For an integrative and pluralist ethics: pathways to moral education based on conflict resolution

Por uma ética integradora e pluralista: caminhos para a educação em valores a partir da resolução de conflitos

Por una ética integradora y pluralista: caminos para la educación en valores a partir de la resolución de conflictos

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore theoretical-methodological implications of the ethics of care for psychology and moral education. Taking the premise of multiple moral voices in connection, installed by Gilligan, the article analyzes interpersonal conflicts, through the Theory of Organizing Models of Thinking. From a research clipping with teenagers aged 14 to 16, in which interviews about interpersonal conflicts were applied, we present the analysis of two conflicts narrated by a young participant. We seek to highlight different phenomena of the human psyche in conflict resolution. The results showed the continuum between the desires of justice, care, happiness, and well-being in the elaboration of interpersonal relationships in different interactive contexts, giving visibility to relational ethics. Based on the results, we discuss some implications for educational practices aimed at ethical education aligned with acting for the personal and collective good.

Keywords: Ethics. Organizing Models of Thinking. Conflicts. Moral education.

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo desbravar implicações teórico-metodológicas da ética do cuidado para a psicologia e a educação moral. Assumindo a premissa de múltiplas vozes morais em conexão, inaugurada por Gilligan, o artigo estuda os conflitos interpessoais pela via da Teoria dos Modelos Organizadores do Pensamento. Parte-se de um recorte de pesquisa com adolescentes de 14 a 16 anos em que foram aplicadas entrevistas sobre conflitos interpessoais. Apresentamos a análise de dois conflitos narrados por um jovem participante para identificar diferentes fenômenos do psiquismo humano na resolução de conflitos. Os resultados evidenciaram o *continuum* entre desejos de justiça, cuidado, felicidade e bem-estar na elaboração das relações interpessoais em diversos contextos interativos, dando visibilidade à ética relacional. Com base nos resultados, discutimos algumas implicações para práticas educacionais voltadas à formação ética e à atuação para o bem pessoal e coletivo.

Palavras-chave: Ética. Modelos Organizadores do Pensamento. Conflitos. Educação em valores.

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RESUMEN

Este artículo explora las implicaciones teóricas y metodológicas de la ética del cuidado para la psicología y la educación moral. Asumiendo la premisa de Gilligan múltiples voces morales en conexión, el artículo estudia los conflictos interpersonales a través de la Teoría de los Modelos Organizadores del Pensamiento. Desde un recorte de investigación con entrevistas a adolescentes de 14 a 16 años sobre conflictos interpersonales, presentamos el análisis de dos conflictos narrados por un joven participante, para identificar diferentes fenómenos de la psique humana en la resolución de conflictos. Los resultados mostraron el continuo entre los deseos de justicia, cuidado, felicidad y bienestar en el desarrollo de las relaciones interpersonales en diferentes contextos interactivos, dando visibilidad a la ética relacional. Con base en los resultados, discutimos algunas implicaciones para las prácticas educativas dirigidas a la formación ética y al actuar para el bien personal y colectivo.

Palabras clave: Ética. Modelos Organizadores del Pensamiento. Conflictos. Educación en Valores.

> On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, selves, and environment, which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web. (Tronto, 1993, p. 103).

Carol Gilligan's book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, published in 1982, highlighted an innovative and influential branch of studying human morality with essential implications for moral education. Her ideas, which essentially sought to break the principle of morality based exclusively on justice, were a milestone in opening new paths for investigations and revealed, based on feminist assumptions, a "different voice" in judgment-making in the face of moral dilemmas. It is a "voice" elaborated by girls and women in search of another conception of morality: the ethics of care, aimed at understanding responsibility and interpersonal relations.

The theoretical construct that posited the ethics of care as fundamental to human morality has broadened the spectrum of moral psychology by the identification of multiple voices (Hekman, 1995), giving rise to the idea that, beyond the ideal of equality and justice, love and peace are equally important assumptions for exercising citizenship in democratic societies (Gilligan, 2013; Tronto, 2013). Hence, this perspective begins to consider the subject in their complexity and immersed in a space-time context, inaugurating a new paradigm that integrates cognition and emotion, mind, and body, public and private, as well as the self, its relations, and the world (Gilligan, 2013).

Inspired by Gilligan's ideas, we explore some theoretical and methodological implications from the ethics of care for psychology and moral education, articulating them with our reflections based on an investigation of conflict resolution from the perspective of the Theory of Organizing Models of Thought (TOMT — Moreno Marimón *et al*., 1999).

