

ARTICLE

DIGITALS: NOTES ON LOVE, CHARACTER, AND TEACHING¹LUIZ ANTONIO CALLEGARI COPPI¹ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7613-1355>

<lcoppi@unicamp.br>

GABRIELA DE ARAUJO CARVALHO²ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0947-445X>

<gabaracarvalho@gmail.com>

¹ Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp). Campinas, São Paulo (SP), Brasil.

² Fundação Cásper Líbero. São Paulo, São Paulo (SP), Brasil.

ABSTRACT: This article arises from a statement and a narrative. The former, posted by the CEO of OpenAI, a technology company from the US responsible for creating ChatGPT, is that teachers will soon become obsolete due to advances in artificial intelligence. The latter is presented to us by Mia Couto and it brings to the scene a memory from this Mozambican author: when he was a child, one of his teachers asked a specific task for the class and sat down among the children so that he could do it too. The two events show contrasting meanings for teaching: on one hand, a perception that links it to efficiency and productivity; on the other hand, a teaching practice that is justified by sharing the experience of a human being with the world, a loving and character-building experience involving the teacher in question, an experience which offers the students the possibility to witness a subject who, in his relation with the school subject he is responsible for, is also making himself. In that regard, this article attempted to depart from the first perception, with the recognition that it may not be so far from what other technical lines in pedagogy have already proposed, and approach Mia Couto's report as an example for a teaching based on love, as conceived by Masschlein and Simons, and on character, as understood by Jorge Larrosa. Our intention with that is to advocate for a self-aware and, thus, irreplaceable teaching practice.

Keywords: Experience, Teacher Education, Teaching, Digital World.

DIGITAIS: NOTAS SOBRE O AMOR, O CARÁTER E A DOCÊNCIA

RESUMO: Este artigo surge de uma afirmação e de uma narração. A primeira, postada pelo CEO da OpenAI, uma empresa estadunidense de tecnologia, responsável pela criação do ChatGPT, é a de que os professores logo se tornarão obsoletos devido aos avanços das inteligências artificiais (Altman, 2021). A segunda, apresentada por Mia Couto (2017), põe em cena uma lembrança do autor moçambicano: quando era criança, um de seus professores pediu à classe uma determinada tarefa e sentou-se em meio às crianças para ele mesmo também a realizar. Os dois eventos contrastam os sentidos da docência: de um lado, uma

¹ Article published with funding from the *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* - CNPq/Brazil for editing, layout and XML conversion services.

percepção atrelada à eficiência e à produtividade; do outro, um fazer docente que se justifica pelo compartilhamento da experiência de um ser humano com o mundo. Uma experiência amorosa e forjadora do caráter do professor em questão, que oferece aos estudantes a possibilidade de testemunharem um sujeito que, na relação com o universo da sua disciplina, faz a si mesmo. Nesse sentido, este artigo procurou sair da primeira percepção e, a partir do reconhecimento de que ela talvez não se afaste tanto do que outras linhas tecnicistas da pedagogia já propuseram, chegar ao relato de Mia Couto como um caso exemplar de uma docência pautada no amor, conforme concebido por Masschlein e Simons (2014a; 2014b), e no caráter, como o entende Jorge Larrosa (2018; 2014). Nosso intuito foi advogar por uma prática docente ciosa de si mesma e, assim, insubstituível.

Palavras-chave: experiência, formação docente, ensino, mundo digital.

DIGITALES: NOTAS SOBRE EL AMOR, EL CARÁCTER Y LA ENSEÑANZA

RESUMEN: Este artículo surge de una afirmación y de una narración. La primera, publicada por el CEO de OpenAI, que es una empresa de tecnología de EEUU que es responsable de la creación del ChatGPT, hace referencia a que los y las docentes pronto se tornarán obsoletos/as debido a los avances de las inteligencias artificiales. Por otro lado, la segunda nos la presenta Mia Couto y pone en escena un recuerdo del autor mozambiqueño: cuando era niño, un profesor suyo pidió a la clase que hiciera una determinada tarea y se sentó entre los niños y niñas para hacerla él mismo. Los dos acontecimientos contraponen los sentidos de la docencia: por un lado, está la percepción de ese sentido que la vincula a la eficiencia y a la productividad; por el otro lado, una enseñanza que se justifica por el hecho de compartir una experiencia de un ser humano con el mundo, una experiencia amorosa que forja el carácter del/de la docente en cuestión, una experiencia que ofrece a las y los estudiantes la posibilidad de presenciar a un sujeto que, en su relación con el mundo de la disciplina por la cual está a cargo, se hace a sí mismo. En ese sentido, este artículo buscó salir de la primera percepción y, a partir del reconocimiento que tal vez no esté tan lejos de lo que otras líneas tecnicistas de la pedagogía ya han propuesto, llegar al relato de Mia Couto como un caso ejemplar de una docencia pautada en el amor, tal como lo conciben Masschlein y Simons, y en el carácter, tal como lo entiende Jorge Larrosa. Nuestro objetivo aquí fue abogar por una práctica docente consciente de sí misma y, por lo tanto, insustituible.

Palabras clave: Experiencia, Formación Docente, Enseñanza, Mundo Digital.

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of his *Notes on Experience and Experience-Based Knowledge*, the Catalan philosopher Jorge Larrosa (2014) proposes a thought exercise. It is common, he claims, to think about education based on the relationship between science and technology or between theory and practice, ideas that have already been sufficiently addressed in pedagogical literature. But what if we reflected on teaching practices based on *experience and meaning*? Experience, he claims, is what happens to us – it is worth paying close attention to the pronoun here: it is not about what objectively happens, but about what happens to a specific person. Meaning, in turn, has to do with words, with “[...] the way we position ourselves before ourselves, before others and before the world in which we live” (Larrosa, 2014, p. 17). “Man [...]”, the author continues, “[...] is a word, [...] is as a word, [...] is given in words, is woven of words [...]” and, “[...] when we do things with words, what we are talking about is how we give meaning to who we are and what happens to us, how we correlate words and things, how we name what we see or what we feel and how we see or feel what we name” (Larrosa, 2014, p. 17). Since experience is, therefore, what

happens to us, and the knowledge derived from it has to do with the elaboration of the meanings of what happens to us, this knowledge is always “[...] finite, linked to the existence of an individual or a particular human community; or in a more explicit way, it is a knowledge that reveals to the concrete and singular man, understood individually or collectively, the meaning or meaninglessness of his own existence” (Larrosa, 2014, p. 32).

