

## The ethical responsibility of answering what purpose school serves

### *Da responsabilidade ética do responder para que serve a escola<sup>1</sup>*

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#### ABSTRACT

We were urged to this discussion by the “persecution” suffered by the school during the COVID-19 pandemic, a persecution to which it is our ethical-political duty to respond. This is an essay that intends to problematize the *servicing* of the school – which seems to confer its meanings – to defend that such meanings only appear in the relationship with the other that defines them and that also distort our own subjectivation. The school, as a name, only exists because it integrates the whole lived experience with the world and with ourselves and, therefore, cannot be defined *a priori* or by a *servicing*. In the construction of this text, we were haunted by conversations triggered by the interpellation “What purpose does school serve?” with teachers and administrative agents of the municipal education network in the city of Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. From a theoretical point of view, we have a dialogue mainly with Judith Butler, Janet Miller and Gert Biesta to defend that a responsible or responsive pedagogical theory needs to make any ideal of school come accompanied by its deconstruction.

*Keywords:* Curriculum Theory; School; Subjectification; Ethical responsibility

#### RESUMO

Fomos instadas a esta discussão pela “perseguição” sofrida pela escola no momento de pandemia da covid-19, perseguição à qual é nosso dever ético-político responder. Trata-se de um ensaio

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que pretende problematizar o *servir da escola* – que parece lhe conferir sentidos –, defendendo que tais sentidos só aparecem na relação com o outro que os constitui e que perturba, também, nossa própria subjetivação. A escola, como nome, só existe porque integra o todo vivido da experiência com o mundo e conosco e, portanto, não pode ser definida *a priori* ou por um *servir*. Na construção do texto, fomos assombradas por conversas detonadas pela interpelação “para que serve a escola?”, vinda de professores e agentes administrativos da rede municipal de Educação da cidade de Niterói, Rio de Janeiro. Do ponto de vista teórico, dialogamos principalmente com Judith Butler, Janet Miller e Gert Biesta, para defender que uma teoria pedagógica responsável ou responsiva precisa fazer qualquer ideal de escola vir acompanhado de sua desconstrução. *Palavras-chave*: Teoria de currículo; Escola; Subjetivação; Responsabilidade ética.

## Introduction

It does not matter what words we use – because there are, in a sense, no words. It only matters that we respond, that we take responsibility, that we take our responsibility.

(BIESTA, 2006, p. 65)

In debating with Lévinas, Butler (2005) argues that the action of telling a story always arises “as a demand upon the persecuted, and its central dilemma is whether or not one may kill in response to persecution” (p. 92). To the author, it is through an accusation that the senses of persecution arise as a demand and as an invitation to act responsibly with the persecuted. This responsibility to act with the persecuted does not appear with persecution, but due to the relationship with the other, an ethical dilemma that appears as a requirement about what comes and over which there is no control. As persecution “[...] forms the horizon of choice, and it grounds our responsibility, [...] it creates the conditions under which we assume responsibility. We did not create it, and therefore it is what we must heed” (BUTLER, 2005, p. 101).

What is at stake is the condition of thinking about the dependence, not desired or chosen, in relation to the other. Given the persecution, “something places itself in my place, and an ‘I’ emerges who can understand its place in no other way than as this place already occupied by another” (BUTLER, 2005, p. 89). Even though persecution is not solved – because we cannot solve anything in the name of a subject – perhaps it is possible, as Butler (2017) insists, to understand that, if everyone acts dependent on the other and is at the mercy of the other, the requirement of an answer is imposed. Such an answer is regardless of what happened to the other, so it does not depend on whether there is a desire for revenge or the cultivation of a will or a choice to respond.

Thus, the ontological relationality that forces us to respond to the other, to act with the persecuted or to respond to the persecution is at the center of this text. In it,

we want to deal with school and “persecution” – more as a specific event – that it has been suffering during the health crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2. Being a potentially deadly virus, it is also part of the world, a companion, as Haraway (2008) says, and many actions it provoked were already in the world in other forms (PRECIADO, 2020). Regarding school, the virus rekindled talks about the lack of quality of schooling defined by alleged deficits in relation to expected learning results. It also mobilized the idea of poorly trained teachers to account for the demands posed by isolation, as if they were the only professionals to learn to deal with an unusual situation.

