

## MORAL EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION: A POLITICAL-PEDAGOGICAL PROJECT



<https://doi.org/10.56238/arev7n3-135>

Submitted on: 02/14/2025

Publication date: 03/14/2025

**Marco Antonio Morgado da Silva<sup>1</sup>.**

### ABSTRACT

Moral education is a field of studies and practices in which different perspectives are inscribed, many of which are exempt from making explicit their political intentionality and do not give centrality to moral problems that concern the causes and consequences of a profoundly unequal society. The objective of this article is to theoretically support a perspective of moral education for social transformation. To this end, we delimit its political-pedagogical foundations, conceptualizing morality as a historical, sociocultural, political and personal construction, and defining its political objective. From this conceptual framework, we circumscribe its pedagogical objective to the construction of socio-moral competences, values and moral identity. Finally, we present some methodological parameters anchored in constructivist epistemology and propose Learning by Social Projects as a methodological strategy that responds to the principles of a moral education for social transformation.

**Keywords:** Moral education. Construction of values. Moral identity. Learning through Social Projects.

---

<sup>1</sup> E-mail: marcomorgado.s@gmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

Learning to live in a common world, in which human actions impact the lives of other people or social groups, is a challenge that compels each of us to include the other in our individual and collective field of action. In other words, learning to live presupposes building a moral framework to regulate our insertion in a complex and diverse social world and constantly answering the question "how should I act?", of a fundamentally moral nature.

Despite the fact that morality is an inalienable component of human experience, it has not been centrally placed as a systematic object of curricular teaching-learning by the modern school. On the other hand, even without the clear intention of providing the learning of moral skills and values, each and every formal education institution structures a moral culture, that is, a system of systematic and regular rules and practices guided by values (PUIG et al, 2012). The moral culture of an institution educates students through the daily experience of this moral culture, which can be more or less structured, with greater or lesser formative potential, depending on the intentionality, coordination and consistency of curricular and non-curricular practices with the purpose of morally educating the school community. But, be that as it may, a school cannot exempt itself from morally educating its students, whether it is a moral education guided by more conservative or progressive, individualistic or humanist values.

Thus, even if a school does not explicitly enunciate moral education in its political-pedagogical project, it manifests in its practices a conception; and aims, through these practices, to train students to a way of positioning themselves in the world, to reproduce or build a type of society. The discipline "moral and civic education" that prevailed in the Brazilian curriculum in the dark times of the military dictatorship, is an example of a moral education oriented to form subjects to reproduce an individualistic, conservative and authoritarian society.

In the field of studies that adopts moral education as its object, it is common to find pedagogical foundations and methodological guidelines that guide values such as justice, honesty, respect and citizen participation on an abstract level, with apparent ideological neutrality, advocating the development of moral judgment and emotions as a resource to deal with moral problems more associated with interpersonal conflicts and inadequacy to the norms in force in society than those that concern the causes and consequences of a profoundly unequal society (NUCCI, 2000; NUCCI; ILTEN-GREE, 2021). In doing so, it is chosen, either out of ideological conviction or because of the convenience of not guiding

the critical confrontation of the current socioeconomic model, to neglect poverty and social inequalities as the main moral problem of humanity to be faced. In fact, in the face of the essentially individualistic neoliberal hegemony (ALTHUSSER, 2022), which has increased the concentration of income and power (PIKETTY, 2014), and which is intensified with the rise of neo-fascist and far-right movements around the world, solidarity, social justice, and the common good are values that, if anchored in the criticism of the political-economic system, will not be subject to consensus.

That is why moral education, as a field of knowledge, cannot be restricted to a pedagogical domain that omits its political-ideological intentionality or exempts itself from taking a position. Moral education, we insist, must make explicit not only the pedagogical objectives that indicate the profile of the subject that one wishes to form, but also the political objectives that support them and that reveal the type of society that one wishes such subjects to build.

The objective of this article is to theoretically support a perspective of moral education for social transformation. To this end, we will delimit its political-pedagogical foundations, conceptualizing morality as a simultaneous and dialectically historical, sociocultural, political and personal construction, and defining its political objective. From this conceptual framework, we circumscribe its pedagogical objective to the construction of socio-moral competences, values and moral identity. Finally, we present some methodological parameters anchored in constructivist epistemology and propose Learning by Social Projects as a methodological strategy that responds to the principles of a moral education for social transformation.

## **POLITICAL-PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF A MORAL EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION**

Positioning moral education in a horizon of social transformation requires, from the outset, demarcating the definition of morality that supports it. In this article, we define morality as a system of principles and rules constructed socially and individually with the function of regulating the differences, contradictions and conflicts that cross life in society, in view of the impact of human actions on the lives of others (HABERMAS, 1999; VÁZQUEZ, 2012; NUCCI; ILTEN-GEE, 2021).

Those moral contents - such as principles and rules - considered of greater importance for the regulation of social life by a certain group in a given historical time, are

moral values (VÁZQUEZ, 2012). After all, choosing the life you want to lead in a world in which actions have repercussions on others implies making choices based on criteria that allow you to qualify a conduct option as morally preferable, that is, more valuable. Thus, at the core of all morality, we find an axiological content that determines it and gives it meaning. In this work, moral values are those that make it possible to reconcile divergences between people and social groups under conditions of equality, that ensure the dignity of all people, that contemplate respect for diversity and that consider the common good (TRILLA, 1995; PUIG, 1998a; NUCCI; ILTEN-GEE, 2021).

