

BEHAVIORIST AND HUMANISTIC APPROACH: PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

ABORDAGEM BEHAVIORISTA E HUMANISTA: IMPLICAÇÕES PSICOPEDAGÓGICAS

ENFOQUE CONDUCTISTA Y HUMANISTA: IMPLICACIONES PSICOPEDAGÓGICAS



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ABSTRACT

The educational phenomenon is multidimensional, involving human, technical, cognitive, emotional, sociopolitical, and cultural aspects, requiring diverse approaches, such as anthropological and psychological, to avoid reductionism. Theories of knowledge, such as empiricism (primacy of the object), nativism (primacy of the subject), and interactionism (subject-object), influence distinct pedagogical practices. Behaviorism, centered on the object, emphasizes environmental control of behavior, while humanism, focused on the subject, values autonomy and meaningful learning. Interactionism emphasizes the continuous construction of knowledge through subject-environment interaction. Education, from these perspectives, varies between cultural transmission (behaviorism) and the facilitation of self-learning (humanism).

Keywords: Educational Phenomenon. Pedagogical Approaches. Interactionism.

RESUMO

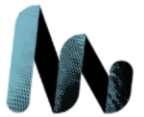
O fenômeno educativo é multidimensional, envolvendo aspectos humanos, técnicos, cognitivos, emocionais, sociopolíticos e culturais, exigindo abordagens diversas como antropológica e psicológica para evitar reducionismos. Teorias do conhecimento, como empirismo (primado do objeto), nativismo (primado do sujeito) e interacionismo (sujeito-objeto), influenciam práticas pedagógicas distintas. O behaviorismo, centrado no objeto, enfatiza o controle ambiental do comportamento, enquanto o humanismo, focado no sujeito, valoriza a autonomia e a aprendizagem significativa. O interacionismo destaca a construção contínua do conhecimento pela interação sujeito-ambiente. A educação, nessas perspectivas, varia entre transmissão cultural (behaviorismo) e facilitação da autoaprendizagem (humanismo).

Palavras-chave: Fenômeno Educativo. Abordagens Pedagógicas. Interacionismo.

RESUMEN

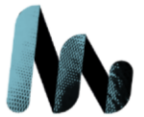
El fenómeno educativo es multidimensional e involucra aspectos humanos, técnicos, cognitivos, emocionales, sociopolíticos y culturales, lo que requiere diversos enfoques, como

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el antropológico y el psicológico, para evitar el reduccionismo. Teorías del conocimiento, como el empirismo (primacía del objeto), el nativismo (primacía del sujeto) y el interaccionismo (sujeto-objeto), influyen en distintas prácticas pedagógicas. El conductismo, centrado en el objeto, enfatiza el control ambiental del comportamiento, mientras que el humanismo, centrado en el sujeto, valora la autonomía y el aprendizaje significativo. El interaccionismo enfatiza la construcción continua del conocimiento mediante la interacción sujeto-entorno. Desde estas perspectivas, la educación varía entre la transmisión cultural (conductismo) y la facilitación del autoaprendizaje (humanismo).

Palabras clave: Fenómeno Educativo. Enfoques Pedagógicos. Interaccionismo.



1 INTRODUCTION

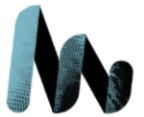
The educational phenomenon is human, historical and multidimensional. In it, both the human, technical, cognitive, emotional, socio-political and cultural dimensions are present. The study and understanding of these educational phenomena require multiple and convergent approaches - anthropological, philosophical, sociological, economic, ideological and psychological, privileging one or the other approach would favor a series of reductionisms, whose failure consists in isolating an aspect of the educational act and discussing the object of education on top of it.

Through a socio-historical retrospective, we can observe the presence of some theories of knowledge that privileged the primacy of the object (behaviorist approach) and the primacy of the subject (humanist approach). Each of these theories condenses different conceptions about man, society, culture and knowledge. These different positions, in turn, can imply from a logical point of view, different pedagogical applications. Nowadays, contrary to the first theories of knowledge that privileged, sometimes the primacy of the object, sometimes the primacy of the subject, it is believed that the interpretation of the vital phenomenon, whether biological, sociological or psychological, should start from the subject-environment relationship, that is, the subject-object interaction is emphasized. Let us then rescue these theories of knowledge, in order to better understand the philosophical and epistemological support that guides the approaches to teaching learning, as Mizukami (1986) assures us, namely: traditional, cognitivist, humanistic, behaviorist and socio-interactionist approach.

