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Worldview and educational work in times of neoconservatism: a reflection based on historical-critical pedagogy

Concepção de mundo e trabalho educativo em tempos de neoconservadorismo: uma reflexão a partir da pedagogia histórico-crítica

Cosmovisión y trabajo educativo en tiempos del neoconservadurismo: una reflexión desde la pedagogía histórico-crítica

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Abstract

This manuscript aims to elucidate theoretical assumptions that demonstrate the importance of educational work within the school context, facing the struggle between worldviews within the current Brazilian socio-historical landscape, in which the prevalence of neoliberal ideology is identified, aligned, as an aggravating factor, with the neoconservative fervor. Through theoretical-bibliographical research, based on the theoretical foundations of historical-critical pedagogy, a critical analysis of this scenario was conducted, more precisely within the school context of education, this referer to the problematization of the relationship between worldview and educational work. It is observed that, stemming from the neoliberal-

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neoconservatism, as in this case, for instance, with historical denialism, there are contributions to an incoherent (naive) worldview that tends to be, in turn, subjectivist, relativist, and skeptic. In contrast, due to the need for confrontation, in light of historical-critical pedagogy, with an educational purposed, it is proposed to form and/or transform the conception of worldview through educational work in school education, in favor of a critical worldview.

Keywords: Worldview. Educational Work. Neoconservatism. Historical-Critical Pedagogy.

Resumo

Este manuscrito tem com objetivo explicitar pressupostos teóricos que evidenciem a importância do trabalho educativo no contexto escolar, diante da luta entre concepções de mundo no atual cenário histórico-social brasileiro, em que se identifica a prevalência do ideário neoliberal, alinhado, como agravante, com a efervescência neoconservadora. Por meio de uma pesquisa teórico-bibliográfica, a partir dos fundamentos teóricos da pedagogia histórico-crítica, recorreu-se a uma análise crítica diante de tal cenário, mais precisamente, no âmbito da educação escolar, referente à problematização da relação entre concepção de mundo e trabalho educativo. Constatou-se que, a partir da unidade neoliberalismo-neoconservadorismo, como é o caso, por exemplo, do negacionismo histórico, há contribuições para a concepção de mundo incoerente (ingênua) que tende a ser, por sua vez, subjetivista, relativista e ceticista. Em contrapartida, pela necessidade de enfrentamento, à luz da pedagogia histórica-crítica, tendo como finalidade educativa, propõe-se a formação e/ou transformação da concepção de mundo, por meio do trabalho educativo na educação escolar, em proveito da concepção de mundo crítica.

Palavras-chave: Concepção de Mundo. Trabalho Educativo. Neoconservadorismo. Pedagogia Histórico-Crítica.

Resumen

Este manuscrito tiene como objetivo dilucidar los presupuestos teóricos que demuestran la importancia del trabajo educativo en el contexto escolar, frente a la lucha entre visiones de mundo en el actual panorama sociohistórico brasileño, en el que se identifica la prevalencia de la ideología neoliberal, alineada, como factor agravante, con el fervor neoconservador. A través de una investigación teórico-bibliográfica, basada en los fundamentos teóricos de la pedagogía histórico-crítica, se realizó un análisis crítico de este escenario, más precisamente en el contexto escolar de la educación, esto referente a la problematización de la relación entre la cosmovisión y el trabajo educativo. Se observa que, a partir del neoliberalismo-neoconservadurismo, como en este caso, por ejemplo, con el negacionismo histórico, hay contribuciones a una cosmovisión incoherente (ingenua) que tiende a ser, a su vez, subjetivista, relativista y escéptica. En contrapartida, debido a la necesidad de confrontación, a la luz de la pedagogía histórico-crítica, con una finalidad educativa, se propone formar y/o transformar la concepción de cosmovisión a través del trabajo educativo en la formación escolar, en favor de una cosmovisión crítica.

Palabras clave: Cosmovisión. Trabajo educativo. Neoconservadurismo. Pedagogía histórico-crítica.

There is nothing that man fears more than contact with the unknown. He wants to see what is touching him; to be able to know it or, at least, to classify it. Everywhere, man avoids contact with what is foreign to him. At night or in the dark, the dread of unexpected contact can intensify to the point of panic. Not even clothing provides sufficient protection – how easily they can be torn, how easy it is to advance to the bare, smooth, defenseless flesh of the victim.

(Canetti, 2019, p. 11)

1. Initial considerations

This manuscript aims to present a discussion based on results obtained within the research project entitled “Implications of the school formative process in the development of worldviews in current times: the educational work of the teacher”¹, whose general purpose is to understand the implications of educational work in school education for the development (training and/or transformation) of the individual’s worldview, based on the theoretical foundations of historical-critical pedagogy. Considering this, this text aims to explain theoretical assumptions that highlight the importance of school education, precisely of educational work, before the struggle between worldviews in the current Brazilian socio-historical scenario, where neoliberal ideology prevails as hegemonic, aggravated by the rise of neoconservatism.

This theoretical-bibliographical research aims to recover certain assumptions of historical-critical pedagogy regarding the importance of objective knowledge, within the context of school educational work, for the development of the student’s critical worldview. The importance of presenting the relevance of objective knowledge to this worldview lies in contributing to the process of establishing a critique of the neoliberal-neoconservatism unity, nowadays, with the aim of highlighting, as Gramsci (2023) mentions, the critical elaboration in the face of the specificities of the current mode of sociability. Thus, it becomes possible to envision and act in favor of building another mode of sociability.

Thereunto, this manuscript is organized in two parts: *a*) initial notes on the implications of the development of an individual’s worldview within the current Brazilian socio-historical context, characterized by the prevalence of neoliberal ideology in conjunction with neoconservatism; and *b*) theoretical assumptions stemming from historical-critical pedagogy can contribute to addressing neoconservative specificities in school education, focusing on the relationship between worldview and educational work.

2. Development of the worldview in the current Brazilian historical and social context: initial notes

Given the specific nature of school education in relation to the process of human development, several questions need to be highlighted to identify the possibilities and limitations of this type of education in current times, that is, within the global socio-historical context, and especially the Brazilian context.

