

Article

THE LIBERAL FOUNDATION OF WESTERN DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION: THE PEDAGOGICAL LEGACY OF LOCKE AND ROUSSEAU

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to establish the difference between two currents of thought which, although they come from the same liberal tradition, have given rise to different political trends in the present day, intervening on the democratisation of the contemporary school. Hermeneutic pedagogy is used as a working method to analyse the historical, political and educational path of liberalism, as well as its implications. In this way, two liberal traditions are identified, each of which has advocated a different pedagogical model, reconstructing a political microcosm in schools in order to reproduce itself. It concludes with the idea that our contemporaneity is based on a mistaken idea of the extreme democratisation of schools, which leads to a permanent questioning of the school as an institution.

Keywords: Liberalism, Education, Democracy, School, Western.

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A BASE LIBERAL DA EDUCAÇÃO DEMOCRÁTICA OCIDENTAL: O LEGADO PEDAGÓGICO DE LOCKE E ROUSSEAU

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é estabelecer a diferença entre duas correntes de pensamento que, embora provenientes da mesma tradição liberal, deram origem a correntes políticas nos dias de hoje, intervindo na democratização da escola contemporânea. A pedagogia Hermenêutica é utilizada como método de trabalho para analisar o caminho histórico, político e educativo do liberalismo, bem como as suas implicações atuais. Desta forma, são identificadas duas tradições liberais, cada uma das quais tem defendido um modelo pedagógico diferente, reconstruindo um microcosmo político nas escolas a fim de se reproduzir. Conclui com a ideia de que a nossa contemporaneidade se baseia numa ideia errada da extrema democratização das escolas, o que leva a um questionamento permanente da escola como instituição.

Palavras-chave: Liberalismo, Educação, Democracia, Escola, Ocidental.

EL FUNDAMENTO LIBERAL DE LA EDUCACIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA OCIDENTAL: EL LEGADO PEDAGÓGICO DE LOCKE Y ROUSSEAU

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es establecer la diferencia entre dos corrientes de pensamiento que, aunque proceden de una misma tradición liberal, han dado lugar a sendas corrientes políticas en la actualidad, interviniendo sobre la democratización de la escuela contemporánea. Se utiliza la pedagogía hermenéutica como método de trabajo para analizar el recorrido histórico, político y educativo del liberalismo, así como su implicación en la actualidad. De este modo, se identifican dos tradiciones liberales que han abogado por sendos modelos pedagógicos, que reconstruyen un microcosmos político en las escuelas con el objeto de reproducirse. Se concluye con la idea de que nuestra contemporaneidad parte de una equivocada idea de extrema democratización de las escuelas que provoca un cuestionamiento permanente de la escuela como institución.

Palabras clave: Liberalismo, Educación, Democracia, Escuela, Occidente.

LE FONDEMENT LIBERAL DE L'ÉDUCATION DEMOCRATIQUE OCIDENTALE: L'HERITAGE PEDAGOGIQUE DE LOCKE ET ROUSSEAU

RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif de cet article est d'établir la différence entre deux courants de pensée qui, bien qu'issus de la même tradition libérale, ont donné naissance à des courants politiques différents à l'heure actuelle, intervenant sur la démocratisation de l'école contemporaine. La pédagogie herméneutique est utilisée comme méthode de travail pour analyser le parcours historique, politique et éducatif du libéralisme, ainsi que ses implications actuelles. On identifie ainsi deux traditions libérales, qui ont chacune prôné un modèle pédagogique différent, reconstruisant un microcosme politique dans les écoles afin de se reproduire. Il conclut sur l'idée que notre contemporanéité repose sur une idée erronée de la démocratisation extrême de l'école, qui conduit à une remise en cause permanente de l'école en tant qu'institution.

Mots-clés: Libéralisme, Éducation, Démocratie, École, Occident.

INTRODUCTION

When we talk about democratic education, we are actually talking about a recently created term, although the terms education and democracy have been in Western thought for centuries. Nevertheless, they emerged at different times and, throughout their evolution in the West, they have undergone numerous conceptual modifications. In an attempt to delimit the term, and despite its historical trajectory, we can define democratic education as general, universal and free education, which has also absorbed a democratic political structure in order to reproduce within it the Western democratic architecture of a marked liberal tradition. Democratic education is not only a transmission of democratic values, but it also aims to train citizens for full political integration so that they can exercise their civil functions. Consequently, a study of democratic education must consider not only the evolution of education in Western societies, but also its liberal political spirit and its implications for the school.

The aim of this article is to establish the difference between two trends of thought which, although they come from the same liberal tradition associated with Western thought, have given rise to different political currents today, and which we can call individualist liberalism and democratic liberalism. Derived from this main objective, we intend to develop the idea that the public, universal and free educational systems that spread throughout Europe since the 19th century adopted the liberal idea that education is a political tool capable of transforming societies.