If we take the philosopher’s propositions seriously, it is unavoidable for us to note that what is narrated, what is reported as knowledge derived from experience, is always the result of a specific subject’s encounter with a world. In this sense, narration is neither a solipsistic embodiment of the interior of an always given self – immutable, essential. Nor, on the other hand, is it a totally objective and neutral account of something in the world. It, narration, is a construction in which we simultaneously see a subject who is only what he is due to the encounter with the world he experiences, and a world that can only be what it is as constructed by the words and meanings of that subject. The marks of one are in the other, and it is only to this that one can aspire. Thus, writes Larrosa, “[...] no one can learn from the experience of another, unless that experience is somehow revived and made one’s own” (Larrosa, 2014, p. 32). In a way, it is this effort to make someone else’s experience our own that animates this article. It is the effort to give our own meanings to someone else’s memory, articulating what happened to them, as Benjamin (2012) points out, not as someone who seeks to know what actually happened, but as someone who appropriates a memory “[...] as it flashes at the moment of danger” (Benjamin, 2012, p. 243).

The memory comes from colonial Mozambique in the early 1960s. From there, the memories that Mia Couto talks about in an interview given to *Café Filosófico* spring up, in which he tells of a childhood school experience. A teacher, he says, asks his class to write a text, but instead of limiting himself to waiting for the children to produce, he sits down among them and starts writing. This is the narrative that we want to put on stage so that, based on it, we can reflect on the history of teachers who leave their mark on what they teach, and construct, in our own words, meanings that allow us to illuminate teaching practices in a context in which they are apparently under threat. Here, we come to the danger that, however, is not new: the reduction of teaching to technicalization and calls for efficiency.

Masschelein and Simons (2014), Jorge Larrosa (2018), Laval (2011), among many others, argue that certain logics of capital attack and capture the school. Once captured, teachers are held hostage. Whether tamed or with their hands tied, their fingerprints become clear evidence that such logics have touched something that is sacred and unavailable (Agamben, 2007). Nowadays, however, this kidnapping is compounded by the possibility that it may not even be necessary to tie hands or tame anyone: the development of artificial intelligence, large companies announce, will make a considerable part of teaching work dispensable. In this regard, specifically, Teixeira (2015, p. 75) states that “[...] the value of human labor will become almost zero [...]” and that “[...] even if we do not become dispensable, competition with machines will be brutal”. The explosion of intelligence, according to the author, will allow machines to perform tasks that until now could only be done by human hands. But do hands atrophy when work becomes industrialized? Doing is one thing. Doing it in a certain way, it is important not to forget, is another.

In this sense, what we intend to do in this article is to bring this into focus. Corporations promise or threaten that teaching work will become superfluous and unnecessary. However, the unnecessary is not impossible – and, most of the time, after all, it is what gives pleasure. Doing what does not need to be done: perhaps therein lies a motto. It is necessary to do it because it is in work that the

subject can find himself. Not a self that was already there ready to be found, but a subject of experience (Larrosa, 2014), a self that only exists in the encounter with something in the world: a bit of clay for the potter (Benjamin, 2012), flour and water for the baker, mathematics or geography for those who teach. It is the love for something in the world that, even without precision, impels someone to it; it is in the encounter with something in the world that the character of the person is forged.

This is where our narrative comes in. The logic of the article, however, which is neither the logic of history nor that of narratives, follows its own paths. Therefore, we will try not to deviate completely from them. To this end, we will first present what Masschelein and Simons (2014) and Larrosa (2018) identify as obstacles to teaching. To this we will add a brief discussion on artificial intelligence, mainly based on some recent statements by Sam Altman (2021), CEO – Chief Executive Officer – of OpenAI, a developer of this service – statements that resurfaced on the occasion of the launch of ChatGPT. Our intention is not to delve into theoretical or technical aspects of this area: we simply want to observe how some assumptions align with a certain hostility to the marks that teachers leave on what they teach. From there, in a second moment, we are interested in presenting two notions that, as we seek to argue, help us to see such marks, to speculate where they come from, what produces them: *love*, as conceived by Masschelein and Simons (2014), and *character*, which Larrosa (2018) borrows from Richard Sennett to think about teaching.

Finally, we turn to the narrative that, taken from the experience of another, it is here put into play as an open suggestion for the continuation of this story that we are now telling. Based on the hermeneutic approach of Paul Ricoeur (2013) – according to which the meaning of a text (or of a narrative, for what concerns us here) is not a given, but something to be constructed in the encounter between it, the object investigated, and the researcher – we narrate, in our own way, the experience shared by Mia Couto in search of a glimpse of the “[...] potential horizons of meaning that can be actualized in different ways” (Ricoeur, 2013, p. 110). To what was experienced by another, we add our own concerns, adding questions; from this experience, we infer one or another direction; we ultimately appropriate it and make it our own. Perhaps, after the way we narrate what someone else has narrated, something else will unfold – narratives are polysemic, unpredictable like life itself. In the senses that communicate something to us, however, we intend to leave our fingerprints and, from them, communicate, with our words, something that flashes and illuminates our own experiences.

ADERMATOGLYPHIA

Fingerprints form unique patterns and are not repeated even in identical twins, since these designs on the fingertips are formed not only from genetic configuration, but also from movements made while still in the mother's womb. Fingerprints, then, have a bit of themselves and a bit of the world. They make them unique. But not all hands have their fingers marked by them. Adermatoglyphia is the name of the genetic condition of those who are born without fingerprints. Metaphorically, there seems to be an effort to transform this condition into a way of being in teaching.

