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Article

Hannah Arendt's educational conception: interlocutions with John Dewey*

A concepção educacional de Hannah Arendt: interlocuções com John Dewey

La concepción educativa de Hannah Arendt: intelocuciones con John Dewey

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to present Hannah Arendt's educational conception through the analysis of her essay entitled "The crisis in education", originating from a conference and published in a book in 1961. The choice is justified because this is the author's only text entirely dedicated to broader educational issues. The objective of the article, however, is difficult to achieve because Arendt, who is not an education scholar, leaves several conceptual gaps, as is common in texts arising from conferences. This obstacle could determine the abandonment of the investigation, which would imply keeping the author's critical potential at the margins of the educational field. Instead, a method of inferential analysis is adopted that allows identifying Arendt's theses on education. Through these theses, possible interlocutions between Arendt and John Dewey are elaborated, focusing on the pedagogical and political aspects of both.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt. John Dewey. Pedagogical Theories. Contemporary Education.

RESUMO

Este artigo visa apresentar a concepção educacional de Hannah Arendt por intermédio da análise do ensaio de sua autoria intitulado "A crise na educação", originário de uma conferência e publicado em livro em 1961. A escolha se justifica por ser esse o único texto da autora inteiramente dedicado a problemáticas educacionais mais amplas. O objetivo do artigo, no entanto, é de difícil realização porque Arendt, que não é uma pensadora da educação, deixa várias lacunas conceituais, como é comum acontecer em textos decorrentes de conferências. Esse obstáculo poderia determinar o abandono da investigação, o que implicaria manter o potencial crítico da autora à margem do campo educacional. Em vez disso, adota-se um método de análise inferencial que permite identificar as teses arendtianas sobre a educação. Por intermédio dessas teses, elaboram-

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se possíveis interlocuções de Arendt com John Dewey, focalizando os aspectos pedagógicos e políticos de ambos.

Palavras-chave: Hannah Arendt. John Dewey. Teorias Pedagógicas. Educação Contemporânea.

RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar la concepción educativa de Hannah Arendt a través del análisis de su ensayo titulado "La crisis de la educación", originado en una conferencia y publicado en un libro en 1961. La elección se justifica porque es el único texto de la autora enteramente dedicado a cuestiones educativas. El objetivo del artículo, sin embargo, es difícil de alcanzar porque Arendt, que no es un pensador de la educación, deja varios vacíos conceptuales, como es habitual en los textos surgidos de conferencias. Este obstáculo podría determinar el abandono de la investigación, lo que implicaría mantener el potencial crítico del autor al margen del campo educativo. En cambio, se adopta un método de análisis inferencial que permite identificar las tesis de Arendt sobre la educación. A través de estas tesis se elaboran posibles interlocuciones entre Arendt y John Dewey, centrándose en los aspectos pedagógicos y políticos de ambos.

Palabras clave: Hannah Arendt. John Dewey. Teorías Pedagógicas. Educación Contemporánea.

A PROBLEMATIC ESSAY

Hannah Arendt's essay "The Crisis in Education" (2018a) is frequently mentioned in educational literature and teacher training courses due to its powerful critique of the trends propagated in the first half of the 20th century by the reformist movement known as progressive education, originating in the United States of America. The author discusses this theme with the purpose of showing that, both within families and schools, the belief was established that there is a childhood world to be valued in itself, keeping children apart from authority, adult knowledge, and values, as if the natural spontaneity of childhood would produce reliable educational principles.

Arendt's critique of this belief is widely known and will not be addressed in this article, whose objective is to extract the author's educational conception from the aforementioned essay.[1] By *educational conception*, one should understand a set of normative formulations containing proposals concerning the organization of the curriculum and the establishment of methodological guidelines that ensure the smooth progress of teaching. Beyond this technical criterion, such proposals must be supported by a philosophical reflection that expresses a certain vision of the human being and their relationships with the world, as well as the purposes of education and the way educators and learners should interact within the school space and, more broadly, in the social universe.[2]

The objective of this article is relevant because it aims to contribute to enriching research on Arendt's thought and to fostering debate about her reflections beyond her area of training and practice, philosophy, positioning her in the field of education.[3] "The Crisis in Education" serves this purpose as it is the only work in which the author broadly examines educational issues. Her other text on the subject, "Reflections on Little Rock" (Arendt, 2004), specifically discusses the problems

1 On Arendt's analysis of progressive education, see Santos e Cunha (2023).
2 It is what is found in classical authors in the field as distinct as Coménio (1985), Rousseau (1999), and Freire (1987), for example.
3 On the life and work of Arendt (1906-1975), see Adler (2007) and Young-Bruehl (2020).

arising from the law of racial desegregation in schools in the United States, a measure taken by that country's Supreme Court in 1954 as a result of the civil rights movement.

"The Crisis in Education" resulted from a lecture delivered in 1958, titled "*Die Krise in der Erziehung: Gedanken zur Progressive Education*" — in free translation, "The Crisis in Education: Thoughts on Progressive Education". The transcription was published in the *Partisan Review* journal that same year and, in 1961, translated into English, becoming part of the book *Between Past and Future* (Arendt, 2018b).[4] This information is important because the lecture format imposes certain limitations, and Arendt's case is no different: the essay is incomplete in several aspects, making it difficult to derive an educational conception from it; the author, who never presented herself as an educational thinker, did not intend to defend proposals but rather to critically examine the pedagogical trends she considered dominant at the time.