It went even further, in the recurring interpretation that teachers resisted returning to in-person learning just because they did not want to work, which materialized in subsequent attempts to withdraw professionals’ benefits during and depending on the remote period. Statements such as of the federal deputy Ricardo Barros, government leader in the House of Deputies – “only the teacher does not want to work in the pandemic. [...] There is no reason for the teacher not to teach” – were often repeated in the media by journalists, many of them working remotely. The issue has become a kind of motto: “schools will be the last to close and the first to open”, not only in the Rio de Janeiro municipal campaign but in other cities in Brazil – a repetition of repetition (SMITH, 1995) that marked the “persecution” speech of the school.

Here we do not intend, however, to be exhaustive in enumerating criticism of the school or providing examples that support the speeches heard during these last two years. We just want to build a scenario in which the *servicing of the school* was put into question, especially in the first year of the sanitary crisis, by the requirement of greater social distancing, with the closure of institutions, like what happened with universities. However, before we go on, we think it is possible to argue that if there were talks such as the ones we mentioned, there would be recognition of the difficulties and appreciation of the teacher’s work by guardians who had to deal with children in learning. Although such recognition arose here and there, it was often accompanied by a certain culprit of schools because they were closed, especially when social distancing was reduced.

We will not follow this argument because our goal is eminently theoretical: we intend to problematize the *servicing of the school* – which seems to give it meaning, arguing that the senses of school only appear in the relationship with the other that constitutes them and that also distorts our own subjectivation. School, as a name, exists only because it integrates the whole lived experience with the world and with us, and therefore cannot be defined as *a priori* or by a *servicing*. It exists beyond the normative definition that populates our beliefs, it is a place of invention of itself. We could probably do so without mentioning these recent moments of “persecution” of the school and the teachers. Silencing them, however, it does not present itself as an option, because it would be to admit that this is not part of us and all of us in the world, that it would not be implicated in our relations with the other, with what we speak and to whom we speak (BUTLER, 2017). So we insist on this text being narrative, which makes it an

autobiographical text and that can sometimes be called an autobiographical narrative.

The limits to our experiences and interpretations to the serving of the school makes us recognize that the persecution we bring – serving, school and responsibility – “returns us not to our acts and choices but to the region of existence that is radically unwilling, the primary, inaugurating impingement on me by the Other, one that happens to me” (BUTLER, 2005, p. 85). Thus, the way of making it autobiographical is a form of our acting that, prior to other possibilities, is the basis for the susceptibility of which we have no choice, because, as we have announced, we become responsible for others – we assume to respond to persecution ethically.

The experiences that are narrated here “do not rest in the past or are brought from the past to the present” (MILLER; MACEDO, 2018, p. 958 our translation), but assume a constant return to the various temporalities (MILLER, 2005; SANTOS, 2022). It is a continuous opening for narratives and refusal to a simplistic version of memory – which means it is not a descriptive, complete or essentialized text of our experiences (MILLER, 2005; 2021). Our purpose, assumed to think the poststructural theory, is to use narrative or autobiography as a way to explore social and political construction that “[...] simultaneously, draws attention to always incomplete interpretations, always attached to repression, always endless” (MILLER, 2021, p. 35, our translation). Therefore, as a form of educational research, it moves beyond telling our versions of persecution of school, as it reiterates “situations and identities already known as fixed, unchanging, trapped in the normalized, and therefore exclusionary conceptions from what and who are possible” (MILLER, 2021, p. 37, our translation). That is, it is not subject to conversions of a writing with static descriptions (MILLER, 2005; SANTOS, 2022), but rather to incompleteness, which puts us in a place of persecution – invades us and requires answers to the tasks of school.

Having said that, we haunt this text with talks produced during the activities of a research project carried out in the city of Niterói, State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with teachers and administrative agents of the municipal education network. In this project, we have sought to argue in favor of the production of public curriculum policies – focusing on quality, as most are – from school, advocating the articulation between public policy and subjectivation processes. In one of the first activities of the project, the detonating interpellation of the conversations we maintained – research team and network professionals, mostly teachers – presented themselves in the form of the question: *What purpose does school serve?* An interpellation that intended to detonate an intersubjective process capable of dislodge (or complicate) “unitary notions, both of our *selves* and our voices and of prescriptive systems of teaching and learning” (MILLER, 2005, p. 55, our emphasis). It was an invitation to “[...] a fictional and radically contingent invention of the *self* that could not require the manifestation of a presence of the self without revealing a constitutive proxy” (PIMENTEL JÚNIOR; CARVALHO; SÁ, 2017, p. 213, our emphasis, our translation). Or, as Miller (2005)

argues, an intention that appears “always attached to representation, always endless” (p. 53) in any writing or performative process. We tried to provoke all of us into this performative process of representing a vast world of things that were still on the verge of being authorized to be narrated [to the extent that we had already authorized ourselves to the narrative], but which had already happened, which, according to Pinar (2016), it is “enabled by the fact of structural non-coincidence” (p. 25, our translation). Not that such provocation was essential for the representation, after all we are always challenged by the presence of the other: “[...] humans, living processes, inorganic conditions and means of life” (BUTLER, 2018, p. 144, our translation).

