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## **NARRATIVE IDENTITY IN EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS: PROMISE, SOLICITUDE AND GIFT**

*Identidad narrativa en la relación educativa: promesa,  
solicitud y don*

Rodrigo MORENO APONTE\* & Eduardo S. VILA MERINO\*\*

\**University of Otavalo. Ecuador.*

*dp\_moreno@uotavalo.edu.ec*

*<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1293-5682>*

\*\**University of Málaga. Spain.*

*eduardo@uma.es*

*<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8598-7654>*

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### ABSTRACT

This article proposes the possibility of relating Paul Ricoeur's philosophical proposal on the self with the ethical experience of education. The starting point is a narrative identity that is constructed in the midst of a scenario in which the subject changes as they develop (*ipse* identity), as opposed to a fixed, immutable identity (*idem* identity). On this narrative plane, education is presented as a space for dialogue where the experience of the educator and the learner take on particular relevance. From here, the text turns to the concepts of solicitude, promise and gift, which have recognition and mutuality between the self and the other at their very heart. Solicitude,

as an ethical relationship, does not expect any recognition of the self by the other. Any movement from the self to the other implies an implicit mutuality that involves giving without expecting a response. The synthesis of these concepts leads to the possibility of a pedagogy of ipseity. Here, the relationship between educator and learner coalesces in mutual recognition through the development of their narrative identity. The educational relationship takes place in the midst of the solicitude that the self makes to the other. Education, as seen from the solicitude in the construction of the *ipse* identity, allows us to see the school experience as something unfinished and in constant change. Mutuality in the school favours the exchange of gifts. A narrative perspective mediated by mutual recognition is therefore a propitious place for the ethical event of alterity in the educational action.

*Keywords:* educational theory; school; educational philosophy; identity; teacher-student relationship.

## RESUMEN

En este artículo se propone la posibilidad de relacionar la propuesta filosófica de Paul Ricoeur sobre el sí mismo con la experiencia ética de la educación. Se parte de la propuesta de la identidad narrativa que se construye en medio de una trama en la que el sujeto cambia a medida que ésta se desarrolla (identidad *ipse*), a diferencia de una identidad fija e inmutable (identidad *idem*). La educación en este plano narrativo se presenta como un espacio de conversación donde la experiencia del educador y educando cobra relevancia. A partir de esto, el texto se dirige a los conceptos de solicitud, promesa y don que tienen como eje el reconocimiento y la mutualidad entre el sí mismo y el otro. La relación ética de la solicitud no espera el reconocimiento del otro al sí mismo. El movimiento que se plantea del sí mismo hacia el otro lleva implícita una mutualidad que significa un dar sin esperar el retorno de una respuesta. La síntesis de estos conceptos lleva a plantear la posibilidad de una pedagogía de la ipseidad. Aquí, la relación entre educador y educando se cohesionan en el reconocimiento mutuo a partir del desarrollo de su identidad narrativa. La relación educativa acontece en medio de la solicitud que el sí mismo hace del otro. La educación vista desde la solicitud en la construcción de la identidad *ipse* permite ver la experiencia de la escuela como algo inacabado y en cambio constante. La mutualidad en la escuela propicia el intercambio de dones. De esta manera, una perspectiva narrativa mediada por el reconocimiento mutuo es un lugar propicio para el acontecimiento ético de la alteridad en la acción educativa.

*Palabras clave:* teoría de la educación; escuela; filosofía de la educación; identidad; relación maestro-alumno.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article offers a reflection on some contributions of the philosopher Paul Ricoeur and how his postulates can be transferred to the pedagogical field, providing fertile ground for the development of a philosophy of education around what we refer to as pedagogy of ipseity. We will therefore delve deeper into Ricoeur's ideas

in relation to the question under consideration, to finally see the emerging pedagogical elements and carry out a theoretical-educational construction on this basis.

Human beings, in our relationships with others and with ourselves, tend to be constantly constructing narratives involving a special type of discourse that allows us to think, organise knowledge and interpret reality, emerging as particular reconstructions of human experience —individual or collective— by which meaning is assigned and argumentation and time shape meaning. In keeping with Bruner (1997), there is probably a dialectical relationship whereby we learn narrative through the lifeworld and the lifeworld through narrative. This author starts off from a conception in which he understands narrative as a structure to organise our knowledge, and as an essential vehicle in every educational process.