For this reason, the first section of this article will be dedicated to identifying the passages in "The Crisis in Education" that most closely align with an educational conception. The search will not focus on negative formulations — *it should not be like this* — but rather on statements or theses that can be interpreted as positive — *it should be like this*. As will become evident, this effort is problematic both due to the original format and objectives of the essay and because Arendt was not a scholar of pedagogy. Acknowledging the absence of a fully developed educational conception in the author's text places the research before a dilemma: to abandon the investigation, which would mean keeping Arendt's reflections on the margins of the educational field, or to adopt a methodological strategy that allows for inferences about the essay's gaps, to the benefit of education itself.

Opting for this second approach, the two subsequent sections will be dedicated to confronting Arendt's positive formulations with certain educational theories, in order to support inferences about what can be qualified as Arendtian positions regarding education. In this strategy, the care to be taken consists of never subverting the meaning of what is recorded in "The Crisis in Education"; on the contrary, the text's suggestions must always serve as the basis. This method will make it possible to identify certain connections between Arendt and John Dewey's educational philosophy, which, in turn, will allow Deweyan theses to be used to compose the set of inferences about the author's ideas. The fourth section of this article will be dedicated to this task, assuming that the use of this unconventional procedure is essential to achieve the proposed objective: to promote the interaction of the author with the field of education. By way of conclusion, the final section will discuss the no less relevant theme of possible dialogues between Arendt and Dewey in the realm of politics.

FIVE ARENDTIAN THESES ON EDUCATION

The first thesis of "The Crisis in Education" can be formulated as follows: education must be guided by authority and tradition. This implies the need to organize forms of education that value the past and are responsible for establishing an educational process that transmits to the learner what the world is, a world that existed before the arrival of new members — children — and which is unknown to them. Related to this thesis is the idea that childhood is "a temporary stage, a preparation for the condition of adulthood" (Arendt, 2018a, p. 233), and it is the responsibility of education to protect it, as well as to protect the world from the immaturity inherent in this stage of life.

The authority of education is grounded in knowledge of the past, an attribute that only adults possess, which is why the task of educating occupies a strategic place between the old and the new. For Arendt (2018a, p. 246), education must "inevitably turn toward the past," as it is an essential part of its definition to guide the child in assimilating the legacy of previous generations, so that, upon reaching adulthood, they can face the challenges presented by the world — in other words,

4 Almeida (2011) states that there were no significant differences between the conference and the printed version.

enter the political sphere. Among these challenges, the highest is what Arendt (2020) defines in *The Human Condition*: combating the alienation caused by modernity.

From this reflection arises the second Arendtian thesis, which establishes the purpose of educational practices: although it has a conservative character, education must prepare learners to transform the world. Created by human hands, the world tends to wear out, and, if not for the arrival of new members, it would eventually collapse. Education, therefore, has an essentially transformative function. Arendt (2018a, p. 243) states that conservatism exists "for the benefit of what is new and revolutionary in each child"; it must "preserve this novelty and introduce it as something new into an old world which, no matter how revolutionary its actions may be, is always, from the perspective of the next generation, obsolete and on the verge of destruction." Thus, acting as spectators in the pre-political realm, learners will be able to exercise, in the future, upon entering the political sphere, action and discourse with revolutionary purposes.

In Arendt, education assumes an apparently paradoxical profile: it must be both conservative and transformative. Conservative because it reveres the past and transmits it to the learners; transformative because it uses already established knowledge to equip newcomers with attitudes and knowledge aimed at confronting the future. For Arendt (2018a, p. 247), this is how love for the world is expressed: "Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to take responsibility for it and, through such a gesture, save it from the ruin that would be inevitable were it not for the renewal and the coming of the new and the young." To materialize this love, children must not be expelled from the adult world, creating for them a space of apparent autonomy, nor should the opportunity "to undertake something new and unforeseen for us be taken from their hands. Instead, they should be prepared in advance for the task of renewing a common world."

From this reflection derives the third Arendtian thesis: to educate is to assume responsibility for the world, even if one is dissatisfied with its current configuration. This responsibility is grounded in the requirement of respect for tradition and authority, as established in the first thesis, and is expressed in educational practices that involve caring for the well-being of the child and, even more, fostering the "free development of personal qualities and talents," creating an environment conducive both to protecting the newcomer and enabling them to achieve "enjoyment of the world as it is" (Arendt, 2018a, p. 239). It can be concluded, then, that it is through these practices that the purpose prescribed in the second thesis is achieved: the transformation of the world will result from an education that promotes individual qualities and talents.

These first three theses pertain to pre-political spheres in general, including the family and the school. The fourth thesis specifically mentions educational institutions: it is the responsibility of the school to guide the child in transitioning from the private domain to the public domain.[5] Because it does not truly belong to either of these domains and represents "in a certain sense the world, although it is not the world itself," as Arendt states (2018a, p. 238), the school must create a distinct environment in which it is possible to fulfill the aim of the third thesis: to develop and prepare the individual to transform the world.

