

Of love as lacking: a pedagogical approach^{1*}

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Abstract

In the present article, we assume the objective of elucidating the relevance of taking love as lacking as an object of study of school education, approaching it, especially from the moral education. To this end, we start from a literature review on the theme, highlighting the tension between reason and emotion that permeated the understanding of love, as well as the appreciation of love marked by lack. In contrast to such understandings, we emphasize a perspective that understands that love requires retribution, and therefore it is a relationship that cannot be sustained unilaterally, and we likewise stress the need for self-awareness, self-care, and self-esteem. Based on these notes, we highlight the importance of a pedagogical approach on the subject and explain the justifications and possible methodological and epistemological ways that support a pedagogical approach about love, understanding, therefore, that formal education presents itself as a terrain. It is useful for the affectivity to be worked in a pedagogical way, aiming to favor the awareness about the feelings and actions that guide the experience of more just and equal affective and loving relationships. In this direction, we point to love as a cross-cutting and interdisciplinary theme of the school curriculum, which contributes to moral education. To this end, among other recognized paths, we will focus on conflict resolution methodology and project strategy.

Keywords

Love – Moral education – Conflict resolution – Project strategy.

Introduction

1- Article upholds in part the reflections of the doctoral thesis of the first author, prepared under the guidance of the second author, and updates the reflection on the theme.

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The understanding of love as a phenomenon that constitutes the basis of society, a vital necessity (MORENO; SASTRE, 2010), and that manifests itself in the most different social relationships – between mothers and children and between friends, just to mention a few examples – is the main focus of this paper. It addresses a specific way of experiencing love: that related to love between the couple⁴. In this view, we have been arguing in some previous works (FRANZI, 2013; FRANZI; ARAÚJO, 2017, 2018) that formal education cannot do without a pedagogical approach to this theme.

Starting from this, within the limits of this paper, we will seek to deepen and broaden this argument by reinforcing that love should constitute itself an object of study of the school curriculum, arguing for the need for knowledge of the partner, care, respect, retribution and solidarity in the relationship with her or him, as well as self-care, self-knowledge and self-esteem for relationships of this nature.

To support this argument, we will start from a review of the theme, explaining the tension between reason and emotion that permeates the understanding of love, as well as the valuation of love as lacking, that is, the exaltation of unrequited love. Indeed, based on the historical relevance attributed to love valued due to lacking, we focus on the analysis of this kind of love considering the value of an educational work that promotes a critical dialogue on such theme.

Subsequently, we will discuss some claims that justify the approach of the theme in formal education, emphasizing two aspects. One of them refers to some studies that indicate unrequited love as a notorious reason to mobilize the idea of suicide (VIEIRA et al., 2009; AZEVEDO; DUTRA, 2012; BRUNHARI; MORETTO, 2015). The second aspect refers to research that reveals the experience of relationships that merge and confuse the conceptions of love and violence (ARANTES; SASTRE; GONZÁLEZ, 2010; MINAYO; ASSIS; NJAINE, 2011; FABENI et al., 2015).

Then, we will analyze possible methodological and epistemological paths for an educational work on love, considering it as a theme of the school curriculum to be worked across and interdisciplinary which contributes to education in values (ARAÚJO, 2007, 2008) and to the construction of the moral personality (PUIG, 1996). In this regard, we emphasize conflict resolution methodology and project strategy.

Indeed, by taking such a path highlighting education of values as the cornerstone of the educational process, we inevitably contradict the premise of the self-styled School Without Party movement, which assumes that education of values is the task of family members and not of school, as Macedo (2017) argues. Thus, contrary to the proposition presented by such a movement, our proposal fits into a perspective that understands that schools cannot be restricted to instruct/teach subjects, but should assume its role more broadly around an ethical and citizenship formation (ARAÚJO, 2003a, 2008).

Reviewing understandings of love: love as lacking and the

4- We consider the diversity of sexual orientation and are not restricted to heterosexual couples.

tension between reason and emotion

In studies that explore the theme of love, the idea of the lack, of unrequited desire, is expressive. Precisely because it does not materialize, this idea sustains itself as such. In the same way, the dichotomous treatment of reason and emotion is remarkable: sometimes reason has been given the guiding potential of love relationships; sometimes such a role has been attributed to emotion.