Therefore, and due to the varied dimensions of complexity surrounding school education, this text proposes to highlight, in an initial note, certain implications for the development of an individual’s worldview, considering the current Brazilian socio-historical context. It is understood that the process of human development, within the scope of school education, is and goes through constant disputes for the maintenance of hegemony in the form of a worldview, especially for the working-class members.

This maintenance occurs, among other things, through the capillary action of producing consensus based on the interests of the dominant class. According to Gramscian theory, this requires the constant maintenance of hegemony over the direction of politics for the benefit of that class. Therefore, hegemony, as a means of social domination of one class over another, occurs in numerous ways and with varying degrees of complexity. According to

¹ In Portuguese, “*Implicações do processo formativo escolar no desenvolvimento da concepção de mundo em tempos atuais: o trabalho educativo do professor*”. This manuscript was supported by the Foundation for Research and Innovation of the State of Santa Catarina (FAPESC in its Portuguese acronym) as a funding entity, via Public Notice 21/2024.

Coelho (2025, p. 10), “[...] the construction and actual exercise of class power occur not only in the State institutional spaces, but also in private apparatuses of hegemony located in civil society”.

It is noteworthy that the implications of producing and maintaining consensus influence the development (formation and/or transformation) of the worldview of individuals within the current mode of sociability. For Coelho (2025, p. 20), “worldviews are not custom-made, nor are they sprouts born by chance. They originate from social life itself, that is, from the relationships through which societies produce themselves; therefore, they are not disposable or replaceable according to the will of their users”.

Gramsci (2023) argues that all individuals, due to their worldview, belong, consciously or unconsciously, to a particular social group. Then, in current times, it is understood that to maintain the process of social consensus in favor of the interests of the dominant class, there are distinct ways that influence the development of the worldview of individuals belonging to the working class. This is a movement that promotes an uncritical and incoherent (naive) worldview. This specific worldview tends to establish a biased understanding of specificities of the current mode of production of human existence.

The process of forming an uncritical worldview takes place, among other dimensions, in the individual shaped by the form of the *false self* and the *fetishized we*, as Kosik (2010, pp. 85-86) argues when mentioning that

Because man identifies with his surrounding environment and with what falls into his hands, with what manipulates him and is ontically closest, his own existence and understanding become something remote and little known to him. Familiarity is an obstacle to knowledge; man knows how to orient himself in the world closest to him, in the world of concern and manipulation, but he “does not orient himself” within himself, because he gets lost in the manipulable world, identifying with it. The pseudo-demystifying (in reality, mystifying) philosophy of “concern” describes and acknowledges this reality but cannot explain it. Why does man, first and foremost, and most often, get lost in the “external” world and interpret himself based on it? Man is, above all, what his world is. This being that is not its own determines its consciousness and dictates how it interprets its own existence. The subject of the individual is, in the first instance and most often, a subject that does not belong to him, both in the form of false individuality (false self) and false collectivity (fetishized we).

In the current mode of sociability, false individuality and false collectivity tend to prevail at the level of the individual’s everyday perception of concrete reality. False individuality tends to prevail through hyper-individualization at the expense of true collectivity (emphasis on false collectivity). Therefore, the position by Coutinho (2017, p. 44) on the relationship between irrationalism and the misery of reason stands out, in which “[...] the totality of the world – the object of ontology – appears as dominated by an ineliminable irrationality”.

This perception, under irrational logic, is also configured by an immediate relationship with what is apprehended within the realm of reality (Konder, 2020). “Unlike knowledge gained through the arts, or philosophical or scientific knowledge, which need to go beyond the immediate to develop, everyday consciousness – subjected to the pressures and constraints of daily life – tends to remain very close to the surface of empiricism, often clinging to it [...]” (Konder, 2020, p. 262).

Spontaneity is revitalized to corroborate the individual’s worldview, benefiting adaptation and social consensus. Beliefs, values, habits, in short, everyday knowledge, come to prevail in the formation and/or transformation of one’s worldview. Therefore, it is understood that the comprehension of concrete reality, based on the individual’s (everyday) worldview, is predominantly aligned with a conservative logic. In modern times, this conservative worldview aligns with the dictates stemming from the rise of neoconservatism in the Brazilian socio-historical context, whose materiality lies in ideological distortions leading to a precarious decoding of data from concrete reality.

In that regard, distinct prevailing social determinants that influence the individual in daily life are identified², which reverberate to endorse neoconservative perspectives regarding the elements that constitute concrete reality. It

² Given the complexity surrounding the category of everyday life, the work by Heller (2024) is suggested, among others, in which he addresses everyday life as a *direct* reproduction of the individual within social relations; the work by Paulo Netto (2017), who starting from Lukács, establishes a reflection on the

is understood that the current situation, characterized by neoliberal precepts in conjunction with the postmodern climate (Duarte, 2011; 2012; Saviani, 2021d), presupposes the constant need to *construct* a hyper-individualized individual as a sine qua non condition for being able to meet demands of the current stage of the capitalist mode of production. Furthermore, the aggravating process of dismantling grand narratives, such as the historical development of reality, facilitates the predominance, according to Duarte (2022), of analyses in a subjectivist, relativist, and skeptical sense.

The contradictory relationship between humanization and alienation (Duarte, 2013), in the current mode of sociability, is accentuated in an unprecedented way. “On the one hand, the formation of the individual as a human being cannot be achieved without the appropriation of the objectifications produced throughout social history [humanization], but on the other hand, this appropriation is also the way in which the alienation resulting from class struggle is reproduced” (Duarte, 2013, p. 11).

According to Marx (2021, p. 92-93), “production produces man not only as a *commodity*, a *human commodity*, man in the determination of the *commodity*; it produces him, in this respective determination, precisely as a *dehumanized* being [...] both *spiritually* and physically – immorality, deformation, brutalization of workers and capitalists”. Therefore, what has been historically produced and socially developed in its maximum complexity by humankind is accessible to an increasingly smaller number of individuals (members of the dominant class). In contrast, members of the working class experience a continuously sharp reduction in access to what is produced by the individuals themselves (workers).

