

## **AUTHORITY, BOND, AND KNOWLEDGE IN EDUCATION: TRANSMITTING A TESTIMONY OF DESIRE**

*Autoridad, vínculo y saber en educación. Transmitir un  
testimonio de deseo*

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to address the issue of authority in education and to provide some keys to building a position of desire in educators, while at the same time inspiring passion and a desire for knowledge in learners. The crisis of authority affects all of us who, as teachers and educators, represent a part of the symbolic system and institutional order that enables social bond. Therefore, from an educational standpoint, it is worth asking what kind of authority should be built for educators to continue fulfilling their educational role.

The well-known essay entitled «The Crisis in Education» by German philosopher Hannah Arendt allows us, in a first line of reflection, to situate and update the social, cultural and pedagogical changes that have weakened authority in the field of education. Our analysis then turns to the questioning and reformulation of the knowledge to be imparted in school, a process that has shifted the role of educators towards more ambiguous and confusing tasks and responsibilities. The question of what pedagogical actions would serve to restore the bond and authority in education places the desire for knowledge on the part of educators at the centre of the discussion. In this regard, our proposal explores how one can assume the responsibility of education through a determined commitment to transmit a testimony of desire, that is, a way of engaging with the world and knowledge, thus seeking a path towards reviving the educational bond between educator and learner and, with it, the social bond between generations.

*Keywords:* educational theory; teacher authority; teaching; educational content; pedagogical practice.

## RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo parte del problema de la autoridad en la educación a fin de proporcionar algunas claves que permitan construir una posición de deseo en el educador y despertar la pasión y el deseo de saber en el sujeto de la educación. La crisis de la autoridad nos toca de lleno a todas aquellas personas que, como maestros, profesores y educadores, representamos algo del sistema simbólico y el orden institucional que hace posible el lazo social. Así pues, desde el punto de vista educativo, cabe preguntarse por el tipo de autoridad que habría que poder construir para que los agentes de la educación puedan seguir desempeñando su función educativa.

El conocido ensayo titulado «La crisis de la educación» de la filósofa alemana Hannah Arendt nos permite situar y actualizar, en una primera línea reflexiva, los cambios sociales, culturales y pedagógicos que han debilitado la autoridad en el campo educativo. Posteriormente, centramos el análisis en el cuestionamiento y la reformulación de los saberes que hay que transmitir en la escuela, un proceso que ha desplazado el rol docente hacia funciones más borrosas y confusas. La pregunta en torno a los actos pedagógicos que permitirían recuperar el vínculo y la autoridad educativa sitúa el deseo de saber del agente de la educación en el centro de la discusión. En este contexto, nuestra propuesta explora cómo asumir la responsabilidad de la función educativa mediante el compromiso decidido de transmitir un testimonio de deseo, es decir, una forma de relacionarse con el mundo y con el saber, buscando así una vía que permita revitalizar el vínculo educativo entre el educador y el sujeto de la educación y, con él, el lazo social entre las generaciones.

*Palabras clave:* teoría de la educación; autoridad del docente; enseñanza; contenido de la educación; práctica pedagógica.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to address the issue of authority in the educator-learner relationship and to consider how it affects the construction of educational bond. Insofar as social bond are underpinned by the symbolic and cultural structures that order the world and govern social relationships (that still most painful source of human suffering, as Freud (1994) argued in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, when confronted with the decay of the body and the supremacy of nature), it is important to explore what these structures can do today to inscribe subjects into the symbolic order that governs society.

The crisis of authority affects all of us who, as educators, form part of the symbolic system and institutional order that make social bond possible. This crisis reminds us that there is always a limit to education. Freud himself (1975, p. 249, 2006, p. 23) warned that educating, like governing and healing, was an impossible profession. Given this warning, this structural limit, the question is what kind of authority could be restored, or more precisely, what actions would give educators the authority they need to fulfil their symbolic purpose, a purpose that supports the creation of social bond.

Indeed, education is a practice and discourse that forms social bond. According to Frigerio (2017, p. 44), it occupies a place, exerts a presence, and intervenes in the lives of others. It therefore fulfils a «civilising function», as Kant (1991, p. 9) would say, regulating the «jouissance of drive» based on a certain symbolic order (Tizio, 2003, p. 165). We understand discourse here in terms of Jacques Lacan (2006), that is, as something that institutes a framework of symbolic references, a structure that delimits how individuals relate to each other and how social interactions are established. Lacan identified four discourses: the discourse of the Master, the discourse of the Hysteric, the discourse of the University and the discourse of the Analyst. Each discourse, except for the Analyst, determines a different type of social bond, understood as a form of domination, which ultimately points to the social function of discourse around the forms that knowledge takes in the present.

