

GROUNDINGS FOR AN ECO-JUSTICE DIALOGICAL ETHICS OF EMANCIPATION

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Abstract

Through the eco-justice ethical criticism, which is the basic methodology of research in this paper, the authors attempt to weave the concept of personal identity as a dialogical virtue, while linked to the process of interaction with a human and, inevitably, more-than-human “otherness”, commonly referred to as Nature or the holistic other. Such a gesture serves to go beyond Humanism and turn to what Posthumanism could mean, in order to overcome the questionable narcissistic, supernaturalizing and predatory attitude of the latter. This gives way to seeking groundings for eco-justice ethics, by pointing to a dispossession and dispossession of the self as a contribution to a new, after all, more intimate degree of relationship mediated by the forms the value love may assume. In line with these assumptions, a new paradigm of education for citizenship is proposed, with relation to alterity and an indispensable form of non-reproductive emancipation, not giving up on the critical exercise of unmasking the practices of naturalization of injustice, namely through carrying out the parrhesiastic function of telling a truth to power. This not only resituates the problem in the educational field, as in the awareness of the more-than-human to be considered, but it also looks for the caring about the natural and human (material and immaterial) “commons”. Finally, the main goal of this paper is to redress possible imbalances between the conditions provided by power and the legitimate expectations of peoples, including their eco-systems, without losing sight of the defined emancipatory ethical framework grounded in the values of love, peace, and hope.

Keywords: eco-justice, ethics, identity, otherness, emancipation, love

Introduction

Realizing the Otherness Facets

Any attempt to conceive an approach to ethics has become a gesture forcibly inserted, nowadays, in the framework of a dialogical stance, presupposing at once the other human and the other more-than-human, as Martusewicz et al. (2011) wisely like to refer. As to the other human, we should start by focusing on the first person and not necessarily on the second or third person of the singular or plural, as we are prone to do. Although this disposition is not the most commonly adopted, we take it for granted that we know who we are, which is the same as saying that, ordinarily, we assume absolute self-knowledge once we do not suspect or admit the other within ourselves. The atavistic tendency to look at oneself as transparent embodies even the Cartesian approach, according to which it is the transparency of consciousness which guarantees that truth can be attained precisely through its display in the clearing of such transparency (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 33). However, a closer look reveals a different scenario.

On the one hand, we have to recognize that the person is a dialogical virtue. Revalidating the notion of subject and person as an anthropological and ethical basis is dependent on the search for relational anthropology, a search which requires recognizing the relational nature of subjectivity and the person-as-relationship as the structure of the personal self, the latter arising from a relational emergency, and, hence, it is impossible to treat it as its condition or essence. “In relational anthropology, the person is a structural unit that, having no pre-given identity, has to acquire it through an identification process in which I, You, and He play, as communicational instances, a constituent role” (Carvalho, 1998, p. 41). From an ontological hermeneutic viewpoint, Martin Buber has shaped the most beautiful exercises of laconic eloquence on the subject that are worth hearing again (Buber, 1937, p. 3):

The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words. The one primary word is the combination I-Thou. The other primary word is the combination I-It; wherein, without a change in the primary word, one of the words He and She can replace It. Hence the I of man is also twofold. For the I of the primary word, I-Thou is different from that of the primary word I-It. Primary words do not signify things, but they intimate relations.¹

Let us remember here that Mounier had already shown how the fundamental experience of the person is communication: “The person appears to us as a presence turned to the world and other people, without limits, mixed with them in a perspective of universality. Other people do not limit her/him; they make them be and grow. She/he exists only for others; she/he is known only by others; she/he is found only in others. The primitive experience of a person is the experience of the second person. The You and, within Him/Her, the We, precede the self or, at least, accompany it” (Mounier, 2004, p. 72).

According to Lopes (2001), relational anthropology, based on the principle of “*primum relationis*”, allows us to see how consciousness emerges from an interdiscursive process, symbolically mediated, and that the person and his/her identity are always the results of interlocutory relationships. A personal self is progressively developed through a process of identification that relies on “telling others” and “saying with others”, i.e., the relationship to the second and third person. The “Us” itself is gradually forged as a result of interdiscursivity. In such a perspective, from relational anthropology, we move away from “the secondary way of understanding relationship, giving it a founding and primordial status, not only logical but ontological and, fundamentally, linguistic-communicational” (Lopes, 2001, p. 41).

¹ “Primary words do not describe something that might exist independently of them; being spoken, they bring about existence. Primary words are spoken from the being. If Thou is said, the I of the combination I-Thou is said along with it. If It is said, the I of the combination I-It is said along with it. The primary word I-Thou can only be spoken with the whole being. The primary word I-It can never be spoken with the whole being” (Buber, 1937, p. 3).

The mind is no longer subject-conscious, solipsistic, and monological, nor is language simply an instrument for expressing thought, but relations and language are the constituents of consciousness. Being one of the “dialogical virtues”, the person is relational in its genesis, structure, and development. On the other hand, it should now be evident that there is no self without otherness. In the words of Buber (1937, p. 4): “There is no I taken in itself, but only the I of the primary word I-Thou and the I of the primary word I-It.” Moreover, we should bear in mind that otherness itself will not only be the person of the other, but it may also be that of another within the self, which creates openness to the unconscious, a layer in which the self cleaves itself, and that must be recognized as constitutive of its psychic dynamics. Thus, our postmodern age requires us to see any behaviour or discourse that asserts full knowledge of oneself and the other as nothing other than a manifestation of insane arrogance, guilty of violence against otherness. Thirdly, given the endemic anthropocentrism that is often unsuspected in civilization, the “other” could not be restricted to humans, as it would be to animals and plants. Besides, in a more complex approach to the interrelation between all the beings, from the physical-chemical level to the bio-social-cultural level, that expresses itself in the “eco”, binding everything to configure a new entity, it emerges as a holistic “other”, which we can address as more-than-human. When we dimensionalize this being at the level of the planet, which is hardly separable from the solar system and, inversely, very easy to extend to the universe as a whole, we encounter not only the natural roots of our self, although natural by culture as well as cultural by nature (Morin, 1973), but also a set of ties of belonging and sharing that are perhaps unsuspected. This would help us surpass the supranaturalistic and isolationist conception of humanity as “a fortiori”, the ground of ethics itself.