Undoubtedly, this movement is an important dimension of capitalist society. However, in the current neoliberal context, the gap between the lifestyles of both classes is widening sharply. As is well known, there are numerous dimensions that materialize this social scenario of inequality in neoliberalism (Duarte, 2011; 2022; Fontes, 2025; Saviani, 2021d). Based on liberal ideology, and therefore also on neoliberal ideology, there is an implicit aim to mask the real objectives when promulgating stated goals, “[...] given its condition as a typical ideology of the capitalist mode of production which introduced, through ‘commodity fetishism’, opacity into social relations” (Saviani, 2021b, p. 228).

It is worth highlighting, for contextual purposes only, that among the social dimensions of neoliberalism, given its complexity, regarding both real and proclaimed objectives, is the focus on the individual’s condition as an *entrepreneur*, for the benefit of the freedom to *manage* their own life. In that regard, Barros (2024, p. 101) emphasizes that “the empirical experience of individual diversity underlies spiritual inequality, which, in turn, legitimizes the social inequality necessary for the chaos organized by the market as an absolute spirit”. Then, following the author’s reflection, “freedom becomes synonymous with competition, and the individual, with entrepreneurship” (Barros, 2024, p. 101).

Since the present manuscript does not focus on highlighting these dimensions, it seeks, at this moment, to demonstrate elements that corroborate the development of an uncritical, ahistorical, and therefore incoherent (naive) worldview in the face of the current social structure. In turn, this reinvigorates the struggle to maintain consensus in favor of neoliberal guidelines currently in vogue in the social lives of individuals.

The relevance of establishing various mechanisms and strategies for developing this type of worldview lies in the diminished critical, historical, and coherent understanding of a considerable portion of society (individuals belonging to the working class) regarding the dynamics of concrete reality. This involves a process of maintaining and asserting what Kosik (2010) describes as the *false self* and the *fetishized we*.

Through ideological rhetoric, several ways of distorting reality bring to the forefront supposed obstacles to human life. With the advent of digital technologies, such as, for example, social media platforms (Raulino, 2022), ways in which various ideological rhetorics are internalized, influencing individuals’ worldviews. Therefore, to highlight the materiality of certain mechanisms and strategies that promote these ideological rhetorics, in favor of establishing

fundamental determinations of everyday life; and by Duarte (2007), who discusses the relationship between school education and the concept of everyday life.

consensus based on neoconservative dictates, it is appropriate to present some phenomena that corroborate an uncritical, ahistorical, and incoherent worldview.

In that regard, certain assumptions of Lukács (2024) stand out, highlighting the discussion about Marx and ideological decline. The author emphasizes the problematic nature of the individual's subordination to the division of labor within the capitalist mode of social interaction, standing out the narrow and animalistic character of this form of social subordination. It is understandable that ideological (neoliberal) rhetoric aligns itself in this narrow and animalistic way. "[...] this narrowness finds expression in contrast that has been fashionable in worldviews in recent decades: the contrast between rationalism and irrationalism. The inability of bourgeois thought to overcome this contrast stems precisely from the fact that it has very deep roots in the life of man subjected to the capitalist division of labor" (Lukács, 2024, p. 67).

As Lukács (2024, p. 67) observed a few decades ago, it is understood that, even currently, "today's ideologues adorn this irrationalism with the most seductive colors, evoking the 'abyssal depths'". As an illustrative note, it is possible to mention the phenomenon that Viana (2015) calls *rituals of suffering*, which is understood to be an example of an uncritical (naïve) worldview founded on irrationalism.

These rituals are socially instituted and consolidated. Because these *rituals* are gradually reproduced through various communication channels and commented on by figures considered *famous*, or in the current social context, by *digital influencers*, they end up being normalized by a considerable portion of individuals. In the subtext, what is being sought to be established, as rituals of suffering, are the jargon and rituals of individualism characteristic of contemporary capitalism: "[...] the jargon and rituals of contemporary individualism seek to distance awareness from the rigid and insoluble mutual dependence between individuals, appealing instead to a supposed selfish struggle for survival" (Viana, 2015, p. 184).

Then, the following reflection on a supposed game is presented, which can be characterized as one of the *rituals of suffering*:

Imagine four contestants on a TV show, after seven hours of fasting and sleep deprivation, being thrown into a tiny garage, largely occupied by a brand-new car that, despite its alluring appearance, couldn't be used for rest, and if they had to remain standing, unable to sleep, eat, go to the bathroom, or even raise their voices, while environmental conditions abruptly and mercilessly changed from extreme cold to suffocating heat, from drizzle to heavy rain, from icy breeze to gale, from total darkness to light that commands the eyes into another darkness, and this painful scene stretched on for hours, night, dawn, morning, until the exhaustion of the last one, perhaps then a young viewer... were invited to dictate the climate change measures to be implemented, as well as their intensity, by internet – and he did so. And if more than 5 million votes were cast? That's how it is (Viana, 2015, p. 10).

This is a narrative about the *trials of the leader* of the popular television program on Rede Globo entitled *Big Brother Brasil*³ (TV program classified as a *reality show*). Specifically, regarding this event, which took place in 2010, as evidenced by the significant number of votes and, as Viana (2015) mentions on the approval of participants in this *reality show*, it established a normality, possibly benefiting from jargon such as overcoming challenges, merit, personal effort, overcoming adversity, among others. Potentially, on the surface, one could draw a connection between these types of games and current reality, and within the context of an individual's everyday perception, interpret them as an incentive to overcome the adversities of neoliberal life, since supposedly, through individual effort, it is possible to achieve success. If these events do not occur, the individual may understand that the responsibility lies solely with them.

According to Viana (2015, p. 33), "the programs have the same form as productive life under neoliberalism: their organization is that of the contemporary capitalist enterprise, their structure is one of flexible work management; the commanding voice that echoes from both sides of the screen is the same, and there is the same pattern of

³ It is understood that the current television program broadcast by Rede Globo still holds relevance as a *commodity*. Not surprisingly, according to Pezzotti (2026), Rede Globo is expected to have commercial revenue from *Big Brother Brasil 26* exceeding R\$ 1 billion this year. This consequently demonstrates its potential in terms of audience reach, that is, the significant number of viewers it attracts.

responses from both sides of the screen”. In the case of this socially established phenomenon, what we observe is an irrationalism forged in the supposed relationship between games and reality shows, culminating in the naturalization of competition for the benefit of consensus. This competition, for Viana (2015, p. 185),

[...] it is fundamental for a consciousness that wants to escape destructive and restrictive social integration and that becomes entangled in antisocial categories of the past, instead of aiming to overcome destruction and deprivation. This ideological path is the counterpart to the urgent, frightened, irrational behavior of everyday life, a behavior of desperate, intimidated, automatic adherence to the course of the world.