Addressing especially these aspects, we chose to begin our analysis from Plato's ideas, since his work *The Banquet* is perceived as a kind of "obligatory crossing point" on the topic of love (GUTMAN, 2009). In this work, which features seven speeches by different characters, Eros is not interpreted uniquely. For this reason, we chose to discuss two of the meanings attributed to him, highlighting the discourse of Aristophanes and Diotima.

Aristophanes discusses the idea of love as a desire for completeness. The Greek poet recounts the myth that at first there were three genders: the masculine (sons of the sun), the feminine (sons of the earth) and the androgynous (sons of the moon), the latter being part female and part male. They were all considered as complete beings: they had two faces (opposite to each other) supported by a single head, and four arms and four legs, allowing them to be agile. Because they were able to develop fast circular motions, they intended to climb to the sky to fight the gods. However, when they lost the fight, Zeus punished them by splitting them in half. The punishment was intended to make them more modest, since, by dividing them, Zeus had his head turned halfway to the side of the cut, so that they would always remember the defeat. In addition, he asked Apollo to heal the wounds by stitching each half and leaving an opening in the middle of his belly, which we now call navel. As the sexual organs were in the back, they no longer reproduced, which is why Zeus, moved with compassion, shifted the sexual organs forward in order to favor reproduction.

In Aristophanes' speech, precisely the search for the other half defines love, as explained in the following excerpt: "[...] our old nature was like this, and we were a whole; *therefore, to the desire and search for the whole is given the name of love*" (PLATO, 1966, p. 132, emphasis added).

Therefore, in this myth, the notion of love prevails as lack, that is, the desire for completeness marked by the absence of the desired being and which, precisely because it does not materialize, supports the love phenomenon.

Another meaning attributed to love is that presented through the character Diotima.⁵ Socrates reproduces the speech of this priestess by considering her an expert in the subject.

Diotima described the origin of Eros. To this end, she went to a feast on the Olympus, which was intended to commemorate the birth of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. At the end of the party, Penia (goddess of poverty) entered the hall with the purpose of requesting the remains of the banquet. However, she came across Poros (god of wealth), who was in the garden of Zeus, drunk and in deep sleep. Penia, as the goddess of poverty

5- As noted by Rocha (2000), there is no record to prove the true existence of Diotima. For such an author, the figure of Diotima was probably a literary creation of Plato to protect Socrates from the envy and jealousy of the colleagues who spoke before him at the Banquet.

and, consequently, always striving for wealth, decided to have a son with Poros, and slept with him. Penia reached her goal, for in embracing him, Poros awoke and Penia invited him to enjoy her company. Without being highly conscious, Poros accepted the invitation and impregnated Penia, conceiving the desired son: Eros. Therefore, on the same day of Aphrodite's birth, Eros is begotten.

As Braz (2005) explains, Eros is ambiguous, since it is marked by the contradiction between the mother and the father figure. Thus, on the one hand, he is avid, beautiful and pleasurable, while, on the other hand, he is needy. Indeed, the neediness, the lack, causes Eros to seek wisdom continually. Thus, for Diotima, Eros, marked by the principle of lacking, is seen as one who aspires to the Good, the Beautiful, and the True.

The dialectical ascension of the soul in Diotima is directed by Logos, and proceeds gradually to the supreme beauty of the Idea of Beautiful. First, it is the beauty of bodies and their desire for biological procreation; then, the beauty of the soul and its desire for spiritual procreation; after, it is the beauty of science and, finally, the supreme beauty of the Idea of Beautiful (ROCHA, 2000).

This logic results in the notion of ladder of love, "an image that contains the principle that each citizen could climb the stages that, when certain, would lead to the contemplation of the essential forms of Beautiful/Good" (GUTMAN, 2009, p. 546). Such asceticism implied, therefore, transcendence of worldly desires that characterized the sensitive Eros. Once overcome, they should aim at the celestial, and thus the pursuit of the ideal beauty of the intelligible world.