From this preliminary definition, we are interested in unfolding additional considerations and highlighting morality as a product of a construction in four inseparable dimensions, namely: historical, sociocultural, political and personal. Let us make a brief incursion into each of them, starting with the historical character of morality.

Morality is as old as the history of our species. Even before what we are able to know through graphic representations and written language, the human species has built moral rules to regulate the relationship with others in order to optimize their adaptation to the physical and social environment, transmitting their moral structures to the next generations. A social group in constant dispute, without internal cohesion, was less able to survive. Morality, in this sense, represented a fundamental component in the phylogenesis and sociogenesis of our species (VÁZQUEZ, 2012; TOMASELLO, 2021). And as the course of history has operated changes in the social, economic and political spheres, the values and moral principles in force in different human societies have been improved, modified or replaced (VILANOU; COLLELDELMONT, 2000; 2001). Morality is, therefore, a historical construction, subject to transformations over time as a result of social, political and personal changes.

The sociocultural dimension of morality is manifested in the difference with which different social groups and cultures can elect certain values to the detriment of others to regulate social relations or in the greater and lesser importance given to these values. The distinct way in which Brazilian culture and an orthodox Muslim culture conceive of equality between men and women is an example of sociocultural variation in morality. Turiel (1996) and Nucci (2000) present other examples of intercultural variations in moral judgment on gender issues and on conceptions of justice in different contexts.

With regard to its political dimension, as we have already mentioned, contemporary societies are heirs to a long process of dispute, negotiation and affirmation of moral

principles considered to be more capable of regulating human relations and ordering their institutions in the public sphere (VÁZQUEZ, 2012), that is, in the stage of decisions about the common life that defines politics (ARENDT, 2010). At different times in history, groups with political, economic, and military power enforced a moral structure that responded to their values and interests and that excluded a significant portion of the population from the social regulation granted by the morality they established. The slavery of African peoples, the holocaust in Nazi Germany, the deregulation of labor relations that led workers (including children) to death from exhaustion, as well as the suppression of women's political and social rights less than a century ago, are some products of moralities that in other times were dominant and naturalized. However, the action of organized social groups in the public sphere - inside and outside institutional politics - so that their needs and rights were considered under parameters of social equality, triggered changes in the economic and political spheres, accompanied by changes in the moral sphere. The conquest of social, political and civil rights by excluded and marginalized groups – such as workers, blacks and women – is an example of the affirmation of the value of equality as an important moral regulator with broad sociocultural adherence, even though it can receive different meanings (VÁZQUEZ, 2012).

Finally, if, on the one hand, morality is a collective construction and, therefore, historical, sociocultural and political, on the other hand, we could not conceive it in the absence of a subject who personally constructs a moral system, who formulates and negotiates principles, who attributes personal meanings to them, in short, who assimilates the morality of his time and culture, but it is also, dialectically, an agent of cultural production and socio-moral transformation. Morality, in this sense, is a construction that is simultaneously social and personal.

Having made these considerations about the concept of morality, we are interested in reiterating that all moral education, as well as any and all educational practices, are dependent on a project of society (FREIRE, 2005). There is no possible neutrality and to say otherwise or to omit it means to advocate a moral education that alienates and submits the interlocutor.

While we argue that educating morally requires making its intentionality explicit, we consider that a critical moral education should adopt the following *political objective*: to contribute so that all people are able to pursue their personal goals, can build healthy and respectful relationships, have their political, civil and social rights assured, and are actively

committed to the construction of a more just society. democratic, solidary and sustainable (PUIG, 2021).

Note that it is not just a project of personal fulfillment that respects others. It is not, resorting to the caricature made by Nucci (2000) when advocating a critical moral education, of forming "good children". In a profoundly unequal and unjust society, a moral education that ignores the association between the concentration of power and income, poverty and physical and mental health problems as structural problems experienced by millions of people around the world, does not seem worthy of being so named. Moral education demands the political commitment to educate children, young people and adults for a project of individual and collective emancipation, of personal and social transformation, which the subjects should carry out when choosing those socio-moral problems that, in an autonomous and critical way, they consider to need to be faced, either because they affect them directly, or because what they cause in the other is unacceptable.

Here it is worth noting that we do not defend a moral education that predetermines which moral subject should be formatted, that advocates a critical education and for autonomy, but establishes the life trajectory that the student should follow, how he should think, feel and act in the world. It is about promoting a moral education that enables the student to build his morality and make his choices with autonomy, but within a formative field in which he needs to negotiate his individuality with the other and with the collective, regulate his actions in view of the rights and needs of the other. And it needs to do so within the framework of a pedagogical experience delimited by moral values that are neither relativistic nor absolute (TRILLA, 1995), but which have been shown by different societies, as we have already pointed out elsewhere, as important for the conciliation of divergences between people and social groups in conditions of equality, which ensure the dignity of all people, that contemplate respect for diversity and that consider the common good (TRILLA, 1995; PUIG, 1998a; NUCCI; ILTEN-GEE, 2021).