BETWEEN THE ETHICS OF JUSTICE AND THE ETHICS OF CARE

Until the publication of *In a Different Voice* (Gilligan, 1982), Kantian inspiration dominated moral psychology from the perspective of a deontological morality based on the principle of justice and characterized by a hierarchical and universal path established between intellectual development and moral reasoning. Inspired by this morality, Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1976; 1984), despite their substantial differences, converged on the concept that moral judgment anticipates and is a necessary

condition for action, guiding and directing it, even if unable to ensure it. This interpretation determines the rational subject as the holder of morality, which configures a partial reading that does not correspond to psychological subjects' reality, as pointed out by several authors such as Selman (1989), Flanagan (1993), Sastre Vilarrasa, Moreno Marimón and Fernández Nistal (1994) and Campbell and Christopher (1996).

Pointing out gaps in these theoretical models, Gilligan vehemently argued that what was considered limitations in women's development — concern with the other, relations, and the emotional dimension — was an interest in the *self* and concern for the *other*. Hence, an increasing differentiation of the self and the other and a growing understanding of the dynamics in social interaction legitimized the development of the ethics of care built on the cumulative knowledge of human relations in a progression that presupposes the interdependence between the *self* and the *other*. Therefore, this feminine voice's invisibility meant sacrificing the relationship. Besides being problematic from a moral point of view, this flaw seems unacceptable psychologically since being in a relationship means being present and not absent (Gilligan, 2013).

According to Gilligan (1982), girls and boys experience very different relations from early childhood, leading both to reach puberty with interpersonal orientations and social experiences that are also very diverse. As women were cared for by someone of the same gender, in addition to not needing the successful separation from the mother in their individualization process, they define themselves in a framework of human relations, judging themselves according to their ability to care for others. Therefore, there is the assumption of two existing sources of morality without qualifying one as superior: the ethics of justice, strongly rooted in masculine traits, and the ethics of care, more present in feminine judgments. Notably, although the orientation towards justice or care may be more expressive, respectively, in men and women, Gilligan was cautious in postulating that both "[…] are capable of shifting orientations in considering conflicts in relationships" (Gilligan and Wiggins, 1988, p. 119).

Despite acknowledging that care is not strictly related to women, by using the expression "feminine voice" in her studies, Gilligan was interpreted as the author of "feminine" ethics and, as a result, was criticized by feminist theories which pointed out the limitations of her model in overcoming the sexist paradigms of patriarchal society. In one way or another, the controversy about the duality of justice and care was cemented in the 1980s and 1990s, generating debates that opened new paths for research in psychology and moral philosophy. Also in the scene was the "care challenge", proposed by Gilligan and other theorists, to construct a theory that would address care development as complementary to the cognitive development of the principle of justice. In addition to Gilligan herself (1986; 1988; 1995/2003), this theoretical branch has been developed by several authors such as Noddings (1984/2013), Hekman (1993; 1995), Tronto (1993; 2013), Held (2006), Skoe (2014), and Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), corroborating new possibilities in various fields of knowledge. This context forced Kohlberg to review his theoretical assumptions and, consequently, recognize another moral orientation besides justice (Kohlberg, Levine and Hewer, 1983), maintaining, however, justice as a superior ethical principle, to which the ethics of care was subordinated (Blum, 1988).

In this movement, some authors proposed redefining justice within the parameters of the ethics of care. Noddings (1984/2013), for example, argued that care is "natural", accessible to all, and, immanently human, ends up encompassing the principle of justice. Okin (1989), on the political side, defended that justice needs to be evaluated by the principle of care, which requires transforming the distinction between the public and private spheres, with the intimacy of family relations presenting a fruitful path for public policies. Similarly, Young (1990) argued that impartiality is an impossible ideal that masks the dominance of a hegemonic group, holding that justice must be

exercised in a context of heterogeneity and partiality. According to Hekman (1993), however, such approaches still need to assess the radical implications suggested by Gilligan's work, as they seek, in our Western tradition, to redefine rather than transform moral epistemology.

The finer analysis of these two ethics was conducted by the philosopher Seyla Benhabib (1992). For this author, the ethics of justice consider each person as a "generalized other," which allows all individuals to be given the same rights and duties. Centered on what all human beings have in common, relations in this perspective are governed by *formal equality* and *reciprocity* norms, primarily public and institutional. Justice is, in this sense, understood as respect for people's rights and duties, which must be above all needs and/or differences. On the other hand, the ethics of care and responsibility consider diversity and a "concrete other." In this approach, human beings are seen as people endowed with identity, a concrete life story, and an affective constitution. Governed by *equity* and *"complementary" reciprocity*, individuals assume behaviors about others where they feel recognized as people with specific needs, talents, and capacities. Private and not public, the moral categories of such ethics are *responsibility* and *sharing*, based on love, friendship, care, empathy, and solidarity.