Thus, despite the different possible interpretations, we understand that Diotima's discourse reveals to us the need to draw orientations in order to delegate to Eros an important function to boost the intellectual exercise. As Braz explains (2005, p. 74, emphasis added):

[...] Plato points out that it is the responsibility of the human being to provide intellectual and spiritual ascent to the force of Eros. *In this sense, the elevation of love is a matter of intelligence*, and therefore essentially masculine, the side inherited from Poros. *The intellect, in this Platonic version, is also considered an important and fundamental element for understanding and experiencing love.*

Therefore, the overlapping of reason with emotion was established since ancient times, which led to remarkable consequences in the way love was conceived.

In fact, the demand for the experience of rational love relationships, already exalted since classical antiquity, will be radicalized, especially by Christianity. However, in the case of Christianity, the exercise of rationality will be required as a means of approaching God. Despite such a distinction, we can see that the understandings of love, whose works *The Banquet* was intended to disseminate, were to some extent appropriated by Christian thought.

Saint Thomas Aquinas was a prominent character in Christianity dealing with love. According to Monzani (1995), Thomas Aquinas, in line with the thinking from classical antiquity, presents us with a classification of passions, whose order is expressed by the

pairs 1) love – hate, 2) desire – aversion, and 3) pleasure – displeasure. The fulfillment of pleasure is put ultimately into practice, and love must prevail as a form of contemplation.

Around 1500-1700 this hierarchy of passions begins to change. This change came about when teleological thinking lost its strength against mechanistic thinking. Such transformations implied that from then on “love came down from the top of the pyramid of passions where it was placed by ancient and Christian sensibility. In its place, desire and then pleasure emerged” (COSTA, 1998, p. 60).

Thus, while for the Greeks and Christians love was at the top of the hierarchy of passions, envisioned only as contemplation and aspiration of a transcendent Good, for Thomas Hobbes, for example, desire and pleasure were superimposed on love, involving the actual satisfaction of desires.

Therefore, “[...] *it will no longer be about the Empire of Reason* over passion, but exactly the opposite” (MONZANI, 1995, pp. 78-79, emphasis added). This inversion caused the abandonment of notions of good and evil, so exalted in the moral precepts of antiquity. In the mechanistic view, “we do not want things because they are good, but they are good because we want them” (MONZANI, 1995, p. 84).

The mechanistic view of love underwent significant changes because of the context of the court society, which required a civilizing process implying the internalization of feelings.

Because of this process, courteous love was a form of love driven by medieval poetic art. It was based on the troubadour’s procession of a lady, who never gave in to her own desires and the troubadour’s desires. Because the lady was inaccessible, the troubadour engaged in a ritual of loving vassalage. Without bodily relations, the man offered songs to the woman, sealing a relationship marked by the rules of courtesy (LAGO, 2009).

This brings back the idea of love as a desire for someone who one cannot have. There is a remarkable tension between the thinking of mechanistic theorists and the ideas that arose from the court society about love. In this tension, Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s thought gains relevance (COSTA, 1998).

Rousseau played an important role in synthesizing the love subject from the influences of desire theorists such as Hobbes, but also from the new conception of love experienced in the court society. On the one hand, the Swiss philosopher considered the need for temperance and control of the passions, as in antiquity. On the other hand, he also believed in the need for the fulfillment of desires, which is why he pointed to the social potential of sex, recognizing the relevance of marriage and the constitution of the family (COSTA, 1998).

In this synthesis devised by Rousseau, although the idea of love as lack has been minimized, the classical meaning of love has not been extinguished.

Indeed, in the field of psychology, especially psychoanalysis, the theme of love as lack returned intensely.

In the Seminar 8: the Transfer (1960-1961), Lacan refers to Plato’s work *The Banquet*, and states that to love “[is] to give what one does not have – and one can only love by acting as if one does not have, even if one does have. Love in response implies mastery

of not knowing. It was not me; it was Plato who invented it [...] Loving always needs the refusal” (LACAN, 1992, p. 345).

We can therefore recall the logic of courteous love, noting that in this kind of love, marked by lack, there is a mismatch in the relationship between lover and beloved. The troubadour desires the Lady, but the Lady only puts herself in a relationship to be loved and not to fulfill the troubadour’s desires. Thus, “what the lover lacks is not what the beloved has” (FERREIRA, 2004, p. 50). That is, what is missing in this relationship is the object of desire; after all, “if it existed, those lucky enough to find it would have found true love. If so, Aristophanes in *Plato’s Banquet* would have deciphered the riddle of the truth of love” (FERREIRA, 2004, p. 10).