The fifth thesis, still within the school context, describes the role of the teacher. The definition of the attributes of this professional arises from the other theses related to education and the educator, generically defined as follows: the teacher must act with authority, grounded in tradition, adopting a conservative stance toward the past; they must protect the child and promote their development, aiming at their future role as agents of world transformation. By assuming responsibility for the world, the teacher must make the school an environment capable of fostering the full realization of the students' individual attributes.

5 About the Arendtian concepts of *public* and *private*, see Arendt (2020).

The teacher's authority pertains to their responsibility for the world, stemming from their knowledge of the past and the body of knowledge that constitutes adult life, rather than from an institutional mandate. The teacher must adopt an authoritative stance, not in the conventional sense of the word — as something that cannot be questioned at all — but in the sense of being committed to the continuity of the world and acting as a "representative of all adult inhabitants" of that world, being able to say to the children: "This is our world" (Arendt, 2018a, p. 239).

The challenge faced by the teaching professional is immense, as Arendt (2018a, p. 243) argues that their role requires a "minimum of conservation and a conservative attitude without which education is simply not possible." Their work demands "an extraordinary respect for the past," yet the world they live in is in crisis precisely because it fails to respect these principles (Arendt, 2018a, p. 244). Arendt (2018a, p. 239) makes a categorical statement: "Anyone who refuses to assume collective responsibility for the world should not have children, and they must be prohibited from participating in their education." Thus, the teacher's greatest challenge lies in educating within a social environment that tends to reject education in the form envisioned by the author.

Extracted from the essay under analysis, the five theses outlined above represent what most closely resembles an educational conception. However, these formulations do not meet all the criteria established earlier in this article — criteria without which there is not truly an educational conception, but merely a set of ideas that, even if formally well-organized, fail to provide guidance on what to do within the specific context of the school. These criteria, it is worth noting, pertain to curricular and methodological norms — technical aspects that must be supported by a philosophical vision of humanity and its relationships with the world.

The Arendtian theses address the philosophical component of these criteria, as they state that the relationship between educators and students must be based on authority and tradition — qualities embodied by the former, who take responsibility for the world due to their knowledge of the past. However, this conservatism requires a transformative disposition that challenges the established order so that the world does not continue along its path of alienation. While the school is grounded in respect for the past, the world that will receive the current learners demands revolutionary attitudes. Therefore, the goal of education is to prepare them to assume this role, and the school is the essential intermediary stage to achieve this objective.

As for the components of a technical nature, Arendt acknowledges their relevance but assumes they are beyond the scope of the essay:

> I will not discuss [...] the more technical issue, although perhaps even more important in the long run, of how it is possible to reformulate the curricula of secondary and elementary schools in all countries in order to prepare them for the entirely new demands of today's world. (Arendt, 2018a, p. 234)

Later, when outlining a discussion on the difference between teaching and educating, which would place the essay at the heart of the educational issue, Arendt (2018a, p. 247) states that: "All of this is particular details, [...] that in fact should be left to the specialists and pedagogues." It is important to note that the author is not a researcher in the field of education.

FIRST HYPOTHESIS: THE TRADITIONAL CURRICULUM

To elevate Arendt's theses to the level of an authentic educational conception, it is necessary to investigate two hypotheses regarding the author's view of what is central in discussions of a technical nature: the curriculum, around which all pedagogical practices and behaviors that define a pedagogical theory are determined. According to Sacristán (2000, p. 14), the curricular

organization reveals the "didactic, political, administrative, and economic behaviors," as well as the "assumptions, theories, beliefs, and values" that guide education. Decisions about the curriculum have an evident political connotation, as, ultimately, they establish the relationship between the school and society.

The first hypothesis is that Arendt would endorse the so-called traditional curriculum, an orientation that emerged in the United States in the 1920s in response to the industrial development process and the large wave of immigration the country, making mass schooling of the population urgent. This situation imposed serious challenges on school administrative practices and required standardization of what should be taught (Silva, 2005; Moreira and Tadeu, 2013). Sacristán (2000, p. 37) evaluates that the traditional curriculum fostered a "utilitarian concern," the goal of which was to refine teaching practices in order to achieve maximum possible efficiency; however, subsequent developments did not contribute to making actual improvements in education.

The proponents of this approach produced what is generically called *traditional* curriculum *theories*, which are articulated to address issues related to "teaching, learning, assessment, methodology, didactics, organization, planning, efficiency, and objectives," with a strong appeal to maintaining the established power (Silva, 2005, p. 17). In this articulation, school subjects are situated within a broad "territory of dispute of conservative, bureaucratic, and controlling conceptions," leading the discussion away from concrete social demands (Arroyo, 2013, p. 33-37).

This traditionalist view descends from the proposals made by Franklin Bobbitt in the book *The Curriculum*, published in 1918, when the United States was going through a turbulent moment in its history, with various groups of intellectuals and politicians searching for the best way to conduct the education of the masses to meet their objectives (Silva, 2005, p. 22). In this work, the curriculum is conceived in such a way as to standardize educational outcomes through rigorously established processes: "objectives, procedures, and methods for obtaining results that can be precisely measured" (Silva, 2005, p. 12).

Its conservative character is evident in the idea of standardizing curricular practices in alignment with the methods adopted in industries, where there is no freedom of action or thought for the vast majority of those involved. Arroyo (2013, p. 31) analyzes that this conservative and controlling approach, entirely focused on measuring the behavior of teachers and students, does not take into account the experiences and creativity of the learners, since "competency-based or assessment-based curricula" are implemented through "content-driven" and "practical" teaching materials that limit — if they do not completely prevent — any possibility of creative behavior.

