

School and Adolescence: A Message in a Bottle and a Wind of Change

Arthur Chicralla*

Department of Psychology, Universidade Salgado de Oliveira, Brazil

***Corresponding Author:** Arthur Chicralla, Department of Psychology, Universidade Salgado de Oliveira, Brazil.

Received: February 01, 2020; **Published:** February 24, 2020

What is the relationship between adolescence and school? How can we link a period of life to an institution? This article has its starting point the question of adolescence, a broad and complex theme, which will be presented under some theoretical aspects and highlighted from a symptomatic issue of our culture: the segregation of the youth.

I consider that a reflection on educational institutions is fundamental to comprehend the current status of adolescence and its challenges. What other place besides the school can gather, treat and segregates adolescents so extensively today? There are fundamental themes on the issue of adolescence today, such as violence, consumption, professionalization and modes of socialization; which, roughly speaking, cannot be dissociated from the issue of school life.

In 2018, I conducted some interviews with students and teachers at a public educational institution in Brazil. My intention at the time was to understand the themes of institutional reality, innovation in the classroom and current challenges of adolescence. To support the theoretical foundation, some excerpts from these conversations will be presented below, preserving the identities of the interviewees.

The purpose of this article is to address the theme of adolescence, focusing on the problem of segregation, and to raise questions about how the educational institution can teach us about the status of young people today.

What is adolescence?

We can think about adolescence starting from the fall of the passage rituals in modernity. According to Le Breton [1], adolescence is not an event, but an issue that crosses the time and space of human societies. There are demarcations that vary according to society, whether they age, ritualistic, etc. Therefore, the chronological question is not necessarily defined.

Adolescence only exists in societies that have a margin of time between childhood and the transmission of social responsibilities. In so-called traditional societies, as Le Breton [1] points out, rites of passage eliminate the issue of adolescent transition, as the child makes his crossing into adulthood and assumes his role as a man or woman in the community, at the moment when closes the ritualistic ceremony. In the logic of the rites of passage, social tension tends to be neutralized, as well as the anguish of the time to come, as the young man knows the way forward to observe his parents and other older members of his community.

Each society uses different criteria to plot the transition to social maturity. In this field, which is diverse, puberty is not necessarily the moment for this identification.

The initiation rites are linked to the radical change in the status and sense of identity of the childhood. There is a transformation process that ensures social transmission and unanimous recognition by the group. In general, the religious dimension connects individual

and collective existence. Another factor that is very present in the rite process is the body inscription through, for example, circumcision, perforation, scraping, waxing, tattooing, excoriation, burning, beating, etc.

Le Breton [1] names the rite of passage as a surgery of the sense, in which the virulence of the proof articulated to the pain provided ends in the personal metamorphosis. This operation represents symbolic death and rebirth, the dismissal of the child and the emergence of man or woman.

The psychoanalytic perspective is important to move forward on the topic. Freud [2] elaborated on the development of the sexual drive in the transition from childhood to adulthood. According to him, the sexual drive is present since childhood, when it is satisfied in the body itself and therefore it is not directed at another person. In this context, the theme of puberty emerges as decisive as the transformations of this stage lead to the passage from auto-erotic sexual life to the search for satisfaction of the genital zone through the encounter with another subject. From puberty the genital zone in a perspective of the development of the so-called normal drive assumes a privileged function. This does not mean that infantile libidinal fixations are completely abandoned - they remain a source of satisfaction for the subject. However, puberty is the moment of convocation for the subject to start the sexual encounter. According to Freud [2], sexual tension and the pleasure that follows it are already experienced in childhood, what happens only at puberty is the experience of the final pleasure of sexual activity.

Lacan [3] based on the Freudian theory, elaborates that any sexual relationship is unsuccessful for any speaking subject. In this sense, there is no complementarity between the parties because something remains - not everything is contemplated in the encounter. The pubescent subject when launching socially as a participant in the contingency of the sexual encounter is faced with the real of non-relationship, that is the inevitable lack of the encounter. What Lacan [3] aims to demonstrate is that there is no rite or social convention that converges enjoyment and meaning in a stable way. The childhood promise of phallic jouissance reveals a taste of disappointment regarding the desired goal, which calls the subject to a reconfiguration of fantasy and symptom. Note that this process is not related to the maturation of the biological body nor to the subject's chronological development.