Ricoeur is one of the philosophers who has worked most on this subject. In his work *Time and Narrative* (1987), he took his hermeneutic conception to a coming together of explanation and understanding, where interpretation enjoys a practical status which entwines freedom and solidarity. For Ricoeur, every narrative is characterised by the fact it occupies a specific time, assuming an order in the sequence of an action structured as a text, i.e. interpretable and endowed with meaning. Indeed, for Ricoeur this narrative structure is a condition for personal identity, since it is when we have such identity, whether as individuals or collectively, that we construct the world of our actions. Hence the importance of understanding narrative identity, as developed below, and its role in educational relationships.

It is important to remember that education takes on meaning and being in the relationship with the other, looking after, accompanying and helping them. Educational relationships play an important role in developing the concept of alterity (Vila, 2019). Particularly worthy of note in this regard are the ideas put forward by Lévinas, where alterity must be understood as the radical difference from the other, what the other is (which is different from what the self could ever be), and where, before all knowledge, there is ethics, in which responsibility with the other is expressed from the commitment of an ethical relationship.

The intersubjective relationship is asymmetrical. In this sense, I am responsible for the other without expecting reciprocity, even if it costs me my life. Reciprocity is the other's business. Precisely to the extent that the relationship between the self and the other is not reciprocal, I am subject to the other, and I am 'subject' essentially in this sense (Lévinas, 1991, p. 92).

Ricoeur, for his part, enters the ethical debate —which is key to all pedagogical knowledge— by defining ethical aspiration through three terms: tend to a good life, with another and for another, in just institutions. The first is linked to self-esteem, understood as a reflective moment of praxis. The second, which Ricoeur calls solicitude, deploys the dialogical dimension implicit in self-esteem, because one cannot be lived and thought without the other:

reciprocity of the irreplaceables is the secret of the solicitude. [...] However, reciprocity does not exclude a certain inequality, as happens in the submission of the disciple to

the teacher; in any case, inequality is corrected by the recognition of superiority of the teacher, a recognition that re-establishes reciprocity (Ricoeur, 2002, p. 292).

All this comes within a concept of distributive justice, related to equity. In this context, we consider the permanent consideration and presence of the other in education to be essential (Bárcena, 2012; Pallarés y Chiva, 2017); here, the defined ethical aspiration becomes a place to come together in disposition, welcome and hospitality, from an experience that brings out one's own alterity and recognises it as a legitimate other in social harmony (Maturana, 1994). From here we should:

consider what happens to us when the other penetrates our knowledge, ideas, words, intentions, experiments and practices, not to reinforce or improve them, but rather to undermine their security and stability (Larrosa, 2009, p. 191).

All this ties in with Ricoeur's thinking around solicitude, insofar as alterity is found in the ethical demand that the presence of the other implies, how this conditions us and how the responsibility that emerges from this solicitude makes us delve deeper in these two essential values —freedom and equality— which are at the very heart of the construction of meaningful and emotional worlds. Here, the solicitude adds the dimension of value that makes each person irreplaceable in our esteem. In this sense, experiencing the irreparable character of loss of the other whom we love is where we learn, by transferring this other to ourselves, the irreplaceable character of our own life. Ethics and a pedagogy of alterity should therefore allow us to bring out, welcome, recognise and value the other, a specific other in space and time (with a context and a history), making us responsible for them, for their presence and development, for listening to them, since: «the pedagogy of silence, that of listening rather than speaking, should be the first practical lesson that every teacher should learn» (Martínez, Esteban, Jover y Payá, 2017, p. 45).

Here it is interesting to begin to introduce Ricoeur's concept of ipseity as an option to also construct ourselves for the other. Not in vain, as Skliar (2004) states: «to think of education in another way, which is nothing more than to think of another relationship with the other [...] is simply to dare weigh up selfhood in another way» (p. 14).

