methodological procedure, science has produced true knowledge, synthesized in the binomial explain and predict, creating a technical-scientific culture foreign to the original meaning of culture, which included philosophical knowledge. Until modernity, philosophy means the desire to learn and a kind of summary of conceptual knowledge, but it certainly loses the interpretive monopoly of culture and specialization takes over. In addition, for the so-called human sciences, any prediction, a common procedure in sciences, becomes problematic, since the human being is faced with the issue of freedom, which always brings new surprises. It is remarkable that nothing assures the results of educational processes, as we are always subject to the risks of not learning as expected.

According to Gadamer, science as conceived in Europe[1] has become the very basis

1- Gadamer highlights that this statement does not deny important contributions from other cultures: "Just remember what the fledgling Greek

of Western culture in modern times, because the technical and industrial revolution:

> [...] has already covered the whole world with increasing intensity. Modern science and research, the education system and the university system are all limited to the European model or its American form: all this is a consequence of European science (GADAMER, 2002, p.144)[2].

It is noteworthy that not until the eighteenth century did the discussions of pedagogy as a scientific discipline, its status as a science and its relation with philosophy emerge[3]. The use of pedagogy as a new science of education appeared in Germany around 1770. The creation of the discipline pedagogy, at Halle/ Saale University, under the supervision of Ernst Trapp in 1779, is referred to as the beginning of the institutional separation of pedagogy and philosophy (FRISCHMANN; MOHR, 1997, p. 9). This separation not only marks the beginning of a process of emancipation, but also points to the increasing withdrawal of philosophy fromthe discussion of educational matters in the following decades. As a consequence of such withdrawal, the field of education has been increasingly defined by sciences and the growing penetration of the procedures considered specific to science. This led to such dominance of scientism in pedagogythat non-empirical research seemed strange.

Despite the scientification of pedagogy, the field of education housed the humanities, such as history, psychology, sociology and philosophy, under the broad designation of *foundations of education*. And in spite of their being under a common name, there remained distances marked by the nature of the object and the methodological approach. This structure has come to dominate the institutional integration of the disciplines of the area of foundations.

In Brazil, many departments in Education Schools are called so. In that space, philosophy was responsible for the theoretical treatment of teaching problems and the interpretation of the different philosophical contributions to education, including the maturation of educational consciousness, by the ancient Greeks, Christianity's pedagogical idea, the cultural changes from Renaissance humanism to the Enlightenment and the links of education with the concepts of nature, individual and society. Among the many works that have marked the interpretive courses of education as exemplary theoretical investigations about what to educate means, the following stand out: *Nicomachean Ethics* (about 334 a. C.), by Aristotle; *Letters to Lucilius* (65), by Seneca; *De magistro* (389), by Augustine; "Affection of parents towards their children", in Essays (1580-1588),by Montaigne; *Some thoughts on education* (1693), by Locke; *Emile*, or *On education* (1762), by Rousseau; *Letters Upon the Aestjetoc Education of Man*(1795), by Schiller, and *On Pedagogy* (1803), by Kant. The philosophical foundations of modern education emerged from the discussions of these thinkers. Some even became important links in the anthropological foundation of education, which had begun with Plato in Greece, from the perspective that human imperfection would be offset by education.

In spite of the advancement of science and the specialization of disciplines, it was under the auspices of the tradition of great systems that philosophy was articulated as the foundation of education, in order to give it theoretical foundations, and indicate its ends. Therefore, pedagogical thinking derives from the philosophical system, and is tributary to certain ontological, epistemological, ethical and anthropological models. The anthropological model of the eighteenth century, in particular, formulates a concept of human nature that is decisive to modern pedagogical thinking, in which the individual is understood as a feature of the universal, endowed with an essence,

science inherited from the Near East and Egypt" (GADAMER, 2002).

2 - Translator's note: freely translated from Spanish.

3 - Here I discus some of the arguments developed in Hermann (2012).

whose destiny is the moral improvement of oneself and the species. This type of model is present in metaphysical philosophies, in which man, the world and society consist of rational structures which can be made explicit.

Foundations give education a secure ground, upon which it would be possible for the full human life to settle, integrated in cosmic and social wholeness: a search for an antidote to lack, transience, particularity. Thus, philosophy is a foundation that indicates what the purpose of education, human nature, the subject etc. are, and research in philosophy proposes to unfold this link.

Due to the advance of modernization processes, the area of the foundations suffered the impact of scientific rationality, which produced increasingly indisputable results and eventually cornered metaphysical knowledge or forced philosophy to criticize itself. From this perspective, the idea of an essentialist and unchanging human nature, governed by divine command or by a natural law (as it was understood by metaphysical tradition, before the modern movement) is rejected by the new interpretations of biology, psychology, sociology and anthropology, which share an opposition to metaphysical foundations.