We will not describe the structure of Lacan's four discourses here. We refer to them only to situate education within the structure of university discourse. This structure delimits the position of educators, learners, and knowledge in the construction of the educational bond. The term «university», as the reader may have gathered, refers not only to the institution but also to the logic that governs formal education, a logic that seeks to transmit established and systematised knowledge. In this respect, university discourse represents the hegemony of knowledge. «In all pedagogy supported by university discourse», writes Koreck (2022), «it is a matter of domesticating jouissance through knowledge» (p. 75). The authority of educators therefore derives from this knowledge. They are the

formal guarantors of knowledge. But what happens when knowledge ceases to be the source of authority that makes the educational relationship possible? Since the role of educators is (mainly, but not exclusively) to transmit knowledge, how can they maintain authority based on knowledge that has lost its place or is profoundly challenged as the central pillar of the educational relationship? What are the implications of this loss for the construction of the educational bond? If, in Herbart's (1983) didactic triangle, knowledge is part of the vertex that makes the educational bond between educator and learner possible, what happens when this knowledge is taken out of the picture? What takes its place? What can we do with it?

In this scenario of transformation and questioning of knowledge as the exclusive source of authority in education, it becomes imperative to explore new forms of legitimacy and pedagogical authority building. How can we redefine the role of the educator and the role of knowledge in the construction of the educational bond when traditional structures are being challenged? The answer to these questions will not only redefine the nature of authority in education, but also open the door to a deeper reflection on the purpose and dynamics of the educational process and the reconstruction of social bond in contemporary society.

## 2. AUTHORITY IN EDUCATION

There are two main reasons for asking these questions. Before going into them, we should mention a third reason that is beyond the scope of this article, which has to do with the authoritarian drift in our societies, a consequence of the crisis of authority in the present age (Bassols, 2020). The first main reason stems from the conviction that education, and therefore teaching, cannot be done without authority. Thus, as Gert Biesta (2017) argues in *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, learning in its deepest sense can only take place if the learner recognises the authority of the teacher. This conviction, it should be said at the outset, has nothing to do, as Biesta (2017) argues, with conservative calls for the return of the teacher as a figure of authority and control (that is, an *authoritarian* figure). However, for their authority to be recognised, educators must first claim authority themselves, which brings us to the second main reason that has led us to reflect on this issue. The adults who are supposed to play this role of symbolic authority have become somewhat inhibited. In all too many cases, these adults withdraw and shirk their responsibilities. Often, they are deeply confused. Of course, this is a long-standing phenomenon. If we analyse it from an educational point of view, it seems as if educators do not believe in their role, do not know how to fulfil it (overwhelmed as they are by the demands of innovation) or simply do not give themselves the authority to do so, even if they sometimes appear heavy-handed (and therefore highly authoritarian) in enforcing the rules,

protocols and regulations that govern today's educational institutions, a clear sign of their own powerlessness.

Hannah Arendt addressed this in her well-known essay «The Crisis in Education», where she noted a drift in the American education system. The overthrow of «all traditions and all the established methods of teaching» (Arendt, 1996, p. 190) to reform education, the German author wrote, is based on a misunderstanding of «modern» and «progressive» pedagogies around the concept of authority, on which three «counterproductive and senseless» assumptions are based. Let us look at them briefly.

The first of these assumptions has to do with the fact that children's experiences are not formed in relation to adults' experiences. The experience of each group begins and ends in different worlds. It is based on the premise, as we can see today in various strands of so-called alternative pedagogy, such as non-directive teaching, that children must govern themselves without the influence of adult authority. Everything rests on the child group, on its interests and demands, and it is this group that ends up exercising authority over each individual child, free from the authority of adults. If this is so, it is because the first to reject authority was adults themselves, who did not want to assume their responsibilities. However, the problem of authority is not gone, but transferred from the individual adult-child relationship into the child group. Each child is thus subject to the pressure of the peer group, which is in constant danger of exercising stronger and more tyrannical authority than any individual adult ever could. We will not dwell here on how cruel children can be to each other, or on the cost to adolescents of having to conform to their peer group and adopt the styles and behaviours of the clan. In some ways, phenomena such as the various forms of school bullying are a good example of this. The main flaw in this assumption, according to Hannah Arendt, is the belief that children have a world of their own, separate from the adult world, and that it is not possible for these two worlds to interact. The assumption is that there are two separate realms of experience rather than a single shared world, which prevents adults from taking responsibility for children.