## **2. BEYOND RESPONSIBILITY AND EXTERNALITY: NARRATING OURSELVES IN EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

The direction we are now heading in leads us to the ideas of philosopher Paul Ricoeur. The French philosopher's phenomenological proposal takes up Husserl's response to the accusation of solipsism. He envisages the possibility of an intersubjectivity constructed from the self, where the other is constituted as the alter ego. The other would be an analogue of the self. The situation is problematic for Ricoeur, as evinced in *The Course of Recognition*:

[...] the experience that the other has of themselves will remain forever forbidden to me in its original form, even in the most favourable case of a confirmation of my presumptions drawn from the coherence of the physiognomic, gestural and verbal expressions deciphered on the body of the other. Only 'I' appears to myself 'presented'; the other—presumed analogue—remains 'apresented' (Ricoeur, 2006a, p. 323).

Intersubjectivity is made impossible because of the distance marked by the self from its own ego, which, even if it assumes the other ego as an equal, does not generate the link.

For Ricoeur, the Cartesian self that is framed within reason is crystal clear for modernity, but is not so clear when the identity of the subject appears, with this becoming indirect and complexly appropriated. The identity of the subject is dynamic and flows through the different situations of the past and present and the relationships of the account that become evident in the narrative of their life story.

It could be said that Ricoeur makes an effort to go beyond the determined self—fixed identity—in order to give openness to the self, which is narrated and escapes any channelisation that allows it to be immediately apprehended. In the conclusions of *Time and Narrative III*, Ricoeur outlines the idea of narrative identity that will gain more strength in *Onself as Another*. «The story tells the *who* of the action. *The very identity of the who is therefore nothing more than a narrative identity*» (Ricoeur, 1996, p. 997; italics in the original). Ricoeur then opens the way to an essential element for the matter in hand: the difference between *idem* and *ipse*. *Idem* is the fixed identity, while *ipse* is a changing identity mediated by the dynamism of the narrative. «The difference between *idem* and *ipse* is none other than the difference between a substantial or formal identity and the narrative identity» (Ricoeur, 1996, p. 998). *Idem* would become itself conformed by *ipse* in the narrative. The narrative fact contemplates the mutability of the subject as constitutive of its identity and, at the same time, of ipseity.

Complementary to this, Ricoeur states that «identity in the sense of *ipse* does not imply any affirmation about a pretended non-changing personality core» (Ricoeur, 2006b, p. XIII). The *ipse* does not make the *idem* disappear, but rather there is a dialectic between the two. The self is not static, but can change according to the contingencies of the life story. The self is examined in its narrative and in the cultural reality that comes from its relationship with the past narrated to its present.

The construction of narratives presents three elements which Ricoeur calls mimesis. «The first mimesis of narrative—to imitate or represent the action—is, above all, to understand beforehand what human action consists of: its semantics, its symbolic reality, its temporality» (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 130). This would be the historical pre-understanding that the subject has of reality from the direct reference of their experience of the world. In mimesis II we are already before the elaboration of the account, it being the middle ground between the author and the reader. In mimesis

III, a change is generated in the reader following the link with the narrative. All of this has important pedagogical derivations that we will see later on.

Ricoeur highlights three moments in which he argues why the plot (mimesis II) is a mediator once constructed. Firstly, because it mediates between the individuality of fragmented situations, making way for the cohesion of the whole story; secondly, because, when seeking out the whole account, effort lies in bringing together a range of events and characters to give meaning to the account, rather than remaining in situations that are detached from each other; and, thirdly, narrative unity requires both a temporal thread that gives chronological order to situations and also an act that configures the events that give meaning to the plot. For example, a film that begins with an ellipsis has no chronological relationship with the facts, although it does present an order when organised as an essential event from which the next event can be formed.

Moreover, ipseity does not only apply to the examination of the self, as it can also occur in a community that examines itself in relation to its cultural ancestry from the narratives that have constructed it. As this idea opens the way to the relationship between narrative identity and educational context, shouldn't the educational community be able to construct an interpretation of itself through its narratives?

After studying the links between Paul Ricoeur's bioethical concepts and educational action, Moratalla (2015) presents, from what he defines as *the heart of educational practice*, the threefold mimesis as follows:

The educational act comes from life (mimesis I; life of the student, of the teacher); it is not life (we are in class! The moment of mimesis II); and yet life changes, influencing life (mimesis III). We can therefore understand education as a process of mimesis of the everyday life of those directly involved in the educational act (p. 167).