We support this text with some answers provoked [or not, you will know] for the detonating question of our conversation, without the intention of rebuilding the lived moment by the impossible and undesirable. Possibly, it would be more appropriate to refer to the traces of the answers, since they are not evidence, but “living ghosts that accompany us, without being able to say truths or even representations” (MACEDO; SILVA, 2021, p. 16, our translation). In this sense, they will be brought as openness to another totally another, refusing any moral and ethical reduction, “[...] essential to the determination of agency and the possibility of hope” (BUTLER, 2005, p. 21).

If we sometimes have the impression that answers only repeat hegemonized speeches about the serving of the school, we will seek to argue that no discourse exhausts the possibility of response, the desire that is always underway with the events of and in the world. We will seek to highlight that the norms do not direct our actions or say of our recognition, but of a possible relationship of our recognition with the other (BUTLER, 2017). The circulating answers in our conversations about the *servicing of the school* do not express the recognition of one or the other; they appear for both because there is a normative reference frame. Thus, because there was an interpellation, and because we were all interpellated by the “persecution”, we responded by the *servicing of the school*, in the web of our relationship and that of others [world] with the school, which includes dealing with the unexpected of the own *servicing of the school*.

Finally, for all that we have been arguing, first we propose, in this text, to question *servicing of the school* with a focus on “persecution” and the versions for its services; and then, in a responsible and responsive way, talk about the school as a server and not as a service – knowing that, by the orders of calculation, this is only possible as a pedagogical theory in a project of deconstruction.

## **The *servicing of the school***

If we start from the idea that every persecution requires the opportunity for speech, school does not “exist beyond life and [...], due to that, it always keeps something terribly personal” (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 2009, p. 45, our translation). Because it is not out of life and place of invention, the pandemic is part of it, constituting it not only

in its in-person format, but also as a remote or hybrid teaching. Thus, school appears without the limit of physical presence that filled our imagination: a gate to be crossed. When the gates, remote and hybrid, opened, other possibilities of life were created, created by the movement of unpredictability. Such an experience, in a way compulsory due to the pandemic, is an invitation to go further, crossing the gate that supposedly separates it from the world in the opposite direction. Perhaps it was worth asking how much of the school experience that happened in virtual environments has always been in digital platforms such as Zoom, Meet, Google Class, WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and others. We do not propose this path, at least not directly, but to think about how the new contingent forms of school continue to allow access, as it always happened, “versions of ourselves that resist prescription and that can respond – rather than reject – to the divergent, paradoxical, unexpected and unknown of classroom life” (MILLER, 2014, p. 2060, our translation).

As much as the unpredictability has increased at this moment in which we are still at the mercy of the pandemic, some old questions have emerged – in other iterations – especially those about the experiences of socialization and apprehending as experiences of openness to the other. At the same time, we continue to be haunted by the defunding of education. The absence of the minimum conditions of infrastructure for remote education has become obvious, either in relation to students and teachers, or regarding the school itself, most of them – public and private, it is important to point out. After two years practically without policies to alleviate the distancing that closed schools as physical places, it became public to reduce the spending of the Ministry of Education, much lower than those provided for in the budget laws. Examples of dismantling and destruction are many – as well as the resistance of teachers, schools and even some municipalities –, but they are not the focus of this text. We just want to claim that this context has further connected the event of the virus with the relationship of the ourselves and the ourselves of others with the school before resuming the interpellation: *What purpose does school serve?*, which guided our conversations with colleagues from the municipality of Niterói.