In another dimension, but also with a bias towards establishing consensus, movements are observed that occur through digital technologies, mainly through socio-digital platforms (which can include social networks). Valente (2020) establishes, as a problematization, the category of *freedom of expression*, which has been hijacked by ideological rhetoric forged in neoconservative precepts. By contextualizing the significant transformations recently brought about by the advent of the internet, a more expansive form of communication is established. In this context, it is worth highlighting how news reaches individuals.

The emphasis given by Valente (2020) therefore focuses on how algorithms function, as a kind of *curator of the virtual environment*. Using algorithms, it is possible to select what an individual is most interested in at a given moment. However, as is known, algorithms are not *neutral instructions*. In addition to reflecting the interests of Big Tech (Morozov, 2021), within the scope of algorithms, an intense process of accumulating information about the data that characterizes the individual in daily virtual life is forged, potentially leading to refinements in news and products, for example, tailored to the individual. It is also through algorithms that it is possible to place something that might interest individuals (users) in their sights. This occurs primarily through social networks, that is, through socio-digital platforms such as Facebook, X, among many others. In this scenario, especially in the context of social media, what is made available to each user depends on the possible traits selected by the algorithms.

Barros (2024, p. 159-160) expresses the following position:

In computer technology, an algorithm is a set of instructions organized systematically for the purpose of solving or executing a problem. It starts with simple and precise instructions to identify and quantify the behavior of internet users. The issue is that, while neutral as a tool for collecting and cross-referencing data, it is not neutral in terms of its intended purpose, guided by the language that feeds the model. [...]

Everything appears to be perfectly neutral, with a scientific rigor that escapes human inefficiencies; this notion, however, does not withstand even minimal scrutiny, since algorithmic construction requires the definition of a problem and a solution goal. This is where the human factor comes in. This goal involves a sequence of steps to solve the stated problem, and these steps are translated into programming language. When launched, programming codes utilize various other algorithms to optimize the information: a model uses data to optimize its efficiency.

Certainly, from the perspective of the rise of digital technologies, it is necessary to consider the progress made considering this possibility. However, as already mentioned, algorithms are not neutral, and behind them lie private interests that, among other things, seek to introduce consensus and social appeasement. Ergo, based on the socio-historical context of recent years, it is possible to observe the use of these mechanisms, through digital technologies, for dissemination of ideological rhetoric grounded in neoconservatism. This is a phenomenon that manifests itself in different ways to reach various social groups.

Returning to the matter of algorithms as a kind of *curator of the virtual environment*, according to Valente (2020, p. 98), the phenomena of *echo chambers* and *filter bubbles* become evident: “each of these phenomena, focusing on an aspect of the same issue, revolves around the concern that algorithms attempting to personalize an internet user’s experience tend to expose them to content increasingly aligned with their worldview”.

Currently, with the ease of creating and disseminating information on social digital platforms, which implies the formation/transformation of worldviews, the possibility arises of using informational filters, devoid of objective

knowledge, they foster *alienating instruments*, such as *fake news* and *post-truth* (Gabriel, 2018) that contribute to creating and managing *echo chambers* and *filter bubbles*. Therefore, bubbles are created that currently tend to *echo* and *establish filters*, considering fake news and post-truth (Bernardo Silva, 2025), given the social scenario that still prevails of extreme political polarization, decentralization of information, and generalized skepticism among individuals and democratic and political institutions (Santaella, 2018).

Conspiratorial populism (Demuru, 2024) is part of a phenomenon that seeks to establish connections between populist discourse and conspiracy theories, forged in *echo chambers* and *filter bubbles*. It can be seen in the movement that Demuru (2024, p. 17) highlights as far-right, that “[...] encompasses movements, leaders, parties and agendas of the ‘far right’ and the ‘radical right’, as well as subcultures such as the North American alt-right [alternative right]”. This populist format has resonated in recent years by highlighting, according to Demuru (2024, p. 25), “[...] the due importance given to the magical dimension of his discourse”.

This magical dimension is housed within the fundamental paradox of conspiracy theory discourse: “[...] the truth it claims to reveal must always remain, to some degree, a mystery. Its secrets cannot be fully unveiled. Otherwise, the wonder ends. That is why, even when their predictions do not come true, conspiracy theories persist, sometimes more alive than ever” (Demuru, 2024, p. 32). Therefore, it becomes evident that “the empty secret that sustains them is filled with new narrative ingredients, with other plots that revive the story” (Demuru, 2024, p. 32).

What is observed in the Brazilian scenario is still the constant relationship between the individual’s immediate perception of reality, endorsed by hegemonic pedagogical theories (as discussed later), and the advance of neoconservatism through actions that seek to disseminate beliefs, attitudes, values, among others, to influence the formation/transformation of the worldview. Given the virtual predominance in individuals’ daily lives, there is a subordination of the field of disputes between worldviews in the face of a systemic dynamic (Cesarino, 2022) regarding new media, which implies an imprecise base of internet users, a systematized action of digital influencers (political or otherwise) organized and in constant algorithmic decision-making directed to serve the interests of dominant social groups.

It is understood, therefore, that one of the conditions that makes it possible to internalize neoconservative precepts, aligned with neoliberal principles, occurs in the predominance of the formation/transformation of individuals’ worldview based on the everyday perception of reality, which in turn does not contribute to a systematized understanding of this concrete reality. Ergo, theories, or rather, stories and/or fantasies (Demuru, 2024) promulgated through *mermaid tales*, tend to have a significant following among individuals, impacting human experiences and social relations.