Sigmund Freud had already paid attention to the theme of love, focusing it as a process of idealization (FERREIRA, 2004). For Freud, the idealization of love as a promise of happiness was a necessary process in face of the discomfort and discontent brought about by reality. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, the author states: “we are never as helpless against suffering as when we love, never as helplessly unhappy as when we lose our beloved object or its love” (FREUD, 1996, p. 90). Therefore, here we observe the mention of suffering due to the absence, the lack, of the beloved object.

Because of this logic, a constant exercise is instituted to remedy the lack, which paradoxically is the most valued element in the relationship. In this play, some authors understand that love is transmuted into passion. The phenomenon of passion is considered an ideal love in which the relationship between the self and the other is marked excessively by the idealization of the partner. According to the psychoanalyst Gisela Haddad (2011, p. 128, emphasis added):

The experience of *passion* is one of *ideal love*: we place the elect in the place of our own idealized self and can no longer distinguish it from ourselves. [...] Not only do we have the conviction that the other can remedy our lack, but also that we do have what we lack.

In view of such understandings that have marked love, Robert Solomon (1992) assumes a position contrary to the notion of love as lacking, emphasizing that love requires retribution, equality and response, and is therefore a relationship that is not supported unilaterally. According to Solomon, “love may begin as desire, but it will only be love when it demands retribution. *This seems obvious, but many great thinkers in history, from Plato to Freud, did not give enough importance to this thinking*” (SOLOMON, 1992, p. 40, emphasis added).

Robert Solomon’s (1992) statement seems to be at the heart of the historical problematic in the way love is conceived because, instead of understanding that love rises in face of the impossibility of materialization and that it is sustained in lacking, it emphasizes the need of retribution and correspondence in love relationships.

Despite being in line with the position of such author, we recognize that the experience of relationships based on retribution does not seem to us a trivial path, since, as we have explained, this was not the historical understanding that has been woven about love. In this sense, we identified the need for formal education to undertake a pedagogical

task aiming to stimulate dialogue and reflection on love and, more specifically, on love as lacking.

Weaving other understandings of love

As Costa (1998, p. 12) points out, “love is an emotional belief and, as any belief, it can be maintained, altered, dismissed, exchanged, improved, made worse, or abolished.” Based on this statement, we understand that love is not an instinctive and unchanging phenomenon, but a social construct. Therefore, we believe that we can educate ourselves to experience affective and loving relationships based on retribution to the detriment of appreciation of lacking and suffering.

The task proves to be arduous since the conception of love as lacking has clear manifestations in fields such as literature, music, cinema, soap operas, among others. We can think, for example, of the plot of films and soap operas that reveal the drama of protagonists who seek to be together throughout the plot, but who, through various barriers and facing much suffering, only fulfill their desire at the end. The story ends, therefore, with the union of the couple and shows us and teaches us little or nothing about the possibilities of living the relationship based on dialogue, the ways of resolving conflicts in the relationship, and the establishment of agreements between the partners. Thus, the latent message points us that the search, the lack, the idealization and the suffering are more interesting than the experience of the relationship taking into account the effective presence of the other.

In view of the reflections raised so far, we move to the discussion about the potentiality of the theme of love and, more specifically, of love as lacking as an object of study to be worked on at school.

As Jane Felipe (2007) points out, it is noteworthy that the school rarely dialogues, guides and reflects on issues that commonly permeate the affective experience of young people, such as unrequited love, the ideal of romantic love, love traumas, jealousy, pacts of faithfulness, oaths of eternal love etc. As the author mentions, what is observed is a biological approach worked through the bias of fear (disease and death) and by prescribing actions to prevent sexually transmitted diseases (especially AIDS) and early pregnancy.⁶

To clarify the relevance of a work that considers love as an object of study in formal education two justifications stand out. One of them is based on studies that point to the fact that unrequited love has been indicated as a recurring motive to mobilize the idea of suicide (VIEIRA et al., 2009; AZEVEDO; DUTRA, 2012; BRUNHARI; MORETTO, 2015). According to Vieira et al. (2009), one of the prominent causes in the speech of adolescents who attempted suicide, according to a research conducted in a national context, is unrequited love, and “*the break up with the loved one was mentioned as a*