The second assumption has to do with teaching. Here, Hannah Arendt draws attention to the damage caused by the fact that pedagogy, «under the influence of modern psychology and the tenets of pragmatism» (Arendt, 1996, p. 193), has become emancipated from the specific material to be taught; in other words, teaching has detached itself from knowledge. The crisis in education is therefore the result of knowledge losing its social value. Today, this has become even more serious because, according to Luri (2020), we are witnessing the degradation of knowledge in the classroom for the sake of entertainment and the mastery of a set of competences devoid of ideas and content. Under this assumption, teachers become experts in a particular methodology or learning technique, while at the same time losing the most legitimate source of their authority: the mastery of a

subject, their knowledge, which is what they ultimately have to transmit to their students, insofar as they are someone who, «turn it whatever way one will, still knows more and can do more than oneself» (Arendt, 1996, p. 194). The moment they are told that «they don't need to know anything» or that «they have nothing to transmit», as Bellamy (2018) denounces in *Los desheredados* [*The Disinherited*], because «children should set off on their own in search of their knowledge, their moral decisions and their destiny» (Bellamy, 2018, p. 20), they are demeaned and discredited. In this context, teachers become figures who must settle for organising «the conditions for their students' learning» (Bellamy, 2018, p. 122), facilitators, simple companions, competence coaches or learning outcome supervisors, but not figures capable of fostering –as Professor Bárcena (2018) puts it– an intellectual, ethical, and existential bond with their students.

Finally, the third assumption identified by Hannah Arendt concerns the conceptual expression of learning. Here, the *learning by doing* approach advocated by John Dewey (1967) takes on an overriding value, substituting *learning for doing*. Although Arendt overlooked some of the warnings that Dewey himself had written about, the key point here is that, according to the German philosopher, teachers stop imparting knowledge because they start inculcating skills and abilities. There is no content worth teaching because all the focus is on procedures and skills acquisition. *Know-how* takes precedence over *knowledge* itself, «motivating students to action rather than directing action towards knowledge» (Luri, 2020, p. 77). Knowledge in itself is useless, worthless, and therefore tradition is silenced. In turn, play, understood as the quintessential activity of childhood, replaces work and effort. The trade-off in defending this assumption is that the child is kept at the infant level. Everything that should prepare children for the adult world, the gradually acquired habit of working and not playing, is done away with in favour of the autonomy of the world of childhood.

This assumption treats the world of childhood and the pragmatic formula, that is, the link between doing and knowing, as well as the way children learn through play, as absolutes. This does not mean that play is not an important activity for learning. It is known to foreshadow future performance and is essential for children's psychological development. What Arendt (1996) stresses is its absoluteness. When teaching is deprived of content, when the scientific and cultural heritage handed down by tradition is disregarded, the classroom becomes a simple space for recreation and entertainment, consolidating the existence of a world of childhood parallel to the world of adults; a world of its own, autonomous, and artificial, governed by different rules.

One cannot educate, therefore, without teaching. This is one of the key ideas we can glean from Arendt's essay. Education without learning is an empty act and can therefore degenerate, as the German author writes, into the «moral emotional rhetoric» (Arendt, 1996, p. 208) that has taken over our schools today. In other words, instead of showing children the world or teaching them about it, they

are pushed to look at themselves (Simons & Masschelein, 2014). They are told that they must learn to manage their emotions, to strengthen their self-esteem, which is attributed a central role in coping with individual and social discomfort (Ecclestone, 2004), to promote their talents and their full potential (Bornhauser & Garay, 2023), and so on, but all of this has the effect of locking them in their own inner selves, in a childish narcissism, without the possibility of «cultivating a studious disposition towards the world» (Larrosa, 2019, p. 132) or acquiring the tools to interpret it so that they can act within it and renew it.