The hypothesis of this study is based on the nature of the pedagogical currents attached to two political trends – individualistic liberal education and democratic liberal education – which have determined the sense and meaning of democratic education, conditioning the parts of the dialectic process that it undergoes. It is essential to know and understand these currents in order to extract the real political meaning of democratic education.

With the aim of understanding the development of this hypothesis, in this paper we will adopt a liberal epistemological position, starting from the idea that, just as each nation adapts the rules of democratic political participation to its particular characteristics, educational systems absorb and reproduce the same political system in which it is integrated. Thus, although liberal democracy has been imposed in the West as the most widespread political system of participation, it is possible to identify as many forms of democratic education as there are particular democracies in each nation. From the frontiers of the socio-critical paradigm, the historical-pedagogical method is used, following the four traditional phases: heuristics, criticism (external and internal), hermeneutics and exposition (RUIZ, 1976).

In the following pages, we will reflect on the relationship between the two concepts presented in the Western tradition. We try to focus on the connections that exist between both concepts, rather than on their development in isolation. Thus, we will begin this journey by reviewing the foundations established during Antiquity, when the tradition of Western thought began. We will then focus on the early stages of European liberalism, which emerged during Modernity with Locke and Rousseau. Both laid the foundations of two liberal traditions that

later, during the Enlightenment, would give rise to two currents of contemporary liberalism. We will also review the pedagogical innovations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and try to elucidate their relationship with democratic education.

In the conclusions of our study, we will end with an analysis of our contemporaneity, where a mistaken idea of extreme democratisation of schools is causing a lack of teacher legitimacy that results in the permanent questioning of the institution. Contemporary pedagogical trends try to overcome these contradictions by making different proposals that will also be analysed in the light of the historical overview presented.

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE CENTURIES: FROM ANTIQUITY TO MODERNITY

We can affirm that democratic education reflects the contemporary meaning of education and democracy. However, both concepts are as old as Western tradition and thought itself, and although they have undergone profound transformation over the centuries, there are elements that lead the direction of their own evolution. The first significant democratic experience arose at the beginning of the Western tradition, around the 6th century BC in Athens.

During this period, education would begin to abandon its military role to embrace other areas of intellect, leading them from being “a culture of warriors to a culture of scribes” (MARROU, 1985, p. 58). Athens emerged as one of the most influential polis in Greece, so its political experiences did not go unnoticed. Its democracy was still very exclusive, as only free men could participate, excluding women, minors, slaves and foreigners, even if they lived in the city itself. There was no system of representation like the contemporary one, since the Assembly had full powers, and the citizens alternated in power.

Without falling into anachronisms, it is fair to recognise that, from its own perspective, Athenian education was very democratic. It was reserved for the descendants of those who held political office, who had a political education adapted to their future responsibility. However, the education of the rest of the citizenry was reduced to the mastery of a trade, the knowledge of which was almost always passed down from father to son. As a highlight, we focus on the idea of a primitive formation of democratic citizenship, made by and for the polis, which understands, respects, and commits itself to the rules of coexistence (MARROU, 1985). Despite the chronological and axiological distance between Athenian education and today's education, this is the first experience of democratic education in Western history. This shows us that the concept is anchored to the democratic context in which it was born and develops.

Socratic thought reflected on the relationship between the educational phenomenon (the *paideia*) and the political regime (the *politeia*). According to Jaeger, during this period, the awareness of the true political potential of education emerges, so that the reproductive, perfective and conservative functions of the political regime emerge as opposed to the transformative function (JAEGER, 2001). The establishment of these orientations gave

rise to two interpretative currents of education: regime-conserving education and regime-transforming education (DOMÍNGUEZ, 2016). The most notable aspect of this period of Antiquity is the emergence of concepts such as education, citizenship, and democracy, which will accompany the development of Western history.

The contemporary concept of democratic education is linked to the liberal tradition, which is part of the Western tradition of thought, and would experience its moment of greatest splendour during Modernity. Although it is true that certain values, such as individuality or civil liberties, already received a significant amount of attention during Antiquity, and continued to develop throughout the Middle Ages, it was from the Renaissance onwards that the thread of this political tradition was recovered (FLORES-RODRÍGUEZ, 2021).

THE MODERN CONCEPT OF PEDAGOGY

As the liberal spirit spread across the European continent, the universalisation of education began to occupy the centre of intellectual debates, starting from the contradiction of not extending liberal postulates to the general public. In this sense, in order to understand the foundations of liberal education, we start from the thought of two great exponents: Locke and Rousseau. Both authors had a great influence on political and educational thought in the West for centuries. This is an influence that continues to this day and that marks the evolution of the education-democracy binomial. However, although similar in many respects, each author was able to contribute his particular vision of education, and their philosophical ideas are still part of the foundations of contemporary Western pedagogy.