First, we highlight Empirism (primacy of the object), which advocates the organism subject to the contingencies of the environment, with knowledge being a copy of something given in the external world. There is, therefore, an emphasis on the importance of the object, of the environment, whether the subject is taken into account as a "tabula rasa", or whether it is not so orthodox and admits the maturation of some cognitive activity.

In the midst of the conceptions of this current, knowledge is seen as a discovery and is new to the individual who makes it. What was discovered, however, was already present in the external reality, that is, for empiricists, there is no construction of new realities. From the pedagogical point of view, this position is guided by an empiricist associationism, where all knowledge is reduced to an exogenous acquisition, based on experiences, verbalizations or audiovisual resources and materials; that are simply transmitted (this is what happens with traditional and behaviorist teaching approaches).

In a second position, we can highlight nativism, apriorism or innatism (primacy of the subject) which argues that the forms of knowledge are predetermined in the subject. The

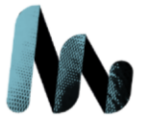


subject, the human organism, is attributed "ready-made" categories, to which all sensory stimulation is channeled. Thus, there is an emphasis on the importance of the subject, including both the tendencies that advocate an absolute preformism, and those that admit a process of updating. From the pedagogical point of view, the concern would be, to a large extent, focused on what Piaget (1967) called the "exercise of an already prefabricated reason". Thus, while in the first case (empiricism) there is an emphasis on an exogenous pre-formation of knowledge, in the second (nativism), the emphasis found is on an endogenous pre-formation.

In a third position we find the interactionist point of view (subject-object interaction), as we have already mentioned, which considers knowledge as a continuous construction and, to a certain extent, invention and discovery are pertinent to every act of understanding. The passage from one level of understanding to the next is always characterized by the formation of new structures, which did not previously exist in the individual. This includes the tendencies in which this interactionism appears, either in the a priori modality of "gestalt" or as a process characterized by sequential constructivism. In the latter tendency, there is no preformation, neither endogenous (innate) nor exogenous (empiricist), but a continuous development of successive elaborations that imply the interaction of both positions. One of the pedagogical consequences of this current is the great importance given to the activities, spontaneous or not, of children, in their interaction with the physical, psychosocial and cultural world. In this way, interactionists emphasize a dynamic relationship between hereditary genetic baggage and its adaptation to the environment in which it develops.

Let us analyze, after this brief retrospective, the behaviorist approach, which focuses on the primacy of the object, and the humanist approach, which focuses on the primacy of the subject. Let us return to the historical and philosophical origins that supported these two approaches. Let's start with the precursors of behaviorism.

A quick incursion into the history of psychology, in its process of constitution as a science of man, in its search for authenticity, reveals that it has undergone two major epistemological cuts: The first occurred when, not intending to, dedicating herself to the task of abstract and reflective knowledge, she sought to break with the umbilical cord that linked her to Philosophy. The second cut, resulting from the first, is linked to the moment when Psychology, in the nineteenth century, allied itself with a perspective known as "scientific", constituted by the scope of the physical, biological or psychochemical sciences, whose status of scientificity was recognized by all. The birth of this scientific psychology occurred in a climate permeated by Comtean positivism that tried to apply the methods and principles of the natural sciences to human problems. The twofold objective set by Auguste Comte was,



on the one hand, to delimit the frontiers of science against any possible incursion of metaphysics and, on the other, to fix the principles and methods of the sciences, on the basis of the methods of physics or chemistry.

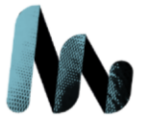
Despite Comte's doctrine, behavioral psychology had to wait about 80 years before it constituted its status of public scientificity, recognized from Watson's work.

