



Refusal and Adhesion: resistance between studies of cognition and theater education

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ABSTRACT – Refusal and Adhesion: resistance between studies of cognition and theater education – This article presents reflections on certain public education policy guidelines, oriented to the labor market and exemplified by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recommendations, concerning their influence on artistic education and, more precisely, theater education. It addresses existing problems in the field of education in Brazil and France, with emphasis on conceptual causes. In a possible contribution to debates on utilitarianism in theater education, the concept of resistance, present in Michel Foucault's works, is used as mediator in the utilization of cognition studies to analyze the planning, practice and evaluation of theater classes in primary schools.

Keywords: **Resistance. Theater Education. Michel Foucault. OECD. Cognition Studies.**

RÉSUMÉ – Refus et Adhésion: résistance entre les études de la cognition et l'éducation théâtrale – Cet article construit des réflexions sur certaines lignes directrices des politiques publiques d'éducation, orientées vers le marché du travail et illustrées par des recommandations de l'OCDE, dans ce qui concerne son influence sur l'éducation artistique et, plus précisément, théâtrale. Il approche des problèmes dans ce domaine d'activité au Brésil et en France, en mettant l'accent sur ses causes conceptuelles. Dans une éventuelle contribution aux débats sur l'utilitarisme dans l'éducation théâtrale, le concept de résistance, présent dans des œuvres de Michel Foucault, est utilisé comme médiateur dans l'utilisation des études de cognition dans l'analyse de la planification, la conduite et l'évaluation des classes de théâtre dans les écoles du système éducatif.

Mots-clés: **Résistance. Éducation Théâtrale. Michel Foucault. OCDE. Études sur la Cognition.**

RESUMO – Recusa e Adesão: resistência entre estudos da cognição e a educação teatral – Este artigo tece reflexões sobre algumas orientações de políticas públicas de educação, direcionadas para o mercado de trabalho e exemplificadas por recomendações da Organização para a Cooperação e Desenvolvimento Econômico (OCDE), em sua influência sobre a educação artística e, mais precisamente, teatral. Aborda problemas existentes nesse campo de atividade no Brasil e na França, com destaque para causas conceituais. Em uma possível contribuição para os debates sobre o utilitarismo na educação teatral, vale-se do conceito de resistência, presente nas obras de Michel Foucault, como mediador na utilização de estudos da cognição na análise do planejamento, condução e avaliação de aulas de teatro em escolas do ensino básico.

Palavras-chave: **Resistência. Educação Teatral. Michel Foucault. OCDE. Estudos da Cognição.**

Brief Preface

In December 2019, the worldwide result of the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) educational test, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), was released. At the time, the term used by the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* to define Brazil's situation was *a decade of stagnation* (Pinho; Amâncio, 2019), in reference to the country's stubbornly poor position in the world ranking.

The character of PISA has changed a lot over the years in its attempt to respond to global changes in the area of education and economic production. This can be deduced from statements by Andreas Schleicher (2018), OECD Director of Education and Skills, in the book he wrote reflecting on the test's proposals and results, in comparison with the educational policies of the countries evaluated:

Our current schools were invented in the industrial age, when the prevailing norms were standardisation and compliance, and when it was both effective and efficient to educate students in batches and to train teachers once for their entire working lives. [...] This structure, inherited from the industrial model of work, makes change in a fast-moving world far too slow (Schleicher, 2018, p. 15).

PISA has proven to be an instrument for standardizing education (Pereira, 2019) (Ydesen, 2019), oriented to specific OECD interests. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge the advantages that this test can provide, such as not including educational policies tied to anachronistic pedagogical models involving the repetition of information. We can ascertain this by examining the test itself, in addition to Schleicher's assertions (2018, p. 18-19):

In our view, education is about promoting passion for learning, stimulating the imagination, and developing independent decision makers who can shape the future. So we did not mainly want to reward students for reproducing material they learned in class. To do well in PISA, students had to be able to extrapolate from what they knew, think across the boundaries of subject-matter disciplines, and apply their knowledge creatively in novel situations.

Previously, in February 2019, Schleicher was invited to a hearing in the English parliament to address the challenges for education in the face of

the so-called *fourth industrial revolution*. At one point, parliamentarian Lucy Powell commented on the dropping-off of subjects related to design, technology, arts and creativity. Schleicher was then asked about his recommendations on the number and depth of subjects and disciplines to be worked on with students. During his answer, he stated categorically that “[...] in the fourth industrial revolution, art may become more important than maths” (United Kingdom, 2019, electronic document).

Schleicher’s affirmation is quite impactful, but not unwarranted, since there is an evident increase in references to the importance of creativity, complex thinking and good socio-emotional education among workers’ skills. Thanks to the discourses that envisage the artist as “[...] an exemplary figure of the new worker” (Menger, 2002, p. 8), arts classes have the chance to take on supporting or even protagonist roles in initiatives that aim at developing these elements.