6- By the way, in the scientific field, according to Neves (2007, p. 610), until the mid-1970s, the theme of love was considered “too mysterious and intangible for scientific study.” Not by chance, Ortega y Gasset (1960, p. 50), in his book entitled *About Love*, published in the late 1930s, stated that “there is no less exploited topography in every human landscape than that of love. It can be said that everything is unsaid; better, it is all unthinkable.”

crucial point driving them towards the realization of suicidal ideas" (VIEIRA et al., 2009, p. 1829, emphasis added).

From our point of view, this deserves attention as it highlights the magnitude and the potentiality of schoolwork towards collaborating to prevent suicides and promote life. In this sense, we highlight the importance of a pedagogical work that, besides proposing a dialogue about the relationship with the partner based on values such as respect and knowledge of the partner and marked by retribution, also fosters self-knowledge and self-esteem. We understand that such values may greatly contribute to coping with suicide.

A second justification is based on studies that have explained a certain mix between the conceptions of love and violence (ARANTES; SASTRE, GONZÁLEZ, 2010; MINAYO; ASSIS; NJAINE, 2011; FABENI et al., 2015). The work of Arantes, Sastre and González (2010), for example, investigated the psychological problems underlying the ways of dealing with violence against women using an instrument that consisted of a report about a conflict between a teenager and her boyfriend marked by episodes of physical and verbal violence perpetrated by the boyfriend. The results of the survey, conducted with 120 adolescents (12, 14 and 16 years old), indicated five different ways to position themselves in face of violence against women. Among these ways, it is noteworthy the posture of subjects who expressed a will to maintain the relationship with the aggressor and the silent acceptance of the situation sustained, in some cases, by the need for affirmation of love by the boyfriend. Thus, although the authors' investigation did not address the possibilities of pedagogical intervention in face of these positions, it is noticeable that such data, collected from students in the abovementioned age group, enable us to think about a schoolwork capable of reflecting on and making explicit the distinctions between love and violence.

By assuming such pedagogical work, explaining the need to include the theme of love in the school curriculum, we bring to light a position that breaks with the understanding that the role of the school institution should be restricted to the work related to the cognitive domain, limiting to address traditional subjects through the organization of pedagogical work into disciplinary areas such as History, Geography, Chemistry and Mathematics. The reason for this rupture is based on the premise that affectivity and cognition are inseparable (DAMÁSIO, 1996; ARANTES, 2000, 2003). Let us see.

Breaking the dichotomy between affectivity and cognition: possibilities of pedagogical approaches to love as lacking

At different historical moments, different thinkers advocated the separation and the duality between rational and emotional phenomena, pointing to the fact that emotions are disturbing and detrimental to the exercise of rationality. Among others who we would like to mention here (within the limits of space of this study), we can highlight Plato, Aristotle, Descartes and Kant.

Nevertheless, recent investigations have assumed an antagonistic interpretation to such understanding, revealing that reason and emotion, affectivity and cognition, are inseparable. In this sense, António R. Damásio (1996), based on studies in the field of

Neurology, points out that emotions and feelings act as somatic markers that greatly influence the functioning of the human brain and become decisive in defining how cognitive processes act in decision-making.

In the educational field, in line with the premise that affectivity and cognition are inseparable, several authors have presented propositions in favor of an emotional education. In this sense, we can highlight the works of Casassus (2008, 2009), Zins and Elias (2006), Bisquerra, Perez-González and Garcia Navarro (2015), Bisquerra (2003), Gonsalves (2015) and Gonsalves and Souza (2015). As Casassus (2008, 2009) explains, the emotional climate that permeates the classroom is the variable that most influences the learning process. This author understands that a pleasant emotional environment is the basic element that explains why some students learn more than others do.⁷

Bisquerra (2003, p. 9) points out that “the goal of emotional education is the development of emotional skills: emotional awareness, emotional regulation, personal autonomy, interpersonal intelligence, and life and well-being skills.”