In a well known the passage, Protagoras of Abddera, the Eristic expert, declares: “Of all things the measure is man: of those that are, that they are; and of those that are not, that they are not” (Diels & Krantz, 1968, p. 80B1 DK). That he was often accused of harsh relativism is no surprise; yet, it is more difficult to grasp what his sentence could imply from a more mediated reading. On the one hand, it could be plausible that we were noticing that human beliefs, made at our own scale under specific social and individual conditions, reveal the inescapable human framing of what humans assume as true or valid, along with its opposite. On the other hand, it is perhaps legitimate to concede that Protagoras was aware of the cleavage introduced by humans between them and nature as an object of their understanding endeavours. The assumption, conscious or unconscious, of such cleavage denounces the ingrained tendency humans nourish about their supranaturalistic condition, namely, that they are the result of favour from Prometheus, who endowed them with the art of using fire, i.e., science and technology that enable them to enslave the forces of nature to their benefit, as Francis Bacon (1878) would agree. According to Harari (2017), the project behind science, technology and capitalism is, effectively, the seemingly tangible dream of *homo deus*, which will no longer be the *homo sapiens sapiens* as we know it but a cyborg derivation, a new variety above the *sapiens*. We have to ask if this being would even be concerned about the destiny of the planet, let alone the common sapiens.

The discontinuity between humanity and nature has deep roots. In Genesis 1:28, the narcissistic relation to nature seems allowed: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, and every creature that crawls upon the earth.’” It is also commented that, in medieval times, when someone asked why we could not find in the Bible an explanation about the way spiders weave their webs, someone answered “It is because things like that are unimportant.” Well, a piece of news from Dye (2006) has just come out with the information that scientists are finally closing in on the answers to the puzzle that perplexed them for centuries, concerning the way spiders spin a web of silk, which is five times stronger, on a weight-to-strength basis, than steel.

Moreover, it has been claimed that if we knew the secrets behind these little beings' capabilities, we could also "create all sorts of biomedical devices of extraordinary strength, make bulletproof vests that might stop a bomb, and create a whole new line of materials for everything from high-performance aircraft to household appliances."

The "meme"² (Dawkins, 1976) of human superiority has completely ruled our behaviours and relationships with nature until now. "Both Christianity and Humanism are built on the assumption that it is possible to escape or transcend, either in death or life, the constraints of the natural world" (Marks, 2019, p. 160). A complete, or at least partial fallacy that has produced the narcissistic, supernatural, and predatory attitude has to be questioned, along with what Humanism represents, so to think about what Posthumanism could mean. Could this be the sense of what Foucault was foretelling when he uttered the famous statement that "man" could be on the brink of disappearing (Foucault, 1966)?

². The concept of a "selfish gene" expresses a gene-centred view of evolution, as opposed to one focused on the organism and the group, meaning that, supposedly, the more individuals are genetically related, the more (at the level of genes) they tend to behave cooperatively. In the realm of culture, the term "meme" appears as the homologue of the gene, modelling culture through the identical process of "selfish" replication of a trend.

Now, we should notice that the predatory orientation towards animals, plants, Earth, and humans themselves, having achieved a certain level of deregulation, has made humans resemble viruses, which, after infiltrating an organism, do not stop until they destroy it, destroying themselves in the blind path of their irrational predisposition. In the 1999 movie “Matrix”, directed by Lana and Lilly Wachowski and set in a dystopian future of a world dominated by machines that use humans as power banks, Agent Smith, a material holographic personification of a software program, says to Neo (the awakened hope of those still believing in humankind):

“I’d like to share a revelation that I’ve had during my time here. It came to me when I tried to classify your species and realized that you’re not actually mammals. Every mammal on this planet instinctively develops a natural equilibrium with the surrounding environment, but you humans do not. You move to an area and you multiply and multiply until every natural resource is consumed, and the only way you can survive is to spread to another area. There is another organism on this planet that follows the same pattern. Do you know what it is? A virus. Human beings are a disease, a cancer of this planet. You’re a plague, and we are the cure.”³

³. In the movie, humans were under a “cattle breeding” to become powercell for the machines artificial intelligence world, that need to construct virtual world form keeping the sleeping humans under control. It resembles an allegory for Marxian description of the domination of the means of production owners over the wage earners, creating a surplus for the exploiters particular benefit. But in the first case the purpose was to rule out the mass extinction machines that humans have become in such a short and virulent history. In our view, the problem lies in the fact that once a predatory (say exploitative) attitude is developed, it applies indiscriminately to humans and non-humans alike: becoming a cancer that devours everything, a kind of negation of negentropy (this one aligned with the search for equilibrium), a return to Chaos. Which would make predation/exploitation the path to doom.

Only very recently, when the impugment regarding the human predatory attitude began to make itself heard and felt, namely through practical consequences, and we began to notice the extensive criminal desolation that scientific-techno-capitalism is spreading regarding all sorts of animals and plants, along with entire ecological niches and the consequent Earth climate imbalance, have we started to try to do something on behalf of this otherness, “more-than-human”, this unsuspected mother, who suffers everything silently along with her “children” without appeal. This relates to the case that such “otherness” is about to be severely crippled, as we know it, implying that we are about to fail in our responsibility towards the incoming generations that will not be inheriting the pristine planet that once existed – as neither did we, by the way. The case is that our legacy will be one of a drastically poorer and more unsustainable planet. It seems, though, that we have to break through predatory Humanism and look for a new ground for ethics of eco-justice, encompassing the human and the more-than-human.