The consequences of positivism fall on the constitution of the Vienna Circle, in 1920, a group of philosophers, mathematicians and scientists who strove to reform philosophy and purge it of metaphysics. This neopositivism maintained Comte's commitment to consider science the only vehicle for progress, but it extirpated metaphysical questions of value and morality from human discourse, considering them merely "non-scientific". For this group, the only statements considered scientific were those whose content could be publicly verified.

Under the influence of Wittgenstein (a disciple of Bertrand Russell), Viennese neopositivism arrived in England, where it constituted Logical Positivism, and formed the famous "Oxford Group", which would tremendously influence Skinner's thought, since he preached the need for the scientist to prescribe how science should be performed, and not to describe how it is done.

Skinnerianism was born within American environmentalism, which emphasizes the importance of the environment and its influence on human personality and behavior, with the research of Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead standing out in the Social Sciences and Watson's work in Psychology. This author, due to the strength given to the effects of the environment, launched Behaviorism and transformed the study of learning - modification of behavior as a result of experience - into a dominant topic in American psychology for three decades. However, Skinner criticizes these early versions of environmentalism for not explaining how the environment worked and for the large space given to autonomous man. In the experimental analysis of behavior, undertaken by Skinner, there is the transfer of the behavior of the autonomous man to the environment, that is, man is a consequence of the forces existing in the environment. The hypothesis that "man is not free" is a fundamental premise for being able to apply a scientific method in the field of behavioral sciences. Thus, the purpose of science, for Skinner, is to influence, model, modify and control human behavior through the manipulation of environmental variables.

The concern with the controlling agents of behavior in Skinner's work (government, family, religion, culture) arose in the late 50s and early 60s, as a result of the pressure made by American society for psychology to engage in the solution of problems such as: equal treatment of citizens, the understanding of human freedom, among other themes.



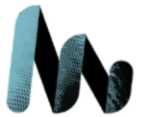
After having succinctly pointed out the socio-historical roots of Skinner's work, let us take a closer look at his conceptual framework, and approach the teaching-learning reality. Themes such as society-culture are emphasized throughout his work. Culture, in the Skinnerian perspective, is understood as an experimental space used in the study of behavior and as a set of reinforcement contingencies. Thus, in this approach, the use of a science in the planning of a culture is advocated. The emphasis on the development of this social and cultural planning was expressed in his book *Walden II*, when Skinner portrays an ideal society governed by the laws of behavioral engineering. Thus, in the behaviorist approach, culture is represented by the dominant uses and customs and by the behaviors that are maintained over time because they are reinforced to the extent that they serve power.

The individual, in the context of this sociocultural planning, has a role merely as a passive element and a responder to what is expected of him. The control and directism of human behavior prevail and the human being is seen as a part of a planned and controlled machine, performing the function that is expected of him in an efficient manner.

The planned experience is, therefore, the basis of knowledge, thus evidencing the empiricist foundation of this approach: knowledge is the direct result of experience. Thus, we realize that Skinner did not pay attention to the processes, intermediate constructs and what could be hypothetically processed in the individual's mind during the learning process, as the cognitivist approach does, for example.

With regard to education, it is intimately linked to cultural transmission. In other words, education, in this type of approach, should be responsible for transmitting knowledge, as well as ethical behaviors, social practices, skills considered basic for the manipulation and control of the world/environment (cultural, social, etc.). The basic purpose of education would be to promote desirable and permanent changes, which imply both the acquisition of new behaviors and the modification of existing ones.

In the midst of these assumptions, the school appears as an educational agency that must adopt a peculiar form of control, according to the behaviors it intends to install and maintain. It is therefore up to it to maintain, conserve and in part modify the patterns of behavior accepted as useful and desirable for a society, considering a given cultural context. The school therefore meets the objectives of a social nature, to the extent that it meets the objectives of those who confer power on it - the power to know if we wanted to use a Foucaultian terminology. The school is also seen, in this approach, as linked to and dependent on other controlling agencies of society and the social system: government, media, politics and economy. These agencies, in turn, also need the school because it is the institution in which the new generations are trained.