But we are still surprised that a statistician responsible for promoting the economic development of countries says this in a British parliamentary hearing. At stake in this hearing were not public policies on culture or the fostering of citizenship (fields usually associated with the arts), but rather something deemed the hard core of economic development – material wealth, money, technology, industries:

We often talk about soft skills as being social and emotional skills, and hard skills as being science and maths, but it might be the opposite. Science and maths might become a lot softer in the future, where the relevance of knowledge evaporates very quickly, whereas the hard skills might be your curiosity, leadership, persistence and resilience (United Kingdom, 2019, electronic document).

It is very likely that professionals in the field of artistic education (theater education included here) will initially see the immediate advantages of this unusual defense of their work with joy, since the usefulness of these classes for entrepreneurship and the 4th industrial revolution seems to solve frequent problems in the teaching of arts in schools – the worst of them being the scant importance given to it: “Far less time is spent on the arts in our schools than on subject areas considered to be the core of the academic curriculum. The arts are treated as a luxury – an arena for self-expression, perhaps, but not a necessary part of schooling” (Winner, 2019, p. 167).

However, there may be dangers in this perspective, or at least a need for caution in adhering to it. We may, for example, infer that this capture of arts education's importance by the economic production mainstream could, at any time, turn against artistic education, if the decision-makers, at some point, come to consider that other skills better meet immediate economic needs. It is not the teaching of arts that is being valued, but rather what is promoted by it – creativity, emotional self-regulation, etc. And these soft elements may, at any moment, be discarded if there is a perception that they are not serving so well to fuel this kind of economic system. The fact that arts education is positioned as a protagonist in the entrepreneurial and industrialization field does not challenge the protagonism of these fields in relation to life as a whole. These are initial considerations on an issue that is not new, despite these evident current changes in its configuration.

The following text articulates analyses and proposals on theater education in Brazil and France, adding reflections developed during a post-doctoral internship at the University of Lyon, from 2018-2019. Research on the teaching of arts (in Brazil, visual arts, dance, music, theater; in France, Artistic and Cultural Education – *EAC*) was used in these reflections on theater education – my field of expertise. I will switch in a dangerously fluent manner between Brazil and France, as well as between theater education and the teaching of other artistic languages when the issues are deemed similar, within the context. To clarify: what is said here about artistic education can be extended to theater education. However, I must warn that whenever there are explicit references to theater education, the idea outlined may not necessarily be applied to arts education in general.

In Brazil, there is a system of university licentiate degrees, in order to train teachers to give theater classes in the education system. In France, the teaching of theater is carried out by artists, in conjunction with the teachers of other disciplines, in the so-called *partenariat* (partnership) system. At this point, I would like to point out that I prefer and see strong advantages in the Brazilian system of theater teacher training, which also allows for a significant volume of research and bibliography in this area.

Despite the differences, and contrary to commonly accepted wisdom, I believe that the conceptual problems in the teaching of theater in Brazil

are similar to those in France. In both, there are mistakes in the comprehension of what is taught in theater classes, resulting mainly from the excessive reliance that this education still has on professional theater. I will justify these statements below.

Situation

Besides the above example, there are already other cases of a valorization of arts teaching; scattered, although significant. However, the rarity of statements like Schleicher's, as well as the fact that he still has to say it, are indicative of a problem to be solved.

The teaching of theater in Brazil is plagued by many issues, such as the excessive focus on visual arts in the imaginary about arts education, the scarcity of trained teachers, and the general lack of structure and working conditions in schools (Ferreira, 2020). And, even though there are pertinent laws, their “[...] practical implementation in regular Brazilian schools is still far away” (Ferreira, 2020, p. 7). But these problems do not surprise us and we know they are widespread in the education system. What I consider pertinent to tackle at the moment is an internal problem in the field addressed here – a problem whose greatest severity is having been barely perceived or assumed.

Many books on theater and education devote a significant part, usually the initial one, to justifying the teaching of theater in schools. However, not only in Brazil, there is still a lack of research, methods, and models to account for the pedagogical processes that take place in arts classes, besides not having “[...] any reliable method, or generalizable explanatory model for us to understand what takes place in this holistic formation of the subject through art” (Choquet, 2016, p. 6). The need for long-term qualitative investigations, notwithstanding some exceptions (such as the North-American Project Zero¹), is still far from being covered. And what is most needed is still the basic – a problem already identified by Ana Mae Barbosa 30 years ago (Barbosa, 1989), and not yet addressed: to compose a conceptual field that can provide support for this educational modality. It is not only a Brazilian problem: “[...] the budgetary funding granted by the Ministry of Culture [French], which has real impacts on the increase of beneficiaries, is not

accompanied by a strong and shared conceptualization” (Bordeaux, 2018, p. 267-268).

Even if we do not inflict this alarmist tone on the conceptual work already undertaken in this field, we must recognize the need to disseminate, outside and beyond social niches directly related to the arts, consistent arguments that promote the need for theater education. This is a difficult task that has not been fully confronted, or even understood.