From this perspective, the ethics of justice prevents us, for example, from treating others unjustly. In contrast, the ethics of care and responsibility make it impossible to ignore someone in a situation of need or risk. Although they are complementary ethics, each of them — justice and care — obeys a different moral position. By applying the same norms to all people without considering their particularities, difficulties, and personal problems, the ethics of justice can become unjust. In contrast, the ethics of care, seen as complementary, can cover up the drawbacks of the ethics of justice and establish a new morality based not only on justice but also on caring for others, respecting differences, cooperation, and love (Moreno Marimón and Sastre Vilarrasa, 2014).

Admitting that both dimensions are essential for human beings, Benhabib (1992) postulates that neither has primacy and defends their integration since we are concrete and bodily beings with needs, emotions, and desires. Such integration foresees reversible points of view according to the subject's interests, desires, values, and attitudes toward the "concrete other." At the same time, the context of their experiences establishes rules and rights for the "generalized other." Within these discussions, Gilligan (1995/2003) points out that the ethics of care leads to the breaking of a patriarchal paradigm based on the "disconnect" between men and women. Hence, there is a need to make an initial distinction between a *feminine ethics of care*, which concerns interpersonal obligations and relations based on self-sacrifice and lack of identity, and a *feminist ethics of care*, whose essence lies in "connection," seen as primary and fundamental for the human being.

All these studies and controversies intend to seek more comprehensive and complete theoretical models of human morality, admitting that their understanding presupposes the confluence of the public and private spheres of the affective and cognitive aspects. After all, what is left of a public universe devoid of affect? Where are we headed in a "private" world without cognition? Could a society that favors hierarchy between men and women be considered democratic?

Such questions encourage us to overcome theoretical and experimental paradigms centered on a linear thought analysis. For this purpose, we have developed studies that allow us to differentiate and relate the confluence of both processes, inseparable in mental acts, and to outline important implications for moral education.

MULTIPLE VOICES IN CONNECTION: ORGANIZING MODELS OF THOUGHT AND INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS

As Hekman (1993) argued, if the premise that voices are products of experiences through which the subject is constituted is correct, then there are certainly more than just two moral principles.

Proposed by Gilligan, this premise promoted a shift in morality studies, leading to other possible voices or multiple ethical principles in the human constitution.

In search of these multiple voices, we resumed the paths taken by Fox Keller (*apud* Schnitman and Littlejohn, 1999), who criticizes the classic dichotomous oppositions and systematically examines the personal elements of the political and the political elements of the personal, the hidden and silent subjective dimension of the objective, the rational dimension of the affective and the affective dimensions of the rational. We add the impassable border between the conscious and unconscious dimensions to these dichotomies. This is because we have inherited a culture whose universe has been divided into two halves throughout history: one considered public, cognitive, objective, and conscious, and another conceived as private, affective, subjective, and non-conscious. Such a division simplifies and impoverishes the qualifying elements in each of the created halves and does not do justice to the experiences underpinning the production of our different voices.

Personal elaboration of experiences leads to the construction and organization of new knowledge with elements that support readings of different orders: personal, political, affective, and cognitive. In this elaboration, some readings reach consciousness while others remain unconscious; however, even if a small part of our activity emerges consciously, our internal and external worlds are elaborated simultaneously (Arantes and Pinheiro, 2017). These different forces — internal and external, conscious and unconscious, moral and non-moral — act and regulate our thoughts, feelings, and actions in everyday situations. In this process, human beings are driven to choose how to live, applying them to their personal and collective lives, in a path for constituting their identity in which values are built and incorporated (Araújo, Puig and Arantes, 2007).

Conceiving morality as under ongoing construction and integrated into the subject's identity leads to a commitment to act morally (Blasi, 2004), which, although not the sole way to think, feel, and act morally, supports them. This is because, beyond the range of mental, emotional, and behavioral processes that contribute to a moral choice, the organization of moral thinking and acting presupposes the connection between them, given their reciprocal interaction during human experience (Damon and Colby, 2015).

By assuming the perspective of human morality as a complex construct and the premise of multiple voices in connection, the study of interpersonal conflicts emerges as a fruitful way to interpret the different phenomena of the human psyche. Following Schnitman and Littlejohn (1999), we understand conflicts as raw material for our psychic, cognitive, affective, ideological, and social constitution. After all, because we are in direct or mediated relations with others, conflict resolution invites us to decentralize our point of view to contemplate that of others simultaneously (Sastre Vilarrasa and Moreno Marimón, 2002). It is, therefore, a complex exercise that integrates all the constitutive dimensions of the human being — cognitive, affective, physical, and social — and enables the (re)construction of how we view ourselves and the world (Moreno Marimón and Sastre Vilarrasa, 2014).