The accounts of educators would also emerge on this level, where we listen to each other and ask ourselves: What is a narrative without someone to read it or listen to it? Without a recipient, it would be a simple monologue. For Moratalla, narration is an invitation to mutual listening in which educator and learners offer their stories-narratives. Accordingly, the learner is at the heart of the relationship between narrative identity and education, but both are narrators. They need each other.

### **3. PROMISE, SOLICITUDE AND GIFT IN THE CONSTITUTION OF IPSEITY**

Ricoeur proposes a movement on the part of the self towards the encounter: the self asks for the other. The self comes out to meet the other. The solicitude would be on the ethical plane in relation to the objective of living, but not the duty of normal morality. This is why, in Ricoeur, the hermeneutics of the self are

transformed into an ethics of self-esteem. It is an esteem that is directed towards the other and allows an interpretation of the self.

Within this movement of the solicitude is the promise and, with it, ipseity. As Ricoeur states in *The Course of Recognition*: «The predominance of ipseity is so abundant that the promise is easily evoked as a paradigm of ipseity» (Ricoeur, 2006a, p. 145). The dialectic of selfhood-ipseity evinced in narrative identity is maintained in the phenomenology of promise. Selfhood —framed in memory insofar as it is fixed and unchanging— gives way to the promise composed of ipseity as the determiner of the self that looks towards the future.

The promise commits in time to self-esteem. This obligation to keep the promise shows that the self is present, as it must be maintained over time, as proposed by Ricoeur (1993). The promise is evident in the relationship with the other:

The relationship between recognition in time and recognition before the other appears differently in the framework of the promise: the before-the-other comes to the fore, promising not only to the other, but also in the interest of the other; however, as in testimony, the promise may not be perceived or received, and may even be rejected, challenged or quarantined (Ricoeur, 2006a, p. 317).

The promise is susceptible to being rejected or put to the test, and is therefore attentive to whatever happens. The self is committed in the face of future action. This idea is developed further in *Love and Justice*: «to keep the promise is to keep the self in the identity of the one who has said it and who will do it tomorrow. Maintaining the self announces the self-esteem» (Ricoeur, 1993, p. 116).

A contradiction may arise in the relationship between promise and future time. If *idem* is sameness —immutable—, then how can the promise be *ipse* if it must be fixed in order to maintain the commitment in time?

The promise is immersed within the narrative. Narrative coheses life and can maintain its characteristics throughout changes in the subject. The promise takes shape in the encounter with the other, and this is part of the narrative plot as constitutive of a fragment of the story.

For us, the contradiction would not apply, since the promise is given in the midst of the construction of the plot from their life stories. In this framework, Ricoeur establishes the promise as follows:

To promise, in effect, is not only to promise that I will do something, but also that I will keep my promise. To keep one's word is therefore to ensure that the initiative has a succession, that it truly inaugurates a new course of things; in a word, that the present is not just an incidence, but the beginning of a continuation (Ricoeur, 1996, p. 997).

The movement towards the other that emerges in the promise is linked to the state of solicitude for the other. The opportunity to promise is solicited. Specifically, Ricoeur defines the solicitude as: «[...] the movement of the self towards the other,

which responds to the interpellation by the other. [...] To make the other my peer, such is the pretension of ethics with regard to self-esteem and solicitude» (Ricoeur, 1993, p. 108). This implies what for Ricoeur is at the heart of recognition, since, in the absence of the other, alterity would refer to the self. For Ricoeur, self-esteem cannot exist without solicitude by the other.

Moreover, Ricoeur shows that in a relationship where there is an inequality of power, the solicitude of the self towards the other would come to equal a mutual solicitude that starts from the compassion of the master. This idea can be found in a more nuanced way at *The Self as Other*. Here it is argued that this initial dissymmetry is offset by the recognition motivated by the movement of the solicitude:

In true sympathy, the self—whose power to act is, in principle, stronger than that of the other—is affected anew by all that the suffering other offers in return. Indeed, from the other who suffers comes a giving that does not draw precisely on power to act and exist but rather on weakness. Perhaps this is the supreme test of the solicitude: that the inequality of power comes to be compensated by an authentic reciprocity in the exchange, which, in the hour of agony, takes refuge in the shared murmur of voices or in the gentle shaking of hands (Ricoeur, 2006b, pp. 198-199).

