



Philosophy Teaching and Opinion Formation in the Technical Age

Edgar Lyra*

Abstract: I present here a balance of my research on philosophy teaching. The involvement dates back to my first teaching experiences when it became clear that knowledge of the philosophical tradition was insufficient. But only in 2009, when I took over teacher training courses at PUC-Rio, was the research formalized. Times were different: Philosophy and Sociology became mandatory in high school, and the philosophical community intensified its attention to the field. In 2015 I joined the team that prepared the first versions of the BNCC. Much has changed since then: Philosophy lost its fixed place in the curriculum, we entered a period of political uncertainty, and significant changes in opinion-forming processes came to light. I invested in rhetoric – classical and digital – as an element of teacher training. It was up to Philosophy to prevent our young people from becoming simultaneously “mere users of new technologies” and “second-class citizens.” This investment resulted in the publication of the book *O Esquecimento de uma Arte: Retórica, Pedagogia e Filosofia no Século 21* (The Oblivious of na Art: Rhetoric, Pedagogy, and Philosophy in the 21st Century). Now I focus on constructing a “philosophy of opinion,” as required by the current denialism and political polarization scenario. In short, this text summarizes the history of a search for an effectively formative curricular place for Philosophy, above all in tune with the present demands.

Keywords: Teaching Philosophy; Opinion; Knowledge; Digital Rhetoric.

* PhD in Philosophy from the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio). Professor at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica (PUC). E-mail: lyranetto@gmail.com. Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3641926552572579>. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3664-3537>.

Ensino de filosofia e formação de opinião na era técnica

Resumo: Faço aqui um balanço das minhas pesquisas sobre ensino de filosofia. O envolvimento recua às minhas primeiras experiências docentes, quando se fez claro que o conhecimento da tradição filosófica não bastava. Mas, apenas em 2009, quando assumi disciplinas de formação de professores na PUC-Rio, é que a pesquisa se formalizou. Eram outros os tempos: a filosofia e a sociologia tornavam-se obrigatórias no ensino médio, e a comunidade filosófica brasileira intensificava sua atenção ao campo. Integrei, em 2015, a equipe que elaborou as primeiras versões da BNCC. Muita coisa se transformou desde então. A referida obrigatoriedade foi revogada, e ingressamos num período de incerteza política, ademais caracterizado por insignes modificações nos dispositivos de formação de opinião. Investi na retórica – clássica e digital – como elemento de formação docente. Cabia à filosofia evitar que nossos jovens se transformassem simultaneamente em “meros usuários de novas tecnologias” e “cidadãos de segunda classe”. Esse investimento rendeu o livro *O Esquecimento de uma Arte: Retórica, Pedagogia e Filosofia no Século 21*. Agora me volto para a construção de uma “filosofia da opinião”. Assim o exige o presente cenário de negacionismos e polarização política. Em uma frase, este texto resume uma história de busca de lugar curricular efetivamente formativo para a filosofia, sobretudo sintonizado com as presentes demandas.

Palavras-chave: Ensino de Filosofia; Opinião; Conhecimento; Retórica Digital.

Enseñanza de la Filosofía filosofía y formación de opinión en la era técnica

Resumen: Presento aquí un balance de mi investigación sobre la enseñanza de la filosofía. La implicación se remonta a mis primeras experiencias docentes, cuando quedó claro que el conocimiento de la tradición filosófica no era suficiente. Pero fue recién en 2009, cuando asumí los cursos de formación docente en la PUC-Rio, que se formalizó la investigación. Los tiempos eran otros: la filosofía y la sociología se volvieron obligatorias en la escuela secundaria y la comunidad filosófica brasileña intensificó su atención al campo. En 2015 me incorporé al equipo que elaboró las primeras versiones de la BNCC. Mucho ha cambiado desde entonces. La obligación antes mencionada fue revocada y entramos en un período de incertidumbre política, que también se caracterizó por cambios significativos en los dispositivos de formación de opinión. Invertí en la retórica, clásica y digital, como

elemento de formación docente. Correspondía a la filosofía evitar que nuestros jóvenes se convirtieran simultáneamente en “meros usuarios de las nuevas tecnologías” y “ciudadanos de segunda”. Esta inversión dio como resultado el libro *O Esquecimento de uma Arte: Retórica, Pedagogia y Filosofia no Século 21*. Paso ahora a la construcción de una “filosofía de la opinión”. Esto es lo que demanda el actual escenario de negacionismo y polarización política. En suma, este texto resume una historia de la búsqueda de un lugar curricular efectivamente formativo para la filosofía, sobre todo en sintonía con las demandas actuales.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de la Filosofía; Opinión; Conocimiento; Retórica Digital.