In their work *In Defense of School: A Public Issue*, Masschelein and Simons (2014) undertake the defense that they announce in the title by recovering the etymology of the word “school”. In its beginnings, the Greek *skholé* referred to a free time, unsubmitive both to the times and logic that guided life in the city, the *polis*, and to the rules that characterized life within the domestic space, the *oikos*. In general terms, they argue, school would be a free time-space capable of deactivating, even if for a short period, that which governed life outside of it: “[...] in the Greek school, it was no longer someone's origin,

their race or ‘nature’ that justified their belonging to the class of the good and the wise” (Masschelein; Simons, 2014, p. 26). “What the school did [...]”, the authors continue, “[...] was to establish a time and space that was, in a certain sense, separate from the time and space of both society [...] and the family [...], an egalitarian time and, therefore, the invention of school can be described as the democratization of free time” (Masschelein; Simons, 2014, p. 26). It did not take long, therefore, for this democratization to be attacked. The authors say that, since its invention, the school, while preserving this provision of equally free time, has been despised and hostile to the most varied privileged elites – in addition to “[...] a kind of hatred directed at school [...]” (Masschelein; Simons, 2014, p. 27), these elites will not stop developing ways to tame the institution.

From there, the work will first present what characterizes the school – and, among the aspects listed, love is presented, to which we will return later; then, the attempts to control both the school and the teacher. On this last point, we focus our attention. Taking the notions of professionalization and flexibility as guidelines, the authors argue that there is an effort to “[...] replace the so-called wisdom of the teacher’s experience with specialization or competence” (Masschelein; Simons, 2014, p. 137). The doing would no longer be something that develops over time in a careful relationship with the profession but rather something parameterized from the outside. The knowledge necessary for the exercise of the profession would be objective, easily verifiable by metrics whose origins are not always academic or pedagogical. In this way, teaching and its language can be standardized and, with this, its results and effectiveness optimized. Furthermore, it is also from this dynamic that, if any failure is detected in the system, the problematic part can be identified and promptly replaced:

The dream is for the teacher to be a small but excellent and well-managed company. The teacher is therefore increasingly expected to manage his or her own time (‘prioritizing’), his or her energy output (‘exerting effort and recharging batteries’), his or her competences (‘a pair of tasks for adequate human resources’) and his or her level of quality (‘developing quality of service’). The result is that all sorts of problems in the school and its functioning can be traced back to problems in the teacher’s self-management [...] (Masschelein; Simons, 2014, p. 148).

What is at stake here is improving performance: goals are set in advance, known and sought throughout the educational process. Dardot and Laval (2016), analyzing the transformation of neoliberalism into the very rationality of contemporary life, are categorical in this regard: “[...] each subject was led to conceive of and behave, in all dimensions of his/her life, as a capital that should be valued” (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 201). In this sense, the “[...] dream of the teacher as a small business [...]”, as Masschelein and Simons (2014, p. 148) refer to, points to a type of robotization, of automation aiming at greater individual performance. It is important to note here that performance, even though it individualizes and brings self-management into play, is not exactly a notion that dialogues with the notions given here of digital. It imposes ways of doing things focused on speed and productivity, on the optimized intensification of what is done – *how* to do what *must* be done is not an open question to be interpreted in their way by each person.

When thinking about a teaching practice less tied to industrial logic, Jorge Larrosa touches on a somewhat different dimension of this hostility to a certain form of teaching. In the chapter *Da vocação*, de *Esperando não se sabe o quê* (2018), he denounces what, today, prohibits what would be a *teacher-artisan*. According to him, for this prohibition to be established, it is “[...] necessary to convert the teacher’s work, what is now called teaching practices, that is, the work of their hands and their manners, into

stereotypical, objective and evaluable procedures” (Larrosa, 2018, p. 41). This, Larrosa continues, transforms teachers into interchangeable professionals and, therefore, reduces them – and here he explicitly uses the metaphor of automation – to “[...] a function of a school machine that aims to be effective and, above all, controlled and controllable” (Larrosa, 2018, p. 41). For all this, the philosopher points out, it is necessary to eliminate traits of singularity from teachers, or, in his words, “[...] anything that refers to a particular way of doing things” (Larrosa, 2018, p. 41). His argument, therefore, although it also raises the issue of effectiveness, seems less interested in individual capitalization and more in a process of manufacturing optimization.

To explain his point, the author uses the book *The Corrosion of Character*, by Richard Sennett (2015), especially the fourth chapter of the work, which narrates the transformation in the work of a group of bakers in Boston over the course of 25 years. On a first visit, Sennett writes that, there, in the bakeries he visited, “[...] tumult reigned; the smell of yeast mixed with that of human sweat in hot rooms; the bakers' hands were constantly immersed in flour and water; the men used their noses and eyes to decide when the bread was ready” (Sennett apud Larrosa, 2018, p. 40). Ready bread, it is worth noting, is not something stipulated in a spreadsheet; rather, it is a decision made by the baker. After a few years, Sennett returned to the establishment and was surprised: the bakery had become part of a large food chain and had incorporated modern machinery into the entire process of making its products; it “[...] no longer smells of sweat and is astonishingly fresh [...] and under the relaxing fluorescent lamps everything has a strangely silent appearance [...]” (Sennett apud Larrosa, 2018, p. 40), he writes. The workers, then, no longer had physical contact with the ingredients or the bread; the bread, in fact, became “[...] a representation on the screen [...]” (Sennett apud Larrosa, 2018, p. 40) and the bakers, therefore, into button pushers.

This process has two consequences: on the one hand, there is no longer any difference between the types of bread produced; after all, it no longer matters whether it is John or Anna who presses the button that starts the baking process, since it is the machines that, in a standardized manner, stipulate the quantities of ingredients, the shapes, and the cooking times. On the other hand, the worker is alienated from what, in fact, characterizes his or her specificity: it is no longer necessary for a baker, that is, someone who knows how to make bread, to press the buttons. Nor is it necessary for the person who presses the buttons inside the bakery to be different from the person who presses buttons in a car factory or a chair factory. In other words, there is a separation between the worker and the product of his or her work. A separation that perhaps prevents us from even saying that the bread produced is, in fact, something related to the person who pressed its representation on the machine's screen. Furthermore, or as another effect of this, any human fingerprints on these products become noticeably more faded.