Therefore, the idea of a sovereign and autonomous subject, which would be transparent to itself, goes into crisis, because empirical data indicate unconscious motives for the action, which made the idea of self-determination and control of one's own action by rational will crumble. The autonomous reason and the founding self-certainty of the Cartesian tradition result in the tendency of objectification due to the separation between subject and object. As a consequence, reason loses its regulatory function. Not even the German idealism did manage to escape reason's domineering attitude and to overcome the impasses arising from the radical separation between subject and object, which brought instrumental rationality and the increasing division of sciences (FLICKINGER; NEUSER, 1994, p. 33). Sciences progress in a multitude of specializations, and there is a noticeable loss of understanding of their own research objects.

Therefore, there is a shift in the relationship between philosophy and education, which ceases to be close and familiar to become strange and distant, especially due to the fall of a foundation from which all pedagogical actions could be deduced. New interpretations indicate that we no longer need to articulate all worldviews in a unit, as in the case of Christian humanism. Also, there is a process ofdisciplinarization of philosophy, which is increasingly subjected to specialization and abandons the idea of wholeness.

Although philosophy has played a role of foundation, paradoxically, as it also yielded to disciplinarization, it lost strength to play the very role of foundation, becausesuch role is associated with an idea of wholeness, of metaphysical nature, no longer consistent with the mode of knowledge development. In the scenario of education, on the one hand, the differentiation of disciplines broadens, accompanied by "a mutual hermetic protection, expressed by the particular language that is specific to each area and is accompanied by a spirit of competition, of mutual disdain or, in the best of hypotheses, of indifference" (FLICKINGER, 2007, p. 115), with few moments of conversation between them, and the predominance of hermetic language.

In the teacher education curriculum, the most varied disciplines proliferate, in a growing fragmentation of the pedagogical object to the point that, in many cases, we confuse education with vocational qualifications determined by utilitarian rationalism. On the other hand, since the early twentieth century, due to the intensification of empirical research in the pedagogical field, there has been a decrease in the employment of philosophy by pedagogy. When pedagogy becomes autonomous, it tends to mimic the behavior of natural sciences, making pedagogical decisions in the realm of specialization, severing ties with tradition and distancing itself from thinking about education.

This, however, does not cancel the question about the meaning of philosophy for education in general and for pedagogy in particular. The relation between them is deep from both a historical and a systematic perspective, despite the controversy regarding the possible dismissal of philosophy. By the way, here it is worth remembering the warning of Frischmann and Mohr (1997, p. 10):

> Herein lies the cunning of philosophy, which, in the farewell of each foundation, shows itself once again as philosophical reflection. A science without critical reflection of the foundations would be no less anachronistic than a philosophical tutelage[4].

Philosophy recognizes that there are no instances outside our culture and practices that may justify human action. The philosophically crucial question is thus about the conclusions which we reach in the face of the fall of the foundations, the subject crisis etc. It is philosophy's responsibility to question the meaning of education, and what subjectivity and the construction of a common world to be presented to the new generations mean. Philosophy can always contribute to thinking about education because, as stated by Gadamer (1983, p. 25):

> [...] The need for philosophical grounding is an endless process. In it, it takes place not only the conversation in which we are all caught up together and never cease to be caught up, whether one says that philosophy is dead or not.

Given the above, an increasingly broader process of differentiation of disciplines occurs and they can no longer be united in a body of knowledge (FLICKINGER, 2010, p. 45). In addition, there is a growing awareness of the complexity of the problems that cannot be absorbed into a single approach. Thus, I would like to introduce two suggestions about the relations between the disciplines of our topic of debate. The first is interdisciplinary; the second refers to the relevance of the humanities. None of them is a new proposal, as I see no need for that. I aim only to make explicit to the field of education the critical impulse of these suggestions, which will facilitate the understanding of the effects of education when it is subjected to restrictive rationalism, and does not thus benefit from the richness of conversation.

The dialogue between disciplines receives different denominations such as interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. Before defining each term, I would like to make a defense of the hermeneutic approach to the possible relation between disciplines in the field of education. The inflated use of such expressions not only indicates the consciousness of the "limits of the validity of disciplinary knowledge," but also gives "the impression of revealing a certain helplessness" in the management of the conflict between being autonomous in its disciplinary field and, at the same time, dependent on the "cooperation with other areas to solve its own problem" (FLICKINGER, 2010, p. 46).