The traditional curriculum dominated the educational scene throughout almost the entire 20th century, solidifying itself through one of the reformist movements that were then widespread: administrative progressivism, which adopted the motto of "social efficiency" (Labaree, 2007, p. 6). This movement was focused on the training and qualification of managers for education systems and on transforming academic education into vocational education, supported by intensive testing of students' abilities to guide them toward subjects suited to their personal competencies. The administrative approach had a strong impact on the American school system, whose curriculum structure was organized to cater to so-called *vocational* courses, with a technical orientation, aimed primarily at preparing students for work.

Bobbitt's ideas advanced through Ralph Tyler, whose model was spread in American education and other countries, including Brazil, until the 1980s. Its success was due to the fact that it addressed the major questions in the field: What objectives does the school want to achieve? What experiences can be mobilized for this? How can we verify if the formulated objectives are being achieved? For all these questions, which are essential for the smooth functioning of schools, regardless of the theoretical approach adopted, the traditionalist view offers precise answers

to guide educational activities: it is about organizing the curriculum and, in alignment with its guidelines, articulating the other aspects of schooling in a way that results can be measured without ambiguity (Silva, 2005).

The technocratic curriculum movement advocated by Bobbitt and Tyler — as well as other pedagogical movements of that time — emerged in opposition to the classical and humanist curriculum that had been present in education since the institutionalization of modern schooling, considered overly abstract, bookish, and encyclopedic, incapable of addressing the demands of a changing world.[6] Since the end of the last century, however, objections to the solutions found by traditionalists have been growing, giving rise to two analytical strands: critical theories and post-critical theories.

Despite the differences between these two perspectives, what unites them is the rejection of the traditionalist model, either for considering it biased in the association between knowledge and power, favoring students from socially privileged classes and thereby contributing to the maintenance of social inequalities regarding access to cultural goods; or for making changes in educational processes impossible, rendering teaching inflexible and dogmatic; or for failing to value the individuality of students and teachers, who are reduced to mere components without decision-making power; or even for being based on an exclusivist culture that selects certain themes to the detriment of others that are of fundamental importance today.[7]

Such critiques suggest that the traditionalist educational propositions directly contradict what was identified above as corresponding to Arendt's philosophical view on education. The author expects schools to form individuals with transformative dispositions, capable of assuming revolutionary stances, so that the world does not continue along its alienating trajectory. The adoption of a technicist curriculum, along with all the political and pedagogical implications it entails, is not consistent with what Arendt refers to as *conservative education*.

The hypothesis under analysis, therefore, seems inadequate for composing the Arendtian educational conception. Arendt would not support the initiative of regressing teaching to coercive practices that subordinate everyone — teachers, students, and administrators — to the dictates of an authoritarian administrative and political order that does not aim at the formation of human beings with autonomy for the public world. Her critique of progressivism is not sufficient to position her in defense of the traditional curriculum. It is possible to assume that, had she focused on outlining all the contours of her conception, conducting an in-depth study in the field of pedagogy, the author would conclude that the traditional organization of the curriculum is not consistent with the goals she envisioned for education.

SECOND HYPOTHESIS: JOHN DEWEY

The second hypothesis regarding the Arendtian educational conception involves examining whether Arendt would endorse the propositions of John Dewey, a philosopher whose ideas encompass all components of the pedagogical situation, including the curriculum. Between 1894 and 1904, Dewey was responsible for the most significant "activist experiment" of the period, the Laboratory School affiliated with the University of Chicago (Cambi, 2009, p. 521). The pioneering practices he instituted aimed to "test the applicability of his philosophical and psychological conceptions and encourage the creation of new methods and teaching techniques" (Cunha, 2018a,

6 Based on the liberal arts of Classical Antiquity, the medieval and Renaissance curriculum was centered on the *trivium*, which included grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, and the *quadrivium*, which grouped astronomy, geometry, music, and arithmetic (Silva, 2005).

7 For a more comprehensive view of the foundations of critical and post-critical theories, the thinkers who advocate them, and the proposals they present, see Silva (2005) and Moreira and Tadeu (2013).

p. 11). As Valdemarin (2010) attests, the Chicago experiments underpinned the theoretical reflections recorded by Dewey in his various educational works.

The choice of this author may cause some perplexity due to his affiliation with pragmatism, since "The Crisis in Education" associates this philosophical current with the deviations that the author identifies in modern pedagogy. Arendt (2018a, p. 232) states that, under the influence of this philosophy, a notion of learning was established in school education according to which "one can only know and understand what we ourselves have done," which led to the substitution of learning by doing; the "distinction between play and work was abolished — in favor of the former," since play is "the only form of activity that spontaneously emerges" from the child, resulting in neglect in teacher training.