Introduction

The following text offers a critical overview of my work and research on philosophy teaching. The timeline begins in 1998, when – contrary to the direction of my academic training – I discovered that an in-depth knowledge of topics from the philosophical tradition was not enough to allow me to engage philosophically with the world around me, especially with students from different levels of education, who to this day remain my most direct and constant interlocutors.

The fact is that my attention to this field has involved, from the outset, a central concern with the dialogue between philosophy and the world, between philosophy and the polis in the broadest sense. Since we live in a distinctly technological era, permeated by radical global transformations – above all in the economy of knowledge, my research has taken on a dual and intertwined character: the necessary questioning of this rapid development brought with it the need for deep reflection on the forms of philosophizing, if only to ensure its survival within a technosphere largely devoid of inquiry and understanding.

Further clarification: this has never been – nor is it now – about a corporatist struggle over job markets or institutional survival, but rather about understanding philosophy as an essential formative need, indeed our best chance of preventing young people from becoming mere users of new

technologies, particularly individuals lacking true digital citizenship, with serious political consequences. In my view, the expansion of the professional field for philosophy teachers should be a natural outcome of recognizing this formative role.

For didactic reasons, I have organized this text into three parts: the first recounts my gradual involvement with the field and my overall understanding of its problems; the second presents a reflection on recent public policies and their relation to philosophy teaching – especially the National Common Curricular Base (Base Nacional Comum Curricular, BNCC) and the upper-secondary education reform;¹ the third outlines my most recent research and my corresponding perception of the paths that philosophy could and should strive to pursue. Some overlap among these three parts is unavoidable, for which I apologize in advance. It is difficult to present such a dynamic and complex landscape in a simpler or more elegant manner.

Involvement with the Field of Philosophy Teaching and its Problems

My first opportunity to teach in higher education came in 1998, at the end of my master's degree program. Like most of us, I had received no teacher training whatsoever. I quickly realized that there was a gap to be filled – a form of knowledge to be explored that was, however, scarcely valued in academia, either because it is seen as intuitive or because it is difficult to measure and neglected as an indicator of productivity. What mattered was theoretical research, whether continental or analytic, for reasons that remain the object of my investigation.

The referred hypertrophy of this academic valuation has other serious consequences, including the creation of a significant gap between what happens in graduate programs and what takes place in philosophy

¹ See Brazil, MEC. BNCC (2018), available at <http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br>. And Brazil. Law No. 13.415/2017, available at http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2017/lei/L13415. Upper-secondary education and high school will be used as synonyms along the text.

teaching in basic education, leaving undergraduate programs squeezed between two irreconcilable logics, with particularly detrimental effects on teacher education. The teaching formation track tends to be devalued relative to the bachelor's degree, and further teacher education rarely finds the time or space it needs. Together, the low priority assigned to teaching and the discouraging academic compensation associated with teacher preparation contribute to a veritable scourge that spreads throughout all levels of education and research.

Programs such as the Institutional Scholarship Program for Teaching Initiation (Programa Institucional de Bolsas de Iniciação à Docência, PIBID) and the very requirement of philosophy instruction in high schools –while it lasted – provided some room for change, but we now once again face difficulties in sustaining these policies, now further aggravated by the general decline in funding for higher education, especially in the Humanities.

It is clear that the pursuit of legitimacy for *research on philosophy teaching* faces several problems. The entire educational model – from basic education to postdoctoral work – must be reconsidered in its commitment to building a desirable future.

The issue is that this widespread lack of investment in dialogue with the polis has fostered true monstrosities. This gap has contributed, for example, to the bizarre possibility that, in Brazil, young people and adults alike might embrace, as if they possessed philosophical depth, conspiratorial speculations and the most delirious demonization of critical thought. It is worth discussing to what extent – acknowledging that other factors are also at play – the lack of communication between the university and the polis is responsible for producing narrative vacuums now occupied by speakers who are as skillful as they are opportunistic, giving rise to phenomena such as “denialisms,” “polarizations,” and even a kind of generalized “discursive collapse.”²

Coordinating research group meetings – where hermeneutic and analytical competencies are usually enough – is, of course, vastly different from

² I explored the idea of “discursive failure” in *O Esquecimento de uma Arte: Retórica, Pedagogia e Filosofia no Século 21* (Lyra, 2021).

teaching secondary, elementary, or early childhood students. Even extension activities and cross-cutting dialogue require rhetorical and pedagogical competencies to ensure their quality. *Interdisciplinarity*, incidentally, is a topic frequently invoked today, yet supported by little systematic research or practice.³ Especially, what can we say about engaging broader and more heterogeneous audiences – such as those reached through traditional media and social networks – which demands discursive competencies entirely absent from the political-pedagogical frameworks of academic institutions?