According to Flickinger (2010), what is at stake when we realize the limits of our own view takes us to the hermeneutical presuppositions of any interdisciplinary relation. Gadamer's hermeneutics, as a theory of understanding, is born as a procedure specific to the humanities. Unlike the causal-explanatory method, hermeneutics places our issues on the horizon of language and historicity, which cannot be dominated by the subject, as the Cartesian tradition, which provided the basis for disciplinarization, wanted.

From this perspective, knowledge is a search for meaning that requires clarification of the prejudices of current knowledge in the face of the inexhaustible knowledge of tradition. This depends on the questions and the dialogue that forces interlocutors to expose their own convictions. Also, the questionableness of what

4 - Translator's note: freely translated by the article's author from German into Portuguese and by the translator from Portuguese into English.

one asks should remain open, the opening being the ability to suspend ideas (GADAMER, 1990, p. 369). In this process, a man experiences himself, trying to make sense of his experiences. Thus, hermeneutics suspects the separation between the knowing subject and the object to be known and suspects, therefore, the alleged scientific objectivity. In other words, it means that every scientific discipline is set in "a realm of interests, questioning and conceptualization, from which it develops the criteria and objectives of its research" (FLICKINGER, 2007, p. 119). Thus, no discipline can escape the horizon of which it is part.

Many factors determine the horizon where the research is located, such as the socio-political context, the genesis of scientific methods, the history of disciplines, research funding policies and priorities of resources. In an attempt to understand how this interdisciplinary dialogue is established, from the recognition by hermeneutics that the supposed scientific objectivity does not exist, Flickinger, supported by hermeneutics, points out what requirements are necessary to build a bridge between them and to build "any interdisciplinary cooperation":

1ª) No discipline may unilaterally impose its own perspective on another. Before that, rather than challenge the other disciplines, "each discipline is forced to expose its own perspective to the risk of being challenged with well-founded arguments" (FLICKINGER, 2010 p. 51). Thanks to such dialogue, something new is born, which was not known by any of the partners, in order to highlight aspects disregarded until then. We know there is resistance to this opening, because in general scientists, imprisoned by their theoretical and methodological convictions, are not willing to examine their certainties. According to Flickinger, this is the most annoying:

> because [it] represents a continuous threat to the disciplinary pillars that not only define the disciplinary identity, but also guarantee on a daily basis the legitimacy of the interests to be discussed and fulfilled within the disciplinary horizon of the questioning (FLICKINGER, 2010, p. 52).

2ª) This proposal depends on each participant opening to dialogue and devoting himself to the questionings to understand and evaluate the authenticity of what is being discussed. Each time we strive to seek the legitimacy of the view of another discipline, we force ourselves to review the bounding assumptions of our own discipline. Thus, interdisciplinary dialogue:

> rather than opening our eyes to better see what is happening in other areas, makes us more and more experts in our discipline of origin. Only then is a broader range of knowledge opened, capable of integrating the most diverse access to the world (FLICKINGER, 2010, p. 53).

This idea that by the dialogue with other disciplines we become more and more experts also appears in those who assume transdisciplinarity, as Wolfgang Welsch (2007) does. According to him, only transdisciplinarity "allows legitimately exploring a discipline" (WELSCH, 2007, p. 244). The author defends this based on the recognition of the paradigm shift in the human sciences, which brings a rationality in which the delimitation of scientific fields is no longer rigid, i.e., the objects of knowledge and working methods interpenetrate.The separation between natural sciences and the humanities is not rigid, because, since the sixties of the twentieth century, especially since the publication of the work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in 1962, Kuhn (2003) has shown that the history of the natural and human sciences (Geisteswissenschaften) and of the arts:

> [...] is characterized by a succession of revolutionary periods, in which the basis changes, and cumulative periods, in which

> work continues on the basis achieved (WELSCH, 2007, p. 239).

Contemporaneously, there is a plurality of paradigms and transformations of research objects. Nature is not the object of natural sciences only; it is also discussed by philosophy and cultural history, as it occurs, for example, in cultural history, in which one can show the real consequences of the image we have of nature (as is the case of the effects of tourism projects on nature).

Welsch (2007) also warns that there is no clear definition of the method. Researchers in history use not only systematic methods but also hermeneutics, deconstruction etc. In education, this difficulty in delimiting the field of sciences is evident, because many of their objects interpenetrate, as it can be noted in subjects such as corporeality, learning etc, which can only be properly understood by the contribution of cognitive sciences, psychology, anthropology, neuroscience, sociology, and philosophy.