Some memories of the talks that emerged in these meetings in response to the interpellation-provocation, certain that we are betraying them, accompany us throughout the text in a disorderly way. Possibly, it is useful to inform here that the conversations were recorded and that, if we refer to memories and betrayals, we do not do so because we did not access the content of that moment in the writing of this text. This only seeks to account for the impossibility of any representation of the event as it happened [or happens]. As a consequence, we bring a set of verbs, nouns and adjectives that do not build consensus on *the serving of the school*, in which refusal to close possibilities is expression – ours in this text and the collective in the research – of respect for the otherness that constitutes school experience.

Thus, in response to the provocation, *servings*<sup>2</sup> emerged such as: *to think straight; to make the subject author of his/her narrative; to be a place of affective access; to relate; to include and exclude; for information circulation; to deal with frustration and success; to translate and produce knowledge; to learn and relearn to think; to offer knowledge; for human formation; to be a place of opportunity, socialization, rescue; for access to content.*<sup>3</sup> We do not take these *servings* as choices of the speaker within a repertoire previously established by the norm, but answers to a provocation, “to what is there”. Even more because *servings* resist a definition and acts only as a possibility – which would be to say that *servings* are where *servicing* does not fit (LEMOS; MACEDO, 2020), at the same time that does not deny it (BIESTA, 2013). However, this set of *servings* tells us that there is no “[...] choice, but circumstance, which reinforces the paradoxes about subjectivity and forwards it to deepening about the doubt [of the serving of the school]” (LEMOS; MACEDO, 2020, p. 380, our translation).

Many answers resonate our inheritances, as expected, and are caused by the pragmatic form of the question that hosts a statement that may confuse it with a *service*: to serve something. Perhaps that is why the *servings* have made us, at times, to return to central themes, to school and curriculum. They point out, for example, the relationship between school and knowledge, although it is not always possible to say that the school experience, the act of educating, “is reduced to inform, teach, to announce” (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 13). The inadequacy of this reduction is present in the many other *servings* by opening other possibilities: it is a place of formation, which possibly confesses that it *serves* for everything that has been stated.

Given the answers – the *servings* –, there seems to be many schools in the same school, which unfolds to be common in a place where there are only differences (BIESTA, 2013), flows of everyday relationships and pedagogical agreements (LEMOS; MACEDO, 2020). Possibly, there is in this multiplicity of *servings* a clue that is an unthinkable place for description, although, as part of the human experience, it can be seen, said, known, thought, made and even invented. Like this contingent place, perhaps the school has no *service* and thus it *serves*, as the desire for goals and *services* is just a way of relating to the social and economic demands of the world, expressed in the saved or emancipatory languages of school and even education (BIESTA, 2013;

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<sup>2</sup> We use *servings* (*servires*) as a noun and as a way to avoid the term “service” (*serviço*), whose traditional meaning in the Portuguese language we keep for when one may more clearly need a kind of task.

<sup>3</sup> We chose to use the italics to highlight the statements instead of quotation marks. The refusal to the appeal of quotation marks seeks to avoid the feeling that speech belongs to a particular subject, trying to throw the authorship in the field of relationality. We would like, as supposed, to do this with the statements we have a dialogue with in this text, but this still depends on an alteration in the epistemology of the individual subject that marks the academic production.

BROWN, 2017; FOUCAULT, 2008).

As we have a long tradition that focuses on the school as a trajectory for the future autonomy of children, youngsters and adults, perhaps the speech that school serves for something will always bring the declared testimony of this desire for something, “[...] according to the history and the event of its manifestation or the secret of its nonmanifestation” (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 10). And yet because, before the provocation – *What purpose does school serve?* –, we see ourselves in “a creed in a positive or necessity value, morally and metaphysically constructed. Value and creed that are said to be a unit, being pure dissension” (LEMOS; MACEDO, 2020, p. 379, our translation). Hence, what is uttered is a trail of desire inhabited in the memory of teaching, which, however, brings the possibility of what is still unknown – the place of doubt, even when one does not seem to doubt, incites the suspicion by it and from itself (LEMOS; MACEDO, 2020). Although the talks of the *servings* announce the desire for the decision, they “[...] respond to provocations of an antecedent alterity that incites the next speech leaving the previous one from the prism of the suspicion” (LEMOS; MACEDO, 2020, p. 380, our translation), which, for us, arises as a condition of appearance, but never sufficient.