In the light of this conception, moral education for social transformation should have as *its pedagogical objective to* act on two complementary fronts of the subject's formation: I) the construction of values and moral identity; and II) the construction of socio-moral competences. We will dedicate the following sections to dealing with each of them. Before that, it is necessary to demarcate constructivism as the epistemological model (PIAGET, 2015; MACEDO, 2002; COLL, 2004) of this moral education.

The constructivist perspective on the genesis and change in knowledge conceives that development and learning are neither innate nor the result of the introjection of the contents of the environment, but are constituted by the constructive activity of the subject, who expands, reorganizes and/or resignifies his previous knowledge - cognitive and emotional - by confronting them with new objects of knowledge when interacting with the physical and social world or with himself. When interacting with an object of knowledge that he is unable to understand or deal with satisfactorily, the subject enters into cognitive imbalance and is provoked to build new knowledge in a simultaneous procedure of assimilation of the contents of the environment and adjustment of his previous knowledge to these contents (PIAGET, 2015).

We consider that neither the innatist nor the empiricist perspective (MACEDO, 2002) are capable of providing the conditions for education to be an agent of critical thinking and of an individual and social transformation with an emancipatory orientation. Because they attribute a passive role to the subject in development and learning. Therefore, the subject is not someone capable of organizing his knowledge in a particular way to create new ways of responding to what he recognizes as a social demand. On the contrary, in the constructivist perspective, as Macedo (2002) argues, for a subject, the unequal social structure can be a factor of imbalance, discomfort and indignation, which leads him to seek knowledge and actions capable of transforming it. This is a perspective that we consider important to be incorporated in the adoption of a critical constructivism, such as the one underlying the work of Paulo Freire (2002).

## **THE CONSTRUCTION OF VALUES AND MORAL IDENTITY**

In the previous section, we defined that morality is constructed in four dimensions that are inseparably related: historical, sociocultural, political, and personal. From now on, considering that values are an essential component of morality, we will dedicate ourselves to exploring how the process of psychological construction of values occurs and its relationship with the construction of moral identity, a psychosocial construct that regulates judgments and feelings and is widely recognized as an important motivator of moral actions (HERTZ; KRETTENAUER, 2016).

In a course given at the Sorbonne University in the academic year of 1954, the Swiss epistemologist Jean Piaget defines that the construction of values results from the affective projection that the subject makes on the object of knowledge, whether it is some



element of the external world (people, situations, ideologies, etc.) or the subject himself. For the author, values are of a fundamentally affective nature, but they are intellectualized by becoming aware of the norms that regulate interindividual relationships and by the meanings attributed to the contents that are the object of evaluation. When they are constructed, they are organized in hierarchical scales, configuring a normative system that defines what is most and least important to the subject, what interests him most and, therefore, regulates and motivates actions.

Piaget states that the values of culture are not transmitted and internalized literally by the subject (as empiricist theses would defend), but are assimilated and actively accommodated by him and articulated to his identity, which presupposes an interpretative and synthesizing role of the individual mind over cultural contents.

Throughout life, the subject builds different values, which are coordinated and organized in a system. Such values may have different contents, depending on the content of the object with which the subject establishes an affective bond and the meanings attributed to them (SILVA, 2020; SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2023). A moral value can be constructed if the object manifests a moral content, such as justice or solidarity. Some of these values will be more central and others more peripheral to the subject (DAMON; COLBY, 1992; BLASI, 1995; ARAÚJO, 1999; SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2023). The centrality of a value will depend on: a) the intensity of the affective bond established with the object of valuation in the situation that produced the affective experience; b) the frequency with which a certain content is the object of evaluation throughout the subject's experiences; c) the meanings that the subject attributes to these contents, for example, if he recognizes that he has produced well-being in himself or in the other, if he considers something he wants for his life, if he considers it something necessary for society; and d) the coordination it establishes with other values, which will make it have a greater presence and cohesion in the value system. Thus, if social justice is a value for the subject and is related to other values, such as solidarity, his profession and knowledge (as when he invests in studies associated with the theme of social justice), it indicates that it is more important for the subject than a value that is isolated, disarticulated within the value system (BLASI, 2004; SILVA, 2020; SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2023; SILVA, 2023).

The process of construction and functioning of the value system that we have explored so far takes place within the *self* (the system of representations of the self) and identity. According to Blasi (2004), values are integrated with motivational and emotional



systems, which, in turn, provide the basis for the construction of representations of oneself and the subject's identity. What becomes important to the subject throughout life organizes the way and the contents with which he defines himself, organizes the type of person he wants to be and what he wants to accomplish. In other words, it organizes its representations of itself and, from adolescence onwards, its identity.

Identity is a more elaborate and mature configuration of self-representations that is characterized by the individual's commitment, developed by an active process of exploration, with domains of contents (family, career, gender, morals, religion, etc.) that are important for the subject's representation of himself and that give him a sense of psychosocial unity and an understanding of his place in society (MARCIA, 1966; ERIKSON, 1968; BLASI; GLODIS, 1995; MCADAMS, 2018; MOSHMAN, 2011; SCHWARTZ et al., 2015).