This realization, in fact, led me to write and publish my most recent work, *O Esquecimento de uma Arte: Retórica, Educação e Filosofia no Século XXI* (Lyra, 2021), which now prompts me to invest in the development of a “philosophy of opinion.” But that is the topic of the third part of this text. It is still necessary to examine the current landscape of educational practices and public policies to highlight the discrepancies between our educational demands and their precarious – indeed, at times wholly misguided – fulfillment. Only from this broader contextual perspective is it possible to justify, and even give meaning to, more proactive initiatives.

The BNCC and The Reform of Upper-Secondary Education

I coordinated the teaching degree program and supervised the practicum placements at PUC-Rio for nearly ten years. I experienced the approval of Law No. 11,684/2008, which made philosophy and sociology teaching mandatory throughout the three years of Brazilian upper secondary education. I witnessed the wide range of efforts made by part of the philosophical community to establish interfaces with this new level of schooling and to dignify teacher education – including the creation, in 2006, of the Working Group *Filosofar e Ensinar a Filosofar*;⁴ the establishment, in

³ Research on this topic can begin with Frodeman (2017).

⁴ Excellent recovering of the production of this Working Group can be found in *Filosofar e Ensinar a Filosofar: Registros do GT da Anpof 2006-2018* (Velasco, 2020).

2012, of ANPOF's section dedicated to upper secondary education; and the emergence of professional master's programs starting in 2015.⁵ From 2013 to 2019, I also served for six years as the coordinator of PUC's Philosophy PIBID, a program by Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior, CAPES) already mentioned as being highly significant in fostering the growth and consolidation of teaching degrees in general.

It was only in 2015, however, that I was invited to serve as a consultant for the Ministry of Education in drafting the first two versions of the BNCC. These versions were entirely transformed after the enactment of Law No. 13,415, during the President Temer administration – a law that, among other setbacks, revoked the requirement that philosophy be taught in upper secondary education.

To briefly summarize: in the initial versions of the document, philosophy appeared as a “curricular component.” The proposal of the team I coordinated – composed of Professors Érico Andrade (UFPE), Emerson Costa (SP-Consed), and José Aílto Vargas da Rosa (ES-Undime–Seduc) (Brasil, 2018, pp. 590-593) – was to design a participatory document guided by a “minimalist spirit,” one that would allow teachers to freely mobilize the best of their training in order to create “experiences of thought” with their students. Obeying minimal *prescriptions* intended to ensure a “common foundation” across the country, each teacher, state, or school network would be able to “curricularize” the BNCC in a way that increased the chances of high-quality philosophy teaching in the classroom, especially by encouraging local demands and students' interest in further study.

At the time the BNCC's early drafts were prepared, there was no concrete high school reform on the horizon. There was, however, a clear perception that the “cross-cutting model,” with its thirteen prescribed curricular components, required imperative solutions for integration – if only to meet the guidelines of the National Education Plan (PNE) (Brasil,

⁵ The master's program at Cefet was approved in 2015, and the first cohort of the networked master's program, PROF-FILO, was launched in 2017.

2014). The initial guidance was to reduce the prescriptions for each subject and produce a streamlined document whose coherence would emerge through the identification of curricular transversalities, to be discussed in the final stage of drafting. It is fair to say, however, that only philosophy took this guidance seriously, benefiting, among other things, from being a component still “without a curricular tradition.” The legacy was “strong” for components such as Mathematics or Geography; there was also a prevailing tendency to search for and point out omissions – gaps or absences in this or that curricular content – in short, a perceived need to leave “nothing out.” This became very clear in the public consultation conducted between the preparation of the first and second versions. A Digital Portal was created, which collected, in raw form, approximately 12 million contributions. It is true that this hyperbolic number encompassed all kinds of interactions; nevertheless, its qualitative assessment – in which I was formally and actively involved – provided highly significant and surprising feedback. The contributions were, in general, complimentary toward the first version of the document, with overall approval rates around 90%, and they typically suggested additions to the “Learning Rights and Objectives” (the terminology adopted from the PNE) for each component.