And perhaps this situation is due, among other reasons, to certain inner problems of the arguments themselves. Even the terms on which the problems related to arts education should be examined may not yet have been well posited. False issues concerning the transfer of skills (arts classes serving to improve linguistic, mathematical, or socio-emotional skills), as well as the superficial approach to utilitarianism in arts teaching, are symptoms of this.

And one of the reasons why this question has not been properly addressed, much less answered, may be that those responsible for tackling the problem do not see it as such (a problem), but as something already dealt with and resolved. For arts professionals and their teaching, the critical question as to *why the arts are important to the world and essential in education?* has always somehow received the response *the arts are important to me*. To put it another way, for artists and arts teachers, the importance of art in the life of everyone is an answer and not a question: “[...] the EAC² is based on a strong voluntarism of the means related to culture: in this case, developing imagination and expression are the watchwords that do not raise any issue and are even claimed by politicians and those responsible for culture” (Bordeaux, 2016, p. 11).

Besides this, the reasons put forward by the social players in this conflict, in Brazil and France, to support the presence of arts in school are not unanimous. As a symptom of an epistemological richness, in a scenario of “contradictory definitions”, “numerous disagreements”, in a complexification that “weakened its objectives” (Bordeaux, 2018, p. 263), we may view this vagueness of justifications as the lack of a necessary unity to form strong artistic education policies.

The challenge of convincingly justifying the presence of arts classes in school curricula must be faced if there is a desire to generalize and/or make

arts teaching compulsory for everyone. It is a dispute related to time, money and, something that is not made very explicit, life choices in the broadest sense.

Strategic Lines

Marie-Christine Bordeaux (2017), on comparing the content of two texts produced by the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on artistic education, identifies what she calls:

[...] a tension between two orientations: on one side, the affirmation of arts practice and cultural initiation as rights in themselves and not as means directed towards another end [‘Road Map for Arts Education’, 2006]; on the other, the adaptation to the economic demands of society [‘Seoul Agenda’, 2010] (Bordeaux, 2017, p. 27).

This change symptomizes the growing influence of the world economic agenda on the values and criteria that guide artistic education, which, often in different ways, is more associated with the desire to improve life “[...] not by the accumulation of material goods, but by the constitution of values ethically accepted by a given community” (Icle, 2010, p. 23). Moreover, in these 2006 and 2010 UNESCO guidelines, we can see a game between two forces, despite the multiplicity of configurations that this dichotomy can assume: adherence to market imperatives and, in opposition to it, a refusal of its powers.

In view of this interplay of forces, I would like to define two lines of argument in defense of artistic education. Even if they are intertwined, it is sometimes possible to clearly differentiate between their characteristics.

The *first* is what I consider the most primordial argument: to adopt the aesthetic dimension as a privileged criterion for the evaluation of life. Recognize the importance of aesthetics as a way of composing the world (Kerlan, 2017) and produce politics (Rancière, 2008). In this *aesthetic paradigm*, the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari is essential. And in the wake of Deleuze and Espinosa’s thinking (Silva, 2013), the approach is intensive: it is not about prioritizing art as an institution or cultural phenomenon, but as an aesthetic operation that permeates daily life. It is not so much the finished forms of theater that matter, but its intensities, its operations – the theatricality, which can exist any-

where and in any way. And in the case of theater education, its theatrical cognitive operations (Magela, 2018).

Removing aesthetic life from a supernatural, utopian and inaccessible place, this perspective consists in mixing art with the common, configuring an effective democratic process (Kerlan, 2015), a full dissemination of art and its teaching. In our times, a (re)integration:

In contrast to the, utterly romantic, credo that life should be art, this movement springs from the insight that the artistic is a dimension of life like many others, a dimension that, at least in Western enlightened societies has been kept at bay, and thus rendered innocuous, for too long. The challenge faced is precisely to reintegrate it by taking it from its pedestal and restoring its 'normality'. All this cannot but reverberate in the field of arts education. But it doesn't. Not yet (Gielen; Van Heusden, 2015, p. 12).

Along this line of argument, classes that address the aesthetic dimensions of life would practice and educate what we consider most important to us – living beauty. Life as a work of art, in which each event constitutes a work according to the aesthetic criteria that can be used or produced. In short, art as a fundamental way of composing the world; and art classes in life, of life, and for life to be great art:

What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life? (Foucault, 1983, p. 236).

This distances us from the utilitarian criteria in force in society, since it is art that works as the greatest valuation. In this aesthetics of existence, which judges that which is around us and constitutes us, life is a work to be built with zeal, and to which we must be faithful (Kerlan, 2004). In its educational unfolding, this perspective is configured as a guideline for all education on the basis of aesthetic values:

In its more radical form, this process is fed by an educational thought for which art is no longer merely a resource and a new base at the service of learning and other objectives of the school, but rather the only fully realized education, the only manner of completely fulfilling the educative ideal: here, art alone educates fully. [...] All these forms are part of an alternative para-

digm in education, which in my opinion attests to the ascension of the aesthetic paradigm in education (Kerlan, 2013, p. 17).