By bringing Sennett into the teaching debate, Larrosa (2018) seems to make his intentions clear. Similar to what happens in bakeries, there is also an expectation for teaching that touches little on the object of teaching, that avoids leaving any singularity on this object: singularity, after all, does not go through quality control; if it does, it is seen as a defect. The fingerprints that remain on the material indicate that it has been handled – and who wants a second-hand product?

In this way, even though it is not necessarily a product, the teaching material, under the dynamics of production and money, is conceived as such. And this, it is worth saying, is nothing new. Gorz (2005), for example, has already denounced the transformation of the individual into a company; furthermore, the new reason of the world, as described by Dardot and Laval (2016), implies precisely the

expansion of neoliberal rationality to each and every sphere, and Laval (2011), in fact, in *A escola não é uma empresa*, points to this lack of distinction precisely in the school context. In parallel to these reflections, Tardif, Lessard and Lahaye (1991), discussing the devaluation of teaching knowledge, present the transformation of the teacher-student relationship into a supplier-client relationship as a process that makes the teacher responsible for providing a certain knowledge, which, in order to be consumed, often must not have any sign of use.

Along similar lines, Biesta (2017) uses a similar argument to defend an education that is opposed to learning. For this author, the focus on learning reinforces a clientelist stance for knowledge: just as a consumer who, when buying any product, already knows what he is looking for and does not want to be surprised by what he ends up having, the student-consumer also does not want any major surprises for what he learns. The risk involved in any form of truly powerful education, reflects Biesta, lies in such a relationship. In one way or another, all of these authors denounce the invectives against authorial teaching work that leaves marks on what it handles. This lack of marks seems to frame teaching practice in what Saviani (2022) classifies as a technicist pedagogy. The author writes that, “[...] based on the assumption of scientific neutrality and inspired by the principles of rationality, efficiency and productivity, this pedagogy advocates the reorganization of the educational process to make it objective and operational” (Saviani, 2022, p. 66). The educational organization, in this context, aims to “[...] minimize subjective interferences that may jeopardize its efficiency [...]” and reduces “[...] the teacher and the student to the condition of executors of a process whose conception, planning, coordination and control are the responsibility of supposedly qualified, neutral, objective, impartial specialists” (Saviani, 2022, p. 67).

But there is a new hostility, a new product on the market that promises to put an end to any of these interferences, the so-called inappropriate manipulations. In an article published on his website on March 16, 2021, Sam Altman writes that “[...] we can imagine artificial intelligence diagnosing and explaining exactly what a student doesn't understand” (2021, online). Altman, CEO of the aforementioned OpenAI, who, in 2023, launched ChatGPT, a specific implementation of a language model. Models of this type are exposed to large amounts of text to learn to understand the structure of a language; the contexts in which words and phrases are used, and the semantic and syntactic relationships between them. The chat is the user-facing interface of this model, and can produce answers to questions asked in a more natural way, with more fluid and common sentences. In other words, it provides “[...] continuity to what one would expect someone to write based on what has been written on billions of web pages” (Santaella, 2023b, p. 24). As they evolve, tools like this are fed by more information, more texts, and, as they are built from a connectionist paradigm, that is, they are inspired by “[...] the functioning of the brain, where artificial neurons, connected in a network, are capable of learning and generalizing from examples [...]” (Sichman, 2021, p. 39), they tend to have a certain independence in the formulations given a priori by a programmer. In this regard, Santaella explains that these large language models work by estimating the probabilities of words “[...] without it being necessary to have explicitly seen, in a text Y, the sequences of words it produces [...]” (Santaella, 2023b, p. 25), that is, it uses

[...] a neural network architecture and unsupervised learning to generate responses. This means that it can learn to generate responses without needing to be explicitly told what the correct response is, which makes it a powerful tool for handling a wide range of conversational tasks (Majumder apud Santaella, 2023b, p. 21).

Altman's prediction, in this sense, is based on an equation that seems simple: if diagnoses about students and their learning require information, and technologies develop to the point of being able to mobilize and process an amount of data infinitely greater than that possible for human brains, teachers, at least with regard to such diagnoses, would be replaceable. Altman, in this article, makes his considerations based on allegedly financial interests: stating that work – and not the profit margin, for example – is the determining cost on many levels. He believes that artificial intelligence, by making work superfluous, should be “[...] the battle cry of a generation whose members cannot afford what they want [...]”, and urges us to imagine a world in which “[...] everything – housing, education, food, clothing, etc. [...]” (Altman, 2021, online) would have its price halved every two years. But why two years?

Altman's text is dedicated to defending, as announced in the title, *Moore's Law for Everything*. Gordon Moore, Teixeira (2015, p. 66) tells us, it is “[...] one of the inventors of integrated circuits [...]” and realized, back in the 1970s, “[...] that the number of transistors that can fit on a chip doubles every eighteen months [...]”, that is, “[...] the power of computers doubles every eighteen months [...]” – as they advance, this period decreases. Enchanted by this idea, Ray Kurzweil, an American inventor, revisits, in a book published in 1999, a term that had emerged in the technological context of the beginning of the previous decade, but which, until then, had not had much repercussion: the *singularity*. Teixeira (2015, p. 17) defines that it is “[...] the moment in which the intelligence of machines will equal that of humans, the zero mark of a new era of civilization. Once the singularity is overcome, machines as intelligent as human beings will be able to generate others, with more intelligence, and so on”. This overcoming, which Teixeira (2015, p. 65) claims is understood by some as an “[...] apotheosis of technology, its supreme achievement [...]”, would open a narcissistic wound. For him:

[...] one of the consequences of singularity will be our loss of the planetary monopoly of intelligence that we have had until now and the need to coexist with its non-biological varieties that will soon supplant human beings in terms of reasoning capacity, memory and other cognitive functions (Teixeira, 2015, p. 65).