Synthesising the liberal thought of John Locke (1632-1704), considered one of the greatest exponents of Western liberalism, is very complicated, partly because of his own contradictions and because of his great contributions. As a man of his time, he lived the first steps of liberalism, marked by the contractualist theories that directed the intellectual and political direction of European nations.

Locke was inspired by Hobbes in the elaboration of his own contractualist theory of society. Based on his *tabula rasa* theory, he developed a new concept of civil society subject no longer to a divine authority, as Hobbes defended in his *Leviathan* (HOBBS, 1980), but to a parliamentary authority which can be challenged, and which guarantees fair treatment (LOCKE, 2005). In this way, he respected what he defined as the “law of nature” (LOCKE, 2005, p. 104), which underlies the meaning of human community. This is a natural law from which the contract must start, so that it guarantees an authority that mediates between civil conflicts. This approach is far from the contractualist conceptions of Hobbes and Rousseau, for whom society (in its civil community sense) arises as a consequence of contract.

This nuance is important, because to admit the existence of a society prior to the contract is to presuppose a series of codes already established and shared by the community. Codes that have arisen from common customs and beliefs, but which do not attain the status of a social

contract due to the absence of conscious voluntariness in their development and acceptance. This is not a minor issue, since the Locke's vision of society would condition his pedagogy. For him, education is not in society, but for society. This view was a consequence of incipient English individualism, marked by respect for citizens' rights and liberties, although they were not extended to political liberties.

Continental liberalism, for its part, was characterised by its rejection of absolutism, which still prevailed in central and southern Europe. This influenced its identity, defined by its opposition to the political experiences of the time. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), born in Geneva (Switzerland), opened the door to a new conception of liberalism, which took up the virtues of individualism (in relation to respect for individual rights and liberties), but differed completely in its communitarian conception. For Rousseau, society arises from the contract, which defines it and establishes its internal dynamics and the possibilities for each individual to realise his or her potential.

Two major literary works serve to understand Rousseau's political, social, and educational thought: *The Social Contract* (ROUSSEAU, 1999) and *Emilie* (ROUSSEAU, 1985). Both works connect, develop, and complement each other, and in their reading we find his entire contractualist theory. As a result, his theory of society contains fewer contradictions. With his work, Rousseau delimited two areas which up to that time had been following the same tradition, but which would eventually split into individualist liberalism and collectivist or democratic liberalism. The first one, led by Locke, defended a capitalist socio-economic system based on the economic freedom and freedom of movement of individuals, and the state was limited to the protection of security and private property. For its part, the collectivist trend would give rise to new political traditions which, from the socialist flank, would lead to political experiences such as communism or social democracy.

Rousseau is the greatest representative of pedagogical naturalism, and his work, influenced by Locke, "shares [with Marx] the idea of the cultural and historical conditioning of social relations and of the forces that explain individual behaviour" (ÁLVAREZ and HURTADO, 2008, p. 116). Ahead of Marx, the Genevan theorised the possibility of the establishment of a popular culture at the service of a minority in order to preserve its privileges. Through this materialist proto-analysis, Rousseau identified an individuality (at the basis of the state of individuals claimed by the Anglo-Saxon sphere) as "a form of human existence characteristic of modern society" (VERGARA, 2012, p. 39), altered, contradicted, and far from plenitude. Rousseau aspired to change humanity, and not the society it conforms. Separating himself from English individualism, he proposes the transformation of "each individual (...) into part of a greater whole, from which he in a way receives his life and his being" (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 85).

Liberal individualism put on the table certain rights and liberties for which the state must adapt to guarantee their existence. Collective trends took up these aspirations. However, later materialist analyses of social reality allowed them to conclude that the authority of the

state cannot emanate from the sum of individualities; on the contrary, it is the state that determines individuals. For Rousseau, the general will is not the sum of wills, but a public will, of which we are all part, and in which we must all participate responsibly.

This responsibility for participation would not be guaranteed by the mere removal of those political barriers that the state was eliminating (as the liberal individualist tradition advocated). Instead, it is necessary an education that would allow individuals to integrate themselves into that political culture, which calls them to participation under a communal responsibility. In this sense, while Locke promoted an individualised education that fostered reason and allowed the learner to be in a state of perpetual search for his or her freedom, Rousseau sought to eliminate all those social barriers that prevented the natural development of the learner, generating an environment of freedom that would allow the conditions for the emergence of reason.

Here lies the leitmotif of the issue we are analysing: while Locke presupposes that reason allows freedom to be achieved, Rousseau points out that it is in fact freedom that allows the emergence of reason. This is an argument that goes beyond *The Social Contract* (ROUSSEAU, 1999) and is embedded in the *Emilium* (ROUSSEAU, 1985), where the Genevan expounds his educational theory. These are the two main perspectives on which we are reflecting: individualistic liberal education and democratic liberal education. These two main trends seek to establish an educational practice based on the construction of a model of citizenship, a specific ethos, which intervenes in the community from its political independence.