Thus, if we assume the need for an aesthetic paradigm in school culture, we can extend it, making it overflow into life as a whole. In this way, art classes would not respect art instituted in the form of expressions conducted by professionals so much, or even the commonly understood definition of arts education, “[...] all activities aimed at transmitting cultural heritage to young people and allowing them to understand and create their own artistic language” (Bamford, 2006, p. 119); or, even more broadly, attempts to expand the scope of conventional arts education:

Arts education and cultural education comprise education for the arts (e.g. promotion of young talents who may form the next generation of artists), in the arts (e.g. encouraging everyone to use their capacity for artistic experience), and through the arts (using the arts for other purposes, e.g. in order to use multiple learning styles or to be creative in non-art fields). Arts education/cultural education encourage people to learn about their cultural heritage and to engage with various forms of traditional and contemporary art (arts education in the narrow sense) and everyday culture (cultural education in the broad sense) as a source of and resource for their present and future life (Wagner; Veloso, 2019, p. 4).

Unlike that which is actually adopted more, the teaching of arts in schools would relate to the artistic operations present in everyone’s lives, in all spheres. It is akin to thinking that maths classes are not oriented to the practice of engineers, but rather the mathematic experience present in all our lives: “[...] there are no ‘athletes’: we are all athletes and we must develop everyone’s potential, and not just the chosen few who specialize” (Boal, 1979, p. 17).

The reference is an aesthetic education of life, whose conception extrapolates “[...] the artistic activity *strictu sensu*, designating aspects implied in the forms that we relate to and know reality” (Quilici, 2015, p. 61). Hence the preference for the term *Theater Education*, which I consider broader than *Pedagogy of the Theater*³, as the latter seems to me excessively subsumed by what artists do, and the theater’s professional and recognizable activity (while it may be contemporary, singular and transgressor, it is not the effective theme of these classes).

This stance begins to characterize the *second strategic line of argument* that I like to identify. Paradoxically, it attempts to satisfy the utilitarian aspect linked to maintaining survival, in a manner close to the example of the OECD that commenced this text.

The most common response to the devaluation of the arts in our schools has been to insist on instrumental justifications claiming value for the arts because of what they can do for the basic literacies (or for the economy, though I am not discussing the monetary claims here) (Winner, 2019, p. 168).

We find examples of this type of attempt in the book *Art for Art's Sake?: The Impact of Arts Education*, published by the OECD (Winner et al., 2013), which analyzes research on artistic education in terms of its presumed power to benefit general and transversal skills such as creativity, imagination, critical thinking, perseverance and motivation, communicative and social skills, as well as the complex capacity for cooperation. The background to this work is the promotion of innovation and creativity through education.

This power was also invoked by the International Society for Education Through Art (INSEA), in 2016, in a letter against Brazilian government measures that threatened artistic education in our country. The letter mentioned skills dear to business culture and pointed out that art classes develop abilities that are valued by that sector. INSEA's arguments clearly adopted the political tactic of trying to engage in a pedagogical dialogue with sectors of society not so close to the artistic system, having more productivist and neoliberal world perspectives. The letter states, for example, that:

[...] 21st century societies need a growing number of creative, flexible, adaptable and innovative workers [...] [and that] [...] artistic education or arts teaching is a means at the disposal of nations to prepare the human resources needed to tap into its precious cultural capital (International..., 2016).

I acknowledge the merit of these two initiatives, although I deem them excessively harmonious with a culture of human capital, which requires reserves (López-Ruiz, 2007). It is almost inevitable that associations of arts classes with the training of the workforce are captured or uncritically

fulfill an ideology of professionalizing education (Laval, 2019), in order to “[...] ensure that pupils and students are equipped with the skills needed to drive and adapt to innovation societies” (Winner et al., 2013, p. 24)⁴:

The OECD’s work on KBC suggests that an exclusive focus in such schemes on STEM⁵ is too narrow. In the United Kingdom, for instance, nearly half of academics from the creative arts and media are engaged with business in some way. This reality, which reflects the changing nature of innovation, also needs to be reflected in government programmes (Organisation..., 2015, p. 73).

At the same time, despite all this criticism, the need for dialogue with social players more connected to the economic mainstream is viewed here not so much as inflexible refusal but as productive caution. In other words, between what is (or seems to be) and what must be (or at least we wish), we can conceive of actions that are minimally legitimate and pragmatic.

Displacement

There is an old and frequent dispute in arts education in general and in theater education particularly - the intrinsic perspective versus the extrinsic perspective. At one pole we have the *teaching of theater* (intrinsic), whose objectives and guidelines are the technical aspects and values within the specific social niche of its artistic branch. At the opposite pole, is *education through the theater* (extrinsic), which assumes something external to the immediate interests of the theater as a social institution – for example, producing a play in which the explicit themes are the laws of physics or issues of citizenship. Or even the training of socio-emotional skills through the practice of acting.