The author also states that singularity would allow “[...] us to take the final step towards moving from semi-automated societies, like those we inherited from the industrial era, to total automatism [...]” (Teixeira, 2015, p.79), since machines would be capable not only of performing mental operations, but also “[...] of making some everyday decisions that still require human intervention” (Teixeira, 2015, p.79). The result, it seems to us, would be not only the *deanthropomorphization* of work, as Ricardo Antunes (2021) denounces, but a total deanthropomorphization.

Our intention here is definitely not to delve into the intricacies of technological development and the announced human obsolescence. There are authors who are much more qualified to make considerations regarding the technical aspects and the accuracy of the predictions made in this field. Nor is it our intention to propose a reflection on the ethical limits of such transformations or even on the possibility of machine ethics. Teixeira (2015) lists many of the challenges involved in this discussion and, instead of forging dogmatic answers that simulate a certainty that is otherwise impossible in this scenario, presenting questions:

[...] how to develop an ethic that involves autonomous, intelligent beings, with unpredictable behavior, but devoid of subjectivity? [...] How can we expect from creatures that only have artificially simulated emotions the development of empathy, compassion and remorse necessary for ethical behavior? (Teixeira, 2015, p. 111).

If one day it were possible to program them with ethical rules, would they be able to understand these rules? The author states that the development of a *roboethics* to be implemented in robots is a question for future generations of philosophers – for our part, the notion of an established, programmed ethics still sounds quite strange.

However, it seems to us that, once again, the predictions that point to the replacement of human beings, to human obsolescence – and, especially for what concerns us here, the obsolescence of teachers – are based on a completely utilitarian perspective: if teachers must teach how to count, read and write, if they must teach how to read maps, research history, formulate scientific hypotheses and, at some point, artificial intelligence can do this more efficiently, the end of this profession would have come. Charlot (2012; 2019) has argued, especially with regard to Google, that its emergence does not make teachers disappear, but forces them to rethink: if they try to remain as *teachers of information*, content with an impersonal transmission of content, they will easily be surpassed, if they have not already been; it would be necessary, the author argues, to assume a different dimension, to think of themselves as *teachers of wisdom*, concerned with instigating doubt, questioning, and symbolic capacity. Santaella, in this regard, reminds us that “[...] there is no education without the incorporation of technical or technological mediations that, far from functioning as mere tools, shape educational systems and processes as a whole [...]” (2023b, p. 124). In this sense, in another work, he argues that more than pointing to human obsolescence, artificial intelligence challenges “[...] the notion that humans have of themselves, forcing us to seek new and more appropriate concepts about ourselves” (Santaella, 2023a, p. 14). But what if we insisted on obsolescence, on uselessness? Not because they really seem to us to be irrevocable destinies of the profession, but as a hypothesis, as a challenge. In *Life is not useful*, Ailton Krenak (2020) questions us about our insistence on transforming life into something useful and, stating that it is not necessarily within this framework that we need to understand it. He urges: “[...] we have to have the courage to be radically alive, and not bargain for survival” (Krenak, 2020, p. 59). Let us listen to him. Let us dare. At the very least, affirm that we can do something without a useful purpose, something that a machine would do more quickly and efficiently. That we can do it out of the desire to do it, because perhaps we do not know how not to do it. Perhaps we can, even if for a short period of time, postpone the end of the profession.

ABOUT LOVE AND CHARACTER

Among the characteristics that concern what a school is, Masschelein and Simons present love. They wrote that a teacher “[...] is someone who loves his subject, who cares about it and pays attention to it” (Masschelein; Simons, 2014, p. 60). This is not someone who is simply versed in his/her discipline, they added, but rather someone who is “[...] passionate about the subject, inspired by his/her work and material” (Masschelein; Simons, 2014, p. 60). The authors summarize, it is not difficult to recognize a teacher who loves what he/she talks about:

[...] This is revealed through the extent to which a person is present in what he or she does and in the way he or she demonstrates who he or she is and what he or she stands for through his or her words and actions. This is what one might call the mastery of a teacher. While knowledge and competence guarantee a type of experience, it is presence, care, and dedication that give expression to the mastery of the teacher. He or she embodies the subject matter in a certain way and has a presence in the classroom (Masschelein; Simons, p. 61).

There is a blurring of the boundaries between what the teacher is and what he teaches. Subject and object are no longer two separate instances, but are fused together and become one. By placing his object of knowledge on the table, the amateur teacher, as the authors describe him/her, also places himself/herself on the table. Mathematics, although always itself, bears João's fingerprints when he is the math teacher; it gains Ana's fingerprints when she is responsible for teaching numbers and operations. Sennett, talking about Enrico, a friend who worked for decades as a cleaner, writes that, when talking about life, he often resorted to parables that he drew from his own work – "[...] we can ignore the dirt, but that doesn't mean it goes away [...]" (Sennett, 2015, p. 24). Life and work, here, are not separated, and not because of a total alienation, because of a process that devours subjectivity, as Crary (2014) captures in contemporary 24/7, but because of a mutual construction. Perhaps this is also a trait of the amateur teacher, who does not talk about what he/she does from the supposed neutrality of the language of competences, of assessments; perhaps, when thinking about his/her own life, he/she also has to resort to what he/she focuses on most of his/her time, which, day after day, concerns his/her work.

His love for the subject is so great, write Masschelein and Simons (2014), that this amateur teacher believes that one should "[...] give everyone, repeatedly, the opportunity to engage [...]" (Masschelein; Simons, 2014, p. 66) in what they talk about. Love makes the subject not fit within the subject; there is a desire for overflow. It is not a possessive, jealous love – because he/she knows that what he/she offers is never the subject in itself, but rather the subject as he/she can offer it, from his/her touches, from the marks he/she leaves on its surface, on its form. This teacher also knows that, ultimately, by handing it over to the students, other contacts can happen and, from these contacts, from these new encounters with the object, things that until then had not appeared to him/her, can make themselves seen and, in this process, this subject grows, gains more body and makes him/her even more passionate.