Adolescence is not without mutations in the pubescent body but the required psychic transformation goes beyond any physical-chemical, hormonal or age apprehension.

Stevens [4] proposes adolescence as the moment for a variety of possible responses to the impossible that is the emergence of the real characteristic of puberty. The subject is called upon to respond symptomatically to the absence of sexual intercourse, in the sense of the constitutive lack that exists in the sexuality circuit. The author elaborates a precise articulation between puberty and adolescence. The first represents the moment when the non-relationship appears to the subject, it is the emergence of the real characteristic of sexuality. Whereas adolescence is the possible symptomatic response adopted by the subject. Adolescence serves as a metaphor as it represents the unspeakable absence in sexuality. The symptomatic arrangement of the subject represents a more or less stable attempt to enchant joy and body.

Therefore, from psychoanalysis we extract that adolescence means the subject's singular solution from the rupture with the psychic configuration of childhood. At this moment, the subject is required a new symptomatic and phantasmatic arrangement to situate which ideals can guide the subjective position in adulthood. It should be noted that what is crucial in adolescence is the singular way in which each individual responds to the calls of this journey.

As Student 1 describes about crossing adolescence: "Adults have the habit of thinking that we have no problems, that life is easy. When we are younger, the adult chooses for us. But when we reach adolescence we get separated from our parents and we start to desire our own things. We have different tastes and choices".

The issue of segregation: adolescence closed in itself

The issue of adolescence emerges as a problematic theme in contemporary times. In addition to an age or physical-biological identification, adolescence today is mainly a mode of subjectification. What is perceived both in the field of clinic and the social bond is the emergence of a language of its own a particular way of communicating a niche highlighted in the consumer market, a specific psychic symptomatology, etc.; the adolescents subjects, in general, have faced difficulties to complete their journeys to adult life and to integrate their selves into the political body of society.

A scenario design can be drawn from the reflection on the decline of tradition, the decline of the role of authority, the influence of media and technologies, etc. For many years, tradition has guided this crossing, through, for example, passage rituals; what is observed in contemporary times is the decline in patriarchal structures as the main form of transmission of knowledge, ways of doing and family ordering. On the one hand, this must be thought as positive, as we observe a plurality of ways of living; on the other hand, we note the scarcity of consistent ideals to guide the arrival of adulthood. Therefore, adolescents rely less and less on symbolic identification resources to support the overcoming of the children's life position.

I mention some of the recurring symptoms in adolescence today: pathologies that involve the dimension of the act, such as suicide/ attempted suicide, aggression or violence directed at themselves (cuts and self-mutilation) or at others, illegal acts and transgressors; humor disorders, such as depression and collapsing feelings; eating disorders; symptomatic mode of socialization, there is the formation of groups among peers that are formed as brotherhoods and are structured under the insignia of hatred towards the different; among others...

A theme that I highlight within this current symptomatological field is the adolescent's segregation process. It is a question with two connected faces: the psychic dimension and the social and political instance.

Lacadée [5] proposes that in adolescence there is a process of exile by the subject himself. Due to the enjoyment that erupts at puberty, the subject is displaced from the Autre of childhood needing a translation to deal with the unspeakable that emerges from this transition to adulthood. This process of subjective exile leads to its segregation and the realization of its non-place in the face of the alterity. This means that the subject concretizes his detachment from the political body of the city in the social bond. Deltombe [6] points out that the subject takes shelter in adolescence to defend himself against entering a process of subjectification. This phenomenon occurs both individually and collectively; in the latter case it is articulated as mentioned above to modes of symptomatic socialization that orbit around a particular consumer market and/or their own language and mode of expression.

Birman [7] points out that what has characterized adolescent subjectivity throughout history is the possibility of experimentation, especially in the spheres of love and the professional field. However, this position of authorized experimenter has been less supported in the social and urban context, especially when the exclusion of the young people mixes with some prejudice of ethnic, economic, religious order, etc. As stated by Birman [7], adolescents have been deprived of social and symbolic recognition. The subjectivity that identifies the adolescents in modernity speaks of a subjective position of wandering, although at times more isolated in the very circuit of language or consumption. The adolescent is invested as a risk figure in the social field, both for his capacity for experimentation and for breaking with the socially instituted.