In this sense, the school is possible in an autobiographical process in which the language of *servicing* becomes language of the experience of subjectivities: teachers, students, doormen, cooks, librarians, general services assistants and many others. When answering – even if there was no question, there would be a normative demand for answers – about the *servicing* of the school, we produced and produce our own recognition. That is, the school only *serves* in a space of dependence with the other (BUTLER, 2017), insofar “there is no wishing away our fundamental sociality” (BUTLER, 2005, p. 33). Recognition of this dependence prevents any attempt to define a correct meaning, with the exclusions it would imply, because in what is announced it is not possible to carry the “living self” (BUTLER, 2005, p. 36) in its entirety. Therefore, the place of doubt in itself fulfills a demand for response, as what those who respond argue, when each one in their subjectivity decides what school *serves* to do, always leaves something under suspicion about itself (LEMOS; MACEDO, 2020).

In this way, it is not possible to expect a single satisfactory answer. If sometimes it seems to exist, it is because there is a norm in action that “conditions what will and will not be a recognizable account” (BUTLER, 2017, p. 51). It conditions what would be revealed, given, what may have recognition potential and what can be disintegrated from recognition (BUTLER, 2017; 2018). Although it exceeds the diatic exchange between the subjects, the question – *What purpose does school serve?* – it cannot be understood as a structure for any recognition, as the normative horizon of recognition itself only happens because there is a dependence on the self and the other. It may be that, in the inattentive eyes to the difference themselves, the teachers’ talks seem familiar, but the responsibility to the demands of the other requires the effort to keep



them foreign. It requires the reopening of the action of the other over me and of me on the other, which can only be understood as a place abroad, as a “place already occupied by another” (BUTLER, 2017, p. 118) – which, at another time, invades the always foreign place that each subject occupies.

So, the utterances that we saw to come about talk about school as a place where teachers and students talk about themselves, about the other, about the world and their experiences; a place where affection encounters happen and things that are not witnessed echo, appear and are possible by trust (BUTLER, 2017). It also emerges as a place haunted by what can never be accessed on the whole, the effort for the review to which it is always subjected (BUTLER, 2017). Thus, to affirm that the school *serves to think straight; to make the subject author of his narrative; to be a place of affective access; to relate; to include and exclude; for the circulation of information; to deal with frustration and success; to translate and produce knowledge; to be a place of opportunity, socialization, rescue* brings recognition as an open discourse, without having anything in it to be solved. It is about the desire that will never be stopped – the desire for desire, the desire to be recognized, as well as the demand that there are infrastructure conditions that make this recognition possible (DERRIDA, 1995).

As we have argued, if these many *servings* do not produce an *a priori* meaning for each and every school or school experience, in a way they hide the strangeness in *servings* that seem to be integrated. Other *servings* caused laughter – an expression that perhaps they were in the wrong place, which was soon overcome. *It served to set up a band*, said someone, expanding the picture of possibilities for the school. In another verbal tense, speech mobilized memories not only of the musician who constituted his band; it allowed, in the discussion, the entry of jokes among friends, to leave the classroom in the middle of the school day, the encounter with the classmate in the corridor, among many other *forms of subversion*. They were all aspects that inhabit the ourselves of our selves in school and that we also deposit in the other (BUTLER, 2017). This let the recreation of life emerge in its own place of school. In Miller’s words (2014, p. 2055, our translation), it brought those aspects that “normally cannot be said or seen” and that are in the dimension of recognition of affectation, which includes desire, anxiety, encounter, exposure and the extended limit of bodies (MILLER, 2014; BUTLER, 2018). Then, suddenly, it seems that the silences and contradictions that permeate the senses of the *servicing* of the school became more visible: the school was also a place for this.

What we are trying to argue is that the norms that produce the school and produce its recognition and representation (BUTLER, 2017; 2018) are mutable. They require “to enact the unconscious as it is relived in the scene of address itself” (BUTLER, 2005, p. 54), complicating the personified communication of the disciplinary field. Even so, the inauguration of what the school is, repeated, can “remain readily foreign to all desire, in any case to every anthropotheomorphic form of desire” (DERRIDA, 1995,

p. 10). This is the only way to recognize something that one already wishes to confess or give as a testimony to the *serving* of the school (DERRIDA, 1995). This movement of confession or testimony “indefinitely expands the meaning games of subjectivity” (PIMENTEL JÚNIOR; CARVALHO; SÁ, 2017, p. 212, our translation), bringing to oneself the “*being*, striving for the *continuum* in the being in the world” (PIMENTEL JÚNIOR; CARVALHO; SÁ, 2017, p. 212, author’s emphases, our translation). Therefore, “having a band” was not just the spoken expression of another serving; it was an enunciative action of life.