FROM THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO THE END OF THE ANCIEN RÉGIME: EDUCATION AS A DEMOCRATIC BATTLEFIELD

Locke's and Rousseau's works on education opened up a new path based on the improvement of human characteristics, progressively abandoning instructionalism and dominant authority. The Enlightenment aspired to the welfare and happiness of the people, an idea that individualism concretizes in individual well-being, which led to collective happiness when it is shared. This spirit would pervade Western education during this period which, combined with an interest in modernising local economies, led to the growth of educational systems, then marked by utilitarianism.

If we take the contractual theories of Locke and Rousseau as a representation of the social model defended by each thinker, we observe the interest of both in extending education to the common classes. We do not dwell on the details of their pedagogical proposals, but on the place of education in society according to their contractual theories. For Locke, this instruction should not go beyond the basic knowledge of reading, writing, elementary mathematical calculation, religious training (provided by the Church), and the performance

of a trade; for Rousseau, education should be a life-long process, from early childhood to adulthood, encouraging curiosity and discovery over practical knowledge.

This difference gives rise to two models of understanding democratic citizenship. Locke defends individuality as the absolute guarantor of freedom, as this is what allows citizens to participate, as individuals, through their thoughts and political actions, and over which no one should intervene. That is, everyone should express his or her own opinion in pursuit of personal benefit because, as Locke defended, the pursuit of personal benefit results in a community benefit. Rousseau's social model, on the other hand, rejects this disintegrating individualism, which he sees as contrary to the communitarian nature of the human being. Individualism, according to Rousseau, lies behind the dissociation of the idea of community that is naturally present in humanity. In this natural semi-communal state, each individual retains his or her identity, but does not reject the benefits of community life. To do so, he or she gives up part of their individuality in favour of group benefits, accepting decisions that may not benefit them as an individual, but as part of the collective.

Rousseau's contract theory tries to recover the spirit of the human being in his natural state, who lived together and was kind. This human being, unlike the Locke's one, transfers his ego to the collective. Consequently, the decisions he or she makes are always made in the best interests of the community. Instruction, therefore, must foster his communitarian character, for it is only through him that his social theory can be meaningfully developed.

Education in Europe was based on the traditional concept of the school. Despite the influence of Rousseau and Pestalozzi, who contributed to the construction of the experimental and scientific character of education at the end of the 18th century, the traditional model, built around the book and the teacher. At the beginning of the 19th century, Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) kept Pestalozzian pedagogy alive, based on the improvement of the human spirit, displacing specific knowledge and specialised training from the classroom. In Herbart we find the cornerstone of autonomous pedagogical thinking, of the construction of an independent science of education, and of the conversion of pedagogy into an autonomous science based on philosophy and psychology (VILANOU, GARCÍA and ARADA, 2018).

Although the 19th century was to be the century of constitutionalism and democracy, both would not appear suddenly, but would take root at the same time as capitalism, driven by the Industrial Revolution. Liberal ideas faced, on the one hand, the stiff resistance offered by the European monarchies and, on the other hand, a social reality and a tradition of thought that restricted their natural development. As Aristotle reminds us, "democratic practices preserve democracy, (...) and the purer the practices, the stronger the state" (ARISTOTLE, 2019, p. 177). Consequently, there will be no place for a socio-political organisation based on a democratic system without the personal and material conditions for that purpose having been installed in the citizenry.

During the 19th century, the emergence of such conditions was influenced by persistent political instability, which implied the absence of physical and economic security, of a guarantee

of civil rights and liberties, or of a regular supply of services and basic necessities. It is fair to say that during this century there were important contributions to the establishment of such conditions in Europe, although the material conditions for the establishment of a democratic political community were still far from being in place. These contributions, among others, were the disentanglement, the extension of suffrage, the separation of powers, the extension of rights and liberties, the rise of capitalism, and the economic growth (TODD, 1995).

PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN THE 20TH CENTURY: THE END OF THE DUAL MODEL?

This dual model that we are analysing began to show signs of exhaustion towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Throughout the world, and especially in the West, there was a kind of socio-educational explosion that gave rise to an unprecedented pedagogical renewal. We can say that we are witnessing the golden age of the pedagogical renewal movements that will mark Western public education systems.

With a markedly progressive, renovating, participatory, and active character, and with the discovery of the child and pedagogy, the New School movement arose, which placed pupils at the centre of school activity, paying special attention to physical activity, the relationship with nature, and manual work. It soon became known as the New School, as opposed to the English Public Schools (MARÍN, 1976), private, elitist, and highly selective educational centres (BENN, FIELDING and MOSS, 2019). The most innovative aspect of the New School was the conception and scientific knowledge about the child and its educational treatment (BRASTER, 2018). The New School had an enormous impact worldwide, whose mark reached especially Europe and America, where Decroly and Montessori were received with special interest, although they sometimes generated clashes and opposing positions (VAN GORP, 2020), especially during the inter-war period (VAN GORP, 2017).