The youth can be understood as an evil pulsing in the vein of the cities and for this reason they can evade the social bond and stand out alone or in social groups and tribes. This type of movement is perceived on both sides: on the adolescent's side. To give consistency to the otherness, they take the initiative to break (through the act, wandering, etc.) with the symbolic social bond in a movement of social exile; and on the society side, through the procedures generated by the discourse of science that quickly eliminate those who confront the capitalist order and individualist ideals, based on a norm that excludes and suppresses the subjects' speeches.

I believe that school institutions reproduce and update through a proposal of mass education the practice of segregation on young people. Therefore, the school content is not useful and it does not prepare for a next stage and the control character of the institutions is intensified through repressive apparatus.

As Teacher 1 points out, many of the students - mainly from public schools - do not have the culture of schooling inside their homes and many of the teachers are unaware of the exclusion process due to the culture of slavery in Brazil. Moreover, teachers do not deal with this historical factor during their own training process. Thus, in Brazil, we have a generalist educational model that does not welcome each subject based on their unique reality. Teacher 1 says there is the reproduction of racist speeches and/or intolerant appeal by the students themselves who are on the sidelines of the historically and economically privileged sector.

I believe that insult or aggression towards others within a collective with which the subject identifies himself can be understood as a manifestation of self-hatred. This phenomenon appears more often and can be read from the disconnection of the childhood circuit, where the subject is thrown into a vacuum of symbolic foundations that would sustain his journey into the world of adults and respond aggressively to what is his more intimate, projected on the other.

Another example of segregation, this time from professionals towards students, occurs as Teacher 1 indicates: when teachers criticize or give up alternative methods or technological resources in the classroom context. He reports that he has heard from other colleagues that teaching activities should not be carried out outdoors because students do not know how to behave well or that it would be a waste to offer alternative material because they would not even know how to use them.

Right now, we ask ourselves: what kind of school do we have today?

The school: the institution of adolescence

The educational system today is in check. Its effectiveness is questioned for several reasons: young people's lack of interest in the learning process, discrepancy between the content taught and the problems of everyday life, inefficiency in the professionalization process, low performance of evaluation, among others.

As stated by Sibilia [8], the school today is in crisis: as a technological device to manage bodies and subjectivities, its tools are increasingly incompatible with the current times. The author, from the path of genealogical analysis, identifies the school as an old-fashioned machine as both its components and its modes of operation are no longer easily in tune with young people of the 21st century.

What is school? Foucault [9] places it as one of the devices for exercising power in disciplinary societies. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, new forms of control over subjects were developed. It is a political anatomy of coercion mechanisms that organize the docility relationship. For the author, it is a precise historical moment, which inaugurates an art of managing human bodies to make them both more useful and more obedient.

As well as hospitals, prisons and nursing homes; the school also acquires a functioning logic of control. The disciplinary power refers to a machinery present in institutions to scan bodies in relation to spaces and obtain dominance. The school represents the beginning of the control of the youth's bodies that follows the logic of the production line, based on serialized capitalist production which effect is standardization.

By the way, the school institution is precisely what has stabilized the notion of adolescence throughout history. Ariès [10] points out that until the 18th century, adolescence was confused with childhood. There was an ambiguity between childhood and adolescence and both were opposed by the notion of youth. Only in the 19th century the age became an essential factor in the demographic structure. Ariès

[10] attributes the beginning of a second childhood and adolescence to secondary school education, which serves the bourgeois population during the 19th century. There was a progressive establishment between age and school class from there. In school life until then, for example, there was no division of class by age group; the content taught brought students together according to interest and the age mix remained out of school. Le Breton [1] also develops that, throughout the 19th century, the school has the function of crystallizing the notion of adolescence and it's through it that a society includes a project for children and young people. Throughout this century, society has intensified its attention in terms of protection and education. The compulsory schooling implies that the young people should remain under the economic tutelage of the parents and under the coercion of the teachers.