The essay, however, does not provide an in-depth analysis of the association between pragmatism and these deviations. The author chooses not to judge whether the mentioned notion of learning is correct or incorrect, merely stating: "Whatever the connection between doing and learning, and whatever the validity of the pragmatic formula, its application to education, or to the way a child learns, tends to make the world of childhood absolute" (Arendt, 2018a, p. 233). What Arendt intends to discuss, in fact, are the educational consequences of absolutizing childhood, not its philosophical foundations. As a philosopher, she could have done so, of course; and she could have also noted that pragmatism was not the only philosophy responsible for the extreme valorization of childhood in school education.[8]

The choice of Dewey may still cause some perplexity due to his association with progressive education, not with the administrative strand analyzed above, but with the tendency known as *pedagogical progressivism*. Its proponents prioritized the interests and capabilities of students, conceiving learning as a natural process, emphasizing students' initiative and agency through practical activities, and advocating for organizing the school in the model of a democratic community, where learners would develop through collaborative actions (Labaree, 2007).[9]

It is true that Dewey's theories influenced this trend, but it is important to note that, in the book Experience and Education (1938), the author presents analyses that differentiate his proposals from both traditional forms of teaching and the more extreme proponents of progressive education, suggesting that we should consider the issue

> [...] in terms of Education and not any 'ism,' even if it is 'progressivism.' This is because [...] any movement whose thought and action are guided by any 'ism' becomes so caught up in reacting against other 'isms' that it ends up, without realizing it, being controlled by them. (Dewey, 2010, p. XVI-XVII)

This book reveals a striking characteristic of Dewey's thought, which appears in almost all of his other texts: the opposition to all forms of dualism and dogmatism (Cunha, 2018b; Pimenta, 2018). Dewey (2010, p. 3) says that man

> [...] likes to think in terms of extreme oppositions, of opposite poles. He tends to formulate his beliefs in terms of "either/or," "this or that," without recognizing intermediate possibilities. [...] The philosophy of education is no exception to this

8 Santos (2021) reveals that a certain Christian psychological approach, aimed at morally reforming civilization, led American methodists to appropriate the contributions of various theorists to support educational practices identical to those prescribed by pragmatic intellectuals.

9 Labaree (2005) states that pedagogical progressivism remained a theoretical reference for teachers throughout the 20th century, but it failed in the institutional realm, where ideas focused on social efficiency, advocated by administrative progressivism, prevailed.

> rule. The history of educational theory is marked by the opposition between the idea that education is development from within to without and the idea that it is formation from without to within; between the idea that it is based on natural gifts and the idea that it is a process of overcoming natural inclinations and replacing them with habits acquired under external pressure.

Theories that view education as a process directed from outside to inside align with the traditional curriculum; those that conceive education as a development that works from inside to outside, such as pedagogical progressivism, value the child's freedom over the formal structures of teaching. Between these extreme, seemingly irreconcilable positions, Dewey prefers to give new meanings to the conflicting terms, as evidenced in his treatment of the theme of *authority* — a theme that is, by the way, central to Arendt's thought, as analyzed above — around which the educational field is divided between the two poles.

Pedagogical progressivists absolutely reject authority, characterizing it as a factor of imposition that deprives the learner of the freedom necessary for the emergence of their spontaneity and the development of their capacity for self-direction. However, Dewey (2010, p. 23) does not follow this line of thought:

> When external control is rejected, the problem becomes discovering the factors of control that are inherent to experience. Rejection of external authority does not mean that all authority should be rejected, but rather that a more effective form of authority must be sought. The fact that traditional education imposed on the younger generation the knowledge, methods, and rules of conduct of adults does not mean, except based on the philosophy of extremes of "either/or," that the knowledge and skills of adults do not have directive value for the experiences of the younger generation.

For the author, therefore, it is not about simply rejecting all forms of authority, but about establishing a relationship with the learner that allows the teacher to take command of the process, without this implying the adoption of imposed behaviors. The solution to escape the "either/or" dilemma is certainly not easy, but Dewey (2010, p. 23) believes that

> [...] basing education on personal experience can mean more frequent and closer contacts between adults and younger individuals than ever existed in traditional schools, and consequently, more interpersonal guidance, not less.

It is noticeable that the author does not dismiss authority itself, the norms of conduct, and the knowledge coming from adults, but rather the authority that is positioned at one pole, the opposite of which is the total absence of authority. In the relationship between adults and children, as well as between teachers and students, what Dewey criticizes is the dualism between having and not having authority, the type of reasoning that only sees this or that.

As an alternative, the author suggests that the notion of *authority* be treated differently from the usual approach: only a more effective source of authority can enable the strengthening of ties between the older and younger generations, with the purpose of allowing the knowledge of the former to guide the experience of the latter. The foundation of this new form of authority is the sharing of objectives between the educator and the learner. As highlighted by Cunha e Sbrana (2018) and Pagni (2018), Dewey believes that the educator's ultimate goal is to facilitate the continuous growth of the learner, and therefore, the educator must always strive to balance personal desires with the need to establish rules for coexistence.

The sources consulted for the preparation of this article do not indicate whether Arendt had the opportunity to read *Experience and Education* — published twenty years before "The Crisis in Education" — , but the ideas contained in this book help clarify Arendt's thesis, which advocates for an education grounded in the authority of the teacher. Had she read Dewey, perhaps Arendt would have made more comprehensive pedagogical considerations on the subject, emphasizing that this authority means respect for the tradition embodied in the knowledge of the elder, who assumes responsibility for this world. This is reflected, in Dewey's words, in proposing a pedagogy where the teacher guides the student's experience through the cooperation established between them.