Conflict analysis brings to light an inexhaustible source of knowledge built from unique experiences throughout a singular history. In the study of representations developed in specific contexts, the dynamic aspect of conflicts allows us to analyze the human psyche's functionality (Inhelder and Cellerier, 1996). For this purpose, we rely on TOMT as a theoretical-methodological framework, which allows us to identify and analyze the possible similarities and differences between these phenomena. According to TOMT, when we experience a conflict, the desire to resolve it opens the door to reviewing our past models and schemes and possibly remodeling what was once considered definitive. Throughout life, each individual elaborates general models responsible for selecting elements and attributing meanings mobilized in interpreting present concrete and specific situations — these are the matrix models (Moreno Marimón and Sastre Vilarrasa, 2014). An in-depth analysis of the conflicts we experience (and, consequently, of our matrix models) can be a unique

opportunity to build new ways of living, thinking, and feeling affective bonds. It is a process in which mental dynamism has particular relevance since it presupposes managing different and opposing desires, thoughts, feelings, actions, sensations, and values (Arantes *et al.*, 2017), constituting an important source of emotional learning and construction of moral values (Sastre Vilarrasa and Moreno Marimón, 2002). Revisiting our biographical narrative through the conflicts experienced and how we operate in and about them enables self-knowledge and constructing peaceful ways of living, strategies already consolidated in moral education practices (Puig, 2004).

TOMT supports experience elaboration by constantly constructing and reconstructing organized and dynamic systems of meanings that individuals attribute to elements they select as relevant from phenomena. Meanings are not properties of objects or elements of the situation; the object does not give meaning to itself but acquires it according to the relations established with and by the subject. Meanings are psychologically organized to draw implications from the relations between them, which is why the organizing models of thought constitute the basis on which human beings construct their representations of the world.

In this process, since the human mind cannot retain all the observable elements in a particular situation, it selects only those that it considers relevant (for social, political, psychic, or cultural reasons) and to which it attributes meaning. In this selection, the subject is not aware of the elements he or she has rejected since they do not fulfill any function in organizing his or her thoughts; that is, they are not part of his or her "mental reality," even though these can objectively be of great importance for an adequate interpretation of the situation. This is because the experiencing individual — the psychological subject — organizes the selected elements with their corresponding meanings to construct a system that seems coherent to them and from which they can draw implications, resulting from a complex mental process that is almost always unconscious — what we tend to consider the "reality" of a subject.

Moreover, TOMT recognizes that others may not observe certain elements in the subjective perception of a situation because they come from inferences or fantasies about a particular subject. These inferences or fantasies are "added" to the situation, as the subject considers them necessary to ensure greater "coherence" between the meanings in constructing his "reality." This coherence is usually "subjective" and has little to do with formal logic. Instead, the relations established by the subject between the elements and meanings are closely related to each other and the subject in dimensions of knowledge and reasoning, moral, social, and personal experiences, as well as feelings and emotions.

As an analytical tool, TOMT can be considered a theory based on data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) insofar as the actual contents of the categories to be analyzed derive inductively from the subjects' responses and not from *a priori* categories. In this sense, TOMT is what Gilligan (2015, p. 68) understands as a method that attends to the interactions between the subject's internal and external worlds: looking at an "embodied" voice, that is, of an authentic subject, that resides in language "[…] grounds psychological inquiry in physical and cultural space".

METHOD

Assuming the premise of functional analysis, we seek to understand the multiple voices in moral thought to unveil possible implications for moral education. For this purpose, we took an excerpt from a more extensive study[1] to analyze, qualitatively and based on TOMT assumptions, the

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1 The research "In-service teacher training and purposes' development in youth" aimed to analyze the impacts of a teacher training course, built collectively with the teaching team educators from a public school in the city of São Paulo, on students and teachers purposes. The multimethod research articulated different data, varied instruments, and analysis formats in the composition of results. In addition to applying questionnaires to students, interviews with educators, and field diary records by researchers, data collections were carried out with complementary data with students through interviews. The National Council of Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), process no. 406899/2018-5, funded the research.

functioning dynamics of the human psyche in adolescents aged 14 to 16 years in the face of different conflicts experienced.

Using structured oral interviews, we selected 18 adolescents who answered the research questionnaires for interviews because they reported situations of social vulnerability, such as family, academic, or emotional issues that affected their life purposes. In the interviews conducted via video call, these participants reported two conflicts experienced in their trajectories that impacted them. They answered questions about what provoked it, the actions of those involved, their thoughts and feelings, how the conflicts were resolved, and the actions envisioned for a hypothetical recurrence.

Data collection followed the ethical principles of research with human beings (Resolution No. 510/2016 — CNS, 2016). Before the questionnaire and interview, the students received an invitation for research participation, had all the necessary information, and signed an informed consent form. The University of São Paulo Research Ethics Committee approved the study under protocol No. 12810219.8.0000.0075.

Based on the TOMT methodology (Moreno Marimón *et al.*, 1999), the analysis included an exhaustive reading of the protocols to highlight the abstracted elements, the meanings attributed to them, and the relations/implications between them, revealing the organizing dynamics of each adolescent's thought in resolving each conflict. After this analytical process, the dynamics undertaken to resolve each conflict were analyzed and compared to understand what was preserved and what changed how each resolved the situation.