Posthumanism and the Grounding of an Eco-Justice Ethics

As John Marks (2019) has poignantly explained, Edgar Morin and Henri Atlan, in their long conversations, have elaborated a new paradigm freed from Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism’s mechanistic model, which either set humanity apart from nature or isolated it in a tragic Sisyphean quest, while reductively separating nature from culture and hence failing to see, in the framing of a new paradigm of complexity, the intertwinedness of these realms. Meanwhile, many have come to gather around Morin’s claim of a New Humanism. Several have come to share the opinion that Modernity failed to give an account of evolution and human nature. The process of “human enlightenment” in which the all-powerful consciousness discharges the lamp that illuminates the mind fails to recognize that consciousness, human intelligence, and the spirit are more epiphenomenons of complexity, with roots in unconscious planes grounded in cellular, genetic, and physical-chemical processes, although the former can go much further and have some retroactivity over the later.

Meaning that human consciousness, intelligence, and the spirit flash through the breach of an uncertain and chaotic world, bringing order from noise, ideas from errors, cooperation from violence, and wisdom from madness, in a wandering pilgrimage of an entangled construction between nature and culture. Along the same line, Christians have felt the need to emphasize our belongingness and responsibility towards nature (Francisco, Pope)⁴, namely the Earth, rejecting the predatory narcissistic attitude regarding an artificial otherness of humans and of more-than-humans that could not be devised as such. That is why Nature has commonly been systematically stripped of its differences' value and dignity, engulfed by the monster that called itself "human".

Humanity does not risk disappearing, whether it is due to the shattering of the abstract sculpture in which it likes to mirror itself or to the Leviathan cyborgs bought out by the techno-science-capitalist system. Perhaps humanity never existed. It may be nothing more than a mythopoeia lubricated to justify the misadventures of feeling outcast from paradise as a projection of those who could not bear the inscrutable orphanhood mystery of having emerged from Chaos, being driven by Chaos to return to Chaos, not least because they themselves have developed predatory and exploitative processes to achieve it more quickly. So, do we really need to insist on such a corroded designation, exuding arrogance and horror, or is it time to look for a new concept that relocates us under a more contextualized, humble, and prudent perspective? As we have to assume complexity to seize the subject, we could not miss using a dialogical approach that invites us to consider the pessimistic and optimistic trends of humans while being able to envisage their complementarity. What then can we say about those who used to call themselves humans and are about to crumble the uterus that carries them? As it appears indispensable to us to exist within a search, however more or less vague it may seem, it could be appropriate to refer to ourselves as wanderers. Those that are engaged in a search, while perhaps feeling lonesome, are always and only can be by another, who may serve as an interlocutor for giving meaning to the primal words to be uttered and thus putting one being into being, or should we say wandering.

⁴. One cannot help but express some surprise that an institution like the Catholic Church and a metanarrative as domesticated as Christianity appear today as critical forces.

The wanderer can be a vagabond, although as one who seeks incessantly; not necessarily with a fixed destiny but rather walking trails that lead nowhere, this nowhere being a place to find oneself. Someone once asked a young rap composer, “Do you think, as you say, that we must lose ourselves to find ourselves?” She answered, “Certainly I do. I really do. I could only find myself after I was lost regarding the normality of what was expected from me and even from what I expected from myself.” Authenticity flourishes only through the deconstruction of the normalized self. The longer we stay in the blindness of self-sufficient consciousness, the less we grasp the diversified dimensions of our self and can attain a glimpse of its complex dynamics. “Dispossessionment and dispossession of oneself is the price for a new degree of relationship, after all, more intimate. Only by losing at one level does one have access to another, more personal, interpersonal level.” (Magalhães, 2003, p. 14). We are without any doubt beings of prejudice and atavic self-deceit, requiring an examined life, without which life is not worth being lived (Plato, 1966, 38a: 5–6). “But it is on the ‘line’ of the horizon that the land connects to the sky, and the sky fades and enters the sea. The ‘unreachable’ horizon is in us: the junction of opposites, the fall of myths, the spirit that generates freedom, justice, and gives life worth are in the hearts of those who know how to lose themselves in order to win” (id. Ibid.), or maybe we should say in order to find themselves.

Our reasoning has opened the space where, from the recognition of our wandering nature, we can devise what the so-called Posthumanism could be, as an inevitable phase for what comes after the narcissist and predatory Humanism.

For an Eco-Justice Ethics: A New Paradigm of Emancipatory Citizenship Education

Otherness and emancipation in the light of love and critique

Eco-justice ethics, while opening to the full range of otherness, breaks with anthropocentricity, which was our common tradition, even if the core theological stance was somehow twisted to endow humanity with a central and supernatural role. The Project of Modernity and Enlightenment has centred the discourses and correlative practises on emancipation, i.e., human emancipation. However, such an orientation would not resist the question of “Who are we defining this project for?” if this implies that we are taking it for granted that humans are the only relevant subjects to be considered. But what would happen if, by practicing pure humility – which is highly recommended in this case–, we not only admitted the “more-than-human” but also, let us say, other forms of humanity, namely alien beings endowed with the homologous complexity humans may display. A question arises here: “Is the term ‘human’ exclusive to the *homo sapiens sapiens*”? To assume an affirmative answer, while deserving of a reductionist approach, immediately reveals the arrogance hidden behind an apparently inclusivist attitude. Moreover, it precludes the very intent of starting eco-just ethics from the human factor and, concomitantly, from human emancipation. What then should we place at the heart of our eco-just ethics? The answer, requiring decentring and, at the same time, integration, being capable of granting the terms complementarity and, for this reason, what we would call dialogic, may not surprise many, although it may disappoint many others. What seems to us to be the ability to comply with the requirement of constituting a nuclear relationship and to focus on the equalization, harmonization, and even the calling of the parties to conviviality and solicitude, seems to us to be love. At the centre of ethics, there is no longer an entity but a value. To construct ethics by placing an entity at the centre entails a reification where such an entity is invested with an inequitable dignity, thus displacing to the ontological margins the “others” also worthy of being considered.