Certainly, this perspective, which is based on the development of emotional skills and abilities, is in line with the proposal of the Common National Curricular Base (BRASIL, 2018), which, among other competencies (ten in total), presents three that, from our point of view, deserve to be thought of in light of the theme of this work:

Chart 1- Emotional skills and abilities

Competence 8: **Self-knowledge and Self-care**: Knowing, appreciating and caring for one's physical and emotional health, understanding oneself in human diversity, and recognizing one's emotions and those of others with self-criticism and ability to deal with them.

Competence 9: **Empathy and Cooperation**: Exercise empathy, dialogue, conflict resolution and cooperation, respecting and promoting respect for others and for the human rights, with the acceptance and appreciation of the diversity of individuals and social groups, their knowledge, identities, cultures and potentialities, without prejudices of any kind.

Competence 10: **Responsibility and Citizenship**: Act personally and collectively with autonomy, responsibility, flexibility, resilience and determination, making decisions based on ethical, democratic, inclusive, sustainable and supportive principles.

Source: (BRAZIL, 2018, p. 9).

The document seems to make room for approaching the themes of love and love as lacking, clearly pointing to aspects that we have reiterated as essential for a pedagogical work that assumes a reflection on love, such as self-knowledge and self-care. Moreover, the three competences mentioned indicate a reflective exercise about the self and the relation of the self to the other: a profoundly valid exercise in pondering the feelings, thoughts, and actions in affective and loving relationships.

Although we indicate the possibility that the Common National Curricular Basis reveals to us, it first seems important to point out that we are not fully in line with the

⁷- This statement is supported by a research developed by UNESCO and coordinated by Juan Casassus. UNESCO supported the study in fourteen Latin American countries, including Brazil, between 1995 and 2000 with the aim of investigating the factors that influence student performance. The report pointed out that the emotional environment is the most relevant factor for school performance. It was observed that a school that favors the quality of education is one in which the emotional environment is favorable to learning (GONSALVES; SOUZA, 2015).

document.⁸ However, we do not intend to present disagreements here, since this would disperse us from the scope of our work. Secondly, it is worth mentioning that although we recognize that the idea of emotional competence is a possible and already recognized way to work pedagogically with the dimension of emotions and feelings, we will take a path that presents a certain uniqueness regarding propositions for the educational field. This is because our theoretical framework does not refer to the idea of skills and competences, but to an educational work aiming education in values (ARAÚJO, 2007) and the construction of moral personality (PUIG, 1996). In other words, we want to clarify that our theoretical trajectory approaches moral education.

Based on these considerations, we understand that values are constructed from complex relationships that the subject establishes with herself or himself and others and that are incorporated into one's identity. In this process, values arise from the projection of feelings about objects, people and relationships or about oneself. When positive feelings are projected, the following values are configured: what we like, what we value. On the other hand, when negative feelings are projected, the following value is configured: what we do not like (ARAÚJO, 2007, 2003b).

It is worth noting that it is not a matter of conceiving the value system as Manichean - reduced only to opposite principles of Good and Evil - but, on the contrary, as extremely complex (ARAÚJO, 2003b). As stated by Pinheiro (2011, p. 222) about Flanagan (1993), "morality, in his interpretation, is not composed of stable characteristics, but susceptible to small or large variations triggered by the context in which one finds oneself."

In addition, we can mention the case of people who derive non-moral values from their positive affective projections. Relating to the theme of our article, we can bring to light the example of subjects who like affective relationships based on lacking, violence and suffering.

It is precisely in view of the complexity of the continuously constructed value system that we recognize that the school institution plays an indispensable role in building moral values or, in other words, socially desirable values (ARAÚJO, 2008) such as justice, respect and solidarity. It means seeking ways to promote the construction of moral personality, as directed by Puig (1996). In this sense, if, as we have already stated, values are related to what we like, we must "definitely include the theme of affectivity and emotions in the educational agenda" (ARANTES, 2000, p. 150). Let us address some paths in this direction.

Notes for a pedagogical approach to love as lacking based on moral education

Given the prominence of considering the affective dimension in the school space, several investigations have argued that affectivity should be approached in a pedagogical manner, and that feelings should be taken as transversal themes in formal education (MORENO et al., 1999; MORENO; SASTRE, 2002).