You can configure an option, based on references that are different from those commonly used. I notice that the conceptual apparatus derived from the intensive philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (after Spinoza) suggests another path for this false opposition. Because if art and theater are seen as an intensive, operational, functional dimension (which may occur with the same nature, but in different ways, both in common life and in artistic expressions and in school), their teaching will always be *of art, of theater* – a subject I have already discussed in other texts (Magela, 2018; 2019a; 2019b). It is a way of teaching that aims to become a force in the life of

students in various ways – in their personal lives, in professions in general or in artistic practices identifiable as such.

Therefore, arts classes are associated with the daily routines of everyone in a functional and/or operational manner. In line with similarities between theater and life identified by thinkers such as Erving Goffman (1956; 1974), among others, we can affirm that theatrical elements or of theatricality are always present in our practical lives. Thus, its pedagogical presence in the educational system is also relevant to all citizens in areas related to survival, the creation of wealth, and problem-solving – from the most common to the most serious.

The gambit is that this approach fulfills an “essentialist” (Japiassú 2001, p. 22), “intrinsic” (Bordeaux, 2017, p. 30) or “aesthetic” (Decoursey, 2018, p. 9) view of theater education, and at the same time appeases the *extrinsic* imperatives, by repositioning and reconfiguring the questions and visions that have been employed to think of utilitarianism in the teaching of theater.

One consequence of this is another perspective regarding the terms and concepts used in discussions about arts teaching and its importance in society. As we have already said, in this approach, which shifts the traditional discussions about theater education, the main component of these classes would not be so much to teach the theater already performed and consecrated (plays or theater texts) or to facilitate contact with theatrical manifestations instituted and conventionally considered as such. Instead, it would be to encourage students to make their lives a work of theater art. This theatrical cognition, an invented object (Bachelard, 1947) (Bourdieu, 1968), would be the effective content of the theater education classes (Magela, 2018).

Another analytical consequence of this view, in terms of educational and social policy, is that the lack of compulsory theater education throughout the education system does not mean that children and young people will not be obliged to take drama classes. It does not mean that they will be *free*. It means that they will not have guaranteed access to theater classes designed and conducted systematically for their theater education. It means that the theatricality that already exists in their lives (which, like their mother tongue, they have to master in order not to be badly mastered) will

not be addressed by the school within a public policy that is aimed, in principle, at providing the best for each student (even if mistakes are bound to be made). Without theater education, this capital component of their lives will be at the mercy of chance, the occasionally harmful or deficient variations in their parents' cultural characteristics, and sometimes excessively local socio-cultural and economic determinations, mass culture, and media advertisers – interests that don't necessarily want the best for students, since the latter are seen as there to be taken advantage of as a consumer, labor force, or voter by convenience.

They are theatrical skills (*sic*) to be nourished in a theater class, as part of an educational policy that should be oriented to the students' well-being, their theatrical life power (Magela, 2019b). If teachers and schools do not do this, the forces of consumption and private or opportunistic interests will do so, for their own benefit.

Letting Go of the Profession

If we accept this more radical attitude, we become dismayed by the fact that perspectives which associate arts classes in schools with the aesthetics of life, in a more autonomous way, have not yet been satisfactorily tackled. Moreover, the need to clearly establish the connection between theater and the weave of life has not been properly taken into account in education.

When the student's life or the importance of theater classes for everyday life are analyzed, what is usually evaluated are personal transformations that could come about in any other class that makes their social connections more dynamic, not having a perception of the theatrical aspects in their daily lives.

A great paradox in theater education is that perhaps it will become more important as it becomes more ordinary in the school routine and in everyone's existence. For a greater insertion of the theater (and its classes) in society, it may be necessary to implant ordinary life in the theater. It would be a reciprocal contamination to not only allow the city or life enter the stage as a theme, but to accept and recognize the legitimacy of the theater from ordinary life; acceptance that human relationships and the experience of time and space in everyone's lives, and not only in the work of profes-

sional artists, are also theater. In other words, these classes are not *from the* theater, but *of* theater.

Whether it is good or bad theater should be evaluated in terms of life potency and theatrical agency capacity (Magela, 2019b). This is the defense of a Freirean approach to theater education, by feeding sparks of theatrical potency in students' lives, welcoming theatrical configurations that are pertinent to them (and not only the previously accepted forms of theater). It is also a call to examine better or with greater argumentative effectiveness why there should be theater classes for everyone and what kind of content-approach they should take – a style that does not merely consider the point of view of theater professionals and even theater teachers. As long as the wider interests of all students are not prioritized, theater education will not play an effective role as an integral element of basic education and will remain unimportant to those who are outsiders “[...] to a small group of insiders (theater professionals or amateur theater devotees (Japiassú, 2001, p. 22).

If the approach advocated here aims to contribute to an improvement in theater classes by establishing a pedagogically pertinent scope (theater classes in an intensive approach, in the operational aspects of theater, which take place both in plays and in life), it also derives from pragmatism. Because it serves a peculiar utilitarianism: if the deep meaning of life is aesthetic and the theater is entrenched in everyday life, then classes that concern this would be at the core of an education *for life* (an implicit claim of the OECD, for example). This particular argument is constituted by the idea that it is not the case that theater classes are not utilitarian: it is the hegemonic utilitarianism that needs to be deepened and expanded, rectified even.