Concrete examples of these ghostly tales can be seen in the spread of conspiracy theories about the Covid-19 pandemic (anti-vaccine theories, *Chinese virus*, etc.), *cultural Marxism*, *gender ideology*, among others. In that regard, the study by Stefanoni (2022) on strategies and movements undertaken by the new right (far right) to endorse and supplant neoconservative idealizations in individuals’ worldviews stands out at this time. In this context, the author mentions certain social digital platforms, such as 4chan, where a factory of memes transmitted virtually has been established. On that platform, for example, it became common for the North American far-right, especially on the *politically incorrect* channel, to carry out various actions (*memes*) in support of Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign.

Among other strategies and movements highlighted by the author, it is understood that, within the Brazilian context, the dissemination of conspiracy theories about *cultural Marxism* and *gender ideology* (Stefanoni, 2022) manifested itself with greater scope and reach, as well as the *Escola Sem Partido* (School Without Parties) movement, not mentioned by the author.⁴ However, as is known, in the Brazilian context, there is a surge of neoconservatism currently, with certain peculiarities. Nevertheless, the common thread remains the spread of fake news (Chauí, 2024), denialism (Duarte, 2022; Schurster; Gherman; Ferreiro-Vázquez, 2022), virtual bubbles (Ferrari, 2018), etc. These

⁴ In previous texts (Bernardo Silva, 2023; 2025), we sought to problematize certain neoconservative movements, such as the militarization of education, gender ideology, and the *School Without Parties* movement, aligned with the assumption of traditional moral and religious values to consolidate hegemony.

peculiarities, stemming from this guiding thread, are situated within what Empoli (2020) describes as the triad (relationship) of fake news – conspiracy theories – algorithms. Social polarization, the logic of me versus them, and the spread of hate (Empoli, 2020) are characteristics that can be observed in the advancement of neoconservative ideological rhetoric.

It can therefore be stated that denialism, especially historical denialism – to the detriment of objective knowledge (historically systematized knowledge) – is a powerful mechanism for the dissemination of neoconservative ideas. “Like an ideological and ever-incomplete jigsaw puzzle, historical denialism uses the pieces that are of interest, discarding those that do not seem interesting a priori” (Schurster; Gherman; Ferreiro-Vázquez, 2022, p. 31). In this context, in current times, it is understood that fake news, conspiracy theories, virtual bubbles, etc., are subordinated as strategies for disseminating a *new way* of telling history. This is because “denialism is part of a process of attempting to fascistize social relations, the way we understand the world [conception of worldview], and how we try to resignify the past by attempting to ‘regenerate’ and ‘cleanse’ the present of an unwanted ‘past’” (Schurster; Gherman; Ferreiro-Vázquez, 2022, p. 31).

One of the possibilities or influences that contribute to neoconservative movements finding resonance in agendas established from denialism occurs through the primacy, according to Duarte (2022), of the relationship between relativism, subjectivism, skepticism, and disenchantment.⁵ Ultimately, this amounts to a denial of the objectivity of knowledge, since reality comes to be understood through the representation of each individual, thus accepting the supposed possibility of varied and distinct versions of reality (Duarte, 2022).

Therefore, regarding this, it is worth highlighting that, according to Duarte (2022, p. 60), it is

clear that the individual performs actions that have objective consequences for the world, and these actions are guided, to some extent, by the individual’s thoughts, knowledge, and feelings. It is not, therefore, a matter of asserting that individual subjectivity has no consequences that affect, to a greater or lesser degree, objective reality, but rather that this reality exists, regardless of whether the individual is aware of its existence or not, or whether they like it or not.

Therefore, when only the singular representations of individuals about reality prevail, the possibility of developing a coherent (critical) worldview diminishes. Conversely, this opens the possibility for the materialization of neoconservatism through the individual’s everyday perception, influenced by what the individual *consumes* immediately and without theoretical depth in their daily life, especially in their digital and virtual daily life (as the case with the rituals of suffering and denialism mentioned earlier), culminating in an incoherent (naive) worldview.

From the perspective of the school formative process (school education), this scenario implies distinct educational projects, both as a political act and as an ontological condition: *a) in line* with prevailing social norms, that is, endorsing and contributing to consensus in light of neoliberal ideology (hyper-individuality); or *b) going against* the prevailing social norms, namely, challenging and presenting concrete possibilities for the school’s formative process that contribute to the complete overcoming of the current mode of sociability. Thus, to highlight the importance of the last education project mentioned, the following section presents assumptions that demonstrate historical-critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework capable of concretely contributing to the integral development of the individual, which implies the development of a coherent (critical) worldview. According to previous studies (Bernardo Silva, 2023; 2025), the aim is to find approaches within school education that contribute to the formation of the individual beyond social daydreaming and reactionary attitudes in current times.

⁵ By way of illustration, we suggest the study carried out by Rosa et al. (2024) on neoconservatism, or rather, technoconservatism and the YouTube channel Brasil Paralelo, in which the authors discuss, among other issues, denialism and historical revisionism.

3. Historical-critical pedagogy in the face of the (neo)conservative worldview: implications for educational work

As mentioned earlier, even in the form of introductory notes, due to the breadth and complexity of the subject matter and the objective conditions and purpose of this manuscript, within the Brazilian socio-historical context, a considerable portion of the population has been understanding the world through predominantly neoconservative and neoliberal lenses. As an example, it is pertinent to cite the rise of Jair Messias Bolsonaro as president of Brazil, in the event of near re-election and the still current repercussions of his refusal to acknowledge his defeat in the 2022 presidential elections.

It is understood that school education, embedded in current social relations, is still in a state of tension which, from the perspective by Duarte (2021b), adheres to the phenomenon known as *belligerent obscurantism*. We agree with the author, because

In recent years, manifestations of obscurantism have intensified, manifesting as an overtly belligerent tone that appears not only in the advocacy of firearms use by ordinary citizens, but also in physical and verbal attacks on individuals who become enemies of certain social groups simply because they express their opinions on controversial issues or the actions of certain political leaders. For this reason, this obscurantism can be described as belligerent (Duarte, 2021b, p. 89).