As stated by several studies, identity begins to emerge at the beginning of adolescence (around 12 years of age), but it is only at the end of this period and, especially, at the beginning of adult life that it will be more actively elaborated and acquire more defined contours (ERIKSON, 1968; BLASI; GLODIS, 1995; HARTER, 2012; KROGER et al., 2010; SCHWARTZ et al., 2015; FADJUKOFF et al., 2016; CRAMER, 2017). These and other studies (DAMON, 1984; MOSHMAN, 2011) converge in the sense of indicating that the integration of moral contents into identity will begin to happen, as a possibility, from adolescence onwards. This does not mean that before this time, in childhood, moral contents could not be part of the representations of oneself (THOMPSON, 2009; LAPSLEY, 2010; KRETTENAUER, 2022), but that it is after adolescence that they can be organized in a more cohesive and systemic way in self-definition, being recognized by the subject as something on which their personal integrity depends, constituting a personal commitment and guiding the purpose of their existence in the world. In other words, from a developmental point of view, we agree with Kingsford and colleagues (2018) and Krettenauer (2018), that a child can have a *moral self* (a representation of moral self) - since he can think of himself under moral criteria, as well as feel guilt and shame - but only an adolescent or an adult can have a moral identity.

To the extent that moral values are central to the subject's representations of himself, they become contents that organize identity, constituting a moral identity. The more central the moral contents are to the subject, the more they tend to be chronically

accessible, being easily activated in the interpretation and action of the subject in different social situations (LAPSLEY; NARVAEZ, 2004; AQUINO et al., 2009; REED et al., 2016).

Several studies (for a meta-analysis, see HERTZ; KRETTENAUER, 2016) confirm the pioneering study by Blasi (1983), who proposes that the *moral self* and moral identity are important motivators of moral actions. According to the author (BLASI, 1983; 1995; 2004), moral identity will tend to determine moral action due to the tendency that all individuals have to preserve coherence with their own identity. For him, moral action depends on the coordination between moral content and personal needs and interests, with self-consistency being his motivational key. As a consequence, to act morally is to preserve an identity for which beliefs and moral ideals are central and not to do so means to violate oneself, to betray one's own principles.

It should be added that several researchers have highlighted that the system of values that is integrated into the representations of oneself or identity has a dynamic functioning, and can be reconfigured according to contextual changes, in such a way that one value can lose or gain centrality in relation to other values depending on the situation, the people, the people, among other variables with which the subject interacts (NISAN, 1993; TURIEL, 1996; ARAÚJO, 1999, 2007; AQUINO et al., 2009; HARDY; CARLO, 2011; LAPSLEY; STAY, 2014; JENNINGS; MITCHEL; HANNAH, 2015). For them, it is not possible to predict full coherence between a value and an action in different contexts, as these require and mobilize different dimensions of *self* and identity. On the other hand, these and other authors (BLASI, 1995; LAPSLEY; NARVAEZ, 2004; FRIMER et al., 2011; DAMON; COLBY, 2015) agree that the greater the centrality of a value for the subject, the greater will be its tendency to stability and its influence on judgments, feelings and actions.

By making these considerations about the construction of values and moral identity, its centrality in the development and moral functioning of the subject is evidenced. This results in the recognition of the importance of moral education adopting this phenomenon in its objectives and practices. The construction of values such as social justice, solidarity, the common good, among others that we could list, can contribute significantly to the construction of identities committed not only to the achievement of their personal goals, but that coordinate their interests with actions oriented to social transformation. To this, we must add the construction of socio-moral competences, the theme of the following section.

## SOCIO-MORAL SKILLS

In the face of moral conflicts, human beings mobilize, in addition to their values and identity, a set of psychological capacities that allow them to value, feel, understand, make decisions and carry them out. The complex moral situations that each subject faces throughout his life give rise to the construction of certain psychological procedures and, at the same time, require him to put into action such procedures to adequately face socio-moral problems and conflicts (PUIG, 2007). Socio-moral competencies are, in the words of PUIG (1998a, p.178),

[...] useful psychological instruments for analyzing moral problems, facing the dilemmas they present, planning ways to optimize reality, evaluating the consequences of each option proposed, deciding in the best possible way on a solution and, finally, putting it into practice.

Puig (1998a) states that socio-moral competencies act in a more specific way in the moral field – because they occur as a function of value criteria –, however, he makes it clear that there are other types of competencies or abilities that are not exclusively linked to morality. Without intending to exhaust the socio-moral competencies that constitute the moral subject, we systematize some of the main ones, according to the definitions made by the author (1998a, 1998b, 2007, 2022):<sup>2</sup>

1. *Self-knowledge*: brings together the ability to elaborate a conceptualized representation of oneself; to know one's own feelings, values, needs and desires; to integrate the various biographical experiences and to project the future. For Puig (1998a, p. 181), "[...] the self capable of knowing itself, evaluating itself and projecting itself ends up becoming the seat of moral responsibility and personal coherence".
2. *Empathy and adoption of social perspectives*: ability to put oneself in the place of the other, recognizing their feelings, needs, opinions and arguments, differentiating them from one's own. In addition, it is about generalizing the point of view of others, of a community or society, seeking the perception of other points of view.
3. *Moral Judgment*: ability to analyze morally conflicting situations or moral dilemmas and define what is correct (what should be done), through the use of general criteria or principles (universally applicable) that guide fair and solidary reasoning. It serves