Cultural history and philosophy can show, by historical and conceptual analysis, how we build certain interpretations on significant themes for research in education. Thus, we are influenced by the effects that certain interpretations of both natural sciences and the humanities and philosophy have on us. An example of that is the reductionism that results from our subjecting issues of the educational process, such as how learning, for example, to a purely biological interpretation, without considering their historical and cultural character. Solutions deviate from the pedagogical axis and are transposed into the realm of medicalization[5], in an impressive reductionism of the concept of learning and without proper assessment of their consequences. On the other hand, an ethicist cannot disregard some of the science discussions[6], just like a aesthetics scholar cannot ignore "the technological reality changes if he wishes to judge the aesthetic condition of society" (WELSCH, 2007, p. 240-1).

Welsch shows that the interdependence of objects of study is not due to "a seemingly unifying element – as 'spirit' – but to the various overlaps and kinship between disciplines" (WELSCH, 2007, p. 241). Based on Wittgenstein's concept of *family resemblances*, the philosopher indicates how these sciences are articulated, allowing him to defend the idea of transdisciplinarity, as opposed to the usual separation into disciplines. According to Welsch, there are "no longer questions that would not be answered differently by different paradigms" (WELSCH, 2007, p. 247). Disciplines such as sociology, psychology, history and philosophy should not dodge this pluralization. This leads Welsch to defend what he calls enlightened relativism, a term that still causes disgust, but that the author argues it is a sensible concept. Therefore,

> [...] The validity of the findings within a world version concerns the assumptions of such version: in the context of the chosen assumptions, statements make sense; in the context of other assumptions, they do not. Therefore, in science, one should always indicate the conditions according to which a statement gains validity (WELSCH, 2007, p. 249).

This does not mean that anything is valid. We can debate the different reference systems, but we cannot reduce them, which means being in accordance with dialogue, through which we open ourselves to clarify our assumptions or reference systems. This view maintains accuracy within each field because we adopt criteria of consistency and validity,

5- In *Os equívocos da infância medicalizada* (The errors in medicalized childhood - 2008), Diniz shows how the discourse of science, in particular medicine, is authorized to determine parameters of normality and abnormality which structure how learning problems are addressed, causing enormous damage to students' school life.

6- Frans de Waal (2010) argues that we descend from animals which are able to cooperate and empathize, and that our morality, that is, our ability to act correctly and not evilly has evolutionary origins, and that there is a continuum between the behavior of animals and that of humans.

within the strict requirements of each discipline and rationality.

This is also Richard Rorty's view. He argues for "science as solidarity", in which the "idea of unforced agreement" and "free and open encounters" are a kind of "encounter in which truth cannot fail to win" (RORTY, 1997, p. 61). According to him, disciplines should be thought of as communities in which:

> [...] The boundaries of disciplines are as fluid as the interests of their members. [...] This community would serve no higher purpose than its own preservation and self-improvement. Preservation and the improvement of civilization. (RORTY, 1991, p. 39)

Thus, among Gadamer, Welsch and Rorty's positions, there is a common defense of the possibility of an open attitude to dialogue as a way to overcome the limits of specialization. Thus, one can see that the dialogue between disciplines depends, above all, on an ethical stance. Flickinger (2007, p. 122) highlights this requirement:

> To accept the differences between the disciplines without attempting to make them similar presupposes an ethical posture of recognition and of mutual responsibility, such as these concepts express: to recognize oneself in the other and to be ready to give answers required by the question of the other.

In a second approach, I wish to reaffirm the fruitfulness of the study of philosophy, sociology, history and psychology to education in general and pedagogy in particular, at the risk of this seeming just serene obviousness. I follow here the suggestion of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht regarding the relevance of the humanities. He suggests that the humanities, and in particular the disciplines in question should be the opportunity to develop *risky thinking*, which he sees as a capacity to produce complexity.

In this view, although in the institutional structure of the university, where we develop the teaching and research work of these disciplines, we are faced with the requirement to "transmit a certain amount of standardized practical knowledge," because after all we have to train professionals, we should also reconcile "the transmission of a certain amount of practical knowledge" with "practices aimed at producing complexity" (GUMBRECHT, 2010, p. 130). The very fact that the humanities are engaged in the practice of complexity determines "their specificity compared with other disciplines" (GUMBRECHT, 2010, p. 130). This means not to simplify matters and not to impose a single way of reading problems.

It can be shown that issues of societal and educational life are explained with theories and processes that had not been discovered before. Concepts such as *disciplinary society or biopolitics*, by Michel Foucault, or *colonization of the world of life*, by Jürgen Habermas, are examples, since they show how the humanities help to understand education in order to make the conflicts of life more visible and to explore the paradoxes of education in their extremes. Therefore, education produces complexities, in that it disarms our simplifications and directs us to another interpretative horizon.