Faced with this, Ricoeur poses the following question: «the solicitude responds to the esteem of the other for myself. But if this response were not in some way spontaneous, how could the solicitude not be reduced to a sad duty?» (Ricoeur, 2006b, p. 201). The answer would be found in the gift.

Ricoeur (2006a) assumes that dissymmetry is constitutive of the human relationship that is constructed in giving and receiving: «in a certain way, it persists in the background of the experiences of reciprocity and continues to show reciprocity as an always unfinished overcoming of dissymmetry» (p. 198). However, reciprocity by itself does not constitute mutual recognition.

Reciprocity is not akin to a mercantile transaction in which there is a forced exchange between the one who receives and the one who gives, finishing by means of the payment. Here there is reciprocity without mutuality. However, within the mutuality that Ricoeur refers to, the self does not seek recognition for recognition's sake. The statements *I am going to recognise* or *I want to be recognised* are not contemplated, but rather recognition resides in the symbolic situation of the gift. «The mutuality of recognition is anticipated in the before-the-other, but is not realised in it» (Ricoeur, 2006a, p. 317). Dissymmetry is present and may even go so far as to receive no response.

Dissymmetry must be assumed as constitutive of the recognition between the self and the other; or, in other words, to know oneself within the uncertainty of mutuality when the giver does not demand the response of the other. The gift, although directed towards the other, does not start from or situate itself in the other.



Mutuality moves away from a reciprocity that becomes implicit, obligatory or instrumental in relation to the mercantile exchange<sup>1</sup>. Ricoeur changes the perspective of the question from «why give back?» to «why give?»:

The commitment in the gift constitutes the gesture that initiates the whole process. The generosity of the gift gives rise not to a restitution, which, in the true sense, would cancel out the first gift, but rather as the response to an offering (Ricoeur, 2006a, p. 303).

Mutual recognition starts from the gift that does not expect anything to be given back, going through the other who receives the gift and who, in turn, knows that nothing is expected in return. The counter-gift—the return of the answer—is therefore disinterested. This dialectic translates to a symbolic mutual recognition.

The gift is based on generosity, with the absence of the need to give back in the interest of reciprocity leading to the appearance of what Ricoeur calls gratitude. Hence, unlike the give-receive and receive-return binomials that are on the plane of equivalences, gratitude does not seek a balance between what is given and what is returned. The exchange of gifts does not mean a state of equality. Dissymmetry does not preclude mutuality.

For Ricoeur, the distance between the self and the other is implicit in the presence of dissymmetry.

Dissymmetry protects mutuality against the traps of fusional union, whether in love, friendship or fraternity on a communal or cosmopolitan scale; an appropriate distance is preserved at the heart of mutuality, one that integrates respect in intimacy (Ricoeur, 2006a, p. 325).

In short, the gift does not require a return. The counter-gift becomes gratitude. This dissymmetry is part of the mutuality between the self and the other.

#### **4. TOWARDS A PEDAGOGY OF IPSEITY**

From all of the above, we can trace a pedagogical path that goes from narrative identity to the construction of the pillars of a pedagogy of ipseity. This takes us back to Moratalla (Moratalla & Mela, 2014), who extends the notion of narrative education of the threefold mimesis to other moments of the educational act: the class and the teacher. The student, the class and the teacher are all within the dynamics of mimesis. Mimesis II is presented in all three as the configuration of mimesis I, which in the case of the student would be their life story, the class with their choice

1. We must not go to the extreme of opposing reciprocity and mutuality. However, we differentiate these two concepts in this passage for the sake of order, rather than to assume an absolute dichotomy. We can be reciprocal without mutuality, but when we are reciprocal with mutuality we are closer to recognition.

of interests, and the educator who channels their previous experiences. In mimesis III, the three elements undergo a change.

In this dynamic of bringing mimesis to the pedagogical field, we must insist that the educational space is conducive to the conversation in which educator and student are participants (Bedoya, Builes and Lenis, 2009, p. 1267). Moreover, we must remember that narrative identity is constituted from narrating and listening and vice versa. A narrative education is narrated from educators and students, as stated by Bárcena and Mélich (2000): «the protagonist of the educational action, whether teacher or disciple, configures their identity (the story of their existence) *narratively* from other stories they have been told or read» (p. 113).