Contrary to this, love levels all entities that may be considered, evenly distributing to beings the ontological status of intrinsic dignity⁵. One must also notice that, as a value, love could receive controversial approaches, i.e., it could be open to the dynamics of intrinsically contestable concepts.

How is emancipation understood in the light of love? As we have seen, love establishes an ontological levelling, which is incompatible with relying on an asymmetric emancipatory relation between an emancipator and an emancipated through an emancipative enlightenment discourse. It is the absence of an offering practice that deflates the discourse of its possible freeing effect on the involved and the very relationship imbricating them. Such is the case of the critical tradition that envisages emancipation as the effect of a demystifying discourse from an enlightened person over a deluded person in relation to a mystifier. In such a case, they both can be nurtured by hate to supposedly enlarge the circle of freedom. History has proven that if the effects can be positive, they usually are not, namely in the medium and long run. The negative value underlying the process seems to take over the process and pervert it.

Both learning and socialization can be instruments of domestication and/or stultification (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1974; Bourdieu, 1979; Rancière, 1991). So, how can these processes be conveyors of emancipation? Gert Biesta (2013) proposes, following Michel Foucault, emancipation without learning, which should entail, from our point of view, socialization without domestication. Enlightenment has disseminated the seemingly good leitmotiv of overcoming our immaturity of being overdetermined by others by enacting the courage of using the power of our personal reason.

⁵. Here we got close to the proposal of a post-critical pedagogy from Hodgson et al. (2017), who suggest a pedagogy of love for the world, which would refer to hope and hermeneutics to set principles that could be worthy of being defended. Accepting that otherness implies the impossibility of completely knowing the other, a claim that would constitute violence against the other, the author says respect must allow a space for dialogue. As a result of this, they state that understanding and respecting eternal hopes and challenges is necessary. Although we don't totally agree with the author's proposal, this is not the place to continue such arguments.

Aligned with this idea, Marxism encouraged liberation from oppressive ideologies, which were mediated by social and cultural processes, including teaching and learning systems. In such an approach, social determination is partly determined through ideology, which also plays the role of masking and denying power mechanisms and oppression, namely through domestication, blinding our consciousness to ongoing domination exercises.

The theory unfolds by stating that we need to expose how power works on our consciousness. The problem arises when it suggests that, to achieve emancipation, there must be the intervention of someone else, already fed on the workings of power, who could endow us with an unveiling of the ideological masquerade, hence returning us to our objective condition, i.e., freeing us from the mechanisms of power while enlightening us.

When it comes to exhorting emancipation by a call to the courage of using personal reason, the above-described process of de-ideologization seems counterintuitive as it makes use of a heteronomous entity to do the work that should belong to the intimacy of another entity summoned to be personally charged with engaging in the work of self-freeing. We almost recall the ritual where the candles were given to the neophytes so that, by holding them, they would become enlightened. Now, the heteronomy of this regimen of such paradoxical emancipation appears when we realize that the freed state of recognizing the truth and gaining the consciousness of one's objective condition relies on a heteronomous entity, supposedly the only one proficient enough to produce the ideological unmasking and the political clarification, as having escaped the influence of ideology and being able to be located outside it, meaning not submitted to it. According to Biesta (2013, p. 10), "The educational 'translation' of this 'logic' of emancipation basically takes two forms: one that can be characterized as monological, and one that can be characterized as dialogical."

On one hand, emancipation depends on the heteronomous intervention of someone who escaped mystification and is generous enough to make such an offering to the emancipating person. Thus, emancipation appears as something that is done to somebody and hence relies on a fundamental inequality between the emancipator and the one to be emancipated. Equality, on this account, becomes the outcome of emancipation; it becomes something that lies in the future. Moreover, it is this outcome that is used to legitimize the interventions of the emancipator (Biesta, 2013, p. 10).

A logic we could call “colonial”, as colonialism corresponds to a practice and/or a policy by which one people or power exerts control (domination and subjugation) over other people through imposing a language, religion, and cultural practices, including economic regimens, so to ensure the pursuit of their interests, taking benefit from the colonized region's people and resources (Kohn, 2017). The transfer of the term from the collective to the individual plane not only clarifies what is implied in the established heteronomous relationship, but also serves to dissect its functioning. History has shown how, for instance, in the nineteenth century, the European dominion over the world was cynically conciliated by those who defended the principles of universalism and equality with the legitimacy of colonialism and imperialism⁶. The rationale behind such mystifying ideology is that the apparently opposed principles could achieve a synthesis in the concept of “civilizing mission”, which presupposes that the “others” required a heteronomous intervention implying dependence and tutelage for transcending their “uncivilized” or unemancipated, unlearned condition – which are equivalent *topoi* – so as to become capable of their *autarkeia*, i.e., self-government or emancipation. Hence, *mutatis mutandis*, collective colonialism presents the same structure as “learning emancipation”. In both cases, the “learning task” corresponds to reproduction, while “it is aimed at the acquisition of the insights of the teacher-emancipator” (Biesta, 2013, p. 10).

⁶. While “*colonus*”, from Latin, refers to a settlement of a farmer or farmers, “imperialism”, from the same Latin, refers to command, implying the exercise of power through settlement, sovereignty, or indirect mechanisms of control.