The philosophy document was no exception to this rule. Although well received by users of the portal, there were frequent suggestions to include philosophical authors and schools – an indication that many readers had not fully engaged with or understood *the introductory text explaining and justifying the learning objectives*. As a matter of principle, the minimalist proposal did not list authors or schools, but rather philosophical questions that could be explored by school networks and teachers according to their needs and contexts. Some comments also claimed that the document was insufficiently prescriptive and that this represented a missed opportunity to improve the field.⁶ The problem

⁶ In addition to the contributions submitted directly through the BNCC Portal, expert reviews were commissioned from *ad hoc* consultants – such as Eduardo Salles de Oliveira Barra (UFPR), Elisete Medianeira Tomazetti (UFSM), Filipe Ceppas de Carvalho e Faria (UFRJ), and Patrícia Del Nero Velasco (UFABC) – alongside engagement with the broader

with this desired “improvement of the field,” of course, lay in the lack of any real consensus regarding what most essentially constitutes it. The decision to prescribe questions as flexible indicators of the field’s boundaries – questions concerning the very idea of philosophy, as well as ontological and existential, epistemological, ethical, aesthetic, political, logical, and rhetorical issues – proved far more likely to foster a minimum consensus around what should count as a sound “philosophical foundation.” For all these reasons, the team focused on revising the text that justified the chosen learning objectives, resisting as much as possible the pressure to increase their number.

There were also other reasons for adopting a minimalist and non-prescriptive approach. By 2015, the field was already marked by tensions that would only intensify in the years to come. Even if only in their early stages, there were already critiques of philosophical Occidentalism, the emergence of African, Amerindian, and feminist voices, urgent environmental concerns, and demands arising from the current technological ubiquity – whose most visible face is social media. A less prescriptive version would make it easier to accommodate these emerging demands without generating anachronisms within the ten-year timeframe established by the PNE (set to conclude in 2024), that is, until the moment of its revision and updating arrived.

A final argument in favor of the minimalist approach was that it would enable a more fluid dialogue with other curricular components, thereby responding simultaneously to the challenges of integrating the high upper secondary BNCC and to the freeing of philosophy to fulfill one of its most important and distinctive roles: *questioning the foundations of other forms of knowledge*.

The minimalist model certainly had its drawbacks, and it was highly debatable whether it could bring about any real qualitative change in the way philosophy is currently taught in Brazilian high schools. The team’s response to this plausible objection was that no curricular framework could, on its own, affect such change. That transformation depended on various other factors:

community through direct conversations and the acceptance of invitations to participate in a wide variety of seminars.

teacher pay and continuing education, the redefinition of teaching hours and teaching–learning dynamics, school planning suited to Brazil’s social and geographical realities, among others. Above all, it depended on whether the broader school community would embrace the proposal – something that could neither be enforced nor demanded through “objectives” imposed from above and beyond their reach. The team ultimately believed that, at least until a genuinely comprehensive program to address our educational deficits could be implemented, it would be reasonable to grant teachers freedom, and to trust and invest in the goodwill and dedication of the colleagues who would bring the BNCC’s ideas to life in their classrooms.

Before moving on to a narrative of what in fact happened to this initial BNCC draft for philosophy, it is important to say a few words about the broader context in which it was developed. This is also relevant because we generally lack practical wisdom – the ability to bring our good ideas to fruition in the concrete political world – and we thus suffer from the kind of “professional deformation” denounced by authors such as Hannah Arendt. The SEB-MEC (Basic Education Secretariat of Ministry of Education [Secretaria de Educação Básica do Ministério da Educação]), then under the leadership of Manoel Palácios and for most of the time during Renato Janine Ribeiro’s term as minister, invested in a democratic and plural drafting process, open to public consultation. Around 130 “specialists” from various educational levels and regions of the country were brought together for the task. *Ad hoc* consultants were appointed to give their opinions on the document’s drafts. Seminars and debates were held with a wide range of interlocutors. Finally, the private sector – with its think tanks and foundations – was strongly represented, for instance through the provision of previously conducted research and the funding of foreign consultants who came to Brazil to share their experiences with similar initiatives in their home countries.⁷ The privileged access these entities had to the Ministry was criticized by many people, but this discomfort was mitigated by the

⁷ For a mapping of the private actors who influenced the development of the BNCC, see *Mapping New Philanthropy and the Heterarchical State: the Mobilization for the National Learning Standards in Brazil*. *International Journal of Educational Development* (Avelar; Ball, 2017).

autonomy granted to advisors and specialists to include in the document only what was considered of public interest and suited to our reality.