<sup>2</sup> In his early works, the author adopted the term psychomoral capacities. In the most recent publications, it began to use the nomenclature moral competences, which we adopted as a reference because we consider that the concept of competence (ZABALA, 2010) is widely adopted in the field of education.

almost as a prescriptive deontological judgment, which becomes important to ensure the preservation of certain principles and to ensure that morality is not subject to personal and circumstantial convenience. The Kantian categorical imperative<sup>3</sup> is an example of a principle of validation that moral judgment can resort to when faced with a controversy of values;

4. *Critical understanding*: if moral judgment is responsible for the application of general validation criteria, critical understanding has the function of contextualizing moral reflection, considering the particularity of each situation, the points of view and what each subject or community involved in a moral problem demands, with a view to finding correct means of applying the general criteria to particular situations. In this sense, judgment and understanding complement each other to ensure the necessary balance between an ethics of conviction (deontological) and an ethics that considers the application of principles to each context and that is equally concerned with the consequences of the moral act (teleological).
5. *Dialogic skills*: ability to exchange opinions, ponder the positions of the interlocutors with the intention of understanding dialogue; predisposes to tolerance and democratic participation;
6. *Emotional and sensitivity skills*: component and driver of other skills; it allows people to "[...] to detect moral conflicts, to feel affected by them, to grasp reality and to promote and motivate the conduct of the subjects with great effectiveness" (PUIG, 1998a, p. 183).
7. *Self-regulation*: has to do with the effort that each subject makes to direct his own conduct by himself, allowing the search for coherence between judgment and moral action and the construction of a desirable way of being. We can cite as an example the effort that an individual makes to acquire sustainable lifestyle habits.
8. *Socio-moral action*: it supposes intervening on problems that occur in the private and public spheres, in an autonomous and responsible way. In other words, it refers to the ability to be able to draw up and execute an efficient action plan in facing moral situations of daily life and social and environmental problems.

---

<sup>3</sup> "How could a maxim like yours harmonize with itself, if everyone, in all cases, made it a universal law?" (KANT, 1797/2008, p. 220).

In the light of Puig's typology, we also raise some characteristics about these capacities that help us to better understand how they appear in moral identity. The first concerns the systemic nature of the moral conscience in which they operate, which supposes taking into account that these competencies do not act in isolation, but, on the contrary, complement each other, juxtapose each other and establish a dialectical relationship with each other. It would not be possible, for example, to conceive that the perception of a moral problem depended exclusively on moral judgment, without empathy or the perception of feelings coming into play.

Secondly, capacities not only play a functional role, but also interfere in the structuring of moral identity and the construction of values. For example, the exercise of putting oneself in the shoes of someone who suffers prejudice, of perceiving their feelings and trying to understand the reasons for that situation, activates and updates values such as justice, solidarity, respect for differences, among others. In fact, at the same time that they resort to values, psychomoral capacities interfere with their cognitive and emotional significance. Conversely, since socio-moral competencies are embodied in a concrete subject, they are conducted according to their identity, values and personal motivations. Therefore, what we have is a recursive relationship between values and socio-moral competences.

Finally, it should be made explicit that, although they are potentialities that every human being can develop from a biological substrate, they are conditioned by the sociocultural factors that shape them and that hinder or drive their development. The content, use and value that we attribute to socio-moral competences are linked to the cultural elaborations that we signify and also their functioning occurs in relation to a sociocultural environment that requires their activation. By this we mean that both the construction and the functioning of these capacities are socioculturally mediated and are supported, to some extent, by the moral references of a given culture: rules, principles, models of conduct, etc.

By virtue of what we have presented so far, we can consider that morality is constructed and exercised through a complex process in which cognitive, emotional and sociocultural elements are interwoven. Thus, the representations about factual reality and cultural productions, values and socio-moral competences, form a set of constitutive attributes of the moral subject continuously learned, signified and put into practice.

## **LEARNING THROUGH SOCIAL PROJECTS: A MORAL EDUCATION BUILT TIVIST AND TRANSFORMATIVE**

Starting from a constructivist conception of development and learning, we consider that sociomoral competences and moral identity are constructed in the context of socio-moral experiences, that is, within contexts that provide the subject with the experience or thematization of socio-moral situations. We are referring to situations imbued with moral content that express problems, conflicts or contradictions, which challenge the subject to seek answers to understand or deal with directly, confronting and problematizing their previous knowledge. As a result, they cause an imbalance in their cognitive-affective organization and generate in them the need to expand, resignify or reorganize their knowledge, socio-moral competencies and their value system, in order to compensate for the disturbance caused and be able to respond to the problem (COLL, 2004; PIAGET, 2015). We can also mention situations that present the subject with what Puig (1998a) calls cultural guides of value, that is, principles, concepts, models of conduct expressed in people, social groups and institutions (whether real or fictitious, as presented in literature and cinema), which the student can adopt as a reference on how to act or not act morally.