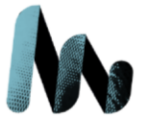
In this context, the role of the teacher lies in his competence to manipulate the conditions of the student's environment, in order to ensure learning. The student's role becomes that of a receiver of knowledge and is expected to accept pre-established goals. The evaluation of these goals is done by measuring the responses (or changes in behavior) that are directly observable and likely to be measures.

The technological model based on behaviorism includes programmed teaching, that is, the reinforcement of correct answers that are intended to be fixed and extinction of undesirable answers or behaviors. On the other hand, the behaviors considered "desired" by the students will be installed and maintained by arbitrary conditions and reinforcers such as praise, degrees, grades, recognition of the masters, among others, which are associated with another class of more remote and generalized reinforcers: the diploma, the advantages of the future profession, status, among others.

From the above, we can say that the Skinnerian theory of positivist foundation, maintained the mechanistic description of man, being considered as a passive being and whose behavior is fully explicable according to a simplistic model of cause and effect, which reminds us of the scientific model of Physics of the nineteenth century, today abandoned even by this science.

The first criticism we can make of Skinner's theory is about determinism versus free will. In the behaviorist or behaviorist approach, the traditional subject-object relationship is inverted and, instead of privileging the finalist operation of the former over the latter, the function of determining and shaping behavior is transferred to the environment. It is a reductionism, an epistemological position that intends to reconstruct all the sciences of man on the basis of a psychological theory that has behavior as its most elementary category. Thus, taking the model of Physics, behaviorism intends to abolish the opposition mental interiority and objective exteriority, describing all kinds of action, thinking of the real in a single dimension, that is, considering the real as that which is manipulable.

In this type of approach, education, teaching-learning and instruction come to mean an arrangement of environmental contingencies to enable cultural transmission and generate behavioral changes, according to what is pre-established by a decision-making summit - the school, the teacher and other institutions of power. Thus, in the Skinnerian conception, pedagogy, education and teaching are identified with methods and technology. The methodology and principles used in this approach derive from experimental analysis, thus reducing human life to a mere laboratory situation.



The applicability of this type of analysis to teaching has produced and enabled the development of an educational technology based on the premise that everything that is not programmed is undesirable.

In contrast to this apology for educational technology, Carl Rogers' humanist approach appears trying to rescue the human dimension. Despite opposing each other, Skinner and Rogers shared the same American scientific and cultural ambience of the thirties and forties. That is, the penetration of positivism in scientific circles; American environmentalism (marking Watson's sociology, anthropology, and psychology); the American value system originated in Puritanism; and the concern with the problem of minorities - blacks, foreigners and women.

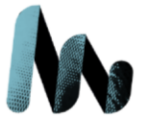
Faced with this panorama and socio-historical context, Skinner's work, as we have already analyzed, based on logical positivism and guided by an experimental line, proposed a system of behavior control that would promote individual and social well-being. From a humanist perspective, the Rogerian proposal tried to rescue these social problems and found only one way: the recovery of man.

This man should be analyzed in a phenomenological approach, essential for the emergence of proposals that would change some fundamental aspects of society.

The philosophical foundation of the humanist approach rests on the European intellectual tradition, which began in the 1930s and 1940s and whose origins must be sought in Hegel, Marx and Brecht. Although there are no strong ties between each of them, each one represents a movement away from Kant and the entire rationalist superstructure of Enlightenment thought. The break with this tradition gave rise to new orientations, shaped by divergent thinkers, such as Martin Heidegger, Søren Kierkegaard, Merleau-Ponty and Jean Paul Sartre, who were concerned with the study of man's existential problems: life, death, pain and anguish, among other topics. This movement called the Philosophy of Existence, which emerged in the post-World War II period, had as its main objective the investigation of human existence. Existentialists consider man as mere subjectivity and this is understood in its creative sense: man creates himself freely, he is his freedom.

Another pillar of this approach is humanism, not the Renaissance one, which defended individualism, but a contemporary humanism that assumes a communitarian character that historical humanism lacked.