Arendt would likely agree with Dewey's educational theories regarding the use of authority, emphasizing that it should not be a means to stifle the freedom and spontaneity of the child, nor should it serve as a tool to keep children separated from adults, creating an artificial environment under the guise of supposed equality between the older and younger generations. According to Dewey's conception, the group of children should not act independently of the teacher, inventing their own rules; adult authority should always guide children's experiences, given that children, due to their immaturity, are scattered and fleeting, inconsistent with the goal of education. Only by doing so can the constraints imposed by the traditional curriculum be broken while avoiding the pitfalls of progressivist extremism, thereby developing an educational process capable of forming individuals to act in the public space — a thesis that aligns with Arendt's formulations.

PEDAGOGICAL DIALOGUE WITH DEWEY

As shown above, "The Crisis in Education" does not present critiques of Dewey's educational vision, a thinker who, in fact, is not even mentioned in the text. On the contrary, there seems to be an agreement between Arendt and Dewey regarding the central themes of the essay. In this context, the goal of elucidating Arendt's educational conception through an inferential approach, as is the purpose of this article, will be greatly supported by the strategy of enriching Arendt's theses with Deweyan propositions, taking care not to exceed what the author would consider plausible, as characterized in these pages.

Continuing the discussion on different perspectives regarding the curriculum, it is important to note that Dewey organizes school subjects in alignment with his notion of *authority*, which has already been mentioned. In *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), Dewey (1967) opposes the traditional model that organizes content based on adult reasoning, which obviously does not align with the thinking of children. This type of curricular approach places teaching in an abstract realm, disconnected from the child's experience, which leads to them falling into a void and renders education ineffective.

This work anticipates the considerations made later in *Experience and Education*, opposing the historically established polarization between curriculum-based teaching and child-centered teaching — the traditional model on one side, and the extreme positions of certain progressive movements on the other. As noted by Cunha e Mercau (2021), Dewey proposes that schoolwork should promote the continuity of the learning process, a task that extends beyond the classroom because it involves the student's integration into social life. The content taught, therefore, must foster the connection between action and thought, which is embodied in the method known as *reflective thinking* (Cunha, 2018b; Lorieri, 2018).

Dewey's critique of those advocating for the abandonment of school subjects in favor of children's freedom is almost identical to the one Arendt develops years later in *The Crisis in Education*. For the reasons outlined earlier, Arendt does not develop methodological proposals for teaching, but Dewey does, grounding them in the concept of *experience*, which emphasizes the teacher's work and the environment in which learning takes place. In *How We Think* (Dewey, 1959) and *Democracy*

and Education (Dewey, 1979), published respectively in 1910 and 1916, the philosopher elaborates more precisely on the reflections arising from the Laboratory School, always aiming to overcome the dualism between method and school subjects.

In Dewey (1979, p. 153), an experience "includes both an active and a passive element, especially combined"; thus, "simple activity does not constitute experience"; experience is "primarily an active-passive action: it is not primarily cognitive." An experience involves factors related to the environment in which the individual is situated, as well as their personal, unique traits. For this reason, Dewey (2010, p. 42-43) uses the term "situation" to refer to the interaction that occurs between "objective conditions" and "internal conditions." An experience is always situational, meaning it depends both on what externally impresses the person and what they bring with them in a given circumstance — their previous experiences.

As individuals live in a world that offers various situations, there are also various experiences. However, the value of a genuine, truly educational experience is conferred by its connection with other experiences. The terms "continuity" and "interaction" define the potential of an experience to enrich the individual's perception of the world (Dewey, 2010, p. 45). Dewey (2010, p. 35) explains that every action performed or endured during an experience "modifies the one who practices it and the one who suffers it, while this modification affects [...] the quantity of subsequent experiences, for, having been modified by previous experiences, it will be a different person who undergoes new experiences.

An authentic experience involves "[...] the formation of emotional and intellectual attitudes; it involves our basic sensitivities and the ways we receive and respond to all the conditions we encounter in life" (Dewey, 2010, p. 35). This is why, for Dewey (1967, p. 82), the subjects of study hold value and cannot be selected in a "random and accidental" way. It is necessary for school content to relate to the student's previous experiences, which serve as starting points for new experiences that will foster the "progressive development of what has already been experienced," in order to deepen the knowledge of the material organized by the teacher (Dewey, 2010, p. 76).

This is how cooperation between the teacher and the learner is realized, a relationship that consolidates the notion of authority, relevant to both Dewey and Arendt. The experience of the adult, who knows the past, as Arendt puts it, serves as a guide for the current and past experiences of the child. Just like in Arendt's educational conception, Dewey does not accept the idea of releasing the learner to arbitrarily impose their own desires, because these, stemming from the immaturity inherent in childhood, cannot sustain any educational project. This project can only come from the teacher, a figure who, for both thinkers, occupies a fundamental role: it is the teacher's responsibility to guide the work of — in Arendt's terms — presenting the world to the child. This responsibility entails knowing the student's experience and, through it, organizing the school environment and connecting the subjects with the purpose of achieving the goals of education.