An alternative to “reproductive emancipation” – while equivalent to being sent free in a big cage – could be taken from Paulo Freire’s (1972) dialogical emancipation, where there is no longer an opportunity for the process of truth-telling by a teacher-emancipator. As emancipation is rescued from “banking education”, which Rancère (1991) would call the “stultification system of explanations”, it “becomes a process of the collective discovery of oppressive structures, processes, and practices, a process in which teacher and student are positioned as ‘co-subjects’” (Biesta, 2013, p. 10). In this line, the oppressed once objects to an oppressor, are disconnected from reality and dehumanized before having their status as subjects restored by emancipation. The teacher’s task is now “to reinstate dialogical and reflective practices, which, in turn, reinitiate praxis and link people back to the world” (Biesta, 2013, p. 11). If a lifelong learning process is implied here, it is not a reproductive learning process but a constructive or generative one, albeit one that still has an orientation toward truth. Unlike in the monological model, this is not the truth given by the teacher to students about their objective condition on the assumption that students are unable to acquire such insights themselves (Biesta, 2013, p. 11).

It would seem that perhaps we have found a sound basis to uphold our eco-justice ethics. Nevertheless, we must be aware that “both approaches ultimately rely on the possibility of truth and, more specifically, truth uncontaminated by power” (Biesta, 2013, p. 11). Truth is either given or discovered; the truth is either uncontaminated by power or restores an uncontaminated human existence, seemingly overcoming the alienation of false consciousness or a state of oppression, meaning achieving the victory of truth over power. But could we admit there is a fundamental distinction between truth and power? Here, the author we have been following turns to Foucault’s understanding that truth and power are entangled. So, how can we follow the idea that truth can only emerge when power is suspended? To accept such a relation would entail to also accept the possibility of absolute truth-telling while also being able to escape from exercising power.

Not abdicating from critique and resistance, Foucault's turn, so to speak, gives us a new perspective on emancipation and ethics. It redirects the focus from the universal, necessary, and obligatory to the singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints, making visible singularities where history is imposed, or, following Barthes's (1972) description⁷, historicizing what has been naturalized⁸. Thus, entailing polyhedric intelligibility, that keeps the plurality of facets of otherness, never given in advance, never exhausted, and never tamed under an absolute reduction. In this line of thought, it is not assumed (by the enlightener or educator) to have a deeper understanding or an understanding of underlying structures or causes; thus, we cannot expect a kind of knowledge that will free us from the mechanisms of working power and, consequently, cannot suggest courses of action for solving problems. It could only serve subjects who act, fighting, resisting, and refusing what is. Hence, we do not embark on an emancipative escape from power but rather a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression. This could be understood as the experimental devising of limits that, for instance, can illuminate how far we can go in denying what we repudiate.

⁷. "The starting point of these reflections was usually a feeling of impatience at the sight of the naturalness' with which newspapers, art, and common sense constantly dress up a reality that, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history. In short, in the account given of our contemporary circumstances, I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn, and I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of what goes without saying, the ideological abuse that, in my view, is hidden there." (Barthes, 1972, 10).

⁸. Isn't this the meaning of "Eventalization", that Foucault defines as "making visible a singularity at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness which imposes itself uniformly on all"? (1991, p. 76, cited by Biesta, 2012, p. 11)

In this line, emancipation does not separate truth from power; it does not rely on teaching and learning that envisages truth-giving or truth-discovery through collective critical learning; it becomes a practical task of transgression. Such endeavour means doing things differently to show and/or prove that things can be different as they are not necessarily what they should be. So, we can say that transgression aims at countering the being, doing, or thinking that we commonly do and seeking to search for an undefined work of freedom. Emancipation, no longer trying to escape from power through demystification, becomes a practice of transgression, a practical confrontation of different power/knowledge constellations to denounce things that do not have to be the way they were settled to be. Critical work then becomes not the demystification of speaking truth to power – a concession which we believe power would appreciate – but rather a pluralization of truth. Moreover, once learning is no longer a condition to escape power, there is nothing to be learned about our objective condition, as it is suggested that we cannot any longer distinguish “between our objective condition and our distorted understandings of this condition” (Biesta, 2013, p. 12), or suppose a truly human existence, as there is no one single true human existence but rather a pluralization of ways of existing, although we could not necessarily attribute to all of them equal value or worth.

It is noteworthy that we understand that transgression and pluralization are no longer driven by learning, but rather come first of learning, meaning that what we collect from our emancipatory experiments comes second, let alone what we may do from thereof. Emancipation, relying upon a different relationship with learning, enters an indefinite work to gain freedom as a never-ending story, becoming “a lifelong challenge (not unlike what Freire had in mind, albeit on different terms); freedom is not a point or a state we can ever reach” (Biesta, 2013, p. 13).

⁹ It is to be noticed that this may be feasible if we can find the space to carry it on: supposedly against power...

Although we concur globally with the above-described critiques of emancipation, we have some difficulty understanding why there isn't any possibility of demystifying the work of a constellation of power knowledge¹⁰. Besides, if we should accept the pluralization of the ways of existing, although not necessarily attributing to all of them equal value or worth, why could not we undertake a critique of the ways of existing? One must have motives not to accept "the way things are," and the deviance from the settled works of the dominating power-knowledge ought to be denounced and demystified, in the sense that a deconstruction of its mechanisms and points of oppression is to be undertaken if we want to take a course of action that, being not blind, is more than groping. While experimenting is a fruitful process, acting upon the reasons and sentiments we have reached to give them some meaning could also be enriching and have wide-ranging results. Take the example from Roland Barthes, quoted in endnote seven: if we can demystify the processes of naturalization of history, through which an absolutization of a power-knowledge constellation is infiltrated, thus creating a deceptive relation to our existence, why shouldn't we undertake their demystification, deconstruction, and denouncement? As to "telling the truth to power", we could ask where Michel Foucault would situate *Parrhesia*? To deal with these perplexities we need, perhaps, to look for what Cadahia (2013) proposes, not to radicate the emergence of freedom as the foundation of a "new art of living", but in a reconsideration of politics as a constitutive tension between power and freedom. As for us, we would not give up on the "aesthetics of existence" as resistance to disciplinary and biopolitical devices and neither of the possibilities of looking at power relations as a double process of subjectivation in which subjects are objectified as well as subjectivized; meaning, they are objectified by being subjected by the practices of power, but they are also subjectified by being objectified by the practices of freedom (Cadahia, 2013, p. 45).