One of the main representatives of the New School movement was the American John Dewey. In his best known work, *Democracy and Education* (DEWEY, 2001), he explores the political dimension of education from a philosophical perspective. This work is very relevant for our work because Dewey, despite the years, is still relevant today, either because the educational uncertainty of the 21st century is palpable, or “because the main objective he demanded has not been achieved: the school has not yet become a space where students reflect critically on reality” (PALLARÈS-PIQUER and MUÑOZ-ESCALADA, 2017, p.14).

What makes Dewey interesting, from the point of view of democratic educational practice, is his idea that the perpetuation and progress of society is based on the dialogical relations established between its members. Participating in this dialogue requires the ability to reason, and the only tool available to citizens is education, which must be oriented towards this end. Democracy, from this approach, is a dialogue open to the whole community. Citizens must be able to know, discuss, and, if they prefer, change the purpose for which they are working. This

situation requires the establishment of a public dialogue that can only be accessed through cultural training and the improvement of personal skills, which would enable citizens to be prepared for initiative and adaptability (DEWEY, 2001). From a holistic position, Dewey extends social and democratic life to the school, and assigns it the task of transmitting the codes of the democratic dialogue that is taking place outside. Thus, he conceives the school as a small-scale social community, where the desirable aspects of society are reproduced, while those that hinder or impede social progress are avoided.

Dewey was one of the great political thinkers who treated education as an intrinsic and fundamental part of his democratic theories (HONNETH, 2013). From his philosophical perspective of democracy, he offers us an interconnected vision of social reality where the elements that compose it depend on each other. Moreover, he does not deny the primitive element of human beings, whose presence alters their character and influences their social and private relations. This primitive and natural character is related to the traditional. Thus, it is justified more by the everydayness that surrounds it than by reflective processes. However, everything that is subject to revision, doubt, and even uncertainty already contains within itself the reflexive character that allows the everyday to be rethought and improved. Democracy, according to Dewey, can and must face its uncertainty, because a closed and definitive system would have no room for improvement. This notion of the organic relationship that occurs between subject and object is the final cause of experience, and is part of the legacy that Hegel left in the Dewey's work. Later, through these foundations, he would synchronise the Hegelian dialectic with the scientific avant-garde of the 19th and 20th centuries. Dewey would end up rejecting the Hegelian postulates, although he would always retain this holistic vision of the organic relationship between the elements (HONNETH, 2013).

WHAT REMAINS IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION? DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION TODAY

After Dewey and the two world wars, the world and the Western liberal democracies, hit by the great tragedies, were generally able to recover and adapt to the new times. The phenomenon of globalisation was growing at the same time as the conflict between the great world powers (the United States and the Soviet Union), which resulted in the definitive establishment of liberal democracy in the West after the fall of the only power of reference for other socialist nations. The growth of Western political participation led to the need to train democratic citizens.

The promotion of education for democracy will be the leitmotif of the contemporary educational movements, which will differ on issues as the origin of democratic authority or the scope of student participation, giving rise to a wide variety of alternative approaches that can be classified into two blocks. On the one hand, there are those pedagogical movements that propose a break with traditional pedagogy and with other alternative movements. This would

be the case of Ivan Illich's unschooling or the homeschooling movement, which advocates teaching at home (AURINI and DAVIES, 2005). In addition, other factions reject schooling for its ineffectiveness in social changing and the regeneration of societies (IGELMO-ZALDÍVAR, 2012), movements among which free schools, Waldorf Pedagogy and other modes of light pedagogy located in the hypermodern pedagogical imaginary stand out (IGELMO-ZALDÍVAR and QUIROGA-UCEDA, 2018).

On the other hand, Critical Pedagogy focuses on the study of democratic and school structures. This pedagogical trend carries out its particular study of school reality from a materialistic approach, recognising it as one of the state institutions at the service of neoliberal agendas, rather than the interest and welfare of citizens. From this perspective, they denounce the alienating and repetitive nature of school, its system of progress based on grades, rewards and punishments, the separation into levels or the frontal and unidirectional teaching. Thus, authors such as Giroux, McLaren, Allman or Apple have been responsible for pointing out the influence that neoliberal policies exert on the processes of social reproduction present in the school context.

The hope of Critical Pedagogy lies in the training and education of individuals from the beginning of their lives. That is, in the formation of a critical and emancipatory spirit, with the aim of establishing a new education that prepares young people to challenge the historical and political structures of power relations (MIKANDER, 2016). In this neoliberal scenario, Critical Pedagogy presents itself as the best alternative to unite the education-democracy binomial, in a struggle for equality and social justice, as it builds in the minds of the next generation the whys and wherefores of how to resist in order to make the future more equal and prosperous (NIKOLAKAKI, 2020).