Dewey's pedagogy indeed adopts the premise that we only truly know what we do — a premise that Arendt rightly associates with pragmatism, as mentioned earlier. However, as Teixeira (1967, p. 39) observes, in Dewey's view, doing does not equate to assigning a positive quality to everything the child does, nor does it imply a *laissez-faire* approach that relies solely on the child's "spontaneous activity." It is the teacher's exclusive responsibility to "guide, direct, and stimulate activity through the paths forged by the knowledge and experience of the adult."

Dewey's pedagogy values the past in much the same way as Arendt's views on the teacher's role. According to Dewey (1979, p. 199), the teacher cannot disregard the contents of school subjects, which represent the past and the progress of humanity. It is essential to consider "observed facts, remembered ones, those read, discussed, and the ideas suggested in the development of a situation with a goal." To expand the students' experiences and prepare them for life in society, "the

teacher must be very familiar with the subject," without neglecting the "mental attitude" and the "reactions of the pupil" (Dewey, 1979, p. 202); the teacher must understand "both the subject and the characteristic needs and capacities of the student" (Dewey, 1979, p. 203). In Arendt's words (2018a, p. 231), this means placing the teacher "one step ahead" of those who are to be educated.

Dewey's method, called reflective thinking, does not view the student as a passive vessel absorbing the teacher's intelligence. Instead, it places the student into action in the face of a problem — an indeterminate situation that requires a solution. We think reflectively when we carefully analyze the factors involved in a problematic circumstance. In school, the student must engage in "*an active, prolonged, and careful examination of every belief or hypothetical kind of knowledge, an examination conducted in light of the arguments supporting it and the conclusions it leads to*" (Dewey, 1959, p. 18, emphasis in the original).

The reflective way of thinking involves a careful examination of the aspects involved in a given situation, with the aim of reaching a conclusion about the presented problem. Hypotheses are raised and tested to find the most appropriate one for the objective. When an answer emerges, it is called *knowledge* (Cunha, 2018b). Even when following all the steps of the investigative process, what results is a provisional solution, because the problematic situations that will arise in the future will not always have the same configuration, requiring a new reflective process to begin.

The problems presented by the teacher as challenges to the students are not, however, of any nature, nor dictated by the fluid interests of childhood. They are problems related to what is intended to be taught — related to the curriculum, certainly — and the one who chooses the legitimate problems is the teacher, the one who knows the past, as Arendt says, and understands what is valuable for educating the immature. Finding real situations of experience in which a relevant problem is evident is the first step of Dewey's method, and this task guides the entire planning of pedagogical work: "Give problems, formulate questions, set tasks, gradually increase the difficulties," etc. (Dewey, 1979, p. 169). Only the teacher, with their respect for tradition, can provide the student with situations of "perplexity, challenging them to the point that belief becomes uncertainty," which can turn into a significant problem (Dewey, 1959, p. 22).

This method forms Dewey's theory of learning, loosely resembling the pragmatist principle mentioned by Arendt in the essay. Dewey's anti-dualism indeed leads to the defense that we can only truly know what we practice, as theory and practice do not stand in opposition to each other. However, Dewey's pedagogy does not suggest the abolition of serious, well-founded work in favor of playful activities, which, when isolated from a well-articulated pedagogical project, do not support the ultimate goals of education. Learning through reflection can be pleasurable; the teacher must "establish conditions that awaken and guide the *curiosity*" of the student, but this must integrate into a planning capable of creating meaningful problems and objectives that allow for the "*consecutiveness* in the succession of ideas" (Dewey, 1959, p. 63, emphasis in the original).

POLITICAL INTERLOCUTION WITH DEWEY

This article aimed to demonstrate that Arendt's educational conception establishes a political purpose for education: to prepare students to undertake transformative — revolutionary — actions that challenge the established order, so that the world does not continue along the path of alienation. The student must learn to face the challenges of the public life they will one day join, and it is the school's task to accomplish this, as it is within this institution that the world is first presented to the child. Although she is a political thinker, Arendt does not delve deeper into these ideas in "The Crisis in Education." The essay does not offer a reflection on two fundamental questions to clarify the relationship between school and politics: what kind of world does Arendt envision, and how will the educational institution prepare students to act within that world?

We can approach an answer to the first question through another work by the author, *On Revolution* (Arendt, 2016), a book that, although it does not precisely outline the world in question, demonstrates, according to Frateschi (2021, p. 288), that Arendt believes in the creation of "[...] concrete spaces for participation," authentic "[...] nurseries for the development of a democratic *ethos* that values public debate and commitment to matters of common interest". In her critique of formal democracy, which she sees as a reflection of the current political system's inability to engage with the people, Arendt (2016, p. 339) revisits the lessons of the so-called *revolutionary councils*, "spontaneous organs of action and order" established during several recent events — the French Revolution, the American Revolution, the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, and the Hungarian Revolution — to argue that experiences of direct political action can expand the public sphere and establish a true democratic culture.

In *Crises of the Republic*, Arendt (2015, p. 200) explains that, instead of addressing public demands through representative forms, the councils established popular participation through small groups — "neighborhood councils, professional councils, councils within factories, residential complexes [...]" — whose purposes are distinct but always based on the same desire: "We want to participate, we want to debate, we want our voices to be heard in public, and we want to have a chance to shape the political course of our country."