¹⁰. In the same direction goes the "Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy" (Hodgson et al., (2017), stating that post-critical pedagogy is understood not as an effort of unmasking or hoping for a better future, but rather for protecting and taking care of the present. It could be that such an exclusive focus in the present could represent an abdication of questioning the established social order and losing the critical stance for precisely elaborating the critical mechanisms able to subvert the established power relations.

Hence, we should focus on power relations as the process where freedom can be produced, as it is in freedom relations that power can be produced. Now, could we find in Foucault, himself, any help for this double-sided process?

Indeed, some questions still remain. Are we bound to abdicate our search for the truth? Such a question can, of course, be unfolded in many other ways. Are there no truths to tell that are worth telling? Is there any character that may assume being a truth-teller in the kingdom where everybody knows that the king parades naked? Exploring the implied subject takes us to consider two related questions as two sides of the same coin. Having learned to be suspicious as well as critical seems to have pushed us to a certain predisposition to the masquerade at the bonfire of vanities.

We aim here to tackle the marshy postmodern condition, relying on Foucault's unfolding of parrhesiastic functions. This will bring us to recover the Cynic as the philosopher for the age of unavoidable recovering of meta-narrative elaboration, by now not for producing, more or less unconscious, masking manipulative processes, but rather for unveiling frameworks able to regain to philosophy a multidimensional parrhesiastic critical work.

Such predisposition sends us back to the meaning and virtual contemporary role of philosophical *Parrhesia* and cynicism that Foucault indicated, possibly since previous times, but surely in the lectures from the "Cours au Collège de France" imparted between 1982 and 1983, which have been entitled "The government of self and others" (Foucault, 2010).

In these last lectures, precisely the last one, from the 9 March 1983, deepening the ancient classical tradition of philosophy as a way of life¹¹, Foucault fuses the character of the cynic with the task of *Parrhesia*. He starts by saying:

TODAY IS THE LAST SESSION. My project was first of all to finish what I was saying to you about the parrhesiast philosopher in Plato. I have tried to examine the profiles of this parrhesiastic philosopher, first in the Letters VII and VIII, and then in the Phaedrus. Today I would like to do the same with regard to the Gorgias, which brings out, I think, a third aspect of the parrhesiastic function of philosophy. (Foucault, 2010, p. 339)

So, in his last lecture, he says his “project” was to present Plato’s parrhesiastic philosopher, putatively Socrates, and then he clarifies that his purpose is to go further in order to bring out the “parrhesiastic function of philosophy” in ancient times. Yet, we have the feeling that Foucault was, in fact, really committed to bringing forth a role for philosophy in our current times of despair. We say despair because, as well as in the case of Sloterdijk (2001), the cynic has come to be the postmodern worthy heir, who can have a part to play as someone being just about ripe to claim its season of disillusioned delivery to nihilism. Perhaps at the end of the 1980s, Foucault could already foresee that it was time for philosophy to recuperate the mission it once courageously demonstrated, not without taking risks, of being “the site, or rather one of the sites, of parrhesia at least as important as that of politics, and in a perpetual relationship of challenge with political parrhesia, another actor of parrhesia” (Foucault, 2010, p. 341).

¹¹. Meaning not ostentation of erudition but living according to wisdom, as Pierre Hadot (1995) so poignantly imparted to us.

The latter refers to the citizen, who gains space within the political realm just by standing on his own assumed right to tell the truth as a philosopher, therefore, opening a new parrhesiastic focal point, i.e., “another parrhesiast appears” (id. *ibid.*). In times of field restrictions and the impact of political *Parrhesia*, how up-to-date does this sound? Moreover, it is justified by “the function of freely and courageously telling the truth” (Foucault, 2010, p. 342). A role that enters deeper and deeper into the realm of philosophy. Such a new paradigm is stated by Aristippus, who, when answering the question about the benefit taken from the philosophy, declares: “That of being able to speak freely to everyone” (Foucault, 2010, p. 243). This simple statement resembles an utterance on behalf of all protagonists of ancient philosophical *Parrhesia* by taking it as a way of life, an existential option, assumed as speaking for itself when it comes to deciding if one is speaking the truth: the philosopher in himself, in his way of living, assumes to be a manifestation of truth. Three elements come to compose such parrhesiastic manifestation: the doctrine corresponding to an ethos that displays the assumed way of living which, in turn, is expressed in every reaction to any given situation that confronts the doctrine one teaches, i.e., the life one lives. Therefore, to be a philosopher means to live philosophically, which corresponds to the announcement that one assumes to be a manifestation of truth composed of three vehicles: the “*éthos* of the scene, *kairos* of the situation, and the doctrine” of the teaching (Foucault, 2010, p. 344).

Discussion

At this point, we want to anticipate an issue that relates to the purpose of this writing. If we would ask at this precise moment what contribution we have obtained in facing the post-modern impasse regarding truth, we would suggest that the support given by Foucault's analytics of truth-telling or the parrhesiastic role of ancient philosophy is, somehow, a simple matter of coherence and conviction. It could be understood as an essay reassigning philosophy to philosophers of bone and flesh, meaning that every living sentient being discovers it stemming from their inner calling.