It is this interest – this *inter-est*, that is, this possibility of being between, of being from a *between* occupied by any object of knowledge, of being from the encounter and confrontation with this object – that generates interest. Masschelein and Simons are assertive:

[...] It is precisely the mastery and interest and inspired engagement by the masterful teacher that allows him/her to inspire and engage students [...]. In fact [...] the student does not want someone who is (only) interested in him/her, but rather someone who is interested in other things and thus can generate interest in those things (2014, p. 63).

This is a vital interest for the amateur teacher; it is what gives him form and makes him unique. In other words, it is this existential interest in the object that engenders, in some way, its own character. In this regard, it is worth paying attention to what Larrosa takes from Sennett's work:

Ancient Anglophones, and indeed writers going back to antiquity, had no doubt about the meaning of 'character': it is the ethical value we attribute to our own desires and our relationships with others. Horace writes that one's character depends on one's connections with the world. In this sense, 'character' is a broader term than its more modern offshoot 'personality', since the latter refers to desires and feelings that can simmer inside, without anyone seeing them (Sennett apud Larrosa, 2018, p. 57).

Character as something that arises from a person's connections with the world is an idea that seems rich to us. It follows that character is not something innate waiting for the moment to be born. It is something that happens in an encounter, in a confrontation. If there is no contact with the world – either because the world is frightening and one prefers to know it by proxy, or because the world

disappears as it is reduced to a single dimension – character is not engendered. If the contacts are always the same, too secure, character becomes fixed, becomes repetition, an unappealable norm. Understood in this way, it depends on the world and on the response we give to the world when it appears to us. And how do we respond to the world? There are things in the world to which we do not respond – we pass them by unnoticed, we do not observe them, we do not single them out from the whole that surrounds us. But there are some that challenge us, that call our attention – not that of a teacher in general, but of a specific person. Or rather, of a person who, depending on how we respond to this encounter, becomes specific. “The world emits signs [...]”, writes Larrosa (2018) based on his reading of some reflections by Gilles Deleuze: “Discovering a vocation is discovering which signs one is predestined to, which signs one is sensitive to, which are the relevant or significant signs [...]” (Larrosa, 2018, p. 63). It is in dealing with these signs that any subject – specifically the teacher

[...] discovers that there are things that don't tell you anything, that are silent and opaque, insignificant, that don't emit signs, and there are things that, however, seem to want to say something, as if calling in some way [...] Discovering your vocation [...] is recognizing what catches your attention (Larrosa, 2018, p. 63).

We believe that there is a specificity, a singularity in a certain way of teaching that safeguards it from any attempt to replace it with the most varied artificial intelligences. A tool, such as ChatGPT, is instigated, based on any question, to present information, *to present answers*; an amateur teacher, a teacher of character, faced with a question from the world, is called to *respond*: in this case, what matters less is the answer, the presentation of the world, and more is the way in which one responds to that world. “Doing something well [...]”, Larrosa recalls, is still considered “[...] 'having a good hand' [...]”, and it is this hand that can leave, in the handled object, traces of the subjects who handled it, who related to the world and who, from this relationship, from the answers that he, singularly, gave to that world, formed themselves.

Larrosa encourages us to untie our hands, but this does not mean a supposedly absolute freedom, as if, free from the shackles identified in a more immediate way, we left the cave and were forever free. We are teachers: our job, after all, is to teach: “It is not about thinking about what a ‘free teacher’ would be [...] but what a teacher would be like who does in a free way and in his own way ‘what he must do’, that is, what is already given in the traditions and rules of his job and that he must, simply, interpret and incorporate” (Larrosa, 2018, p. 55). In our words, the question that seems fundamental to us here is how we, based on our stories, respond to the world that we are supposed to teach. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that teaching comes from *insignare*, that is, from *in-sinar*, from placing signs on what we bring to the classroom.

What we witness in this scene, then, is less the world and more a way of forming oneself, a way of giving meaning to what one cares about and, in doing so, giving oneself a meaning based on the meanings left in the world. What is possible to witness when I form myself by responding to something in the world, when I take care of this world, is something singular and human: the limits of what *my* memory allows, the volume of what is possible with my tone of voice, the drawings and words that *my* motor coordination can trace in chalk on the blackboard – it is all too human, on the one hand; it is all too a self that loves a world, on the other. But it is that without which the “self” does not exist. It is that which, when absent, makes this world unviable. It is that which, perhaps, one day, will no longer be

necessary, after all, machines will be able to redefine what is or is not useful – but it is that which we continue to do because there is love, because we want what we love.

And, who knows, by witnessing this, any student might also feel involved, feel that they also want to love and, by loving, realize that they can be, that they can forge a character. Who knows, by witnessing this way of being, they might also want to respond, in their own way, to the world and, even without having to do so, finally, respond. Respond without being precise: imprecise and, by imprecise, humanize.

ABOUT TREMBLING HANDS AND FINGERPRINTS: SOME READING NOTES

With a narrative of love and character, we conclude this article. With a narrative that tells of an unnecessary and useless gesture, if we consider the optimization that we want in school. A narrative, therefore, that only makes sense if what is at stake is not necessity, but desire, love. This is advice, as Benjamin (2012) defined it – an experience that we borrow from someone else and that we present, in our own way, as a suggestion for the continuation of this whole story about teachers, skills, machines and abstractions. A suggestion, as could not be otherwise, *imprecise*.

“As the son of a poet, it wasn’t in books that I first found myself as a poet [...]” (Couto, 2017, verbal information) – this is how Mia Couto begins to recall the motivations for his entry into the world of poetry. “It was because of something that happened at school [...]”, he also says, as if he realizes that, curiously, it was only when he became able to take a break, to have some time off from being the son of a poet, that he was finally able to experience himself, freely, as a poet. From then on, his speech becomes “[...] a tribute to what a teacher can be when he doesn’t just give classes but lessons” (Couto, 2017, verbal information). What is a class and what is a lesson? Perhaps it is not yet time to answer, but to listen and read a little more.