These two currents are the offspring of a liberal democratic tradition that has not been able to respond to contemporary challenges. Consequently, they strive to rethink the school and the educational phenomenon in such a way as to give rise to a new ethos that does meet liberal aspirations: democratic, civic, critical and participatory. While the first currents presented arise unanchored from any previous tradition of thought (except for the liberal framework in which they are found), critical pedagogy does take over from the Frankfurt School, of Marxist tradition, which recovers Rousseau's thought for its pedagogy. Its deterministic vision of the material conditions that affect citizenship puts the focus on the responsibility of the state. And since the school is a state institution, education must serve the interests of the state, displaced in recent decades in favor of growth and economic performance.

Here we can find the dialectical confrontation between individualistic liberal education and democratic liberal education that is taking place today. While an education that makes it possible to attain quality employment is a sine qua non condition for a fulfilling life, focusing all attention on this dimension jeopardizes education for democratic citizenship. Not only because of the lack of space, but also because of the apparent contradiction between them. This is why Rousseau appealed to the citizenship status of individuals, an artificial characteristic that

cannot emerge without a precise direction. Liberal individualist education, on the other hand, advocates a formal education that allows personal fulfillment through work. In this framework, the state is no more than a tertiary institution responsible for ensuring this framework, not even for providing it. This current, as we pointed out, does not take into account the social dimension of citizenship because, in essence, its evolution has placed it at the limits of the social community in order to produce individual citizens well trained for employment.

The contemporary current of Critical Pedagogy continues to point out the internal conflicts and contradictions of the school, although various readings have been added to the debate that seek to subtract the postmodern impact, whose followers recognise a process of cultural rupture from the end of the 20th century, and carry out their particular reading of the crisis of contemporary education from that juncture (AYUSTE and TRILLA, 2005). Ayuste also points out that this overcoming has allowed the Critical pedagogical approach to leave behind the proposals of social models and bet on a “procedural ethic based on dialogue and the deepening of democracy as a means of favouring social progress and the development of individuals” (AYUSTE, 1997, p. 84).

Post-critical pedagogy emerges from the heart of critical pedagogy. Hodgson, Vlieghe and Zamojski published one of the most controversial texts about this new current (2017), where they expose the five principles that govern (or should govern) post-critical pedagogy. This current rejects the negativity with which traditional critical pedagogy faces otherness, generating an educational scenario in eternal conflict with the future. Post-critical pedagogy, on the other hand, proposes the hope in the present, advocating for possible and achievable changes that do have immediate transcendence in people’s lives. A change of vision that implies a strong emotional component, marked by love for others and the positivity of discourses (WORTMANN, 2019).

This post-critical current rejects its historical commitment to concentrate on the now, on present well-being, putting the focus on the virtues that can be derived from the contemporary school. This can mean two things: either they reject any change in the socio-political paradigm, accepting any change for the better that may occur in the existing paradigm, or they do not recognize a state of inequality that the school must face. In any case, this current cannot make possible a change in the socio-political system, nor can it be coherent with the historical processes that are going through the school. In this sense, post-critical pedagogy is another victim of the postmodern cultural conditions through which any attempt to change the socio-political system manifests itself. A trend marked by immediacy and practicality for the individuality that each one represents. In this way, we see how from a current of thought anchored on the flank of democratic liberal education (critical pedagogy) a new movement emerges which, without descending directly from individualistic liberal education, has assumed its principles, filtered by postmodern cultural conditions, to create a compendium of immediate solutions to structural problems without delving into the causes that provoke them.

At the end of the 20th century, Gutmann takes the debate back to the very origins of democratic legitimacy. Reviewing theories of the state and education based on Plato, Locke and Mill, Gutmann concludes that it is only possible to recognise an authority that emanates from the real and equal deliberation of the agents participating in the dialogue. In the case of education, Gutmann asks who has the task of deciding what education the state should provide. She constructs her theory in opposition to the three currents represented by the aforementioned authors (Plato's State of the family; Locke's State of the family; Mill's State of the individual), and transfers educational authority to the parents of the students, the teachers and the citizens (GUTMANN, 1999). In this way, it is possible to take control over conscious social reproduction through democratic deliberation (and its manifestation through educational control). This raises a number of dangers inherent in power, as the way in which it is distributed does not prevent the emergence of certain abuses. This is why Gutmann proposes two inviolable restrictions, and locates the limits of democracy and education there: the principle of non-repression and the principle of non-discrimination (GUTMANN, 1993). The school must include both if it is to guarantee a socio-political community as proposed by this author, i.e. a community organised in a deliberative democracy. This is a democratic system in which the ways of life of individuals are respected and passed on from generation to generation (principle of non-repression), while at the same time social spaces for new ways of life are respected (principle of non-discrimination), as long as they do not violate these principles. Gutmann outlines a democratic model in which organisation revolves around the search for consensus through participation in public dialogue.