Contemporaneously, philosophy takes a definition that is more consistent with the anti--metaphysical position and more adjusted to the idea of risky thinking, due to the conceptual change which it has been subjected to. Knowing that other contexts require the review of our concepts, Habermas defined philosophy "as stand-in and interpreter", as the title of the conference "Die Philosophieals Platzhalter und Interpret", delivered in June 1981 in the city of Stuttgart, shows. After a detailed explanation of reasons, Habermas argues that philosophy might:

> [...] then be able to help set in motion the interplay between the cognitive-instrumental,

> moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive dimensions that has come to a standstill today like a tangled mobile. This simile at least helps identify the issue philosophy will face when it stops playing the part of the arbiter that inspects culture and instead starts playing the part of a mediating interpreter. (HABERMAS, 1990, p. 19)

Philosophy is no longer the first science, as the interpretation of metaphysical foundations was understood, and philosophy shall have a more humble position before the sciences and other symbolic expressions, dialoguing, interpreting the paradoxes and tensions generated by our relations with the world. As "philosophy does not handle the key to solving the world's problems" (HABERMAS, 2008, p. 181) and the philosopher's voice is not the first or the last, philosophy applies for debates with the other areas on the issues that concern our time. Philosophy opens to a communicative practice "as the only alternative to the more or less violent action on each other" (HABERMAS, 2008, p. 34).

Philosophy's role in this production of complexities is performed by active inclusion in the discussion of contemporary issues. In the article "O caos da esfera pública" (The chaos of the public sphere), published in *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper, in August 2006, Habermas exposes the unequivocal role of intellectuals articulated with their understanding of philosophy. He indicates that a philosopher should have

> [...] the avant-garde flair for relevance. This requires some entirely non-heroic virtues: a suspicious sensitivity for lesions of the normative infrastructure of society; the fearful anticipation of dangers threatening the mental endowment of the form of political life in common; the sense of what is missing and "could be different"; a little imagination to project alternatives; and a bit of courage for polarization, inconvenient manifestation, leaflets. (HABERMAS, 2006, p. 5)

Considering the above, philosophy of education can contribute to produce risky thinking when it is willing to hear the question and indicate how a concept can elucidate that problem, not to retain it or eternalize it, but to recreate it, transform it in the light of new contexts, especially confronting the uniqueness contained in the question. These concepts cannot be addressed in a way that is anachronistic, erudite, tiring, ideological (it is not activism) or distant from life. The challenge would be to reverse the path taken by the foundations, which operates with the purpose of the entire action, in order to listen to educational questions that challenge philosophy, so as to produce a sort of review of the history of concepts (GADAMER, 2007 p.11), a discussion of the categories present in the educational action. This would prevent us from just resorting to the answers already given by the history of philosophy. What keeps the inquisitive nature and the timeliness of a philosophical theory or a conceptual category is its explanatory power, reinterpreted in the light of the new conditions of culture. This is what reveals the complexity of problems.

This theoretical maturity would avoid the excess of fads, dogmatism and the reductionism of leaving only for science such an interpretation. No concept is free from radical questioning. Therefore, deconstruction is often a necessary procedure. But not everything loses meaning. Precisely for this reason, the classic is updated while retaining its historical being. What is important in *Emile*, by Rousseau, is what he encourages us to do, that is, to continue looking for the meaning of childhood. Each historical period has to rethink it. That is why we must have an open mind, capable of hosting its meaning to reinterpret it. Problematizing education, its concepts and its actions is a task that is updated in each historical period. It is the task of those who are dedicated to teaching the humanities in the education field,

to interpreting its time and its symbolic systems and to demonstrating the relevance of this type of thinking.

Philosophers of education should introduce the knowledge of philosophy and the knowledge discussed with science in everyday communication to expand public discussion on topics that interest us, such as violence, ethics, knowledge, and training. I have learned from Hegel[7] and George Steiner[8] that the discussion of a theme must end in poetry. And few have treated with such lucidity and sensitivity the dialogue – ultimately what justifies interdisciplinarity and keeps the humanities alive – as Hölderlin, who says: "From the moment we are dialogue/ And are able to hear and understand one from another"[9].

7 - Hegel finishes *Phenomenology of Spirit* with a verse by Schiller.

8 - "Argument should end in poetry" is how Steiner (2003, p. 184) finishes the afterword of his book *Lessons of the masters*.

9 - Translator's note: As presented in MEURICE, Marc Froment. *Solitudes: from Rimbaud to Heidegger*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1995.

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