But this leads to another paradox: making the aesthetic paradigm central, the *essentialist argument*, is the most susceptible, vulnerable attitude due to conflicts as to the ways of life we can and should have. First, given its inevitable and immediate political and critical component, where we consider that theater education can reconfigure the modes of perception-production of reality:

I think that the question of the stage is also very strongly linked to the question of appearance, in that appearance is not the opposite of reality, the

cave, but rather the scene of manifestation. There is not a stage and a behind the scene, a cave and a place of truth; there is a space of appearance where we always play appearance against appearance. Thus, the world is made to appear as a place where the plebs speak when they were not meant to speak. Theatricality is the construction of another universe of appearances: the fact of making appear what does not appear, or of making appear in another way that which appeared according to a certain mode of visibility and intelligibility (Rancière, 2018, p. 14).

Arts classes do not only reflect what matters in life in an ulterior manner. They connect to values, ideas, intellectual structures and ideologies related to survival:

Inequality is not economic or technological: it is ideological and political. [...] The important point is that power relations are not only material: above all, they are also intellectual and ideological. In other words, ideas and ideologies count in history. They enable us to constantly imagine and structure new worlds and different societies. Multiple trajectories are always possible (Piketty, 2019, p. 32).

Besides this, even without considering its critical components, implicit in the capacity of the arts to (re)compose worlds, this aesthetic paradigm (to prioritize art as a greater value in life), strongly questions the type of utilitarianism that dominates production relations in society (including the production of ways of life). It is a utilitarianism that relegates the arts to a secondary location while prioritizing activities and studies that concern, for example, courses in engineering, management and administration. Utilitarianism associated with the exact and natural sciences – not necessarily with their epistemological field or their rigors, but mainly in their interventionist character regarding nature, prediction and control of phenomena (Sousa Santos, 1988) and their promise to ensure survival.

Conceptual Resource

After these digressions, I would like to highlight, in the second line of argument, the question posed in this paper's title. The focus is not the content of these arguments, or even if they are *true* or *false*, but on something they have in common in their aspect of political strategy. More precisely, I want to emphasize the existence of elements already identified by Michel Foucault in situations of *resistance* against established powers.

The notion of resistance is rife in the work of Foucault, his writings and in his interviews. It is indirectly related to the concepts of strategy, struggle and production of subjectivity.

Here, the most important element we can define in this notion of resistance, as epistemological tool or lens, is that these argumentative initiatives I mentioned (the INSEA letter, the OECD book on arts teaching and the intensive proposal of theatrical cognition), are posited in the same spaces and modes in which the powers they confront are exercised⁶. As such, it is worth noting in Foucault that these forms of struggle aim to somehow escape restrictive situations, often doing so in a relationship of co-extensivity with the various asymmetric exercises of power or maintenance of hegemony: “Where there is power, there is resistance; nevertheless, or rather, as a result, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault, 1976, p. 125-126).

Put another way, in these strategies, there is no solution outside the power relations in which they are inserted. The struggle unfolds in a field that is an integral part of the dominant game of forces, which is internal to it: in this case, the valorization of utilitarianism. Invoking Foucault, it is from within the processes that one tries to pragmatically create “[...] strategies of confrontation”, “[...] strategies defined by the choice of ‘winning’ solutions” (Foucault, 1994b, p. 241).

It is worth highlighting that this promiscuity (*sic*) creates an ambiguity and an intense contradiction in these resistance situations. In the same manner in which there is not “[...] a binary structure with the ‘dominant’ on one side and the ‘dominated’” on the other (Foucault, 1994a, p. 425) we may deduce (and ascertain) that it is very difficult to resolve the binary perception of a certain situation – *does this attitude or action adhere or resist?; does it corroborate or undermine the dominant forms of power?* In addition, these actions often possess characteristics similar to the exercising of the instituted power:

[...] that there are no power relations without resistance; that they are all the more real and effective as they are formed there where power relations are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, but it is not imprisoned because it is a compatriot of power. It exists

even more as it is there where the power is; it is, therefore, similar to it, manifold and integrated into global strategies (Foucault, 1994a, p. 425).

In the case of INSEA's letter, the discourse of safeguarding arts classes invokes the same tone as an engineering school in order to generate innovation and increase the aforementioned productivity of its students, future employees or entrepreneurs. In any case, this type of strategy of mixing with business culture is not new, and often proves to be a necessity or a negotiated exit, as in the institution of the *partenariat* system in the teaching of theater in French schools:

It is with Christian Beullac [in 1977], the Education Minister coming from the corporate world, that the concept of '*partenariat*' first finds an institutional and administrative framework. Noting that National Education must adapt to a rapidly changing economic world and that the forms of knowledge transmission needed to be more open to the city's genuine players, he argued for openness on the part of schools and an approximation with the world of business. It is along this liberal line [...] that the Luc⁷ mission developed the project's pedagogy (Lallias, 2002, p. 100).