Even so, this pursuit of representativeness came at a price – paid in time wasted and in the difficulty of reaching consensus. There was “friendly fire,” as well as people who disagreed with the very idea of having a “national common curricular base.” Within the drafting process itself, countless tensions were experienced, and agreements were not always possible. It is telling that the minimalist proposal for philosophy remained solitary and unique all the way up to the submission of the BNCC’s second version to the minister at the time, Aloysio Mercadante. President Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment was imminent, and the team was racing to finalize the second version of the document, which needed to incorporate contributions considered relevant to date and resolve outstanding issues, such as the unity and scope of the whole document. My view was that this work should be extended for as long as necessary, but that was no longer feasible. It was a matter of delivering whatever could reasonably be completed to the National Council of Education (CNE), which would be responsible for carrying the work forward and for the BNCC’s final promulgation.

The new government, however, had other plans.⁸ The initial team was completely reorganized, and there was very little dialogue with the previous group. Even the composition of the CNE was redefined. More important for our present purposes was the introduction of Provisional Measure 746, issued at the very beginning of President Temer’s administration in September 2016, and rapidly transformed – at lightning speed – into Law 13.415. As noted earlier, this law stripped philosophy of its status as a curricular component, relocating it under “studies and practices,” to be addressed in the BNCC’s third version.

We thus arrive at the more recent scenario. While it was broadly agreed that the current upper secondary model, like all basic education, needed reform, it was highly questionable whether such reform could be

⁸ For a more detailed account of these events, see *Notas sobre a Formação de Professores e Ensino de Filosofia no Brasil. O que nos faz pensar* (Lyra, 2019).

carried out in a non-democratic manner – determined centrally by a team of technical experts, no matter how competent they might be.

Procedurally speaking, what happened was the worst that could possibly have happened. Questioned in its very manner of coming to power, the new government faced enormous difficulties in dialoguing with the pedagogical community: a plural, critical group, and for the most part deeply dissatisfied with the country's direction. It is worth recalling that at the time, “Fora Temer” (“Out, Temer”) was practically a mantra in certain educational circles. It was, in short, within this scenario of profound political precariousness that the new Ministry of Education (Ministério da Educação, MEC) team had to finalize the BNCC. The ministry adopted the narrative – seeking a highly questionable form of legitimation – that they were working based on a public consultation with 12 million responses, thus in continuity with the previous team, with whom it had barely spoken. A clear example of discontinuity was the replacement, in the elementary and upper-secondary segments, of the structuring language adopted in the BNCC's earlier versions with the conceptual pair “skills and competencies,” much closer to the old National Curricular Parameters (Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais, PCNs) than to the PNE, and without any significant indication – found in the public consultation on which the official narrative relied – that such a shift was desired.

Once these changes were in place, the new team managed to finalize and approve the BNCC for early childhood and elementary education with relative speed. By contrast, the rupture introduced by Law 13.415 made it impossible to do the same for upper secondary education. Its document was approved only under intense pressure in December 2018 – at the very end of the Temer administration and with Bolsonaro already elected president.

Having made these clarifications about the history of the document that today purports to address the enormous educational deficits of the final stage of basic schooling, the next step is to analyze the current situation. Given the “complexity” of the reform proposed by Law 13.415, among other factors – such as its requirement of “formative pathways” and its indication of only general competencies for the areas of Natural Sciences and Applied

Human and Social Sciences – it was foreseeable that public school systems would struggle to implement its mandates. The Covid-19 pandemic also hindered negotiations and delayed the process, which has only quite recently begun to be implemented in most Brazilian states.

In some of these states, a reduction in philosophy's instructional hours has become noticeable, and there is growing concern about its dilution within the broader field of Human Sciences, especially given the extremely precarious conditions under which the proposed flexibilization or interdisciplinarity is being carried out.

It is already equally noticeable – albeit without empirical studies to substantiate it – a decline in demand for teaching degree programs in philosophy across the country. Even more problematic than the narrowing of the “job market” for philosophy teachers, however, seems to be the formative deficit that these new public policies are fostering. Especially at a moment marked by overwhelming technological hegemony and by the emergence of new and ubiquitous processes of subjectivation, the ongoing divestment in philosophy education is, at the very least, anachronistic. In a scenario of greater lucidity in educational planning, one would expect philosophy to be strengthened as an important space for questioning these new realities, particularly to avoid, as already suggested, the formation of new generations of “mere users of new technologies” – zombies, in the worst-case scenario.