To conduct the proposed exploratory study and explore the theoretical-methodological implications of integrative and pluralistic ethics, which emerge from the ethics of care, we selected two conflicts narrated by Tobias[2] (14 years old) as an excerpt. By unveiling the organizing models applied by this young man, we intend to identify how care and responsibility appear in each other and in each context.

ORGANIZING MODELS OF THOUGHT IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Based on conflicts reported by Tobias — in a time construction that presupposes analyzing them from the beginning (that is, what caused them) to their resolution (or not) —, we will highlight the core elements and primary meanings attributed by Tobias about himself and the others involved.

The first conflict was an argument with the mother about Tobias' sexuality at the end of 2019. At the time, the participant was talking to his mother about a school assignment when she brought up the subject of sexuality, which led her to share her thoughts and threaten to tell his father about her son's sexual orientation. After a heated argument, Tobias walked away and spent the weekend at a friend's house. Sometime after returning home, his mother came to him and told him that she would not bring it up again.

In narrating the conflict, Tobias recalls how it all began and brings into it his *desire to share work done at school with his mother*. The young man sees this element as a significant job requiring much dedication. He is also proud of the work and wants to share it with his mother. This same element, however, is perceived by his mother as an opportunity for Tobias to be with friends with whom he talks about his sexuality. Tobias points out that the meaning attributed to his mother was coated with accumulated anxiety and anger due to his homosexuality. As a result, Tobias *clashes with his mother about his sexuality*. The young man feels awful about his mother's comments about his friendships and sexual orientation — at the same time that she blames him for "choosing" to be

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2   Trading name.

gay, calling it a "disease". In the episode, Tobias mobilizes *anger* and *fear* about the experience: the *anger* comes from the aggressive way in which his mother spoke to him and the *fear* from the threat of telling his father about his sexuality:

> She started talking and fighting with me, insinuating things about me that made no sense. In the end, she started threatening to tell my dad. She became aggressive towards me. Oh, besides making threats, she started saying that it was a disease, and anyway... She began to insinuate things about my friends and the things I said. However, mostly, she kept saying that it was a disease. (Tobias)

Tobias understands that his mother brings an "established prejudice" to the conflict. For him, she felt confused and hurt for having to accept her son's sexuality and go against her religious beliefs, which makes her blame him:

> She has always been very religious, and breaking that is not easy. I understand that it can be excruciating. I knew she was trying to take away this pain that she was feeling, trying to make me feel guilty. Taking that pain away from the "source of the problem" (which would be me), throwing it all at me to make me feel guilty and for me to see how I hurt her because it was my choice. Because I am doing all this for the buzz, because it is a phase. (Tobias)

Regarding the conflict, Tobias also attributes to his mother's concern with people's judgment, which upsets him. The young man's mother is more concerned about "how people would judge her" than with him. Tobias also points out that his mother sees the conflict as a possibility to vent. Although this creates an argument, it seems to be a way for her to "speak her mind" and better accept the situation: "She said, 'But you should care!' Moreover, I said, "You know what? The only person who makes me feel uncomfortable with my sexuality is you." (Tobias)

Afterward, Tobias highlights his *isolation* and *reflection about what happened*. Tobias signifies this moment as one of profound sadness that his mother was aggressive and little understanding. He feels anxious about everything that could come after the fight and terrified:

> What was going to happen? What was the situation going to look like? I was thinking of... Because of her threats, I was thinking: "Is she going to do what she was implying, which was to tell my dad?" It was something I was terrified of happening. I kept thinking about the threats and how sad it was. How it only made her lose her son. (Tobias)

The *support of a friend* was another element abstracted by Tobias about the reported situation. He called his friend in tears, and she invited him to spend the weekend at her house. Besides feeling good and welcomed by his friend, Tobias saw this as a possible escape, because his "head was too full, to the point of exploding." He sees *keeping silent about the subject* as the way of resolving the situation. This silencing emerges in the mother's speech, who picks up the conversation sometime later and says, "About that thing, I'll leave it to you, I'll not meddle anymore," which leads mother and son not to touch on the subject again. On the mother's side, silence means acceptance of her son's homosexuality and an offer of freedom for him to take care of his life and friendships. However, for Tobias, this *silencing* culminates in a loss of trust: "I know that even though she 'accepts' me, deep down she believes in those things." The young man thus points out "a deep emotional wound" and brings as meaning the impossibility of having an open relationship with his mother again. He also reveals a loss in self-confidence when he realizes that if his mother judges him, other people will, too: "I became much more fearful of other people. I became much more insecure because of it."