The second parrhesiastic unfoldment of philosophy since ancient times comes from its persistent targeting of politicians. It could follow different modes, either by cynical insolence, sometimes taking the form of rough sarcasm, typical of Diogenes of Sinope, or by conforming to more or less direct critical diatribes, which could be presented as eloquent educational proposals, or even by taking the shape of pieces of advice that present the philosopher as a kind of private and public officiant of political counselling. A role that is currently being appropriated, for instance, by some television commentators or resident newspaper columnists, who are closer to the cynical and are prone to relying very much on harsh critical forms like irony, sarcasm, or insolence, as well as crude debunking, complaint, contestation, and opposition.

The third parrhesiastic form of ancient philosophy could be seen in the

“perpetual interpellation addressed, collectively or individually, to persons, private individuals, and which may take the form of the great Cynic and Stoic type of preaching in the theatre, the assemblies, at the games, or in the forum, and which may be the interpellation of an individual or of a crowd.” (Foucault, 2010, p. 345)

Nowadays, we find these personages among artists, some literati oracles, and academicians. As practices of personal openness, reciprocal confidence, and group-restricted collective reflection, we can find stoic and epicurist practices in many solitary and more or less private gatherings, including Buddhist and mindfulness communities, as well as the still-active more traditional “tertulias”. Nevertheless, one should bear in mind that among the analysed forms, none could be compared to normal scholarly practice, where very often “Learning is reduced to a historical type of learning; they deal with the history of philosophy; they learn about famous personalities, schools, periods, or doctrines; and they absorb what is given, available, or, as Kant says, they learn what may be assimilated”. However, teaching philosophy (i.e., philosophizing) in this way is impossible because, as Kant says, there is no book saying, “Look, here is wisdom or knowledge you can rely on” (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25.2: 307), and he is talking about a betrayal and deception of the trust of students (Belas & Zakutna, 2016, p. 32).

The above-criticized teaching process corresponds to the dull and numb practice, deplored by Deleuze and Guattari (1994), that consists of reviewing solutions without having the opportunity to get acquainted with the problems they belong to. It is a long-established tradition that still persists to this day, even though concepts we do not create cannot truly be ours. Without having sprouted from us, they could not speak of us, nor to us, and, therefore, to learn could not be but to apprehend what someone thought without knowing the reason why. This is not the case for what Foucault identifies as the paradigm of ancient philosophy, as a parrhesiastic practice, namely the Epictetus’ “Discourses” or “Conversations”, where, while taking philosophy as a way of living, as a spontaneously unwavering manifestation of truth, the cynical philosopher defines the practice of establishing a relationship with himself through which he respects himself, holding back nothing to himself or about himself. In the practice of *aidós*, or self-sought transparency and self-truth telling through no-fear conditioning, the cynic is not only able to serve himself but also humanity at large.

At this stage, we have to note that, somehow disappointingly, Foucault becomes complacent with Epictetus' admonitions about the cynic, that one guided by the parrhesiastic sense should not intervene at the *ágora* to pronounce himself about public affairs, like resources or revenues, peace, and war. Nevertheless, the philosopher admits he must speak of "happiness and unhappiness, of good and ill fortune, of servitude and freedom" (Foucault, 2010, p. 348). Foucault certainly is, in a way, just commenting on the cynical philosophical attitude, so he does not have to intervene about every statement, nor does he make his own what Epictetus recommends by simply citing him. Anyway, it is strikingly obvious that, as we have seen before, the philosophical parrhésia entails occupying a new and active space regarding political matters, so a caveat would be expected regarding the split of issues Epictetus suggests. Besides, the text concludes as follows: "'When a man is actively engaged in such a political activity, do you ask me if he participates in public affairs?' Ask me if he will occupy an office, and I will reply again: Fool, what more noble office is there than the one he is now exercising?" (Foucault, 2010, p. 348) With such educative reminders, Epictetus anticipates very flagrantly the invectives advanced by Rousseau when defining his pedagogical program for *Émile*: "First of all, he will be a man" (Rousseau, 1899, pp. 13-14).

The comparison is relevant to the extent that it enframes what is here at stake: the main goal of the philosophical parrhésia, an educational one, let us say, regards the core apprenticeship craft of "how to live", of being a human and a citizen. May we advance that it entails, in the current times, engaging in eco-justice ethics and "truth-telling to power", our "truth-telling" from our ground of understanding, taking truth as a centre around which we all gravitate, giving interpretations, and translating them among ourselves (Rancière, 1991).

Conclusions (and Recommendations)

The “Commons”, Peace, and Hope

When we take into consideration the contemporary global context, an “eco-friendly” education is increasingly urgent and unavoidable, according to the relevant expression of Martusewicz et al. (2011). This means an education that saves us from ethno-anthropocentric atavism, which tends to impose a specific way of dealing with life that devalues it, drowns it out and strangles its multiplicity. It means shutting down their otherness. We must overcome the approach that focuses on problems between humans and hyper-separates them from nature, that overlooks the general context of biodiversity and its link with linguistic and cultural diversity, that maintains or exacerbates social inequalities, and that neglects the perspective of its intrinsic link to ecological destruction, which hides the fact that there are not enough resources for the growth of all countries at the current economic pace and the ideology of indefinite growth (Latouche, 2003), which is blind to the intrinsic relationship between a predatory stance and instrumentalization directed to nature and that which attacks our fellow humans. Finally, an education that makes us reflect on the conditions of sustainable communities that do not interfere with the ability of natural systems to regenerate and are prone to supporting life; communal elements, whether natural (land, air, water, and biodiversity) or cultural (beliefs and competencies that belong to everyone). We need an education that warns of harmful ways of thinking/acting, such as self-centred thinking and consumerism. We need an education that opens up to the humility of learning from indigenous cultures and their beliefs, behaviours and sustainable lifestyles. We need, therefore, an education that relies upon the valorisation of the human and natural heritage as interdependent realities and that is more than an ideal; it is an urgent need. The periphery of certain territories is at huge risk today of severe depopulation and/or desertification or plain destruction, thus encompassing the long list of lost natural and built, material and immaterial heritage, which will no longer be a heritage for future generations if we do not preserve them. When we say we need an education that meets these challenges, we are also saying we need ethics that enable us to face them.