Oposing Amy Gutmann's proposal are antagonism and political agonism, theories in which the contributions of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe stand out (LACLAU and MOUFFE, 1987). Political agonism, or agonistics, is based on the assumption that political conflicts allow for social progress, since it does not deny the validity of opposing positions, understanding them as necessary to each other in order to perpetuate such conflict. Dissent and conflict are essential and inevitable when it comes to tackling political projects from this perspective (GONZÁLEZ, 2016). "Agonistic pluralism" (MOUFFE, 1999, p. 754) is thus positioned against deliberative democracy and consensus, as it considers that a solution that no one dislikes is a solution that no one likes. Political agonism does not offer solutions or formulas for action, but rather a participatory political framework, where the validity of some ideas over others is tested through dialogical respect, in order to clarify their real discursive power (MOUFFE, 2014). This perspective, marked by the Marxist spirit, draws on Hegelian dialectical contradiction to elaborate a political space that allows and encourages the confrontation of ideas, so that the conflict that keeps social progress in motion runs through peaceful and constructive of the organic relationship between the elements (HONNETH, 2013).

Here we can identify how these proposals can fit into the currents presented: the consensus of Gutmann in individualistic liberal education, and the antagonism of Mouffe and Laclau

in democratic liberal education. Both are daughters of liberalism, and have democracy as their ideal political framework. However, and in the same way that occurs with critical and post-critical pedagogy, the main difference lies in the way in which they position themselves within a class society, and the way in which they confront their communitarian responsibility.

CONCLUDING

The concept of democratic education on which we have worked is based on the conception that arose during the Enlightenment, marked by liberalism, with specific political and philosophical characteristics, belonging to a specific tradition of thought. Therefore, although Politics and Philosophy are older than our own culture, we have been able to verify the importance of the tradition in which the object of study is framed and the liberal foundations that support it.

The historical tradition of democratic education since the Enlightenment, its political character, the democratic model it uses as a reference, and the associated value system generate their own educational tradition under the protection of the liberal tradition. Therefore, the development of contemporary democracies is related to the value system built in the Western context of the Enlightenment. Consequently, we can conclude that democratic education is nothing without its democratic context, which, even in the Western framework, makes it dependent on external agents to achieve its political goals.

The liberal foundation of Western education allows us to understand that the geographical, political, and social environment of the West conditions the educational, social, cultural, and personal activities of the subjects, who generate active cooperative movements of social and cultural construction (HERCE, 2013). The education-democracy binomial is built on a liberal basis, and gives the school as an institution a responsibility based on the construction of a community that involves the generation of a cultural and educational communication in which the actors are involved, understanding educational practice as an intelligible entity for all members of that community, and the relationships with being, change, progress, and learning in the social and educational context (ZBRÓG, 2016).

In this paper, we have attempted to provide a brief overview of the historical context in which the change in the political paradigm of Modernity took place. Locke's work, in full harmony with the English Reformation, inspired by Protestantism and liberalism, was the starting point of the individualist liberal socio-political tradition, the pedagogical implications of which we have reviewed. In the same way, Rousseau tried to overcome the social theories of Locke, looking at the vicissitudes of community life, and introducing a pedagogical model that would take into account this paradigm. The work of both authors had a significant impact, not only because they directed their thinking towards educational issues, after hundreds of years in which pedagogy had received hardly any attention, but

also because they inquired into the political character of education and its capacity for socio-political transformation.

Both established two lines of thought which, even with the transformations, reformulations, and bifurcations they underwent over the next centuries, have retained their general features to the present day. We refer to the two factions of liberal thought that make up most of the ideological spectrum of contemporary democratic culture, which we have classified as individualist liberal (represented by Locke) and democratic liberal (ascribed to the work of Rousseau). It should be noted that neither of these denominations fits with semantic precision the reality that both lines of thought represent. Firstly, because both came from the values that emanate from individualism, which is nothing more than a philosophical position that emphasises the value of the individual, independently of the value acquired by its social dimension. From this position, fundamental rights and freedoms are claimed which, according to this perspective, are associated with the human condition and, consequently, it urges respect for the exceptionality that each person represents. In other words, the value of human beings ceases to be established according to their position or their contribution to the social group, and the dignity and autonomy of each person is vindicated. The values defended by Rousseau, and thus set out in his *Contract*, are due to the rise of individualism. But Rousseau rejects the extreme individual freedom that emerges from the movement in order to emphasise the value of the community dimension and all the benefits that flow from it. Consequently, he determines the limit of individual freedom where the communal dimension of which we are all a part. This is the boundary that separates individual negative freedom from libertinism.