In this sense, it is also convenient to emphasise the danger of a unilateral narrative, as explained by Freire (1985): «narrative or dissertation that implies a subject —the narrator— and some patient objects or listeners —the learners—. There is a kind of narrative disease. The keynote of education is preponderantly this: to narrate, always narrate» (p. 51). If we find that the interpretation of the self is not automatic but rather is narrated and allows understanding of the self, then the movement of the educator towards the student should allow them to narrate themselves as well. Furthermore, our identity comes from confrontation with the narratives of others and from our cultural traits, which we can interpret and from which we interpret ourselves. If the *ipse* identity arises from the confrontation with the accounts of others, then it is a narrative encounter that the school must allow to flow.

In line with the above, Pallarés, Villalobos, Hernández and Cabero (2020) cite the notion of character in Ricoeur, which is constitutive of the fixed experience of the subject and which we can relate to the *idem* identity. On the other hand, character, in relation to the narrated experience, entails self-reflection, allowing the constitution of multiple possibilities in the educational field:

Overflying the plane that contains the educational subject; the existential consideration of possibility; character; and pedagogy as discourse/action all give perspective to the strategies that confront a moving reality and uncertain knowledge in unanticipated horizons where uncertainty prevails. Teachers must therefore train their character (alterity) so the self can take the forms of the other, which implies a dimension of narrative identity, and therefore always open [...] (p. 16).

The narrative relationship leads to education not being an *idem*, since no static identity of the educational act is prefixed. Ideas, actors, and even theories of education are variable because they respond to the narrative that arrives in mimesis I, eliciting a change from those who are immersed in the narrative in mimesis III.

We can therefore infer that narrative identity as *ipse* is implicit in the educator-learner relationship. Why is it so difficult for educators to narrate themselves in school, to expose their identity, while it is easier for the educator to demand that learners narrate themselves? What role do promise, solicitude and gift play in the educational relationship? Let us start by establishing something in common between

these three elements. In all of them the self is directed towards the other, but this does not mean that alterity is reduced to the self, as this would leave an egocentric self. In principle, we would like to think of the educator as a self that moves towards the learner as another. However, from Ricoeur's point of view, as we have seen, this has some particularities that we can situate in the aforementioned relationship.

Let us start with the promise. Educators can enunciate actions that they are going to develop with students in the future. Let us imagine two of them. Firstly, educators can promise students that they will accompany them, respect them and make every effort to ensure they find the class interesting. Secondly, they can tell them, in the most behaviourist way: «I promise you that every time you don't behave, I will leave you without your break». In the first case, educators establish an ethical relationship by keeping their promise over time. In the second case, learners are constrained to maintain an action over time, so it is not a promise, but a threat.

Educators, in promising, commit their self-esteem to students; if, on the other hand, the threat is not carried out, their illusion of authority is challenged. Although credibility is compromised in both, the promise, by involving the self, invites the learner to remember its fulfilment. In the second, in contrast, the student hopes that the threat will not actually be carried out. In other words, the promise links the educator and the learner in the face of the commitment, while in the threat the learner expects that there will be no link between the educator's words and actions.

The educator's promise becomes *ipse*. The account starts with what the class will be like for students. It is a commitment to the narrative of school events being told within the horizon of this promise. To this end, the account is at the expense of the plot's own contingencies.

«The student is my peer,» says the teacher. The phrase takes on value from Ricoeur's perspective, since the state of solicitude comes to encounter the student. The student does not ask for the promise. The educator asks the student to promise.

An egological problem appears in the absence of the solicitude: educators who are focused on themselves expect or demand that students arrive and solicit it. However, this would not be the solicitude in the sense we have marked out. The solicitude needs the other, even if the other does not answer the call. The solicitude opens the way for the learner to feel acknowledged, and there is the possibility for the learner to thank the educator for this acknowledgement. A space for reflection emerges for the learner to decide to respond to the solicitude.