To conclude our analysis of the ancestry of the humanistic approach, we can say that it begins with Kant and evolves, through Hegelianism, to phenomenology and existentialism. Often omitted from the discussion of phenomenological history is the fact that the fundamental notion of intentionality is implicit in Kant's epistemology. It is also verified, as Goulart (1997) shows us: that theorists such as Piaget, Lewin and Kolberg, who deal with



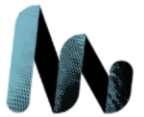
intrinsic maps, fields, rules of formal reasoning, are linked to the Kantian tradition that flourished as phenomenology.

Despite these influences of philosophy on Rogers' thought, his theory was built from his clinical experience, not seeking to justify his statements as coming from a philosophical and psychological school. Thus, the Rogerian approach lacks theoretical foundation, but one cannot deny the vision of reality and human nature that it expresses and that will identify it in a phenomenological approach.

With regard to education, Rogers contrasts with traditional learning theories, whose focus is on learning, either as a process or as a product. For Rogers, the focus is on the person who learns. Learning theories, in general, provide subsidies for the planning and organization of teaching strategies. The Rogerian suggestion has nothing to do with methodologies, but with the teacher's attitudes. The student must assume the role of facilitator of learning and it is in this "facilitator" climate that the student will come into contact with vital problems that have repercussions on his existence. The teacher as a facilitator of learning must be authentic (open to their experiences) and congruent, that is, integrated.

The philosophy of education that underlies Rogerianism is called the philosophy of democratic education, because it consists, as we have already mentioned, in leaving the responsibility of education to the student himself. In the midst of these proposals, the basic purpose of education is the creation of conditions that facilitate the student's learning, freeing their capacity for self-learning in a way that makes it possible for them to learn both intellectual and emotional development. Thus, we can say that the Rogerian propositions about person-centered teaching (primacy of the subject) imply techniques of directing without directing, that is, directing the person to his own experience, so that he can structure himself and act. This is the purpose of Rogers' non-directive method, diametrically opposed to the right-wing Skinnerian educational technology.

The non-directive method is formed by a set of techniques that implements the basic attitude of trust and respect for the student, who must, in this process, take responsibility for the objectives related to the learning that has meaning for him. To summarize, the basic characteristic of this approach is the emphasis given to the pedagogical relationship, which must occur in a climate of mutual teacher-student respect, a favorable climate for the development of both. It is in this climate of mutual respect that Rogers believes that what he calls meaningful learning is achieved, which must be meaningful and experiential for the person who learns. This meaningful learning has the quality of personal involvement - the person as a whole participates in the learning, both in its sensitive and cognitive aspects. Although, in many moments, the encouragement comes from outside, the discovery, the



grasp the meaning, the understanding come from within. This learning brings about changes in the behavior, attitudes and even personality of the student. As such learning occurs, the learner himself evaluates whether he is meeting his needs, towards what he wants to know, so the "locus" of the evaluation resides in the learner himself.

The Rogerian proposals based on meaningful learning and the facilitation of this learning are confronted with a school scheme based on pre-established curricula, identical duties for all students, standardized tests, classes as the didactic resource most used by the teacher as learning measures. The Rogerian proposal is based on the idea that all this must be rethought, so that new objectives and values are defined for which educators and students must fight.

The most important consequence from the Rogerian point of view is his hypothesis that we have, in terms of existence, the power to choose, which implies attributing to man the freedom and responsibility for his choices.

Rogerian humanism consisted of making human possibilities for creativity and growth a reality, considering the person in the here and now, emphasizing the central place of the "I," and freeing people to walk for themselves.

Regarding formal education, Rogers was severe in his criticisms, considering the school, from primary to university, the most obsolete, incompetent and bureaucratic institution of our culture. His great contribution to pedagogical reflections was to propose a form of teacher-student interpersonal relationship, in which individuals function more completely and are self-determined.

Although Rogers and Skinner defended almost totally antagonistic positions and approaches to human problems, both left their marks on American psychology. We can find, however, a point of convergence between the two theorists: they analyze man in the present, without focusing on the past as psychoanalysis did. They are concerned, above all, with the human person and with the possibility of reconstructing the social.

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