These strategies initially try to capture the prerogatives of ways of thinking that are most acceptable to society. In this way, operating *from within*, they can proceed as lines of resistance to hegemonic and exclusionary modes of validating life, both in public policies and in the social imaginary associated with them.

On the other hand, despite the historical necessity of these tactics, there are also restrictions (especially the lack of autonomy in the aesthetic dimension) and risks, for example, excessive adherence to the expropriation of life perpetrated by the current forms of economic production or, as we will now see, the excessive scientific validation of experience.

Case Study

For these reasons, and in an attempt to justify the teaching of theater using the *cognitive* field, I have utilized scientific research on cooperation as an important part of my work with theater education (Magela, 2019a). This is an additional resource of resistance: besides composing an argumentative line that dialogues with the utilitarianism in force, seeking to situate it in a socially endorsed epistemology. In this sense, I note that PISA is ba-

sically composed of a statistical perspective, which is the most explicit component in the preparation of scientific evidence.

This approach to cooperation considers broader theories, for example (Bowles; Gintis, 2011) (Sennett, 2012), in connection with cognitive aspects of cooperation. In the latter field, research conducted by Michael Tomasello at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, plays a key role. Michael Tomasello, in his studies of cognitive psychology and child development, meticulously describes operations of thinking involved in cooperation (Tomasello, 1999; 2014; 2016; 2019) and their crucial role in the constitution of culture.

According to his scientific narrative, cooperative thinking acts are formed by intersubjective actions, such as putting into perspective the actions one takes, the dynamic knowledge of one's own role and the role of others, and the broader perception of the importance of events. Among all these elements, *joint attention* (Eilan et al., 2007) (Tomasello et al., 2005) is the fundamental cognitive capacity for all other operations to take place. Joint attention consists in getting involved with people and objects in triadism – triangulating attention with others, having as subject matter the entities and situations around them. This cooperative approach to theater classes (Magela, 2019a) focuses mainly on coordinated bodily actions, mostly without speech.

Resistance as Adhesion (and Vice-Versa)

What seems to be the most pragmatic element in the use of these studies for theater education is that all these cognitive operations described have an almost total similarity with attention elements which can be identified at the base of theatrical performance practice. Thus, this approximation between theater education and these more general cognitive descriptions would be a connection of these classes with something that satisfies the imperatives of survival and hegemonic utilitarianism: cooperation.

In situations where utilitarianism becomes the pretext for the existence of things, qualifying the theater class as useful in a more accepted way can be a form of resistance. The proposal is, therefore, to research how this scientific interpretation of cooperation can be imbricated in an analytical description of theater exercises and games, thereby composing an understand-

ing of this pedagogical practice that provides a point of contact between theater classes and other epistemologies close to the “[...] dominant form of composing a world” (Kerlan, 2017, p. 215), namely, the scientific one.

The action of resistance lies in the displacement of the argumentative struggle to the interior of a hegemonic epistemology (science), where the exercise of power (Foucault, 1994a) is located. The intent is to transform subaltern relationships of theater education with established ways of learning and knowledge (Foucault, 1994b) by recognizing and dealing with their reality, their manifest power – the importance that society attaches to the natural sciences.

Hence, the strategy consists in assuming this aspect of theater classes characterized as cognitive and emphasizing their pedagogical power to increase cooperation in student interactions in their daily lives (and, of course, in the future work environment). This *scientific* perspective of theater classes can produce an immediate and effective political resistance: a discursive validation recognizable to the public authorities, and to social actors who influence the allocation of material and symbolic resources that provide the necessary conditions for theater education in schools.

At the same time, I would like to remind you that the final desired outcome is not merely that art classes improve other important ways of being in the world, but that the aesthetic experience (in class or in life) is already what matters. It is beauty, and not subsistence, that is most important in our lives. However, changing a whole questionable valuation of life (in which powerful cars are more important than a powerful life) is difficult in a head-on fight. Therefore, this strategic characterization of theater classes as a cooperative training setting represents an intermediate level of struggle.

Necessary Consequence

At this moment, I would like to emphasize the character of narration and discourse (Sousa Santos, 1988) to this cognitive description. As a narrative, the scientific description can act as an intermediary, in relation to society as a whole, towards a greater acceptance of the need and obligation for theater classes. But it should be made clear that this description in cognitive terms is a tool, while remaining mindful that the tool is not the work.

On the one hand, I agree with this categorization of theater classes in basic education as a situation to be cognitively analyzed. I accept and engage in the idea that theater classes can indeed practice these cognitive operations. Furthermore, I concur that this perspective enriches the elaboration and conduction of theater classes and research into theater education.

On the other hand, it is necessary to be vigilant and maintain reservations with regard to this *applicationism*. Since we recognize the legitimacy of this use of science in theater classes and its pedagogy, there is another necessary operation, which at the same time seems to be implied in making clear that this use is a resistance.