The confinement is an important feature of the technology of disciplinary society, which is still perpetuated nowadays. There is a relationship between each body with a given space (and under a temporal unit) to engender a productive logic that lingers in today's classroom. This is one of the aspects that makes the school obsolete, according to Pacheco [11], as this dynamic generates a rupture between what is vital for the student and what is lived in the school. For him, this type of organization represents a servitude to 19th century social needs.

About the classroom, Teacher 2 says: "The classroom remains the same. Technologies have not changed it so much, on the contrary, they have been misused. The portfolios and the teacher- student relationship are the same. Every school has bars. Very little is allowed for the student. Like a prison. I see schools with little change. The rules are imposed".

Student 1 tells us: "We spend a lot of time sitting - blackboard and chalk. If I was going to create another school I would vary, propose other things, invest in different types of talent: drawing, music, etc".

Teacher 3 states that "There is a very great dissociation, the feeling of imprisonment and the containment of bodies. The layout of the desks, the timetable... The school is a conservative institution".

The school institution, therefore, searches and limits the movement of young people and follows the ideal of standardization, based on serialized capitalist production. What effects does it have on the learning context? The massification of education is the consequence of this process. This school model does not take into account the particularity of each student, their origin, their desire, interest, curiosity. There is few opportunities for unique learning paths. As Alves [12] states, the learning process works as a production line as if all children were equal and had the same interest.

Today, in the 21st century, we realize that the school structure has not changed much. Does this represent the success of the disciplinary model in the logic of control and exercise of power? This question must be faced from the reflection of Deleuze [13] on the substitution of disciplinary societies by societies of control. According to him, we live in a stage of generalized crisis in the confinement institutions - the family, the school, the factory, etc. and new devices tend to emerge. The question of the exercise of power gains a new architecture, economy and modulation.

In the logic of disciplinary society, control is exercised discontinuously as the institutional apparatus with well-defined doors and walls confines bodies in relation to production. In the control society, on the other hand, this happens uninterruptedly, in a continuous way - the walls are no longer contained - which provides an increasingly subtle, more economical domain which does not mean less voracious. The issue that gains prominence for Deleuze [13] is above all a change in the capitalist mode of production. What are the new forms of domination over bodies, circulation, finances, etc. and how to fight them?

This reflection leads us to observe that the problem of the school and the classroom is not reduced to the question of physical space and the disposition of bodies. In addition, the predominant subjectification process is linked to the flow of domination and exercise of

power; and it overwhelms us in such a way that we find ourselves swallowed up inert by a routine that does not offer a gap to develop new structures and mechanisms for more free and democratic functioning.

Teacher 3 makes an important association when commenting on the need to reinvent the classroom; for him, young people are underestimated, they are not heard, nor taken seriously, and with that, the school can really be compared to a prison. For Teacher 4, there is a dominant thought that the student must attend the class only in a position of receiver, as if he were not an active participant. According to Teacher 1, it is noted that the students lose their creative expression as they gradually evolve on the school grades. These reports serve us to understand how the disciplinary and control technologies operate in the reality of the classroom and their consequences.

Solutions from the school

The scenario may sound chaotic, but luckily good initiatives and successful processes emerge in different contexts of educational practice. I believe that a change in the status of adolescence is possible through a subversion of the scenario of the educational institution found today. I have observed that school institutions are the ones that most allow an effective change in the perspective of youth today, because school life is part of the majority of adolescents of the 21st century. I think that changing the way schools work today is one of society's most urgent demands.

The school can (and must) become a place of community integration, professional training, creation, production of new tools, experiences that promote the feeling of belonging and freedom. It is necessary to find in each institution ways to mobilize professionals for this proposal, so that gaps for new methods, experiments, activities, innovations in general arise. Everything that involves the objective of allowing each student to find their own path of formation and construction of knowledge. In addition to the learning content, it is about giving young people a place in the world, making them compose in the collective, promoting the feeling of belonging, etc.

In the interviews I noticed a lot of lucidity and a combative spirit on the part of most of the interviewees. Many of them are unhappy with the widespread and segregating system of educational networks and recognize the urgency of inventiveness. I observed speeches that point to the school as a place of exchange and interaction that is the transmission of content and construction of learning the dimension of human relations.