The mercantile tone of reciprocity would invite us to think of it from the statement «I donate to you, but you must pay me back». This can be found in teaching-learning processes. Freire (1985) uses the gift in a negative sense, very similar to the mercantile question:

In the 'banking' vision of education, 'knowledge' is a gift from those who judge themselves wise to those they judge ignorant. This donation is based on one of the instrumental manifestations of the ideology of oppression: the absolutisation of ignorance, which constitutes what we call the alienation of ignorance, according to which ignorance is always found in the other (p. 52).

Let us think of this depositing of knowledge as savings that produce interest. Educators who donate their knowledge in the mercantile sense do it expecting that the learner will give them back this knowledge in the form of a response to the deposited knowledge.

In contrast, the educator's donation, endowed with mutuality, does not expect a response from the student. The counter-gift is channelled in the form of gratitude. Gratitude is not expected, but rather springs from the impulse generated by the gift.

Educators must also open themselves to the possibility of narrating themselves from their historicity. In turn, the school must provide the opportunity for these narratives to reach their space. How can the school cease to be *idem* if it makes the experience of the educator invisible? In this sense, the school should be the meeting place for narratives where mutuality appears. The counter-gift is therefore made possible from the learner who recognises the educator. In other words, the learner also recognises the educator.

'As myself' means: you *too* are capable of starting something in the world, of acting for reasons, of hierarchising your preferences, of estimating the purposes of your action and, in consequence, of estimating yourself as I estimate myself (Ricoeur, 2006b, p. 202).

At this point, with the relations established between narrative, promise, solicitude, mutuality, gift and education, we would like to establish the possibility of naming a pedagogy of ipseity. We are faced with an educational event that allows mutuality as a twofold form of recognition. The educator addresses the learner without expecting retribution. Likewise, the learner, from the own self in the space that opens up a pedagogy of ipseity, has the option of whether or not to go in search of the educator. The centre of the educational relationship is no longer the learner. Consequently, everyone involved in the narrative is a major player in the educational plot.

## 5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

With Husserl came the problematic question of the self as another, self-perceived self, but which is analogous to this other self which, in turn, is self-perceived. This situation, transferred to the educational relationship, could become evident when the educator focuses on their perception as an adult and the learner does the same from their particular experience, thinking that the other would have a similar experience. Although both consider the other a peer from their *ego*, they do so from their experience, reducing one another to an extreme dissymmetry. The encounter with alterity would be absent from a self that assumes that there is another self, each with the same principles.

This is followed by the narrative identity that allows different actors in the educational link to bring out their self. However, here the dialectic *idem* and *ipse* are not so explicit. Consequently, we move to promise, solicitude and gift: three

concepts which, since they are constituted by the *ipse*, have in common the movement from the educator-self to the learner, and vice versa.

The narrated experience of the learner is absent in the school when thought of as *idem*. The absolute Cartesian self is ideal, but who in the world of daily life is ideal? The school, from the perspective of the Cartesian self, would perceive itself as finished, complete, absolute. There is therefore an anchoring of the processes of adultisation that say what the learner should produce without stepping outside an *idem* pre-established reference.

However, great care is required when trying to counteract this with the search for symmetry within the framework of intersubjectivity in the question of recognition. It is stated that the original dissymmetry should not be forgotten, as it is constitutive of recognition. In consequence, dissymmetry becomes educationally relevant in relation to ipseity because learners are *ipse* and different from the educator-self. The educator is not the student and the student is not the educator, one cannot appropriate the other, but one can donate and be grateful. In the dialectic of recognition, no one is obliged to respond.

Ricoeur bridges the distance found between the self and the other from the original dissymmetry in relation to the particular intimacy of each one. The alterity of the other is not accessible in its totality, and this is a necessary and constitutive impediment of mutuality. I am not the other, but I can narrate a part of myself for the other who listens to me. In this sense, the school relationship is not an educator-learner fusion. The relationship, *educator with learner*, is constituted by mutuality and mutual recognition.

When educators make a solicitude to learners, they set in motion the *ipse* and change as they develop their plot. Educators are not perfect, finished and immutable, but rather are in constant construction of their account around their own self. If there is mutuality between educator and learner, both would be in a recognition that allows the exchange of gifts. The ethical event of the school as a narrative form constituted by the promise, the solicitude, the gift and mutuality could constitute the possibility of a pedagogy of ipseity.

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