There are, to be sure, those who now search the BNCC for elements that might grant philosophy some degree of continuity – either as a curricular component or transversally, through workshops, laboratories, hubs, and incubators, as the document suggests. Still, the overall scenario remains highly unsettled.

The results of the 2022 presidential elections suggest that the discussion will be reopened; what remains to be seen is the extent, depth, and dominant interests shaping it. The “transition team” appointed at the time this text was finalized already points to an asymmetric, disproportionate presence of representatives from private institutions. It would, in any case, be highly advisable for the philosophical community to cultivate a formative defense of philosophy teaching in basic education – one as propositively and feasible as

possible, and above all capable of being placed on the table in time to influence the forthcoming revision. The hope is that a truly open, plural, and extended debate might take place, one commensurate with the complexity of the issues at stake and with the genuine formative challenges posed by the dilemmas and impasses of the twenty-first century.

My Contributions from Recent Research

A summary of my academic trajectory and publications relevant to research on philosophy education up to 2018 can be found in the book *Humanidades em questão – abordagens e discussões* (Lyra, 2018). What becomes clear when examining this trajectory is that all of it is, in one way or another, tied to the survival of philosophy in a technologically hegemonic world.

My most recent and substantial work is the aforementioned *O Esquecimento de uma Arte*, published by Edições 70, Almedina. I reproduce here a passage that encapsulates the purpose of the research presented in that book:⁹

[...] these reflections originated in didactic needs connected to formal philosophy teaching. They date back to the moment when discussions about distance learning and classroom technologies – such as computers and multimedia projectors – began to emerge; when the use of smartphones and the internet started to spread among students, and when the games hosted on these platforms began to grow increasingly sophisticated. Everything pointed toward new student habits and a radically new economy of knowledge and attention, inviting teachers to rethink their practices. Naturally, in the case of philosophy teaching, the advisable course was not merely to ‘bring technology into the classroom,’ but to invite sober and articulate reflection on the transformations underway, from within the very technological frameworks that

⁹ All translations of quoted material were made by the translator of this article, unless otherwise noted.

increasingly shaped those transformations and were beginning to permeate the classroom walls. And this required rhetorical skills (Lyra, 2018, p. 8).¹⁰

Preceded by the article “*Contribuição da Retórica para o Ensino de Filosofia*” [Contribution of Rhetoric to Philosophy Teaching] (Lyra, 2017), the book draws on a phenomenological-hermeneutic reading of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* (2006) – the foundational text for the entire subsequent rhetorical tradition – seeking to apply it to the challenges of the contemporary classroom. The solution may seem anachronistic, but the fact is that many digital communication theorists look to ancient rhetorical canons for supporting the task of thinking about issues related to the algorithmic discursive world.

The paraphrase of Aristotelian rhetoric that stands as the book’s epigraph offers a good sense of its contribution: “every discourse is a discourse about a certain subject, addressed to a given audience, in a particular situation, and by a particular speaker capable of mobilizing a certain repertoire to fulfill certain purposes.” Interfaces change, circumstances change, repertoires and aims change – and teachers, as well as their relationships with students, must change accordingly. But the paraphrase still holds.

Another important point is that *Rhetoric* was not originally conceived as a pedagogical text, but rather as a political, judicial, ceremonial work, and more broadly, one oriented toward Greek everyday life. It was the interpretive shifts applied to two of its central concepts, *pistis* and *topos*, that enabled its pedagogical use.

¹⁰ Original: “[...] estas reflexões tiveram origem em necessidades didáticas ligadas ao ensino formal de filosofia. Remontam ao momento em que se começava a falar de ensino a distância e tecnologias de sala de aula, como o computador e os projetores multimídia; começava a se disseminar entre os estudantes o uso de smartphones e internet, assim como a sofisticarem-se os games hospedados nesses ambientes. Tudo apontava para novos hábitos discentes e para uma radicalmente nova economia do conhecimento e da atenção, convidando professoras e professores a repensarem suas práticas. Claro, em se tratando de ensinar filosofia, era aconselhável não apenas ‘embarcar tecnologia’ em sala de aula, mas convidar a sóbria e articuladamente pensar as transformações em curso, de dentro do enquadramento tecnológico que cada vez mais as caracterizava e que então começava a atravessar as paredes das salas de aula. E isso demandava habilidades retóricas”.