We would do well to heed Arendt's warning about moral emotional rhetoric. Indeed, the reason why it has become so central to educational discourse in recent years (Solé & Moyano, 2017; Prieto, 2018; Azrak, 2020; Cabanas & González-Lamas, 2021) is that there is something about knowledge, transmission and learning that seems to be insufficient. For learning to be possible— and every child has a need to learn —there must be someone willing to teach. But what can be taught today?

### 3. THE PLACE OF KNOWLEDGE

Considering the above, we need to ask ourselves about the place of knowledge, that part of the world that can be taught today. There may have been a time when authority was rooted in knowledge. With the Enlightenment, access to knowledge became the new condition for social and political existence, for full membership in society. «Dare to know! Have the courage to use your own understanding! Do not accept dogmas and prejudices without questioning them! Your autonomy and freedom depend on it», pleaded Immanuel Kant (2004, p. 87) in *What is Enlightenment?* Although the Königsberg-born philosopher attached certain conditions to this proclamation (he famously reserved the freedom to use one's own understanding for the educated), later emancipatory discourses made the literacy of the people, for example, a front in the class struggle. At the height of the labour movement in Spain, hundreds of cultural centres (known locally as *ateneos populares*) were built for this purpose: to extend culture to the people as a means of liberation and self-determination (Calvo, 2010). With the progressive establishment of national education systems, academic degrees gradually replaced aristocratic titles. Thus, until relatively recently, it was considered that studying or having an academic qualification conferred certain advantages, opened the possibility of social mobility and allowed one to make plans for the future (Rendueles, 2020). In a way, education was situated in time and its benefits were justified in terms of tomorrow. This has since come to an end. According to the philosopher Marina Garcés (2020b, p. 140), education can no longer keep its promises. Besides, the very conditions of knowledge have changed. It is still important in society and continues to influence the social division of labour and the jobs to which people can aspire. There has also been talk for years of the «knowledge society» as a fundamental pillar of economic progress. However, it is



one thing to regard the «knowledge economy» as a productive force in macroeconomic and geopolitical terms, and quite another to think about the knowledge at stake in education and transmission. These are different matters.

Knowledge is now presented as something disjointed. We can no longer speak of it in the singular, but in its multiple *forms* and, more importantly, in terms of «essential and desirable» learnings, to quote César Coll (2021), one of the co-creators of the new schooling model in Spain. This is even reflected in the country's new curriculum regulations. It is a premise that has disrupted the disciplines and fields of knowledge by which subjects were previously organised, that is, the institutionalisation of knowledge that had become the cornerstone of a whole system of institutionalised teaching, educational levels, and class attendance. Perhaps there is no need to be nostalgic about this. In a way, it opens scenarios linked to cross-disciplinarity (Huerta & Suárez, 2020). However, this reality has shown, then and now, that the forms of knowledge taught in schools are the result of choices that are not natural at all but depend on the prevailing social relations.

All sociological critiques of social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron -1981, 2009-, Bernstein -2001-) on the forms of language transmitted at school through the primacy of an «elaborated code» over the «restricted code» of students from families and communities with low levels of education, etc.) raise questions, for example, about the kind of knowledge that schools legitimise. Who is more likely to succeed at school? Students from families with greater economic and cultural resources. The forms of knowledge and skills valued by the education system are therefore neither universal nor objective, but specific to the dominant culture. As a result, those who do not share the dominant culture are less likely to succeed in the education system and in society in general. The knowledge that is transmitted (and acquired) in schools is never outside the social structure in which it is framed. It is a social and historical construct, which is why Bourdieu and Passeron (1981) say that «all pedagogic action is symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary» (p. 27), an arbitrary that serves to reinforce the social hegemony of the «heirs» of the cultural goods that constitute legitimate culture, a privilege of the dominant classes; to establish distinctions and differentiate hierarchies on the basis of cultural capital, creating a means of recognition and distinction; and, in short, to reproduce social inequalities through the *teaching system*, thus legitimising the status quo (Vicente & Pich, 2020). This is the arbitrary on which educational authority was also previously legitimised.