Regarding the *possibility of another similar conflict*, Tobias interprets it as an opportunity to express himself and his feelings better. The fact that he expressed himself, even timidly, in the conflict helped a lot in the resolution. "I would be much more sincere and strong in my words. I would try to show how serious it was, you know?" Based on this idea, Tobias believes that a stronger reaction and more arguments on his part would have led his mother to be less aggressive and better understand his feelings and what he was going through.

The second conflict reported by Tobias involves a situation in the school environment in mid-August 2019, before the pandemic. Tobias caught the eye of some classmates during his group's seminar presentation; later, this group, which included his friend Vítor, made posts on social media making fun of him. He and his groupmates paid no attention to the case until he realized his friend was also involved in the posts. Tobias then contacted his friend via social media, asking for an explanation; given the answers received, Tobias decided to block him. However, after a while, they got closer and gradually resumed their friendship. In his narrative, Tobias presents his feelings and thoughts and those of his friend Vítor.

By remembering what caused the conflict, Tobias abstracts the element *intervention during the group's seminar presentation*, which was necessary to speed up the presentations since the other group was hindering his performance. Tobias says he felt *tired* and considered his colleagues' attitude to be inappropriate for the context, as well as being *angry* at the intervention. From his perspective, the other groups, including Vítor, found his intervention funny but were angry that he asked for silence, which disrupted their jokes.

This is followed by the *post made by colleagues and Vítor on a social network ridiculing Tobias*. Tobias sees the posts with indifference until he realizes that Vítor was involved, mobilizing feelings of anger and sadness. Tobias reveals that he lost trust in his friend. As for Vítor, the young man accuses him of following the rest of his classmates to try to fit in, laughing at the posts.

Another element that characterizes the conflict for Tobias is the *questioning of his friend Vítor*, mobilized by feelings of *indignation* and *anger* because he disagreed with Vítor's attitude and received justifications rather than an apology.

> I was pissed, so I called him out: how could you do that? He was being an asshole, so I called him out on it, and then he started to justify his behavior with things like "it was just a joke," "it was not my idea," etc.; I started to get very angry. The more he tried to justify himself, the angrier I became. Like, "Just say you did it, dude, it is better". I was fuming. (Tobias)

As confronting his friend did not satisfy his purposes, Tobias presents the element of *blocking Vítor* achieved by ignoring him on social media and distancing himself. Tobias signifies this blocking by a mixture of feelings: first, *relief* at ending the discussion, and later *anxiety*, *sadness*, and *concern* for his friend: "Whether I like it or not, I still cared a bit. I wondered if he was sad or angry. I was thinking about it still; I was anxious. And sad, too." The blocking is also seen as a way of ignoring the conflict, something Tobias admits to doing often:

> It is that usually, in many situations, I reach a point where I do not want to fight anymore. There is a point in the conflict where I cannot anymore, and I am just like, "Okay, we are not getting anywhere with this. [...] Regardless of what I say or you say, we will be wrong." At that point, I just let it go. As in the conflict I talked about before, there was a point where I just said one more thing to my mother and went to my bedroom because I could not anymore [...], which is something I do not know if I should have done. [...] What if I had insisted a bit more? Or, instead of blocking

my friend, I had spoken up and shown how sad I was about that situation and not only fight and talk about his attitude but talk about my emotions, how much it affected me, you know? I should have talked more about myself and how I felt — maybe he would have understood better and stopped making fun of it." (Tobias)

When reflecting on how his friend interpreted the blocking, Tobias understands that Vítor felt worried and confused because he believed it was a harmless joke. "And he was probably just... Hmm... worried too, like, 'Man, he really got mad.' However, I think he should have taken it more seriously."

The *resumption of friendship at Vítor's initiative* was defined by Tobias as gradual as if they were getting to know each other again, for there was a loss of intimacy and trust. Tobias understands that this resumption resolves the situation and is an admission of guilt: "So my conclusion was that [Vítor] understood he was in the wrong". For Tobias, the resumption of their friendship is marked as something he will never forget.

The last element highlighted is the *possibility of another similar conflict*. Tobias says that if he went through this again, he would express his feelings and speak "more tactfully." He also believes Vítor would take the situation more seriously and, instead of being sarcastic and justifying himself, he would have apologized, been kinder, and supported his friend.

FOR AN INTEGRATIVE AND PLURALISTIC ETHICS: REFLECTIONS ON NARRATIVES

The richness and complexity of the conflicts reported by young Tobias demand multiple perspectives. His narratives allow us to reflect on how he organizes his memories of the conflicts experienced, what he thinks about the observable facts of both situations, what affective meanings he attributes to the conflictive scenes, what thoughts accompany them, how he resolves the conflicts, and what ethics underpin his relational conduct.