In this respect, it should be noted that Rousseau's social conception is far from that of the English liberals, as we have seen in the works of Locke and, to a lesser extent, Hobbes. For them, there seems to be a natural inequality reigning over human communities. The same idea is present in Aristotle, when he states that "nature, taking into account the necessity of conservation, has created some beings to command and others to obey" (ARISTOTLE, 2019, p. 8). Rousseau takes a stand against this thesis, pointing out that they take the consequence for the cause, so that "every man born into slavery is born for slavery" (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 53). Rousseau's pedagogical proposal seeks to overcome this conception, first by delving into the origins of the inequality that arose in the first human communities, and then by proposing an emancipatory pedagogy that overcomes any natural differences, so that it is possible to extract from each citizen his or her full transformative political capacity.

At this point, the liberal dimension of Rousseau's liberal democracy needs to be qualified, because in contrast to Locke's individualism, is possible to infer the lack of democratic commitment of the Englishman's. In fact, it is true that both Locke's concept of natural equality and democracy are far from the meanings with which the Swiss worked, or with which we work today. However, Locke's individualism is the manifestation of his opposition to absolutism, from which would emerge a democratic conception of society, albeit inspired (and limited) by the socio-political vicissitudes of his time. Consequently, his pedagogical

proposal was set in this theoretical framework from which he could not escape. The value of his contributions lies in the political dimension he extracted from education, which he oriented towards contemporary social demands.

These two traditions of thought have, to a greater or lesser extent, been preserved to the present day: individualistic liberal education and democratic liberal education. It is possible to distinguish a classical liberal faction which, in a very general way, is characterised by the value it places on human individuality, thus rejecting any interference by the state in the decisions and private acts of citizens. On the other hand, the liberal democratic tradition, also of liberal origin, while recognising the virtues that emanate from individualism, does consider the intervention of the state and its willingness to correct certain social imbalances, such as material inequality or abuses of power, to be necessary. This current sees the state as an indissoluble entity of the citizen condition or even as its highest political representation.

The development and evolution of these two lines of thought suffered their own particular influence in each country, and the liberal trail had to wait the decades from the time it first manifested itself during Modernity until it began to materialise in concrete policies. The late influence led to a particular settlement of both traditions, and created a trench between the two factions that persists to this day. On the one hand, the liberal individualist current, beginning with Locke, has given rise to a democratic political tradition based on representativeness, which today governs the Western socio-political sphere. On the other hand, the liberal democratic trend, which began with Rousseau, advocates a democratic political system based on direct participation.

Each of these traditions has advocated its own pedagogical model, which, beyond focusing on the political formation of citizenship to be integrated into each political model, reconstructs a political microcosm in schools with the aim of reproducing the most desirable characteristics of society, as well as overcoming its limitations. For this reason, both pedagogical models have converged at various points in history (for example, with the New School), evidencing a common origin and aspirations, but marked by a different ontological ordering that has led to insurmountable differences.

As a consequence of our arguments, we understand that the education-democracy binomial requires a fair and equitable principle of the right to education. Training for real citizenship, insofar as democratic education is based on the guarantee of quality education and an inclusive process that guarantees social justice (GARCÍA-GÓMEZ, 2018), based on participation as a basic right, fundamental for developing the autonomy and citizenship of individuals, which is provided as an essential activity in the development of their dignity, respect, voice, and participation (MENDONÇA and FERREIRA, 2020).

The liberal democratic system is currently in a period of instability. Far from leading us towards the end of history, as Fukuyama pointed out (FUKUYAMA, 1992), the Western meta-narrative has passed through the prism of the cultural logic of a late capitalism (JAMESON, 1995) that has fragmented social dialogue, dispersed its identity and renounced the legitimacy of its own tradition. In contemporary times, liberal democracies must grapple with the

contradiction between the relativism that plagues them and the rigidity of the categories belonging to tradition that continue to dominate their development. The implications of this contradiction for democratic education, as well as for the democratic political system itself, are overwhelming, and its effects materialise through the growing institutional instability that has weakened their identities and called their legitimacy into question.

The liberal individualist tradition has displaced the aspirations of the social state. The school finds itself in a crossroads, unable to meet individualistic demands while at the same time grappling with its role as an educator of the community. The dialectic process between the two trends is becoming evident. And the hegemonic positions, marked by immobilism and conservatism, have done nothing but promote ultra-novel pedagogical currents, but actually empty of innovative content, over the last two centuries (MARTÍN-SÁNCHEZ, 2021). These are the emergency resources in the face of a lack of prospects. In order to overcome this situation, a political normative model must be established which, regardless of whether it is inspired by representation or participation, clearly establishes the role of democratic citizenship, so that we can demand that schools provide citizenship training in accordance with a specific and defined socio-political model.

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