Regarding these socio-moral situations as a learning experience, we are interested in highlighting the participation in morally significant social practices, such as forums for collective decision-making and conflict resolution – such as school assemblies (ARAÚJO, 2015) -, and the engagement in interventions on social or environmental problems.

In the context of these socio-moral situations, a critical moral education for autonomy must organize experiences that enable the expression and confrontation between personal positions; intersubjective exchanges, which reveal possible contradictions and divergences that become the object of the subject's reflection on himself and on how he inserts himself in the world; the opportunity to recognize personal rights and the rights of others as equally legitimate despite differences, and to have to take responsibility for the actions and the impact they have on the lives of others and the world.

Among different didactic methods and strategies of moral education (PUIG, 1998b), we are interested in highlighting Social Project Learning (PHC) (service-learning), a methodology that articulates the learning of concepts, skills and values with interventions on real situations that express social or environmental problems (PUIG, 2009; MARTÍN; RUBIO, 2010).



The raw material of a PHC project is a concrete social or environmental problem, which must be faced collectively by the students, if possible, in partnership with institutions and people who work on the problem, such as community associations, NGOs and public power entities. From the point of view of its methodological procedures, a PHC project supposes that students come into direct contact with the context where the problem manifests itself and get to know the people involved; elect the manifestation of the problem that will be the object of intervention; critically understand the problem, with its causes and consequences, both on the scale of the context where it manifests itself (which includes the people involved) and from the point of view of its social structuring; and plan and execute one or more interventions (SILVA, 2015; SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2019; 2021).

According to Trilla (2009), what differentiates PHC from other active learning methodologies is the fact that it puts students to work with real situations of social utility, transcending the school walls to involve students with the needs of the community, while other active methodologies generally resort to simulations or real situations whose demands are restricted to the academic sphere and/or that do not carry out interventions. Silva (2024) points out that PHC is a modality of project-based learning, but that its distinctive feature is intervention on real social problems.

A project of this nature is in line with the realization of the ideal of educating cities of making the city's environments a space for the exercise and promotion of citizenship (GADOTTI; P; CABEDUZO, 2004). By extrapolating the walls of the school with clearly directed pedagogical objectives, the community environment becomes a learning object, a learning context and, at the same time, an educational agent. In addition to this and joint action with partner people and institutions, PHC makes moral education a collective practice of transformation of reality shared by different social actors. And here lies an important formative contribution of this methodology: to enable the recognition and appreciation of collective action as necessary for social transformation by making it a formative instrument. This means promoting a moral education that educates, at the same time and reciprocally, the individual and the collectivity.

A PHC project requires and develops different socio-moral competencies. And, since social problems and conflicts trigger values such as social justice, solidarity, responsibility for the common good and for future generations, the reflection and action of students on real problems, with which they interact directly, enhances their personal bond with these

values and the recognition that they are agents of social transformation, constituting an important procedure for the construction of moral identity (SILVA; ARAÚJO, 2020).

PHC is, therefore, a powerful tool for critical moral education, in which social transformation is not only a goal to be achieved in the future, but a means, in the present time, for the development of socio-moral competencies and the construction of values. It enables subjects to build an identity committed to the common good, which recognizes and values collective organization as a necessary agent for the transformation of material and ideological structures that reproduce social injustices and inequalities. It is a methodology that synthesizes the praxis of action-reflection-action in the simultaneous transformation of subjects and social reality.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Moral education is a field of pedagogical knowledge that manifests itself in every school institution, whether implicitly or explicitly, with greater or lesser intentionality and systematicity, which results in its formative consistency. Despite the fact that morality is an inalienable dimension of human experience, because it is fundamentally social, modern education has not made it a central object of curricular teaching-learning.

In a world marked by deep political, economic, and social inequalities, by the emergence of the climate crisis, among other problems reproduced by the hegemony of economic neoliberalism, demanding a moral education for social transformation is a moral imperative, as it translates the principle that everyone wants to live in dignified living conditions and have access to the necessary resources to satisfy their needs and pursue their goals. A moral education that does not have a project to confront these social problems is not a moral education for all, therefore, it is not worthy of its name.

The moral education that we propose has social transformation as part of its political objectives and, in the light of constructivist epistemology, aims to provide problematizing learning experiences, which confront the knowledge of students among themselves, with academic knowledge and with the social world, which provoke them to actively seek answers to socio-moral problems and to consider the figure of the other in their actions. Learning through Social Projects appears as a strategy aligned with such assumptions by challenging students, in partnership with other social agents, to face real social problems.

In this way, it provides the construction of skills, values and identities that reconcile the achievement of the life goals of each subject with the active commitment to social transformation, recognizing that the construction of a more just, solidary and sustainable society is a personal responsibility that demands a set of individual and collective actions.