In addition to the arguments of critical sociology, questions are now being raised from decolonial thinking, which proposes a critical re-examination of the knowledge and practices imposed as universal in schools from a Eurocentric and Western perspective, in order to decolonise the forms of knowledge and



epistemologies that have been marginalised by hegemonic thinking. Today, there is a whole movement to reclaim the *epistemologies of the South*, that is, knowledge produced from a situated perspective of the global South, which has been excluded until now, and to challenge the hegemony of Eurocentric logos (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007; Quijano, 2022). It is a dispute over the interpretation of knowledge and social issues, in the sense that the paradigms legitimised in the West are intertwined with the forms of social action and corporate knowledge production inherent in the post-Fordist processes of capital accumulation. We have therefore arrived at a point where the legitimate knowledge of schools is being questioned, insofar as this knowledge derives from hegemonic narratives and ways of thinking that can no longer be imposed as universal because they produce and perpetuate relations of domination.

So how possible is it to establish any kind of hierarchy around knowledge? The fragmentary and relative nature of knowledge was already noted in Western postmodern discourse (Lyotard, 1984). All forms of knowledge, all cultural productions, have equal value. «Puss in Boots is equal to Shakespeare», lamented the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut (1987) in *The Defeat of the Mind* in the late 1980s. In its wake, we now find that this relativism of knowledge has only intensified. As Bronner (2022) has shown in *Apocalypse cognitive*, in the age of the internet and social media, the boom of information and consumable knowledge has become a constant in the lives of contemporary citizens. This symbolic omnipresence thrives in a deregulated and horizontal environment, devoid of intermediating experts or critical authorities, leading to the proliferation of false narratives that are used to manipulate people's opinions and behaviour. Moreover, according to Gozávez et al. (2021), «what is published is no longer just better-or-worse-reasoned content in the strong sense of its meaning, but increasingly 'impact', such that it can evade any filter of quality, contrast, or veracity» (p. 36).

In the age of post-truth, fake news, and alternative reality, in the age of excessive displays of emotional and egocentric narratives through social media, anything goes. What counts is the personal narrative, the reaffirmation of identity, the narcissism of small differences, the truth of everyone, validated by the confirmation bias supplied by the algorithm. All knowledge becomes legitimate, all knowledge is authentic, all knowledge is truth; a subjective truth that depends on the way everyone relates to and evokes the facts. Therefore, any knowledge that flows through the metaverse (metaverse being understood here as a metaphor for the accelerated digital world in which our lives are strung together) is more significant to learners and has a much more valuable and revealing impact on their existence than anything that can be taught to them in school (Ubieto & Arroyo, 2022). This makes it exceedingly difficult to transmit or share a minimum amount of common and lasting knowledge that favours encounters and is not lost in the programmed obsolescence of the accelerated times in which we live.

There is a final shift in knowledge that affects all levels of the education system. This is the shift from content-based curricula to *competence-based curricula*, which conveys «a strategic, instrumental, utilitarian image of education» (Esteban & Gil Cantero, 2022, p. 20). The competences in these curricula are also intended to ensure the achievement of «learning outcomes», which, due to their supposedly measurable and objectifiable nature, are a key indicator of the efficacy of the system or of any pedagogical proposal, whether to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of the educational process or to produce accountability reports for the sake of public policy-making, through the implementation of standardised assessments capable of supplying evidence. They are also an indicator of the «learnification» shift in teaching, to use the neologism proposed by Gert Biesta (2017), and the insistence that the priority is not the transmission of knowledge, but «learning to learn».

This has several consequences. Talking about learning, as imposed by the constructivist common sense of teaching, amounts to nothing if it is not related to a piece of content, a guideline and an object. According to Biesta (2017), the goal of education «is never just that students learn, but that they learn something and that they learn it for specific reasons» (p. 81), not to mention learning it from someone. «The language of learning», the Dutch philosopher writes, «has made it extremely difficult to address the question of the object» (Biesta, 2017, p. 81); hardly any attention is paid to it. Moreover, «the fact that 'learning' is an individualistic and individualising term», insofar as one can only learn for oneself (that is, no one can learn for another), «[...] has shifted attention away from the importance of relationships in educational processes and practices, and thus made it much more difficult to explore what the particular responsibilities and tasks of education professionals actually are» (Biesta, 2017, pp. 81–82). In the words of Blanca Thoilliez (2022), «the autonomous learner eclipses the always necessary transmission movement» (p. 67) and thus the educational role of these professionals. As the focus is on learning, «the ability of teachers to engage in the regulatory and policy areas of their work» ends up having a «negative impact» (Biesta, 2017, p. 82).