Therefore, Duarte (2021b), in explaining in his analysis what he is exposing as obscurantism in current times, takes the following position:

Obscurantism seeks to perpetuate power relations that favor certain sectors of society and, to achieve this, it needs to spread prejudices about any person, group, or line of thought that might challenge these power relations. The struggle of obscurantism against knowledge is always a political and socially reactionary struggle; it is a reaction to the possibility of profound changes in the structures and dynamics of a society (Duarte, 2021b, p. 90).

Belligerent obscurantism evidenced by Duarte (2021b), due to its reactionary character, forged in prejudices and the primacy of maintaining the status quo, fueled by denialism – conspiracy theories, fake news, etc. – finds an echo in the individual's daily perception, tending to be, currently, relativistic, subjectivist, and skeptical, contributing to the consolidation of neoconservatism and the neoliberal conjecture.

Within the Brazilian school education context, this possibility arises, among other issues, due to the prevalence of a neo-productivist conception of education and perspectives on formative school curricula, which direct this type of education to, intentionally or not, adhere to an educational project that ultimately meets the current mode of sociability. Thus, it opens concrete possibilities for endorsing belligerent obscurantism in the individual's educational process, in other words, neoconservative and neoliberal ideology.

Duarte (2022) highlights three types of perspectives on school curricula that are geared towards the social adaptation of individuals; that is, curricular perspectives in effect in school education that benefit social consensus. The first perspective on curriculum is primarily based on a pragmatic view; the second one presupposes a curriculum forged from themes linked to the daily lives of individuals, and which should materialize predominantly through identities, subjectivities, narratives, and ultimately, cultural experiences of individuals; the third and final approach directs the school curriculum towards the recovery of traditional moral and religious values.

These three types of vision for the school curriculum result in the construction and implementation of extremely poor curricula in terms of the dissemination of scientific, artistic, and philosophical knowledge. This is the case with the National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC [Portuguese acronym]), which has been the subject of critical analyses that, however, often start from premises in which the devaluation of theoretical knowledge ends up being as great as it is in the competency-based pedagogy that is the theoretical reference of the BNCC (Duarte, 2022, p. 64).

It is understood that such perspectives on school curricula, as is the case with the National Common Curriculum Base [BNCC], seek to legitimize the interests of individuals as a crucial condition for the very educational process of those same individuals. However, as is known, with the predominance of everyday perception of reality, individuals tend to reproduce what is immediately apparent to them, routinely, through common sense. Everyday perception is influenced by numerous mechanisms and strategies that have become common sense, in the interest of social consensus and, therefore, entrenched in the principles that predominantly govern neoconservative and neoliberal ideology.

According to Saviani (2021e), this refers to the dominance of empirical interests to the detriment of the concrete interests of individuals within the school context. In the current socio-historical context, where neoconservative and neoliberal ideologies predominate, school education, considering the previously mentioned curricular perspectives, explicitly or implicitly corroborates the neo-productivist conception of education (Bernardo Silva, 2024; Saviani, 2021a; 2021d). Broadly speaking, from an expository viewpoint, this conception of education can be understood by the following *equation*⁶: *pedagogy of exclusion + pedagogy of learning to learn + competency-based pedagogy = neoliberal school education* (Bernardo Silva, 2024).

This conception of education includes a pragmatic-utilitarian view of the need to become employable as the sole responsibility of the individual, the entrepreneur of oneself; learning through spontaneity, with the *enhancement* of traditional moral and religious values; and the (socio-emotional) skills for psychological adaptation to the concrete reality shaped by market interests. The alignment of such pedagogies focuses on contributing, through the contradictory relationship between real and proclaimed objectives for the school formative process, especially in public education, to social consensus, that is, to the opacity of prevailing social relations.

Pedagogy of exclusion, as a real objective, presupposes, based on the precept that there is not room in the labor market for everyone, the naturalization of inclusion/exclusion from employability as solely the responsibility of the individual. While proclaimed as a goal, it naturalizes this process of exclusion through ideological rhetoric, such as meritocracy. “The goal is to prepare individuals, through successive courses of various types, to become increasingly employable, aiming to escape their status as excluded individuals. And if they fail to do so, the pedagogy of exclusion will have taught them to internalize the responsibility for this issue” (Saviani, 2021d, p. 431).

The pedagogy of learning to learn, as a real objective, presupposes the displacement of the individual’s learning to varied social spaces (*light learning characteristics*), with the prevalence of online courses, and religious entities stemming from new theological trends, such as *coaching theology*, currently in vogue, for example⁷, as a constant process of updating necessary to increase an individual’s employability possibilities. Thereunto, as a stated objective, this individual must draw upon guidance disseminated by companies, *business and stock market experts*, shepherds of churches aligned with the *coaching theological* trend, among others. This is because, in theory, in a constantly changing world, it is up to the individual to always be attentive to market demands to establish a continuous informal training process that benefits them, through individual effort to achieve success, since the objective conditions, in this conception, are the same for everyone. Therefore, it is up to school education to act as a kind of driving force so that individuals can materialize the idea of learning how to learn.

Competency-based pedagogy, as another facet of the pedagogy of learning to learn, as a real objective, results in the need for individual adaptation, mainly behavioral adaptation (to the social environment), through the mobilization of socio-emotional (affective-emotional) competencies. As a stated objective, it is suggested that, in the

⁶ The proposed equation to explain the characteristics of the neo-productivist conception of education is not established by fragmentation, but by attempting to explain, within the expository framework, the pedagogical dimensions that shape it, according to Saviani (2021d), as economic-pedagogical bases, didactic-pedagogical bases, and psychopedagogical bases, aligned with the pedagogical-administrative bases.

⁷ According to Spyer, Damasceno and Khalil (2025, p. 133), *coaching theology* “is a growing phenomenon in the Brazilian religious context, especially in neo-Pentecostal churches, that combines coaching concepts with religious precepts. It emphasizes individual success and personal responsibility, promoting the idea that people possess within themselves the tools to achieve prosperity and fulfillment. Unlike prosperity theology, which still maintains a relationship with the Divine, coaching theology removes God from this equation, asserting that success depends solely on human effort and personal goals”. It therefore approaches the principles of the pedagogy of exclusion.

educational process aimed at contributing to the formation of the individual, their *uniqueness* should be highlighted through precepts such as proactive, creative, flexible, committed, dynamic, agile, resilient, among many other *adjectives* that implicitly direct the adjustment of the individual's behavior in light of the (neoliberal) precepts of the market. This pedagogy, according to Saviani (2021d, p. 437), has as purpose

[...] to equip individuals with flexible behaviors that allow them to adapt to the conditions of a society in which their own survival needs are not guaranteed. Their satisfaction has ceased to be a collective commitment, becoming the responsibility of the individuals themselves who, according to the etymological root of the word, find themselves subjugated to the "invisible hand of the market".