If we can put it another way, it was an action of bio[s], in which “[...] the enunciation of oneself in language is unfaithfully faithful to the whole order of the lived”

(PIMENTEL JÚNIOR; CARVALHO; SÁ, 2017, p. 212, our translation). Hence, the opacity of this bio[s] action was subjected by what the Self convoked – *it served to have a band* – that addresses [re]memorizing: not the past itself, but the possibility of saying what had never been said (BUTLER, 2017). The narrative of oneself was exposed without the *serving* of the school having disappeared, because what is captured from the musician, when offering his voice and narrative, is that “[...] ‘I’ cannot give a final or adequate account of itself because it cannot return to the scene of address by which it is inaugurated [...]” (BUTLER, 2005, p. 67). In this way, the possible reception that *served to have a band* took on other forms of language for the school: the effect that no meaning is given or can be given but occupies a place that is still assumed by a possible reception with the other.

Many other talks emerged from this *served to have a band*, insofar as the lines of the *served to* were interrupted. Somehow, the interruption led to the construction of life stories in the school, explaining the articulation between teaching and life itself. Miller (2021) refers to the difficult task of summoning the self to oneself, arguing that it is not possible to “[...] fully understand our *original landscapes* or relate different perspectives into a *whole*” (MILLER, 2021, p. 30, author’s emphasis, our translation). Being a teacher, researcher, student, mother, father, unionist, friend, at school, is to deal with incompleteness: the “[...] past is there and now, structuring and animating the very contours of a default relationality, animating the transference, the recruitment and use of the analyst, orchestrating the scene of address” (BUTLER, 2005, p. 68). And this is what allows the thread of the subjectivity of the “I” to assume the impossibility of narrating only one “I” of the self. Incompleteness is what authorizes the possibility of putting the many “Is” in motion and, thus, not paralyzing the other incompleteness (MILLER, 2021).

Thus, the narrative memory of teachers, often erased by an idea of professionalization that privileges the technique, was emerging in many stories that seemed out of place and, therefore, may have taken a long time to emerge. Contingent experiences that reminded that *each school is a school and each management is a school management*, as someone recalled at a given time – How would it be possible to forget that? Many

stories brought the game of turning toward the other, allowing to realize that “every other is every other” (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 65, our translation). Or that “every thing, every entity, you, me, the other, every X, every name and every God’s name can become the example of other replacing X” (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 65, our translation). With this the possibility of being a teacher only at the time of the teaching was fading, just as it was consolidating the refusal of a single answer to the *serving* of the school. To the extent that the involvement with life and the lived of the experience was happening, it was also erupting the significant *life of the school* that designed more contradictory stories, such as “places of *permanent opening and re-significability*” (MILLER, 2021, p. 33, author’s emphasis, our translation).

The narratives that talk about the differing followed, many of them marked by another *serving* presented as *to experience bodies*. Although, perhaps, this *serving* generates some astonishment, it is an answer that does not say that of the unlikeliness of the school space that, as a place of relationship, includes the desires of one’s own body. The simple presence of bodies in this space postulates that being in the world and relating to it is “to be connected with what is living, [...] and no self and no human can live without this connection to a biological network of life” (BUTLER, 2015, p. 43). When living this relationship with the world, as organic bodies, they act moved by the need for desire, even in the school where the norms sometimes postulate the absence of desire in this space. Therefore, it is not only about the desire for which the school *served*, but also the control that the norms seek to produce (BUTLER, 2018). This *serving*, as well as the norms that seek to control it and that are not external to it, inaugurates a reflexivity, which is why it is important to consider them. Together, they produce response effects on the school.

Thus, talks as *experience bodies* and *have a band* highlight opposition to universal interpretations, while mentioning the *serving* of the school. They bet – like the other statements – that the problem is not in the “[...] universality as such but with an operation of universality that fails to be responsive to cultural particularity and fails to undergo a reformulation of itself in response to the social and cultural conditions it includes within its scope of applicability” (BUTLER, 2005, p. 6). They act as a challenge for the usual assumptions of experience, “[...] as well as [...] for everything that surrounds recent constructions and expectations about teaching [...] and the *understanding of curriculum*” (MILLER, 2014, p. 2060, author’s emphasis, our translation). When questioning the “given” recognition of the school, it makes it more explicit that it is not possible to announce a sentence, a verdict or a decision about the *serving* of the school, it is not possible to assume an end to it, except a “quite initial, but interminable [and suspicious] as well, end [...]” (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 8).