This teacher, Mia Couto continues, was an elementary school teacher. He was very tall, thin, and austere, and one day he asked his students to write an essay on a free theme – an essay, this direct encounter with language that is perhaps the most scholastic of school tasks (Masschelein; Simons, 2014, p. 45). But there was a detail: he would also write. The next day, this big man came into the classroom, sat down at one of the desks among the little ones, and made himself small himself. He then took the paper and pencil and began to write. His hands, Couto recalls, were trembling, as if, in his perception, that gathering of children was there judging what he put on the pages of his notebook.

What he put on paper, says Mia Couto, was something about his mother’s hands. “Those hands were *my* mother’s hands [...]”, the author notes as if he were once again surprised by what had taken him away as a child. “They were hands worked by time, hands of someone who did not have the possibility of taking care of herself [...]”, he recalls before concluding that, in some way, this was an enchantment, a triangulation – “[...] how could someone talking about their own mother’s hands be talking about *my* mother’s hands?” (Couto, 2017, verbal information). This was revealed, then, as an invitation to write. A symbol put into the world by the answer that a teacher gave to an assignment that he himself had prepared. An invitation that, for Mia Couto, was irresistible and, according to him, still is: it is as if he were still writing a school essay about his mother’s hands.

This is the narrative. What Couto tells us is written down on paper and can be seen and heard countless times by anyone who accesses the video in which his narration was recorded. Anyone who types, in the search tab of the website that hosts this recording, may see terms such as *Mia Couto, professor*,

essay, hands, this interview and others like it. The speech, as a thing of the world, is there amidst an infinite bank of other speeches. But what about as a call?

As a call, it is up to us to read it, interpret it, give it meaning – and it is up to us, of course, if this speech is the universe that calls our attention and not an objective, functional, bureaucratic obligation. In this sense, we read it here not as someone who becomes a poet, but as someone who, in a potential moment of danger, wants to clarify what it means to exercise teaching. It is in this lesson that we suddenly find ourselves interested.

At first, the teacher places a task on the table for the entire class. The teacher does not give information about the world; he calls, invites one. And this world, his own, is dear to him. This value, however, is not expressed simply in an endless sequence of clichés: “write, because writing will be useful to you in adult life”; “write, because it is through writing that you will learn to communicate correctly”; “write, because the great ones did so”. This is not how to show the value that a world carries. To show it, it is necessary to take care of it. And, to do so, the teacher takes it in his own hands. The habit of using writing has not turned it into something banal. He still trembles when handling it – as if it were, perhaps, the first time, over and over again. He trembles because this world is valuable; he trembles because putting it on stage, putting it into play, is always a risk. If habit has made him forget why he loves this world; Has it made you forget the reasons why, year after year, he decides to take it to his students again? It is necessary, then, to start over, to fall in love again and passion is to suffer, it is to become a territory of passage, it is to let oneself be affected (Larrosa, 2014).

The teacher then sits among the students. He makes himself small. He makes himself equal. Not because his knowledge of the subject is the same as that of the students who are encountering it for the first time. But because, ultimately, just like them, he is, forever, a human being responding. *Responding to the world* is different from having an answer. Responding is an act, it is taking responsibility. Delivering an answer is something that a machine can do. Being, therefore, a human being responding to the world, the teacher takes time to handle his subject and, in doing so, teaches what it means to become what one is: a process in which that draws attention in an unavoidable way is no longer something other than the attention drawn. Both become what they are in the classroom scene as they meet, confront, rub against each other and, in this, one by the other, are polished. Human things are not indifferent to us and are not ready in an infinite database waiting to be collected and exposed indifferently to the hands that pick them up, to the eyes that see them.

Finally, a triangulation occurs: the teacher taught something to someone. The teacher, who is only there because of how, singularly, he or she approaches the subject matter of what he or she teaches. The something that, in the hands of another teacher, would be something else. The someone who, during a relatively short interval, can catch sight of, can witness an entirety happening before his or her eyes. It doesn't matter if what he or she teaches is writing, mathematics, or chemistry: it is, above all, someone who becomes who he or she is when responding to an external call. That is what happens. It doesn't matter if a machine had the answer to what the text to be delivered would be, or a solved equation, or a well-done chemical balancing – what matters is that, when he or she witnesses *those* hands of *that* specific teacher handling *that* specific knowledge, the student witnesses the human fingerprints on the world, witnesses, in the fingers that handle that world, the dirt that remains under their nails, the deformations that the pressure exerted to hold the world causes them. *Inter-est*: being between; in a space occupied by something that one has decided to take care of. This is what one sees before one's eyes when

it is this unnecessary and imprecise teaching that one witnesses. And, it seems to us, it is not, neither for the student sitting at his/her desk nor for the teacher who enters a classroom, an unimportant lesson.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We wrote this article to discuss teaching. Not an objective treatment, based on data and statistics, but a treatment attentive to what a teacher leaves of his/her own in what they talk about in their classrooms. We were interested, then, in what in discourses focused on school efficiency or the productivity of Brazilian educators is understood as a stumbling block, a problem, an obstacle. In our view, this is exactly what is condemned in discourses on the optimization of work that distinguish teaching.

In this sense, we begin our reflection with the attempts to tame the subjective aspects of the exercise of the profession. On the one hand, using a brief bibliographical review, we characterize professionalization and standardization as market strategies to control teaching through technicalization. On the other hand, we present this strategy in its newest guise: artificial intelligence, especially with regard to the possibilities of ChatGPT, a conversation generator highly capable of providing responses in the form of cohesive and fluid texts, and which, as some of its developers announce, will soon be able to replace teachers in schools, doctors in offices, scriptwriters in large studios, among many other professions. In this sense, we address the promised deanthropomorphization of work and, regardless of the accuracy of this prediction, we decide to support it, to confront it: what if human labor in teaching becomes unnecessary? Is this an argument to discard it? Is it enough to do so? In other words: is it possible to teach without having to do so? What is taught when teaching is built on this imprecision?

To answer this question, we used a bibliographical study to mobilize two notions that seemed important to us: love for the world and the character that is formed in relation to this world. For the first, we used the book *In Defense of School*, by Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons, especially the chapter in which they discuss the amateur teacher. This teacher is not someone who lacks technical, pedagogical and specific knowledge in what he or she teaches, but rather someone who, in addition to all this, is characterized by a deep interest in the subject, an interest so great that it is almost impossible to contain it and that, therefore, needs to be shared.