The discourse of learning, as obvious as it may seem, ultimately raises profound questions about the place that the object of learning should occupy. The centrality that has been given in recent years to the competence of *learning to learn* shows just how much the real interest lies in controlling learning processes themselves in order to adapt them to the times and to the demands of the tasks and activities that lead to learning. Note in this statement the meaning of the terms used in official documents. It is therefore about learning to manage one's own behaviour.

From these approaches -writes Marina Garcés (2020a, p. 39)- learning to learn has to do with the organisation and management of learning in any context and always

with the same criteria: making procedures more efficient and adaptable to all kinds of tasks and requirements

We are therefore dealing with «an adaptive virtue that combines tactical, strategic, and motivational aspects» (Garcés, 2020a, p. 39), a discourse that reduces the educational task to the promotion of behaviours that can be subjected to different strategies of control and self-regulation. As we have explained in a previous paper, the shift towards competence-based education, supported by the discourse of emotional education, only reinforces this idea (Solé, 2020).

#### **4. AN IDEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL WAR AGAINST YOUNG PEOPLE**

In *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*, Henry Giroux (2018) points out that this shift towards competence-based education also involves a real «ideological war» against the younger generations, a war to shape identities, desires, forms of subjectivity and, in short, ways of living.

Recent curricular reforms have moved in this direction, focusing on competence-based teaching and a kind of vulgar vocational and professionalising instrumentalisation aimed at churning out specialists, technocrats, and skilled workers. All the rhetoric about meritocracy and talent promotion only reinforces the instrumental vision of education, together with a sort of anti-intellectualism bent on preparing new generations for the jobs of the future, in which progress itself is no less at stake, but which no one is able to fathom. The cultural value of education has been overshadowed by a kind of vague vocational training whose sole purpose is to «fulfill the need for human capital» (Giroux, 2018, p. 76). Moreover, this training is expected to be continuous and lifelong, and is subject to the predatory market of micro-credentials. It is a process intended to develop a broad portfolio of (provisional and replaceable) professional skills with which everyone, having become their own self-entrepreneurs, must launch the most competitive I-brand product on a labour market that offers few prospects and great insecurity.

The ideological framework that can (and must) be reconstructed from the discourse of competence-based education implies an insular understanding of knowledge, which it prefers to be technical, instrumental and vocational; a kind of knowledge divorced from social problems and public affairs, creating a culture of critical incompetence that, according to Giroux (2018), undermines the conditions that would otherwise empower students to become political agents committed to social action. Instead, it argues for a form of education geared towards the acquisition of the most marketable learning skills, or «verifiable skills aimed at producing economic success», to quote the philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2011, p. 19). This means embracing an ethos of competitiveness and survival of the fittest in the agonising struggle for economic capital.

Of course, we are aware that pursuing an education implies in some way the need to work and earn a living, given that self-sufficiency is the privilege of the few. But should we reduce the pedagogical rationale to strictly economic considerations? Is it only functional learning, competences and skills best adapted to a world reduced to one big global market that can give meaning to school? Is there a way of organising some form of resistance to the cultural and ideological war being waged against the new generations?

## 5. TRANSMITTING A DESIRE FOR KNOWLEDGE

As we have seen, the knowledge to be transmitted in school is being questioned and reformulated. Criticism is also being levelled at the very idea of transmission, that «materialisation of the kind of love for the world that moves many to the practice of teaching», as Thoilliez (2022, p. 65) puts it. Does all this not necessarily imply a shift in the role of teachers towards more imprecise, blurred, and confused tasks? What are the implications, for example, of conceiving of teachers as entertainers, companions, facilitators, learning environment designers, content curators or even educational coaches, as some of today's pedagogical models advocate, while disdaining any inclination towards their desire to transmit and share the world with new generations?

We must also consider the place of digital technologies in today's world and their use in designing instructional learning processes and personalised, programmed teaching devices, as well as the impact on education of advances in the Internet of Things and generative artificial intelligence. What do these realities mean for the transformation of teachers' role in education? Technological and digital devices are now at the centre of attention as the newest educational agents, but does this mean that they are replacing the former educational authority of teachers? After all, we are clearly dealing with new educational agents –which have become an end in themselves– and not just technological resources and didactic tools (Suárez-Guerrero et al., 2020; García del Dujo et al., 2021). So, to return to Lacan's structure of discourse, if authority depends on the place one occupies in that structure, what place do teachers and educators occupy today, given the changing status of knowledge and the conditions that prevent, hinder and limit its possibilities of transmission? What can we do from this place?