We finish this first movement of thinking about the *servings* of the school with a statement that intended to displace the interpellation, question it by exposing its pragmatism: *Does the school have to serve something?* Strangely, it seemed to put the

interpellation on the tracks from which it had been derived. Intending to problematize the need to appoint the place of the school, it reintroduced the complement that had been shifted by many of the answers that circulated in the conversation. And reinstated – when intending to radicalize the school as a place for recognition – a sense of serving as to *serve something* or as a *service*. In doing so, it highlighted a curious fact: how many answers invited us, in their multiplicity, to think of continuous processes (MILLER, 2014), to the detriment of results, even when they reinforced the belief system about what the schools are or should be.

Likewise, to respond to the *servicing* of the school with statements as *to be a place of affective access; to relate; for human formation* or defining it as a *place of opportunity, socialization, rescue* draws continuous processes of the school as a place of life. Such processes bring the mark of a different *servicing*, assuming this difference as “something that is proper, that belongs to education” (BIESTA, 2006, p. 74). They do not say the difference in themselves, but they try to think differently about the same nominations and, in them, to propose that what makes the school possible is what “makes education possible in the first place” (BIESTA, 2006, p. 75). Hence, this set of statements causes displacements about what inhabits it, making its identification more complex. It is not, however, a statement that would deprive school of recognition – which would threaten its “own possibility of existing and persisting” (BUTLER, 2018, p. 47, our translation) – nor a revolutionary displacement in relation to circulating statements.

Together, these statements explain that the school is seen and is recognizable, even though this recognition cannot be captured. We have advocated that this is exactly what is absent in the statements in response to the interpellation of the *servicing* of the school that allows the opening that talks about its *service*. This is because the answers itself are “effects of power on the flow of significance, they are, therefore, never, only positions that, if added, guarantee a better proposal because they are more inclusive” (MACEDO, 2017, p. 541, our translation). It is in the negotiation of norms and rules that other ways of thinking about the school emerge, this space that wants preparation for another life produced by the control of minds and bodies [just like that, as if they were two].

Therefore, such negotiation highlights the responsibility of each one in building the *servicing* of the school as a place where we all “[...] become somebody through the way in which we engage with what we learn” (BIESTA, 2006, p. 94) and we live, certain that there is “[...] more place, starting from there, beyond” (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 17), there are more schools, starting from there, there are more *servings* – there, here, from the other side, beyond.

## **Responsive responsibility to the school: the *servicing***

In order to expand our senses of school and its *servings*, we want to pursue the question about “how we can respond responsibly to, and how we can live peacefully

with what and with whom is other” (BIESTA, 2006, p. 15). This implies following our proposal of a narrative text – self-narrative subjects – and insisting on the idea of responsibility or responsive response to the other. We warn that the statute of responsibility appears as a duty to offer answers in order to substantiate the right – “*the right to the word*” (SISCAR, 2018, p. 70, author’s emphasis, our translation) –, that brings with it “the attempt to safeguard fixed structures of *duty*” (SISCAR, 2018, p. 70, author’s emphasis, our translation). Thus, the occult right to the word does not cease to appear as inscription of something already known, as “it constitutes an *experience* and, as such, has a political sense that cannot be neglected” (SISCAR, 2018, p. 73, author’s emphasis, our translation). Such a sense is the same possibility of response, even though their senses are blurred in relation to previously defined categories. The interpellation we proposed – *What purpose does school serve?* – already decides a certain place of response, because “[...] the question contains the answer that it apparently seeks in the text of the other” (SISCAR, 2018, p. 73, our translation). It would be an experience of “*thought as an answer*” (SISCAR, 2018, p. 74, author’s emphasis, our translation), showing that school is more than the narrated *servings*, since, in what articulates it, its practice of doing is never absent.

The experiences of what was to be in these multiple places at different times generically appointed as school and its narratives are not the “ultimate [...] essence” (BIESTA, 2006, p. 70). The *servings* of the school gradually set aside the essentially rational, subjective answers to what comes about, a possibility without guarantees of/ for the answer. Instead of any response that grants a metaphysical meaning through its *servings*, the school was being thought of as a place that involves subjects in relationships. Thus, the movement of the singular school responds responsibly or responsively to what the subjects produce or what is yet to come. Being responsive refers to something that cannot be calculated, “[...] it might mean to be, to live with others” (BIESTA, 2006, p. 67).