Above all, the first notion proved limiting for pedagogical purposes when rendered, in the canonical translation, as *persuasion* – a constraint even more evident in the context of philosophy teaching. As stated in the introduction to the book:

The major obstacle arises from the fact that teaching practices are not necessarily *persuasive* – especially when philosophy is at stake. It is unreasonable to assume, at least today, that a philosophy teacher with genuine theoretical training would attempt to convince students that God does or does not exist, or that God possesses such-and-such attributes; or that freedom is or is not a greater good than equality or security. Without delving into broader discussions on the aims of philosophy teaching, it is far more reasonable to assume that instructors should content themselves with inviting their students into reflections capable of elevating them from mere opinion to a sober and patiently examined opinion (Lyra, 2017, pp. 15-16).¹¹

The concept was therefore retranslated so as to capture its proper semantic scope. Rendering it as “convincingness” rather than “persuasion” is warranted both by Aristotle’s text and by the dictionaries. Its original polysemy allows us to discern much broader aims – namely, the construction of *discourses that are convincing and worthy of attention, regardless of whether they actually prompt a change of opinion in their audience*.

This retranslation, in turn, triggered a hermeneutic reassessment of nearly the entire conceptual apparatus of the *Rhetoric*. Above all, the three *pisteis* – *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* – the elemental forms of producing

¹¹ Original: “*O entrave maior surge do fato das práticas docentes não serem necessariamente persuasivas, sobretudo quando é a filosofia que está em jogo. Não é razoável imaginar, pelo menos nos dias de hoje, que um professor de filosofia com real formação teórica busque convencer seus alunos de que Deus existe ou não existe, e de que tem tais ou quais atributos; ou de que a liberdade é ou não um bem maior que a igualdade ou a segurança. Sem aprofundar discussões sobre as finalidades do ensino de filosofia, é bem mais razoável que seus docentes se contentem em convidar seus públicos a reflexões capazes de elevá-los da mera opinião à opinião sóbria e pacientemente examinada*”.

convincingness, were carefully reread throughout the book. What proved crucial was the realization that these three *pisteis* are always intertwined – albeit with differing degrees of weight – across rhetorical situations, the classroom being no exception. There is no discourse that is not traversed by affective dispositions (*pathe*), the prevailing customs and reputations of speakers (*ethe*). In light of a phenomenological-hermeneutic reading that shifts the *Rhetoric* away from the narrow domain of argumentation, even *logos* takes on the contours of an expanded rationality, enabling a broader reassessment of inferential processes – highly opportune for pedagogical purposes.

A second, more substantial shift followed along the same lines. Less developed in the book than the reassessment of *pistis*, the hermeneutic – or, as it became tempting to call it, topological – understanding of the notion of *topos* proves extremely promising for dialogue with audiences beyond our academic circles. Regarding *topos*, I wrote that it is

a titanic concept that traverses the Aristotelian corpus without ever being fully defined. Its rhetorical sense transcends the idea of “argumentative schematization” that structures the fourth book of the *Organon* – Topics – precisely insofar as it must account for the worldly dimensions that distinguish rhetoric from dialectic. From this hermeneutic vantage point, reading the *Rhetoric* flirts with a heightened perception of the lines of force that constitute each discursive context, in a web of opinions, habits, reputations, affects, and other multiple threads. The ability to craft convincing discourses “proper to each case” will therefore be essentially tied to an investment in understanding the rhetorical notion of *topos* and the concomitant discursive topologies (Lyra, 2017, p. 9).¹²

¹² Original: “Conceito titânico que atravessa o corpus aristotélico sem ser cabalmente definido. Sua acepção retórica transcende a ideia de ‘esquematização argumentativa’ que estrutura o quarto livro do *Órganon* – Tópicos –, e justo na medida em que precisa considerar as dimensões mundanas que distinguem a retórica da dialética. A presente perspectiva hermenêutica de leitura da Retórica flerta, nesse sentido, com o ganho de visão das linhas de força que constituem cada contexto discursivo, numa trama de opiniões,

The fact is that this *topological* understanding opens, above all, a new grasp of the first moment of rhetorical elaboration: the moment in which one acquires a view of the discursive circumstance present each time. The adequacy of this synoptic vision determines the choice of pathways to be taken in a class, a lecture, a television interview, or an appearance on social media.

This topological unveiling leads, finally, to the presentation of my most recent ongoing research – one that aims to offer the public, in the form of a new book, the initial outlines for constructing a philosophy of opinion attuned to the digital age.