Student 2 says: "The school is the environment that should serve the debate of ideas. It is the environment where our own prejudices arise, which must be fought against, as they are crystallized ideas". Teacher 5: "The school has to be a place of encounter, of exchange. It has to make sense, have some reflection. (...) It is important to feel that you have managed to cross, pass through them and leave a little bit of yourself and your work"; Teacher 3: "Education must come from each student. The function of the circle is also very important. (...) The institution only exists when there is an exchange, when there are people"; and Student 3: "The transmission between students creates an interaction between those who are not currently identified, breaks the 'inner circle'. When you are able to open up with colleagues creates stability".

I got to know some specific activities and situations that managed to pierce the fabric of polarity between teachers and students; times when inventiveness, spontaneity and respect for each other promoted a harmonic sphere of exchange and learning. Teacher 1, for example, mentions success by betting more on group activities than on individual ones; although criticized by colleagues for having the room considered a "mess", it got feedback from the students that it was the class in which they learned most. Teacher 2 told us with great joy about an innovative activity that engaged his students in interviews, questionnaires, statistical studies and conversation circles based on a theme directly connected with the young person's life and which was articulated with the programmatic content of his discipline.

As Freire [14] affirms, it is necessary for man to have the conviction that he participates in changes in society. Such sentiment is indispensable for the development of democracy. Hence, there is the need of the effort to reformulate educational action. For this, it is essential

to know the foundations of school institutions, which are almost always paternalistic, vertical and therefore - undemocratic. The educational system should lead people to solve the problems of their time and not make him repeat passages and statements disconnected from their way of life.

The treatment that the school must offer to adolescents in modern times is directed towards making them face the social and political problems that go through them, starting from the singular trait that links them to the collective. As Teacher 4 says: "What can you transform? Some ways of acting, feeling and seeing the world. This is like love, something revolutionary, and that is within the scope of micro-relationships. (...) The task of the teacher today is to raise sensitivities. (...) All the pedagogical work of the teacher has political implications and in the formation of the young person".

Bibliography

1. Le Breton D. "Uma breve história da adolescência". Belo Horizonte: Editora PUC Minas (2017).
2. Freud S. "Três ensaios sobre a teoria da sexualidade". Em: Obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud. Volume VII. Ed. Standard Brasileira. Rio de Janeiro: Imago (1905/1996).
3. Lacan J. "Prefácio a O despertar da primavera". Em: Outros escritos. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed (1974/2003).
4. Stevens A. "Adolescência, sintoma da puberdade". Em: Curinga. Belo Horizonte: Escola Brasileira de Psicanálise, Seção Minas Gerais, n. 20 (1998/2004).
5. Lacadée P. "O despertar e o exílio: ensinamentos psicanalíticos da mais delicada das transições, a adolescência". Rio de Janeiro: Contra Capa Livraria (2011).
6. Deltombe H. "A adolescência em questão". Em: Arquivos da biblioteca nº 13. Seção Rio da Escola Brasileira de Psicanálise (2016/2017).
7. [Birman J. "Ser ou não ser" \(2011\).](#)
8. Sibilia P. "Redes ou paredes: a escola em tempos de dispersão". Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto (2012).
9. Foucault M. Vigiar e punir". Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes (1975/2009).
10. Ariès P. "História social da criança e da família". 2nd Edition. Rio de Janeiro: LTC (1973/2006).
11. Pacheco J. "A Escola da Ponte e o eixo autonomia/responsabilidade". Entrevistadora: Viviane Mosé. Em: Mosé V (Org.) A escola e os desafios contemporâneos. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira (2015).
12. Alves R. "A educação como um ato de amor". Entrevistadora: Viviane Mosé. Em: MOSÉ V (Org.) A escola e os desafios contemporâneos. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira (2015).
13. Deleuze G. "Post-scriptum sobre as sociedades de controle". Em: Conversações: 1972-1990. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. 34 (1992).
14. Freire P. "Educação 'versus' massificação". Em: Educação como prática da liberdade. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira (1967).

Volume 9 Issue 3 March 2020

© All rights reserved by Arthur Chicralla.