The answers are not valid for their “content”, they are not right or wrong; some are possibly difficult to avoid – not that they should – because of our formation inheritances. We are interested in saying what they can do or how it is possible to respond to their goals (BIESTA, 2013). They are “a duty both for the creation [...] and for their constant undoing” (BIESTA, 2006, p. 110), a demand to respond to the other and, in this sense, an ethical demand. We advocate the impossibility and undesirability of giving meanings to the school, opting, as Miller (2005; 2014; 2021) proposes in her autobiographical readings, “interrogate our own automatic assumptions” (MILLER, 2014, p. 2049, our translation). Our attempt here is to exercise an educational theorization committed to such interrogation, a theorizing that refuses the response about a school defined by its *servings or services*. We assumed that such an exercise is a possible response to the economized and metaphysics interpellation that the pandemic updated by questioning the *servings* of the school.

We will not resume the many criticisms that the school has suffered at the time of the COVID-19 health crisis or remember that such criticisms, even if they were intensified, are not recent. Perhaps, it is worth declaring that they are really expected, given the ways in which their authors conceive of education. It is not strange to us not even the need to find the guilty ones when the quantified education *services* allegedly fail, even because of a health crisis of severe effects in the most diverse areas. The economic world turned upside down, the productive chains were interrupted, inflation rose in many parts of the world, gross internal products and countries' growth rates have been falling rapidly, but still the current hegemonic statements charge that that school had functioned as if there was no pandemic. Long before the sanitary crisis, Biesta (2006) remembered what we continue to hear, that failure is generally attributed to “[...] students who lack motivation, parents who provide insufficient support, or teachers who lack efficient teaching skills” (p. 99).

Our concern about responsible and responsive theory involves deconstructing criticism of reductive readings of education, but it is not just about that. More complex statements about the *servings* of the school are also sometimes made recognizable as successful desires and citizenship or the guarantee of the right to education in a country with vast socioeconomic and cultural inequality. Like the demands of critics, they also create unrealistic expectations about schools, since they are grounded in the reified reduction of their possibilities. It seems little productive a *servicing* of the school that refers to recognition, necessary and desired by all of us, if it is understood as its recognition or in the already given. A responsible theory is based on refusal to any determinism, since, as Miller (2014; 2021) recalls, we deal with spectral versions of us and what we declare to know. Our bet is in what Biesta (2006) calls “[...] paradoxical – or deconstructive – combination of education and its undoing” (p. 115), an exercise that does not have and does not seek an end.

In this sense, it would be honest to say that the remembrance of the conversations that haunt this text is itself marked by our belief that the senses of education and school fall apart in the same movement in which they are uttered. Responsible and responsive theory is erected for us on the idea that it is not possible to control the *servicing* of the school as a creative and dynamic place, that it is impossible to prescribe its use and even more its disuse. School is becoming and coming to be, it is, as Lemos and Macedo (2020, p. 384, our translation) argue, “[...] this metaphysical evocation that opens its doors every day and welcomes the heterogeneous, persuades us from its need for promises that it cannot fulfill”. Of course, it is only possible to assume something about the school if it is already being, even in the face of being (DERRIDA, 1995). However, it is not desirable – or even better responsible – defining it for its promises, but “[...] it is a responsibility to create and keep the existence of a *worldly space*’ through which new beginnings can come into presence” (BIESTA, 2006, p. 107). Perhaps to think of it as a translation place, a third space in which there are no original senses, but which

emerges as a place of recognition, negotiation and even denial: a recognition that “takes place through action, through our being with others” (BIESTA, 2006, p. 94). This does not imply that the school *no longer serves* – which seems implicit in the criticism that echoed in the pandemic. We argue, as we hope to have made clear, that there is a multiplicity of *servings* for the school, impossible to name and list, that arise in the relationships that constitute it. It is [wants-to be-being] a place from/to subjectivity.

Therefore, any theorizing that proposes to produce an ideal of responses on what school is – and on other subjects – has already failed to be the same as theory. By this, we do not imply a moral evaluation of the ideal of responses, generally something desirable: “[...] a way of embodying a sense of righteousness that requires, and deserves, recognition” (BUTLER, 2018, p. 47, our translation). We just argue that this ideal needs to be assumed as a “relationship of ethics” (BUTLER, 2005, p. 82) or come accompanied by its deconstruction.

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