In particular, the respect we owe to the communal elements, the more-than-human that sustains us, could enlighten us about the involvement gesture love brings to ethics, opening our dialogue to an ample otherness and an ample way of assuming our existences.

Our essay to devise the coordinates for an eco-justice ethics, that takes love as a core value and envisages emancipation and pluralization through exploring alternative ways of being would not be complete if we forgot the value of peace. The ethics of love cannot lay roots without the effort for peace, which corresponds to, at least, a truce by otherness and, at most, a kingdom of ends, as Kant suggested, where people are less taken as objects than as ends in themselves. As the touchstone of this discussion, we leave here the warning from Henry David Thoreau: “The most refined qualities of our nature, such as the plushness of certain fruits, can only be preserved by delicate handling. And yet, we do not treat ourselves so tenderly, neither to ourselves nor to others” (Thoreau, 2014, p. 20).

According to Rummel (1981), who sought to overcome simplifying approaches, peace cannot be reduced to the simple absence of dissension and violence; it also requires the realms of concord, harmony, and justice, which would include, in democratic societies, a certain balance of powers. In any case, in order to give a referential definition, which in this context cannot be more than a display of the meaning of peace, we need a theoretical framework. The author referred to peace as part of a helix process, through which a certain balance is reached between conflict and agreement, always provisional, in accordance with eco-social dynamics. If we take conflict as the process that precedes the establishment of a balance between different interests, necessities, and desires, that is, what people want, can achieve, and are willing to seek, then, from the simple quarrel through hostility to violence and war, we have only manifestations of the conflict process. . On the other hand, for there to be cooperation between the members of a community, the expectations of the members must be aligned with the conditions that the established power is willing to offer.

A thing that can only be achieved if a previous conflict has led to a balance of powers that led to an agreement between parties, representing a solution to the multiple equations of power that can achieve harmony by creating a certain structure of expectations and conditions. Given that the structure of expectations is shaped by a certain map of rights and duties, which represents a given scheme of predictability for behaviours built on conflict and only achieved through the establishment of a certain balance of powers. That is why it can be said that cooperation (peace) depends on the alignment of expectations with the balance of power achieved. As a result, any breach between expectations and the balance of powers contracted will constitute a basis for conflict. Or, to put it another way, any gap between established conditions and expectations can induce conflict. The interaction between the two planes could be understood as the helix process.

One of the crucial problems nowadays is that peace does not only cover human beings. There is an “other” that has long been neglected and, more than that, subject to a predatory assault by humans. We are, again, referring to nature, in which we include ourselves, and without considering ourselves included in it, we will not be able to understand ourselves, nor will we be able to understand each other. Given the current degrading circumstances to which we submit in the natural contexts in which we intervene, peace must be seen from a balance of powers that includes nature, which is to say that peace can only be ecosystemic, a fact that becomes evident when we see that the big conflicts, going back many centuries, have always been, despite pretexts, disputes over natural resources (Curvin, 2015; Waverly Advisors, 2016). It is no accident that many women have to walk several hours to find water, and more than two million people die each year due to its scarcity (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015). Many experts predict that oil reserves will be depleted and that half of our forests will be destroyed in the not-too-distant future. According to Collier (2003), an expert in the economics of civil wars, in 2001, around 50 armed conflicts were related to the exploitation (legal or illegal) of natural resources, triggering, intensifying, or maintaining them. The survey also points out that wars today last more than twice as long as they did in 1980, as it is apparently easier to finance them (World Bank Group, 2016).

Naturally, the resources are focused more on the ones that can produce big profits, such as drinking water, wood, minerals, and oil, which are a real curse for those countries that own them, do not diversify their economies and thus become a pasture for mismanagement and corruption, let alone the assault from foreign powers. On the other hand, it should be noted that it is this conflictive basis that truly exacerbates widespread struggles in the political, economic, cultural, and religious domains. We believe that, as in many other areas, structural change requires intervention upstream, that is, in terms of education itself and also of engaging with eco-justice ethics. It also entails many forms of expressing that things are not what they should be through “truth-telling” and several forms of resistance. As we are never devoid of power, resistance is always possible. As Emerson (1962, p. 32) has stated, “The power of actor A over actor B is the amount of resistance on the part of B that can be potentially overcome by actor A”. Now, one must conclude that, conversely, the more resistance B can present to A, the less power A can really exercise over B. Thus, the point now is to define the lines of resistance to pursue, particularly in the field of education, although we should not lose the global puzzle perspective. Once power entails more than force and is always relational, in such a way that no one is ever completely left without any power at all, one should also consider the possibilities of resistance by creating zones of uncertainty regarding compliance with power (Carvalho, 2014). This could mean negotiation, complaint, denunciation, rejection, and also a subversion, namely the subversion of the current strategies of masked domination. The fact that we have opted for an eco-justice ethics, taking love as a core value, does not mean we have become irenicists, supporting the idea that “There is no good war and no bad peace”. But we are aware that “whoever fights with monsters should see to it that he does not become one himself.” (Nietzsche, 2002, 69, §146). Given the deadlock to which we have arrived, it is to be hoped that we will want to appeal in order to compose ethics able to support existence in the world with others, or, better said, otherness, to face the conundrums of our raving present. We figure that the pedagogy of hope is necessary, but hope implies the future, so we cannot renounce taking care of the future. Such a prospect seems to correspond to the anthropological framework that considers humanity and people as being rooted in the present, while carried by a past and pulled by the future of the projects they inwardly nurture.

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