As for the second notion, we rely mainly on the ideas presented by Jorge Larrosa in *Esperando não se sabe o quê*, more specifically, his interpretation of the work of Richard Sennett. In this sense, character has to do with the way we relate to the world – and not with a supposedly intrinsic personality trait. Now, to form this character, it is necessary for there to be someone and for there to be a world, something that the neoliberal dynamic oriented towards production, consumption, impersonal quality indexes and the effectiveness of standardization, tends to prohibit.

With these two notions, we were able to put into play what, in our view, fundamentally differentiates an instrument like ChatGPT from a specific teaching exercise that is irreplaceable by it: *while the former has answers, the latter is characterized by responding* and, therefore, by its responsibility. Given a world, *how* does one respond to it? It is this gesture that interests us. It is through it that a subject is revealed to the students' eyes that becomes consistent, that becomes whole when deciding to respond to a specific knowledge.

To illustrate this, we end the article with an interpretative exercise based on a memory from our school days. What the writer Mia Couto, in an interview with the program *Café Filosófico*, says about a teacher who taught him in elementary school was the material from which we weave our own

reflections. Couto says that this teacher, when asking the students to write an essay, sat down among them and, with trembling hands, also decided to write. Not as someone who knows, not as someone who has the answers in advance, but as someone who is still capable of answering for something. This way of being a teacher, which cannot be converted into a methodology, allows us to learn, from within a school experience, a valuable lesson for teaching.

In general terms, our intention throughout this article was, in some way, to scratch the ground by marking what is uniquely related to the act of teaching. Based on a supposed danger, it remembered what clarifies the specificity that, for a long time, has characterized a relationship that, in our view, is worth not replacing. It was not to enumerate the supposed advantages that a human being would have in relation to machines, but rather, in the midst of digital inexorability, to make us dedicate a few moments to looking at our fingerprints; in the midst of the empire of the artificial, to recover what is our artifice and which, therefore, cannot but have, to some extent, our own traits. Finally, our intention was also to indicate that, without care for the world, for our world as teachers, and for who we are when we respond to it, a future in which this replacement occurs may not be unlikely.

REFERENCES

AGAMBEN, Giorgio. *Profanações*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2007.

ALTMAN, Sam. Moore's *Law for Everything*. March 16, 2021. Disponível em: <<https://moores.samaltman.com/>>. Acesso em: 28/10/2023.

ANTUNES, Ricardo. Capitalismo de plataforma e desantropomorfização do trabalho. In: GROHMANN, Rafael (org). *Os laboratórios do trabalho digital*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2021, p. 33-38.

BENJAMIN, Walter. *Magia e técnica, arte e política: ensaios sobre literatura e história da cultura*. Trad. Sérgio Paulo Rouanet; Prefácio Jeanne Marie Gagnebin. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 2012.

BIESTA, Gert. *Para além da aprendizagem: educação democrática para um futuro humano*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2017.

CHARLOT, Bernard. A mobilização no exercício da profissão docente. *Revista Contemporânea de Educação*, vol. 7, n. 13, p. 10-26, jan./jul. 2012.

CHARLOT, Bernard. A questão antropológica na educação quando a barbárie está de volta. *Educar em Revista*, v. 35, n. 73, p. 161-180, jan/fev. 2019.

COUTO, Mía. Especial Fronteiras do Pensamento. [Entrevista concedida a] Fernanda Mena. *Café Filosófico* – Instituto CPFL, Campinas, 26/06/2017. Disponível em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BbruWdNhf8&ab_channel=institutocpfl>. Acesso em: 19/03/2023.

CRARY, Jonathan. *24/7: capitalismo tardio ou os fins do sono*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2014.

DARDOT, Pierre; LAVAL, Christian. *A nova razão do mundo: ensaio sobre a sociedade neoliberal*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2016.

GORZ, André. *O Imaterial: conhecimento, valor e capital*. São Paulo: Annablume, 2005.

- KRENAK, Aílton. *A vida não é útil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2020.
- LARROSA, Jorge. *Esperando não se sabe o quê: sobre o ofício de professor*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2018.
- LARROSA, Jorge. *Tremores: escritos sobre experiência*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora, 2014.
- LAVAL, Christian. *A escola não é uma empresa: O neo-liberalismo em ataque ao ensino público*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2011.
- MASSCHELEIN, Jan; SIMONS, Maarten. *A pedagogia, a democracia, a escola*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora, 2014a.
- MASSCHELEIN, Jan; SIMONS, Maarten. *Em defesa da escola: uma questão pública*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora, 2014b.
- RICOEUR, Paul. *Teoria da interpretação*. Lisboa: Edições 70, 2013.
- SANTAELLA, Lucia. *A inteligência artificial é inteligente?* São Paulo: Edições 70, 2023a.
- SANTAELLA, Lucia. *Há como deter a invasão do CHATGPT?*. São Paulo: Estação das Letras e Cores, 2023b.
- SAVIANI, Dermeval. *Escola e democracia* [livro eletrônico]. 44. ed. Campinas, SP: Autores Associados, 2022.
- SENNETT, Richard. *A corrosão do caráter: as consequências pessoais do trabalho no novo capitalismo*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2015.
- SICHMAN, Jaime Simão. Inteligência artificial e sociedade: avanços e riscos. *Estudos Avançados*, 35 (101), p. 37-49, 2021.
- TARDIF, Maurice; LESSARD, Claude; LAHAYE, Louise. Os professores face ao saber – esboço de uma problemática do saber docente. *Teoria e Educação*, n. 4, p. 215-233, 1991.
- TEIXEIRA, João de Fernandes. *O cérebro e o robô: inteligência artificial, biotecnologia e a nova ética*. São Paulo: Paulus, 2015.

Submitted: 2023/10/09

Preprint: 2023/10/09

Approved: 2024/01/24

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Author 1 - Literature research, writing and review of the text.

Author 2 - Literature research, writing and review of the text.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with this article.