## REFERENCES

1. Althusser, L. (2022). *Aparelhos ideológicos de Estado*. Paz e Terra.
2. Aquino, K., Freeman, D., Reed, A., Felps, W., & Lim, V. K. G. (2009). Testing a social-cognitive model of moral behavior: The interactive influence of situations and moral identity centrality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(1), 123–141. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015406>
3. Araujo, U. F. (1999). *Conto de escola: A vergonha como regulador moral*. Moderna.
4. Araujo, U. F. (2007). Social and psychological construction of values. In V. A. Arantes (Ed.), *Educação e valores: Pontos e contrapontos* (pp. 17–64). Summus.
5. Araujo, U. F. (2015). *Autogestão na sala de aula: As assembleias escolares*. Summus.
6. Arendt, H. (2010). *A condição humana* (11th ed.). Forense Universitária.
7. Blasi, A. (1983). Moral cognition and moral action: A theoretical perspective. *Developmental Review*, 3(2), 178–210. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0273-2297\(83\)90029-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0273-2297(83)90029-1)
8. Blasi, A. (1995). Moral understanding and moral personality: The process of moral integration. In W. M. Kurtines & J. L. Gewirtz (Eds.), *Moral development: An introduction* (pp. 229–254). Allyn & Bacon.
9. Blasi, A. (2004). Moral functioning: Moral understanding and personality. In D. K. Lapsley & D. Narvaez (Eds.), *Moral development, self, and identity* (pp. 335–347). Psychology Press.
10. Blasi, A., & Glodis, K. (1995). The development of identity: A critical analysis from the perspective of the self as subject. *Developmental Review*, 404–433. <https://doi.org/10.1006/drev.1995.1017>
11. Colby, A., & Damon, W. (1992). *Some do care: Contemporary lives of moral commitment*. Free Press.
12. Coll, C. (2004). Constructivism and education: The constructivist conception of teaching and learning. In C. Coll, A. Marchesi, & J. Palacios (Eds.), *Desenvolvimento psicológico e educação* (pp. 107–127). Artmed.
13. Cramer, P. (2017). Identity change between late adolescence and adulthood. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 104, 538–543. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.08.044>
14. Damon, W. (1984). Self-understanding and moral development from childhood to adolescence. In W. M. Kurtines & J. L. Gewirtz (Eds.), *Morality, moral behavior and moral development* (pp. 109–127). Wiley.
15. Damon, W., & Colby, A. (2015). *The power of ideals: The real story of moral choice*. Oxford University Press.
16. Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. Norton.
17. Fadjukoff, P., Pulkkinen, L., & Kokko, K. (2016). Identity formation in adulthood: A longitudinal study from age 27 to 50. *Identity*, 16(1), 8–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2015.1121820>
18. Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogia do oprimido* (44th ed.). Paz e Terra.
19. Frimer, J. A., Walker, L. J., Dunlop, W. L., Lee, B. H., & Riches, A. (2011). The integration of agency and communion in moral personality: Evidence of enlightened self-interest. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(1), 149–163. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023780>
20. Gadotti, M., Padilha, P. R., & Cabezudo, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Cidade educadora: Princípios e experiências*. Cortez.
21. Habermas, J. (1989, September/December). For the pragmatic, ethical, and moral use of practical reason. *Estudos Avançados*, 3(7), 4–19.
22. Hardy, S. A., & Carlo, G. (2011). Moral identity: What is it, how does it develop, and is it linked to moral action? *Child Development Perspectives*, 5(3), 212–218. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2011.00189.x>
23. Harter, S. (2012). *The construction of the self: Developmental and sociocultural foundations*. Guilford Publications.
24. Hertz, S. G., & Krettenauer, T. (2016). Does moral identity effectively predict moral behavior? A meta-analysis. *Review of General Psychology*, 20(2), 129–140.