In both situations, the core conflict seems to be the protagonist's homosexuality. As Gilligan (2013) rightly points out, the culture wars in the United States in the 1970s brought to light tensions between the commitment to institutions and democratic values and the maintenance of privilege and patriarchal power. Amidst this context was *gay liberation*. In Tobias' case, a tension between his sexual orientation and cultural adaptation led to a crisis of connection both with his mother and his peers.

In this crisis, as seen in Gilligan's work, Tobias silences himself to be able to relate to others in an "adaptive" movement that seems to offer him, even if momentarily, a social reward: the resumption of relations. This *silencing*, a result of the role society and culture can play in the human psyche, is permeated by the feelings of *anger* and *fear* in Tobias' narrative. After all, although we live in bodies and cultures, we also have a psyche — a voice and an ability to resist. In Gilligan's interviews, the author found *rage* and *social isolation* as the psyche's responses to the "disobedience"[3] committed by women, which psychiatrist Jonathan Shay (1994) calls *moral injury*: that which occurs and which psychologically lacks meaning.

Such lack of meaning in the fact that people reject his homosexuality makes Tobias attribute several cognitive and affective meanings to this *silencing*. We are particularly interested in highlighting the *lack of trust* he instilled in both maternal and friendship relations. However, for a "different voice" to echo (one that does not conform to the prevailing interpretative categories), one must

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3 Disobedience here refers to that which violates what is right in a culture. As Shay (1994, p. 5) stated "[…] no single English words takes in the whole sweep of a culture's definition of right and wrong; we use terms such as moral order, convention, normative expectations, ethics, and commonly understood social values. The ancient Greek word that Homer used, *thémis*, encompasses all these meanings".

listen in a manner that generates trust (Gilligan, 2013, p. 16). In other words, there needs to be space for the story to be told by its author with the certainty that his or her psychological integrity will be protected — or, to use Shay's (1994) expression, no further moral injury will be caused.

Overcoming and/or recovering from these supposed *moral injuries* depends on communicating the trauma and reliable listening. As Shay (1994, p. 4) argues, "[…] before analyzing, before classifying, before thinking, before trying to do anything — we should listen". In Tobias' case, the anguish and desire to seek a psychic balance made him envision greater visibility and intensity for his "voice" if the conflict ever happened again — "I would be much more sincere and strong in my words." He also believes that this would have a significant impact on the feelings of both parties involved: in his mother's case, Tobias believes that the echo of his "voice" would make her less aggressive and more respectful; as for his friend's conduct, his "voice" could lead, in addition to an apology and a kinder attitude, to support for his sexual orientation.

These future projections, elaborated in case of recurrence, may have come to light due to Tobias' further understanding of the different dimensions within himself and others during his narration. In this process, he gets immersed in an interweaving of thoughts, feelings, actions, desires, norms, and social customs (Moreno Marimón and Sastre Vilarrasa, 2014). This occurs through the concrete other, by recognizing the desires, needs, and thoughts of those involved in the conflicts, and the generalized other, imposed by the social norms that permeate a given situation (Benhabib, 1992). As a result, the gazes focused on one's intimacy crossed those directed to the social environment and the other protagonists. For each stage of the conflict, Tobias selected, signified, and organized the elements guiding his actions, giving visibility to the changes and interdependence between the thinking, feeling, and acting of each party involved. In this internal process, made possible by the TOMT analysis (Moreno Marimón *et al.*, 1999), relational ethics is supported by the organization of the meanings one attributes to one's behaviors and those of others.

Bringing relational ethics to light is only possible when we assume a paradigm that allows us to walk along a continuum between the desires for justice, care, happiness, and well-being in elaborating interpersonal relations in various interactive contexts. TOMT is an interactionist theory, which makes the personal elaboration of experience the meeting point between the individual and culture. Any individual behavior reflects what each person or group does with what society wants to make of them. Based on this principle, individuals construct themselves by elaborating on personal experiences in the different social contexts in which they participate. After all, we are part of a world in which we are, at the same time, products and construction agents (Arantes *et al.*, 2017).

In Tobias' case, the weight that "what society wants to make of him" — or, in other words, social and cultural judgment — exerts on the experienced conflicts is explicit. This is because, throughout the process of constructing ourselves and the world in which we live, we incorporate questions that involve the external gaze and presuppose thinking about how others perceive us and what we do with what the environment expects of us. Elaborating experiences is therefore influenced by culture (such as the mother's religiosity in the first conflict), even though cultural significance is only one of the elements that we abstract to organize our experiences, and that is also intertwined with other constitutive dimensions of the human psyche.