8- We agree with the criticisms pointed out by Macedo (2017) in an article entitled "The Conservative Demands of the School Without Party Movement and the Common National Curriculum Basis."

In this regard, it is interesting to note that Sastre and Moreno (2003) are attentive when referring to the World Health Organization (WHO) World Report on Violence and Health of 2000. As the authors warn, the first cause of violent death cited in this document is suicide. Questioning the role of the school in face of this information, ironically, the authors ask:

[...] when reading this information, the question is did any of these people commit suicide by ignoring the Pythagorean Theorem, the crystalline systems or the tributaries of the Amazon River? It seems hard to imagine. Undoubtedly, perhaps this has a lot to do with the lack of resources to manage our own emotions and to resolve inter- or intrapersonal conflicts that often arise in our daily lives (SASTRE; MORENO, 2003, p. 134).

According to Moreno and Sastre (2002), a methodological strategy to consider feelings as objects of study is the proposal of conflict resolution since it allows mobilizing both cognitive and affective aspects. Through such methodology, it is possible to work with themes that involve conflicting situations, making the students hypothetically place themselves in the condition of the (fictitious) characters involved in a conflict situation.

Based on the proposition of such authors, we understand that conflict is a fundamental element for the process of psychic and moral development because its resolution requires recognition of different points of view among those involved in the conflict and requires a reflection on oneself and other people. Thus, this methodological strategy favors the construction of moral values such as justice and solidarity by proposing forms of nonviolent resolutions (MORENO; SASTRE, 2002; PINHEIRO, 2011).

Approaching the theme that is presented as an object of reflection in this article, we understand that the classroom can be a space for debate, especially among young people, about the theme of love. In this sense, students could be led to take stances in face of different conflicting situations based on fictional stories and characters, which indicate, for example, the experience of love relationships that are based on lack of reciprocity.

In other words, we would be questioning love as lacking, which has been much stimulated throughout history. To cite an example, we suggest a situation that provides students with the opportunity to take a stance in the following conflict:

Chart 2- Example of situation

Fabiane met Pedro earlier this year when they began studying at the same school and were introduced by his cousin, Julia. Soon, Fabiane was charmed by him. Several girls in high school wanted to date Pedro, so Fabiane thought she had no chance.

At a party, Pedro approached Fabiane, they kissed and Fabiane lived a special moment. After that day, they dated a few more times, but after a couple of months, the relationship slowly died out and they split.

Fabiane is trying to forget Pedro by dating a boy who shows that he likes her very much and respects her very much. This relationship lasts seven months, but Fabiane believes that the great love of her life is Pedro.

Source: (FRANZI, 2013, p. 109).

In this case, the protagonist of the story is female, but the same situation could also be presented by using a male protagonist, or characters of different sexual orientations, since the different versions of the same story favor a greater proximity to the experience of the students.

From this situation, the teacher could stimulate questions about feelings, thoughts and actions concerning the characters of the referred story, instigating the students to engage in dialogue and reflect on the appreciation of unrequited love. In the midst of such work, it must be noted that “the answers will not be right or wrong from the teacher’s perspective, but will be discussed collectively” (PINHEIRO, 2011, p. 231). The important thing is that this process be organized as a foundation for the group to be aware of the different implications of their positions regarding the situation presented.

However, it is necessary to highlight that, for the conflict resolution methodology to gain space in the school environment, a broader change is necessary in the organization of formal education, allowing feelings - among other themes that evade the content traditionally worked by schools - to become part of the curriculum of such institution. Therefore, we consider that the organization of pedagogical work based on transversal themes and interdisciplinarity can greatly favor the approach to love.

In order to establish our choice of crosscutting themes as a promising way to work on the theme of love in formal education, we begin with the critique to school organization. In this sense, we observe a difficulty in identifying what is, after all, the scope of the school since the pedagogical work has commonly been done through isolated and fragmented disciplines that do not dialogue with each other. Moreover, we may question the mismatch between the intellectual and the abstract preparation that the school aims to ensure, and the real needs and problems that permeate social life.