As can be seen, this set of hegemonic pedagogies contributes to social consensus, implying the development of an incoherent worldview. Such pedagogies endorse neoliberal ideology and do not concern themselves with critically problematizing mechanisms and strategies that translate into beliefs, attitudes, and everyday knowledge aligned with neoconservative principles in current times. What is currently in vogue, regarding the specificities of this neo-productivist conception of education and the mentioned curricular perspectives, is the maintenance of the empirical interests of individuals. As mentioned, such interests are forged within a social consensus, impacting on an incoherent worldview.

In contrast, certain assumptions of historical-critical pedagogy stand out, aiming at human development based on the highest human objectifications (Duarte, 2021a; 2022; Saviani, 2021f) produced historically and developed socially by groups of human beings; that is, the emphasis is placed on the concrete interests of the individual. Then it is reasonable to establish that historical-critical pedagogy understands students as concrete individuals; consequently, it presupposes concrete interests. "Therefore, what is of interest to this student relates to the conditions in which he/she finds himself/herself, conditions he/she did not choose. Ergo, the current generation also does not choose the means or the relations of production it inherits from the previous generation, and its creativity is not absolute, but it is present" (Saviani, 2021e, p. 158). The author makes the following addition regarding the students' creativity: "their creativity will be expressed in the way they assimilate these [social] relationships and transform them. Then, students, as concrete beings, also synthesize social relations that they did not choose. This negates the idea that students can do everything by their own choice. This idea does not correspond to the human reality" (Saviani, 2021e, p. 158).

Considering the problematic relationship between worldview and educational work from the perspective of historical-critical pedagogy, it is necessary to highlight the distinction that Saviani (2021e) makes regarding the interests of the empirical student and the concrete student:

Hence the great importance of distinguishing, in understanding students' interests, between the empirical student and the concrete student, establishing the principle that addressing students' interests should always correspond to the interests of the concrete student. An empirically minded student may want certain things, may have interests that do not necessarily correspond to concrete interests. It is within this context that the problem of systematized knowledge arises, which is produced historically and integrates the set of means of production. This systematized knowledge may not be of interest to the empirical student; that is, the student may not be immediately interested in mastering this knowledge, but it directly corresponds to the interests of the concrete student because, as a synthesis of social relations, the student is situated in a society that demands mastery of this type of knowledge, and it is the primary task of the school to enable access to this type of knowledge (Saviani, 2021e, p. 158).

Then, it is identified that school education is a dispute over a specific development of individuals' worldview (Duarte, 2021a). By emphasizing, on the one hand, the interests of the empirical student, it establishes conditions for a school education for social consensus, that is, for the development of an incoherent (adaptive) worldview. On the other hand, by standing out the interests of the specific student (even if he is not aware of it), as advocated by historical-critical pedagogy, it establishes conditions for the development of a coherent (critical) worldview.

As Saviani (2021f) points out, objective knowledge (historically systematized knowledge) is a crucial foundation for the development of the individual, especially for changing individuals' worldviews. This is the importance of historical-critical pedagogy, in essence a counter-hegemonic pedagogy: the dispute, within the context of school education, is for an educational project that opposes what is presented as neoliberal school education. The characteristics, broadly speaking, of historical-critical pedagogy as a counter-hegemonic theorization, are found in what Saviani (2019) argues as three moments of a truly critical theory.

The first moment is to approach the object of education and consequently its structural specificities to understand it in its concreteness. Education is understood as a mediating social practice embedded in global social practice, which conditions its insertion into prevailing social relations. Saviani (2019, p. 235) indicates that a critical theory of education, such as historical-critical pedagogy, constantly needs to "[...] reclaim, on the level of consciousness, the essential characteristics of education, which have been present in practice for centuries and which current theories, by failing to grasp them or distancing themselves from them, end up distorting in their meaning, contributing to their alienation". Ergo, as mentioned, the current theories cited above deviate from and distort the understanding of the essential characteristics of education, contributing to alienation.

The second moment is geared towards confrontation, or rather, towards the critical contextualization of hegemonic pedagogical theories. This movement of critique also encompasses the process of deconstructing the incoherent worldview that hegemonic pedagogical theories advocate, intentionally or not. It is not necessarily a complete negation, but a dismantling. This dismantling of such theories "[...] moves within the struggle for hegemony, which consists of a process of disarticulation-rearticulation: it involves disarticulating from the dominant interests expressed in hegemonic theories those elements that are articulated around them, but are not inherent to them, and rearticulating them around popular interests [...]" (Saviani, 2019, p. 236).

The third moment is the elaboration and systematization of a theory of education that is critical, in an effective way. Because they are moments in time, they cannot be considered static, based on formal logic. Therefore, this third moment is related to the first moment, and so on. However, according to Saviani (2019), the elaboration and systematization of the theory of critical education occurs specifically in this third moment. This is because, considering the distinction between the Marxist method of exposition and investigation, the author argues that, in carrying out the investigative process, which manifests itself in the preceding stages, it becomes necessary to establish the form of exposition. This involves developing, reconstructing, and systematizing the pedagogical guidelines that will elucidate the specificities of educational work regarding the purposes and objectives of education, as well as the individuals involved in school education. Broadly speaking, it refers to the articulation and systematization between conceptions of the world, the individual, education, and school education. Here is a theory of and for education, that is, a science of and for education (Saviani, 2021a).