Using the mother's religiosity as an example, such intertwining can be easily identified in Tobias' reflection on her conduct — "She has always been very religious, and to break that is very difficult. I understand that it can be excruciating… throwing it all at me to make me feel guilty and for me to see how I hurt her because it was my choice". Religious beliefs thus seem to strongly impact the actions and feelings of both mother and child, corroborating the results of previous research (Araújo, 2000; Araújo and Sastre Vilarrasa, 2003; Arantes, Sastre and González, 2010; Arantes and Pinheiro, 2017; 2021; Sastre Vilarrasa *et al.*, 2016; Arantes *et al.*, 2017), which showed the

inseparability of affective, cognitive, social, and cultural dimensions in moral thought. As the TOMT contemplates cognitive, emotional, and evaluative aspects in organizing the elements abstracted from reality, their meanings, and relations, it shows how individuals interact with the sociocultural context in organizing their thoughts. It is, therefore, a theoretical model that presupposes giving visibility to all dimensions of the psyche, resuming a central concern in Gilligan's investigations: to discover the mechanisms that conceal people's most intimate feelings.

Giving visibility and voice to what is hidden is a necessary and fruitful way to build a more just, supportive, and happy world for oneself and others. In the case of conflicts, we know that the same situation has different psychosocial facets and that by focusing on one of them —rendering the others invisible — we make a reduced reading of the situation and stifle several "voices," hindering what Gilligan called "moral and psychic liberation." In other words, when we are unaware of what we feel and think, we cannot do justice to the "multiple voices" that constitute us. Commitment to constructing faithful citizenship demands a practice that contemplates and integrates rational and emotional knowledge.

FOR AN INTEGRATIVE AND PLURALISTIC MORAL EDUCATION

Reason and emotion are the foundations we rely on to share balanced and satisfying personal relations. Assuming such a perspective — of reason and emotion being inseparable elements in psychic functioning — can help to construct citizenship and ethically competent people in resolving daily conflicts. We believe an educational process of this nature can lead students to build a quality (personal and social) life-based on a mental organization that balances the intellectual and emotional processes mobilized in conflict resolution. It can also help them to develop their personality and life purposes, making them more aware of their actions and their consequences; to get to know themselves and others better; to foster cooperation, self-confidence, and trust in oneself and one's companions based on the knowledge of each person's manner of acting; and to benefit from what this knowledge brings them.

Working on feelings and emotions in basic education via conflict resolution that requires integrating affective, cognitive, social, and cultural aspects of human reasoning is a way to advance interpersonal relations, both in micro-groups (couples, family, friends) and in broader collectives (ethnic relations and between countries — Sastre Vilarrasa and Moreno Marimón, 2002; Arantes, Sastre and González, 2010). Hence, an education that breaks down the historically and culturally constructed boundaries between the public and private, scientific and everyday, rational and emotional spheres is essential. An education centered on the autonomous and solidary construction of creative, generous, and just collectivities (Puig, 2003), which presupposes taking as objects of reflection the feelings, thoughts, and actions of the subjects of rights and duties, while also considering intrapersonal aspects and the virtuous search for happiness as essential.

In this model, the analysis of conflict situations is a privileged perspective for reflecting on the complex web woven by the diversity and subjectivity of factors intertwined in interpersonal relationships (Sastre Vilarrasa and Moreno Marimón, 2002; Puig, 2004). In this analysis, we face differences and similarities that force us to compare, discover, reframe, understand, act, seek alternatives, and reflect on ourselves and others.

As complex phenomena, confronting interpersonal conflicts requires the study of the subjective elaboration of a social issue in which affects play an important role (Araújo and Sastre Vilarrasa, 2003; Arantes, Sastre and González, 2010). If we want to share the resolution of a conflict, we have to approach others and try to understand how they feel and why they come to different conclusions from ours. On the other hand, from our perspective, we have to show our feelings and defend our rights and our reasons so that others can, in turn, understand their obligations. Such an interactive and

dynamic process cannot be founded on isolated parts. Based on their personal history, experiences, and cultural values, each person constructs the roles they deem pertinent when establishing each new relationship (Noam and Fischer, 1996).

A satisfactory resolution, therefore, requires us to decentralize our perspectives to contemplate, at the same time, other points of view that are different and often opposed to our own. Such a process also requires us to elaborate creative fusions between these points and necessarily implies actions of reciprocity and synthesis between differences (Arantes, Sastre and González, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the situation, adequately expose the problem, and seek solutions that allow it to be resolved satisfactorily for those involved. This requires a learning process that presupposes breaking with the win-lose paradigm, whose binary logic limits the construction of coordinated actions considering differences. Conflict resolution becomes an instrument to rethink culture and transform institutional and cultural discourses by promoting dialogue and collective participation in decisions and agreements—an opportunity for growth and development (Schnitman and Littlejohn, 1999).

Based on these assumptions, learning conflict resolution requires systematically analyzing its causes, consequences, affective states, perspective changes, and elaborating referrals for the situation faced (Sastre Vilarrasa and Moreno Marimón, 2002). In our view, such practices should be introduced from the beginning of schooling, aiming to promote the values of democracy, citizenship, ethics, and diversity, attending to an effectively integrative and pluralistic ethics.

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