As such, the concept of resistance becomes a key to comprehension; and capture (convenient, in this case). Considering the concept of resistance may help ensure that this link between theater education and this scientific research on cognition does not work as an explanation or essentializing of these activities as cognitive – on the limit, give in to the seduction of neuro-education (Rose; Abi-Rached, 2013), reduced to immediate utilitarianism. Because there is always the risk of adopting scientific epistemological operations in an absolute way, as an exclusive truth about things – falling into the fascination caused by their positivity, which can configure a final word from science on these theater classes.

And the characterization of this relationship between theater classes and cognitive psychology as a strategy of resistance (and maybe it is just that) can be, in turn, a resistance to a naive and uncontested applicationism from science on theater education. In this moment of reflection, what is being applied is Foucault's concept, like a *toolbox*, a way to guide us to “[...] escape from the dispositives of identification, classification and normalization of discourse” (Revel, 2008, p. 113).

Addressing theatricality as identified and dissected theatrical cognitive operations, making a categorization and taxonomy, reduces the totality or the potency of the theater classes, mainly in their dimension of experience irreducible to description. However, at the same time, the concept of resistance characterizes and analyzes this classificatory use of cognitive psychology, thus providing a distance from this scientific application.

The concept of resistance helps to remind us that the characterization of these theater classes as *scientific* and *cognitive* is a partial and provisional

identitarianism. Consequently, we can overcome the binarism and mutual exclusions between refusal and adherence, through the perception that these attitudes are always intertwined; and that traversing these places does not offer complacency or certainty.

In a schematic way: using this research into cognition would be a form of resistance. And the designation of this strategy as a resistance warns us of the risks in naturalizing this characterization of a theater class as *cognitive*. It is a philosophical applicationism to neutralize, in part, the problems of scientific applicationism.

Means and Ends

Moreover, and perhaps as a consequence of this distancing: this alliance with cognitive psychology does not need to be fated to rationalize the classes, subsuming them to the vision of science. Nor does it have to superficially approve of the theater class in a scientific way and define it as useful.

This rise in the media of stances like Schleicher's is perhaps an opportunity to invest in the strategy of constituting an autonomy (pragmatic and economic, but mainly epistemological) of theatrical cognition. And, in this sense, Michael Tomasello's scientific discourse is a suitable resource for this moment because of the way it can be convincing along this argumentative line. His narrative shows itself to be more propitious in creating strategies that aim to provide autonomy to the aesthetic dimension of life.

First, as previously mentioned, it is because the descriptions of these operations are analogous to the descriptions of attention operations involving actors in the theatrical game. Therefore, to say that collaboration (as described by Tomasello) is theatrical is almost tautology. It is not like other associations, where the theater can develop, for example, self-esteem or emotional intelligence (and we have to adopt statistics based on indirect evidence).

In the texts of Tomasello and his collaborators, the comparison between the description of cognitive operations for cooperation and theater classes demonstrates a very persuasive level of *self-evidence*. Therefore, this parity of descriptions of collaborative cognitive acts with descriptions of what happens with student actors practicing theater does not lose its affinity

with an aesthetic dimension, since the scientific description is directly translatable to the theater.

Such research is related to survival, but, in fact, the center of its interest is the collective constitution of culture – the ineffable bonds between people; provisional commitments; mutual, tacit, indefinite assumptions; action based on partial and dynamic information; values constructed in a complex way, under the eyes of others (including morality). This promotes a broader and more contemporary approach to theater as a practice of this attention that passes through our social cognition (Tomasello, 1999). It is social life, in its theatrical cognitive dimension, as a great improvisation.

A possible consequence of this utilitarian applicationism, beyond resistance, and perhaps after a long struggle, is to characterize the cognitive operations of daily life as theatrical. The assertion that theater is cognitively cooperative is not so important. The real focus of this article is on convincing society that cooperation and life are theatrical. Ultimately, this means greater recognition of aesthetic operations in cognition overall and contributing to the insertion of aesthetic value scales in daily life.

Notes

- ¹ Project begun by Nelson Goodman in 1967, with Howard Gardner as perennial participant, and which continues till this day, albeit with significant modifications. Available at: <<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/>>. Accessed on: 02 Oct. 2020.
- ² Artistic and Cultural Education – a common abbreviation in France.
- ³ In Portuguese, there is a distinction between *Educação Teatral* and *Pedagogia do Teatro*. The adjective *Teatral* would refer to something situated in a functional (intensive) category, widely operating in life. Differently, the noun *Teatro* would be linked to the consolidated forms of theater.
- ⁴ This citation is not exactly a statement by Ellen Winner, Thalia Goldstein and Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin, authors of this book in 2013, through the OECD. Here, they refer in an unspecific way to a work by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010) dedicated to innovation, which was updated and expanded in 2015. Going through the PDF, I managed to es-

establish a relation between this cited phrase and page 79 of the 2010 work on innovation.

- 5 STEM – Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (education based and focused on these areas).
- 6 In the case of the work by Winner et al. (2013) for the OECD, it doesn't exactly involve a confrontation. Nevertheless, it is an action that seeks changes to the status quo, by advocating greater importance for arts classes.
- 7 Cultural action mission entrusted to Jean-Claude Luc.

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