Given the historical trajectory of the collective development of historical-critical pedagogy since the 1970s and 1980s, the commitment to fighting hegemony for the benefit of the working class is demonstrated. This involves the development and constant systematization of a truly critical theory of education. This political commitment resonates from ongoing research in education, pedagogical experiences, and the challenges surrounding the inclusion of historical-critical pedagogy in state and municipal educational policies. The articulation point, based on the theoretical field inaugurated by Saviani, occurs in the understanding of education as both a starting point and an end point (Saviani, 2021a), involving certain aspects highlighted by the same author:

- a) In-depth study of certain theoretical aspects in the fields of philosophy and the so-called educational sciences, and specifically pedagogy.
- b) Investigating problems in the field of educational policy.
- c) Investigation of aspects related to the levels and modalities of education within basic and higher education.
- d) Critical analysis of the attempts being made to apply historical-critical pedagogy in various fields of education within the current Brazilian context (Saviani, 2019, p. 242-243).

Within the scope of this manuscript, it is understood that historical-critical pedagogy, by highlighting the importance of objective knowledge (Bernardo Silva, 2023; Duarte, 2021a; 2022; Saviani, 2021c; 2021f), contributes to confronting the neoconservative effervescence and its *consolidation* in the subjectivity of individuals, especially members of the working class. As previously mentioned, the emphasis is placed on the importance of objective knowledge in school education to challenge students' empirical interests.

According to Duarte (2021a), scientific knowledge, as well as philosophical and artistic knowledge, can contribute to solid changes in the individual's (student's) worldview. Scientific and philosophical thought, along with artistic sensibility, are more advanced ways of understanding concrete reality. For Duarte (2021a, p. 77), "in everyday life, we rarely manage, in our understanding of reality, to go beyond the appearance of things and, more often than not, based on these appearances, we interpret reality in a fetishistic way, as if social phenomena existed in and of themselves, independently of human activity".

Therefore, objective knowledge converted into school learning, based on a materialist, historical, and dialectical foundation, contributes to a qualitative change in the student's development, as well as to a coherent worldview. From the perspective of historical-critical pedagogy, school education should contribute to the process of defetishization, that is, what Duarte (2021a), drawing on Lukács, describes as *defetishizing knowledge*. The specificity of this knowledge, found in scientific, artistic, and philosophical knowledge (objective knowledge), following historical-dialectical materialism, tends to generate a qualitative change in the student's worldview. As highlighted by Duarte (2021), defetishization of knowledge occurs through the following movements, respectively: *a*) in deconstruction of distorting appearance of reality; and *b*) in the concrete condition of realizing and understanding the role of individuals in the course of history.

Implications of this knowledge for the school formative process are fundamental to the specificity of educational work elucidated by historical-critical pedagogy: "[...] the act of producing, directly and intentionally, in each individual, the humanity that is produced historically and collectively by all of humankind" (Saviani, 2021f, p. 13). Consequently, it is necessary, on the one hand, through school education, to identify the cultural elements – knowledge in its most complex and advanced form – necessary for individuals to appropriate the historical process of humanization (human promotion). On the other hand, and concomitantly, finding suitable ways (a developmental dimension of educational work) for individuals (students) to appropriate such cultural elements as defetishizing knowledge.

According to Duarte (2021a, p. 86), "the process of defetishization is also a broadening of the worldview [...]". As a further development, the following stands out: "[...] the importance of educational work towards achieving increasingly higher levels of conscious elaboration of the conception of the world" (Duarte, 2021a, p. 102). The conception of the world is formed and transformed (developed) by what individuals appropriate from society and rework. However, this formation and/or transformation of the worldview, through school education, based on the assumptions of historical-critical pedagogy, must be directed towards coherence, or rather, towards a critical worldview.

Therefore, from a historical-critical pedagogical perspective, it is understood that this process of defetishization, within the scope of school education, can occur, among other issues, with an emphasis on human objectifications for themselves (Duarte, 2007; 2013). In contrast to the predominant emphasis on objectifications-in-themselves, which are forged on the basis of everyday life (common sense) and which tend to endorse, intentionally or not, characteristics of neoliberal-neoconservative ideology, objectifications-for-themselves "[...] form the basis of the non-everyday spheres of social activity and are constituted by science, art, philosophy, morality, and politics" (Duarte, 2007, p. 33).

School education should coincide with a humanizing character, that is, with the process of appropriating human objectifications in their maximum complexity from a historical-dialectical materialist perspective. School education, therefore, assumes the role of mediator between the everyday and the non-everyday (Duarte, 2007), enhancing the objective conditions for the constant process of formation/transformation of the worldview into a critical

worldview. School education, as can be seen, should contribute to the development of a critical worldview, since it is a dimension of the individual's full development, centered on the appropriation of self-objectifications.

In short, this process of forming and/or transforming one's worldview within the context of school education, with a view to self-objectifications (objective knowledge), is fundamental, because "criticizing one's own worldview, therefore, means making it unified and coherent and elevating it to the point reached by the most evolved worldview" (Gramsci, 2023, p. 94). As mentioned earlier, a worldview is not something static, since the individual, being a synthesis of multiple determinations and embedded in social relations, is constantly confronting reality, and this impacts their perspective on that reality. Precisely for this reason, school education should prioritize challenging perspectives to foster and/or transform a critical worldview. "The beginning of critical thinking is the awareness of what one truly is, that is, a 'know thyself' as a product of the historical process unfolding to this day, which has left within you a multitude of traces accepted without critical analysis" (Gramsci, 2023, p. 94). Thereunto, objective knowledge, as argued by historical-critical pedagogy, is fundamental for this critical elaboration.

4. Conclusion

Based on the position by Canetti (2019), it is possible to draw an allusion to the fear of contact with the unknown. This manuscript suggests that neoliberal-neoconservative ideology contributes to inaugurating and/or accentuating the fear of that which is not naturalized in current capitalist society. This implies the development of an incoherent (naive) worldview in individuals, characterized by rejection and even moral panic.

Conversely, in a critical and denunciatory note, while acknowledging the need for further in-depth analysis, the contributions of historical-critical pedagogy as a truly critical theory of education, to educational work aimed at *exposing* neoconservative ideological rhetoric are highlighted, and thus contribute to highlighting the contradictions inherent in neoliberalism in order to forge a critical worldview that provides concrete conditions to contribute to overcoming the current mode of sociability.

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