25. Jennings, P. L., Mitchell, M. S., & Hannah, S. T. (2015). The moral self: A review and integration of the literature. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36(S1), 104–168. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1919>
26. Kant, I. (2008). *A metafísica dos costumes* (2nd ed.). Edipro.
27. Kingsford, J. M., Hawes, D. J., & de Rosnay, M. (2018). The moral self and moral identity: Developmental questions and conceptual challenges. *The British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 36(4), 652–666. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjdp.12260>
28. Kochanska, G., Aksan, N., & Joy, M. E. (2007). Children's fearfulness as a moderator of parenting in early socialization: Two longitudinal studies. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(1), 222–237. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.43.1.222>
29. Krettenauer, T. (2018). Children's moral self as a precursor of moral identity development. In C. C. Helwig (Ed.), *New perspectives on moral development* (pp. 73–87). Routledge.
30. Krettenauer, T. (2022). Development of moral identity: From the age of responsibility to adult maturity. *Developmental Review*, 65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2022.101036>
31. Lapsley, D. K., & Narvaez, D. (2004). A social-cognitive approach to the moral personality. In D. K. Lapsley & D. Narvaez (Eds.), *Moral development, self, and identity* (pp. 189–212). Psychology Press.
32. Lapsley, D. K., & Stay, P. (2014). Moral self-identity as the aim of education. In L. Nucci & D. Narvaez (Eds.), *Handbook of moral and character education*. Routledge.
33. Lapsley, D. K. (2010). Moral agency, identity and narrative in moral development: Commentary on Pasupathi and Wainryb. *Human Development*, 53(2), 87–97. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000288210>
34. Macedo, L. (2002). The question of intelligence: Can everyone learn? In M. K. Oliveira, D. T. R. Souza, & T. C. Rego (Eds.), *Psicologia, educação e as temáticas da vida contemporânea* (chap. 5). Editora Moderna.
35. Martín, X., & Rubio, L. (Coords.). (2010). *Prácticas de ciudadanía: Diez experiencias de aprendizaje servicio*. Ministério de Educación.
36. McAdams, D. P. (2018). Narrative identity: What is it? What does it do? How do you measure it? *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 37(3), 359–372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0276236618756704>
37. Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 5, 551–558. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0023281>
38. Moshman, D. (2011). *Adolescent rationality and development: Cognition, morality, and identity* (3rd ed.). Taylor and Francis.
39. Nisan, M. (1993). Balanced identity: Morality and other identity values. In G. Noam & T. Wren (Eds.), *The moral self* (pp. 239–266). MIT Press.
40. Nucci, L. (2000, July/December). Moral psychology and education: Beyond “nice” children. *Educação e Pesquisa*, 26(2), 71–89.
41. Nucci, L., & Ilten-Gee, R. (2021). *Moral education for social justice*. Teachers College Press.
42. Piaget, J. (1954). *Les relations entre l'affectivité et l'intelligence*. Sorbonne.
43. Piaget, J. (1967). *Seis estudos de psicologia*. Forense.
44. Piketty, T. (2014). *O capital no século XXI. Intrínseca*.
45. Puig, J. M. (1998a). *A construção da personalidade moral. Ática*.
46. Puig, J. M. (1998b). *Ética e valores: Métodos para um ensino transversal. Casa do Psicólogo*.
47. Puig, J. M. (2007). Learning to live. In V. A. Arantes (Ed.), *Educação e valores: Pontos e contrapontos. Summus*.
48. Puig, J. M., et al. (Eds.). (2009). *Aprendizaje servicio: Educación y compromiso cívico. Graó*.
49. Puig, J. M. (Coord.). (2012). *Cultura moral y educación. Graó*.

50. Puig, J. M. (2021). *Pedagogía de la acción común*. Graó.
51. Reed, A., Kay, A., Finnel, S., Aquino, K., & Levy, E. (2016). I don't want the money, I just want your time: How moral identity overcomes the aversion to giving time to prosocial causes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 110(3), 435–457. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000058>
52. Schwartz, S. J., Luyckx, K., & Crocetti, E. (2015). What have we learned since Schwartz (2001)? A reappraisal of the field of identity development. In K. C. McLean & M. Syed (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of identity development* (pp. 539–561). Oxford University Press.
53. Silva, M. A. M., & Araujo, U. F. (2019). Service-learning and community forums: Articulations for building citizenship in environmental education. *Ambiente & Educação*, 24(1), 257–273.
54. Silva, M. A. M., & Araujo, U. F. (2021). Learning through social projects: Integration of moral contents into youth self-representation. *ETD - Educação Temática Digital*, 23(4), 1061–1078. <https://doi.org/10.20396/etd.v23i4.8659662>
55. Silva, M. A. M., & Araujo, U. F. (2023). The theory of organizing models of thinking as a tool for the qualitative and microanalytical study of moral identity. *Identity*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2023.2218878>
56. Silva, M. A. M. (2015). *Educação ambiental para a cidadania e a construção de valores morais: Diálogos entre pesquisa e intervenção* [Master's dissertation, Universidade de São Paulo]. Faculdade de Educação.
57. Silva, M. A. M. (2020). *Integração de valores morais às representações de si de adolescentes* [Doctoral dissertation, Universidade de São Paulo]. <https://doi.org/10.11606/T.48.2020.tde-29092020-162754>
58. Silva, M. A. M. (2023). Moral identity as a system of self-representations centrally integrating moral values. *Trends in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43076-023-00354-z>
59. Silva, M. A. M. (2024). Project-based learning: Theoretical-methodological foundations and didactic perspectives. *Peer Review*, 6(X). <https://doi.org/10.53660/PRW-2100-3903>
60. Thompson, R. A. (2009). Early foundations: Conscience and the development of moral character. In D. Narvaez & D. Lapsley (Eds.), *Personality, identity, and character: Explorations in moral psychology* (pp. 159–184). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511627125>
61. Tomasello, M. (2021). *Becoming human: A theory of ontogeny*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
62. Trilla, J. (1995). Education and controversial values: Elements for a normative approach to neutrality in educational institutions. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*, (7), 93–120.
63. Trilla, J. (2009). Service-learning in contemporary pedagogy. In J. M. Puig et al. (Eds.), *Aprendizaje servicio: Educación y compromiso cívico*. Graó.
64. Turiel, E. (1996). Equality and hierarchy: Conflict in values. In E. S. Reed, E. Turiel, & T. Brown (Eds.), *Values and knowledge* (chap. 5, pp. 75–101). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
65. Vázquez, A. S. (2012). *Ética* (33rd ed.). Civilização Brasileira.
66. Vilanou, C., & Colledelmont, E. (Coords.). (2000). *Historia de la educación en valores* (Vol. 1). Editorial Descleé.
67. Vilanou, C., & Colledelmont, E. (Coords.). (2001). *Historia de la educación en valores* (Vol. 2). Editorial Descleé.
68. Zabala, A. (2010). *Como aprender e ensinar competências*. Artmed.