In our view, we need to construct a position. «When we point to the position of the educator», argues Koreck (2022), «we are emphasising the question of desire and jouissance at stake in the performance of his role» (p. 83). Behind the struggle over what forms of knowledge should make up the curriculum, behind the dispute over new modes of transmission, new methodologies and didactic innovations, we may find the desire for knowledge. Koreck (2022) writes:

In order for the educator to be able to fulfil his role, to create in children and young people a desire for knowledge, to arouse their interest in *apprehending*, he must

himself be interested, driven by the desire to transmit; if this is not the case, knowledge remains a dead letter and does not *take root* in the body of learners, it has no effect on them (p. 83).

Could the desire for knowledge be a way to rebuild educational authority? The new generations have been growing up alone for too long. In fact, some, like the Italian psychoanalyst and writer Massimo Recalcati (2014), have defined the current state of youth in terms of the «Telemachus complex», a myth that evokes a spiritual reality in which today's young people can see their sorrows reflected. Telemachus, the son of Odysseus, awaits his father's return to Ithaca after his departure for the Trojan War. The Telemachus complex represents this often disconsolate and impotent waiting for the father figure. More than this figure, however, what young people are waiting for today is someone willing to fulfil the *paternal role*. Although the splendour and power of this role –as long organised at every level of the social fabric– have been fading for many decades, we are now facing new generations who have had to grow up in an era that has rejected any «educational activity that assumes vertical responsibility for their education» (Recalcati, 2014, p. 117). No one takes responsibility for the act of educating; no one claims authority over it.

We know only too well how this translates into the field of education, and there is certainly a long-standing debate about it. The sacred respect for children's interests and spontaneous creation, which, as we have said, is a strong feature of pedagogical models that defend active and non-directive education, is currently being taken to such an extreme that it can no longer hide the symptom of resignation, of having given up. When teachers defend pedagogical abstention, they abandon children to themselves, with all the consequences we have discussed above, not to mention the effect of reproducing social inequalities by disregarding differences of class, gender, socio-cultural origin, and so on. But let us be clear. Far from wanting to reinstate a disciplinary model of education (which is not what «vertical responsibility» is about), we must understand that children cannot educate themselves alone as learners; they will always need the action of another, someone willing to exercise, in the words of Meirieu (2016), the «duty to educate» (p. 134). For Recalcati (2014), the demand for a father that pervades the discontent of today's youth is not a demand for power and discipline, but a demand for testimony. More than restoring a merely repressive and disciplinary authority, they demand actions, choices, and passions capable of providing testimony, a certain model of how to inhabit the world with desire and at the same time responsibility, in order to make the world make sense.

We must therefore appeal to our responsibility as educators. The French philosopher Georges Gusdorf (2019) described this responsibility, stating that the teacher is a mediator in the existence of the other, as what is at stake is the *edification* of a personality. In this sense, we are obliged to give testimony of

how we interact with the world and knowledge. It is this way of engaging with knowledge, of embodying the desire for it, that allows us to transform what we teach and transmit –the objects of knowledge– into objects of desire, objects that arouse desire. It is then up to each person to choose their objects of desire. We may not (and most likely will not) see it, but it will be our own desire for knowledge that will leave an imprint on the desire of the other. For the etymological meaning of teaching is to show or persuade the other, «which obviously does not mean», as Furman (2022) cautions, «teaching a piece of knowledge, but mostly showing the way to know it» (p. 102). What is transmitted is the desire that is brought into play.

So, what is our desire? Do we have a profound desire for what we teach about this world? These are perhaps the only pedagogical questions we can ask ourselves if we really want to offer the new generations a form of testimony that not only connects them to the world, but also resists the ideological and cultural war that is being waged against them.

In other words, our desire for knowledge is a partisan desire. Let us put it into action as a way of building a bond between educator and learner, let us involve our educational practices in transmission (Thoilliez, 2022), let us give our own testimony about our desire for knowledge (Recalcati, 2016) and our love for the things in the world that we consider valuable and that we must succeed in passing on and transmitting to new generations (Thoilliez et al., 2022). Otherwise, we will end up offering only absence, an uprooted life stripped of meaning, and the guarantee of an authoritarian future for lack of an educational authority supported by desire.

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