Given this criticism, we identified a unique way to ensure the objective of schoolwork on ethical training and citizenship in crosscutting themes, since such themes are related to social conflicts and aim to improve people’s lives (ARAÚJO, 2003a, p. 28). As we have already pointed out, by producing justifications about the relevance of addressing love and love as lacking in schools, we understand that such a theme would clearly and favorably promote people’s quality of life.

To this end, the crosscutting themes permeate/traverse the different fields of knowledge, constituting a vertebrate axis of the educational system. In this perspective, traditional subjects are no longer the purpose of education and are conceived as a medium. That is, the disciplinary contents are now used as instruments to work on themes that connect to socially desirable values, such as justice, democracy and solidarity (ARAÚJO, 2003a, 2008).

Because they imply a resignification of the school’s objective, transversal themes refer not only to a methodological path, but also to an epistemological change that turns social transformation into the core of formal education. Thus, education in moral values and dialogic, democratic and nonviolent forms of conflict resolution favor a new configuration for the school (ARAÚJO, 2003a).

In line with the proposition of transversal themes, the project strategy is presented. As Araújo (2003a, 2008) explains, a project requires putting into practice the ability

to set goals, choose, and decide paths to achieve the established goals. This pathway indicates that the project will always allow an opening to novelty and uncertainty given the possibility of action and the choices and continuous decisions of the subjects, thus encouraging an active posture of teachers and students (ARAÚJO, 2003a, 2008).

In the perspective we are defending here, we consider an articulation between the principles of transversality and interdisciplinarity as essential. This means that, although we have criticized school organization divided into disciplinary areas due to the isolation between one area and another, we are not rejecting the importance of disciplines that traditionally organize the school, but assuming the work with projects using crosscutting themes in articulation with the disciplinary contents historically constructed by humanity. Thus, as we have already explained, such contents are no longer the purpose of the school and are mobilized, in an interdisciplinary way, to discuss transversal themes, which are understood as the vertebrate axis of the educational system. The contents will not be organized in a linear way, but as a network of relations opening to infinite paths that connect to each other (ARAÚJO, 2003a).

We can exemplify this proposal based on a project on sexuality cited by Araújo (2003a, p. 80-91), and whose development provided a reflection on the themes puberty and reproduction. Students themselves chose the themes. Through such themes, not only were the contents related to Science mobilized, as the school usually works with such themes, i.e., restricted to a biological reading, but the project spread to several disciplinary areas, favoring, among other aspects, a discussion about gender relations and discrimination historically suffered by women (ARAÚJO, 2003a).

As in the example above, it is evident that love and, more specifically, love as lacking may be the starting point and the central theme for a school project developed especially with young people, who commonly experience their first and intense love experiences at this stage in life. From this theme, the subjects to be discussed in each subject area could be the most diverse, such as the awareness of one's feelings, the critical reflection on love as lacking, the relationship between love and violence, the different understandings of love in different historical moments and in different cultural groups, the critical dialogue about the dichotomous way in which each gender is stimulated to assume and experience love, the diversity of sexual orientations and the different forms of love, social gender relations that permeate love relationships etc.

It is worth noting the fact that our propositions require assuming dialogue as an instrument with a strong potential to provide moral education through interaction by listening, reasoning, considering different points of view facing a certain theme (MÜLLER; ALENCAR, 2012), thus favoring the construction of moral personality (PUIG, 1996).

In the defense of a work of this nature, as we have already explained, we emphasize that formal education inexorably has the role of not only teaching the contents traditionally taught by each subject area, but also, above all, mobilizing them in favor of ethical training and citizenship. In this sense, we once again endorse our opposition to the premises of the School Without Party movement, which conceives that schools should be restricted to instructing - merely teaching content - and that education, as a broader formation - related to moral values - is the duty of family members and not of formal education (MACEDO, 2017).

We recognize that such opposition implies a complex work to be done by the school, yet we trust that such an institution cannot escape this task. Thus, with regard to the theme that guided our reflection in this paper, we dare to continue stating that it is up to school education to provide a reflection on the possibilities of educating ourselves to experience fairer, more solidary and non-violent relationships in love, boosting the construction of socially desirable values (ARAÚJO, 2008). This is not a subject foreign to schools, but one of the essential objects of study that validate the social function of such institutions.

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