Once again, it is the phenomenological-hermeneutic lens that provides our guiding framework – more specifically, chapter 15 of a lesser-read 1924 book by Martin Heidegger, titled *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*. There, Heidegger defines opinion (*doxa*) as the “genuine orientability of being-with-others-in-the-world” (Heidegger, 2002, p. 136, my translation).¹³

The urgency of a philosophy of opinion is grounded in strong and multiple reasons. One of the most troubling contemporary phenomena – especially from a pedagogical standpoint – is the strong urge to express opinions that now frays the discursive scenario. This phenomenon reaches its apex on social networks, but extends far beyond them, threatening us with a veritable and generalized “discursive collapse” (Lyra, 2021). Even scientific truths that until recently seemed beyond suspicion have come under “negationist” attack. The situation becomes particularly perplexing when we consider what Bruno Latour has called the “black box” of contemporary techno-scientific production (Latour, 2012, p. 3). Why, after all, should anyone believe in truths whose elaboration and justification lie beyond their reach? The fact is that the Western tradition invested almost unilaterally in “philosophies of knowledge,” leaving opinion – with rare exceptions of political interest – confined to the depreciated status of “mere opinion.” In

hábitos, reputações, afetos e outros múltiplos fios. A capacidade de elaborar discursos convincentes, “adequados a cada caso”, estará por tudo isso essencialmente ligada a um investimento na compreensão da noção retórica de topos e concomitantes topologias discursivas.”

¹³ Original: “Genuína orientabilidade do ser-com-outros-no-mundo.”

making that choice, something crucial to the Greeks of Aristotle's time was lost: the notion of *endoxa*, a form of opinion legitimized in everyday life and made, in some sense, resilient. This discussion is directly related to the *topics* and *topology* mentioned above, and it holds the promise of revealing new forms of discursive normativity – *capable of restoring plasticity to common sense and of renegotiating the credibility of science*.

Both the crisis facing science in the new digital economy – doubly afflicted by “negationism” and by increasingly opaque technical modes of producing “knowledge” – and the fraying of common sense brought about by the political free-for-all of fake news and disinformation at large are phenomena of enormous magnitude and concern. For this reason, it has become *necessary to rethink our ways of stabilizing opinions and discourses in general*.

Although Heidegger himself did not pursue this path further, his legacy offers a point of departure for developing a phenomenological-hermeneutic understanding of *doxa* in general and of its contemporary configuration – an understanding that must link the broader process of formation and deformation of common sense with the acute and recent problem of the “convincingness” of scientific truths.

Such is the outline of the research currently underway, one clearly marked by political and pedagogical relevance, and nourished by recent literature on, for instance, algorithmic rhetorics (Ingraham, 2014).

Final considerations

Forming individuals who are more than “mere users of new technologies” appears as an imperative of our time. Quite often, it seems furtively implied – within the educational discourse of a certain self-styled progressive elite – that the task at hand is simply to keep our students attuned or aligned with the latest demands dictated by the most advanced technological centers. In this view, the old notion of critical consciousness is left with a subordinate, even hollow role, considering the current

technological acceleration and the dizzying transformation of the knowledge and attention economy now underway.

To be fair, the BNCC – currently on the verge of being revisited along with the notorious reform of upper-secondary education – is not a document inattentive to the demands arising from these developments. However, it reserves only a modest space for curricular solutions aligned with the urgencies under discussion here. Its principal fault – and, in my view, that of the philosophical community itself – is its failure to indicate or claim a more decisive role for philosophy in addressing the necessary technological demands.

No, this is not a matter of adding a new subject such as “philosophy of technology” to the list of curricular components at the expense of the “academic freedom” defended in this text from the outset. Rather, it may be time for a curation of the philosophical canon (and its noncanonical extensions) attentive to the enormous challenges that today’s digitalization of the world imposes upon discursivity itself – challenges that become especially dangerous when ethically unrestrained. What is needed, in fact, goes beyond the formation of individuals capable of ethical attentiveness to these developments. What is at stake are our forms of political organization, our modes of perceiving and feeling, of knowing and thinking, of working and existing. It is philosophy as a whole – in its historical sense, in its hegemonic formations, and in its tensions with emerging alterities – that must be mobilized in a formative project both consequential and suited to its audiences. In short, the issue should not concern negotiating and securing two or four weekly hours for philosophy teaching in upper-secondary education. That is far too little when measured against what looms on the current planetary horizon.

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