Arendt (2016, p. 334) believes that the historical councils envisioned "the foundation of a new political body." She argues that their establishment today is not a mere utopian fantasy, as long as it is a genuine creation of the people, not an invention by "theorists or ideologues" deciding on behalf of the people (Arendt, 2015, p. 199). Thus, the establishment of a democratic *ethos* would reflect a world based on equality, reciprocity, openness to dialogue, and the appreciation of discourse as a means to reach consensus. This world would be constituted by a great diversity of voices intertwining in search of the collective good. Individual desires and collective interests, as well as differences among individuals, do not necessarily create competitive environments dominated by aristocracies. "Under democratic conditions," as Arendt imagined, "[...] the desire to distinguish oneself is thus aligned with respect for the other, different and equal in their desire to be seen, heard, and respected" (Frateschi, 2021, p. 317).

Dewey's philosophy, the theoretical framework used here to shed light on Arendtian pedagogical concepts, also encompasses a political discussion centered on democratic life. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1979, p. 93) explains that democracy is "[...] more than a form of government"; democracy is "[...] a form of associated life, of shared experience and mutual communication." In this definition, Dewey does not underestimate the importance of institutional arrangements to organize collective life, but he emphasizes that this alone is not sufficient. For true democracy to exist, certain personal dispositions are necessary; democracy only exists when there is "[...] mutual cooperation between individuals" and the appropriate conditions "[...] for the reconstruction of social habits and institutions" (Dewey, 1979, p. 108).

As far as we know, there are no references to popular councils in Dewey's work. However, in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), Dewey (2003) analyzes that forms of government, regardless of their nature, should not be dominated by a select group of experts — intellectuals supposedly endowed with superior knowledge who claim to be capable of making decisions on the common good in isolation, justifying their actions by arguing that the masses are ignorant and too preoccupied with manual labor. Dewey, then, presents an idea that would not sound unfamiliar to Arendt: it is necessary to trust in the intelligence that arises from life in community:

> Signs and symbols, language, are the means of communication through which a fraternally shared experience is introduced and sustained. But the winged words of conversation take on a vital importance in immediate relationships, which is lacking in the fixed and frozen words of written speech. (Dewey, 2003, p. 372)

The "true public" that democracy requires is one that is built in "[...] face-to-face relationships through a direct giving and receiving," which is expressed, according to the author, in a single word: "dialogue." Outside this parameter, all the wealth produced by collective effort is diverted for private purposes (Dewey, 2003, p. 372). For Dewey (2003, p. 372-373), democracy as a shared way of life, of joint experience and mutual communication, does not impose limits on the expansion of individual intelligence, but this premise is only realized when the "[...] flow of social intelligence" can circulate freely "[...] from mouth to mouth, from one to another," in the extensive communication network of local communities.

This conception of democracy as a public space open to direct participation by individuals in collective deliberations supports Dewey's response to the second question left unanswered by Arendt — how the school should prepare students to act in favor of democratic life. Paraphrasing Frateschi's (2021) reference to Arendt, it can be said that Dewey sees the school as an authentic breeding ground for the development of a democratic ethos that values public debate and commitment to issues relevant to the collective. In Dewey's educational philosophy, the purpose of education is to "enable individuals to continue their education" and facilitate the development of their capacities (Dewey, 1979, p. 108). This goal is reflected in the choice of curricular content, which should not be random, but rather take into account the choice of a societal project:

> [...] the choice should be made with the aim of improving the life we live in common, so that the future is better than the past. [...] the curriculum should be planned by prioritizing the essential things [...] Essential things are those that are socially most fundamental, that is, those related to activities shared by the largest groups. (Dewey, 1979, p. 211)

Just as Arendt later does, Dewey characterizes education as both a means of conserving and, at the same time, transforming social life; a means that is organized to "realize the most beautiful human hopes," not only because it impacts the development of children and youth but because it concerns the future society that will one day be built by these individuals (Dewey, 1979, p. 86). The individual and society form an indivisible whole in Dewey's political-educational project: a community remains alive because it renews itself, and this is only achieved through the "educational growth of the immature members of the group" (Dewey, 1979, p. 11). Education is "shaping or molding" the society that is desired to be built, which is why a new way of communication between adults and children is necessary (Dewey, 1979, p. 3).

It is not about simply bringing the world into the school, turning the educational space into a simulation of the social ills that populate real life. Nor is it about preparing the child — an idea frequently used by Arendt, as seen above — as if it were possible to foresee the problems to be faced in the future. Since the future is an enigma, what holds value is the experience that can be carried out in an environment specially designed to guide the mental and moral formation of students. It is about forming, not preparing; therefore, in Dewey's words (1979, p. 21), the school must be a "simplified environment" capable of "*transmitting and preserving*" the achievements of the world, with a view to the ideal of a more balanced future society (Dewey, 1979, p. 22, emphasis in the original).

The achievements of tradition and the past — terms frequently used by Arendt — are, for Dewey, the result of what has been obtained through science up to the present moment. However, the selection of content to be taught and the organization of the educational environment are the result of choices made by educators who are aware of their responsibility toward the current world and the world they aim to build. This world can be described by the Arendtian democratic ethos, which, for both Arendt and Dewey, does not exist in the present, but could exist, depending on the efforts

made to achieve this goal. Forming individuals capable of taking revolutionary, transformative stances, willing to act in the public space through actions and words, is a moral choice, ultimately a decision of a political nature.

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