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# Escola sem Partido/School Without Party – totalitarian elements in a modern democracy: some reflexions based on Arendt

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## ABSTRACT

Between 2014 and 2016, bills that make it possible to relive past experiences in a new format and context were presented in the two Brazilian legislative houses. These bills are about school education, but they have as corollary a normative and mutilating project of nation. These proposals are inspired by an allegedly non-partisan and anti-ideological movement self-styled Movement School Without Party. The purposes of this article are to discuss the bills no. 867/2015 and no. 193/2016, that are in process in the Congress, and to problematize them from the warnings and reflections of Arendt that discuss the education and the totalitarianism, the functions of the school, the separation between instruction and education and the denial of plurality and political action. It is necessary to reflect on the projects, especially because of the emotional load they carry with them in the current context, marked by the rupture of the democratic order since the promulgation of Federal Constitution of 1988.

## KEYWORDS

School Without Party; totalitarianism; education; Hannah Arendt.

## ***ESCOLA SEM PARTIDO — ELEMENTOS TOTALITÁRIOS EM UMA DEMOCRACIA MODERNA: UMA REFLEXÃO A PARTIR DE ARENDT***

### **RESUMO**

Entre 2014 e 2016, projetos de lei (PLs) que possibilitam reviver experiências passadas em novo formato e contexto foram apresentados nas duas casas legislativas brasileiras. Esses PLs versam sobre a educação escolar, mas possuem como corolário um projeto de nação normativo e mutilador. Essas propostas são inspiradas em um movimento alegadamente apertidário e anti-ideológico autodenominado Movimento Escola sem Partido. O objetivo desse artigo é discutir os PLs n. 867/2015 e n. 193/2016 que estão em tramitação na Câmara e no Senado, e problematizá-los a partir das advertências e reflexões de Arendt que discutem a educação e o totalitarismo, as funções da escola, a separação entre ensino e educação e a negação da pluralidade e da ação política. É emergente a necessidade de refletir sobre tais propostas, sobretudo em razão da alta carga emocional que carregam consigo no contexto atual, marcado por ruptura da ordem democrática vigente desde a promulgação da Constituição Federal, em 1988.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Escola sem Partido; totalitarismo; educação; Hannah Arendt.

## ***ESCUELA SIN PARTIDO – ELEMENTOS TOTALITÁRIOS EN UNA DEMOCRACIA MODERNA: REFLECIONES DESDE ARENDT***

### **RESUMEN**

Entre 2014 y 2016, proyectos de ley que posibilitan revivir experiencias pasadas en nuevo formato y contexto fueron presentados nel Congresso Brasileño. Estos PLs versan acerca de la educación escolar, pero poseen como corolario un proyecto de nación normativo y mutilador. Estas propuestas se inspiran en un movimiento supuestamente apertidista y no ideológico autodenominado Movimiento Escuela Sin Partido. Nosso objetivo es discutir los PLs 867/2015 y 193/2016 que están en tramitación nel Congresso, y problematizarlos a partir de las advertencias y reflexiones de Arendt que discuten la educación y el totalitarismo, las funciones de la escuela, la separación entre la enseñanza y la educación y la negación de la pluralidad y de la acción política. Es emergente la necesidad de reflexionar sobre tales propuestas, en razón de la carga emocional que llevan consigo nel contexto atual, marcado por la ruptura del orden democrático vigente desde la promulgación de la Constitución Federal en 1988.

### **PALABRAS-CLAVE**

Escuela Sin Partido; totalitarismo; educación; Hannah Arendt.

## INTRODUCTION – PROJECTS NO. 163/2016 AND NO. 867/2015

In 2016, a bill of law (Act Project no. 193/2016), authored by the State Senator of Espírito Santo Magno Pereira Malta, of the Partido da República (Republican Party), was presented in the Federal Senate. It aims to include among the guidelines of national education the Programa Escola sem Partido (School Without Party Program), dealt with in Law no. 9,394/1996 (Brasil, 1996). In the Chamber of Deputies, in turn, two other bills were presented: Project no. 7,180/2014 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2014) and Project no. 867/2015 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2015). Similar projects were presented in another 19 states and several municipalities of the federation, and reproduce, almost in their entirety, the proposal supported by the movement of the same name Programa Escola sem Partido (EBC, 2016). The project is being considered in both parliamentary houses, although it was considered unconstitutional by the Procuradoria Federal dos Direitos do Cidadão do Ministério Público Federal (2016), and in a technical note in the preliminary injunction of the Minister Roberto Barroso of the Federal Supreme Court (STF, 2017). Several research associations also considered the project to deny the academic freedom and legal advances of the last decades, as well as being antidemocratic and criminalizing the work of some teachers, among which the National Association of Postgraduate and Research in Education (ANPEd, 2016) and the Brazilian Association of History Teaching (ABEH, 2015) raised objections. A public consultation on the project on the website of the Federal Senate in just over two months had the participation of almost 400 thousand citizens (e-Cidadania, 2016), however the possibility of individual, multiple participation cannot be ruled out, as the registration to participate was given by e-mail and not by official document.

When Magno Pereira Malta, the proponent of the bill, stated in the Federal Senate, justifies (in the document of the process) the reasons that led to it, he says the proposal is inspired by the beliefs of the Escola sem Partido. The movement maintains a website (<http://www.escolasempartido.org/>), in which it sets out its objectives, presents articles allegedly free of ideology, and instructs parents and students in the procedures for denouncing teachers who are allegedly using the classrooms as a pulpit. In the “Objectives” section, the movement states that

it was created to give visibility to a very serious problem that affects the vast majority of Brazilian schools and universities: the use of teaching for political, ideological and partisan purposes. And the way to do it is to spread the testimony of the victims, that is, the students themselves (Escola sem Partido, 2017).

Still in this section, it points to a series of flags raised by the movement, among them the struggle “for the decontamination and political and ideological de-monopolization of schools” (Escola sem Partido, 2017), “to respect the students’ intellectual and moral integrity” (Escola sem Partido, 2017), “for respect for parents’ right to moral education that conforms to their own convictions” (Escola sem Partido, 2017).

In the item “for the decontamination and political and ideological de-monopolization of schools” (Escola sem Partido, 2017), the movement argues that “it is fundamental that schools adopt concrete measures to ensure the diversity of ideological perspectives in their respective educational bodies” (Escola sem Partido, 2017). In the case of public schools, this is in opposition to the principle of impersonality in public administration, as in the caput of Article 37 of the Federal Constitution (Brasil, 1988). This principle guarantees that the political, ideological, sexual and religious options of the public servant or the aspirant server will not be taken into account in the selection process and will not be a criterion of discrimination for progression. Thus, Article 37 seeks to engage with the most qualified and professional applicant in public service, devoid of their personal ideologies. If one considers the implications of what the movement advocates, the political-ideological options will become the criterion of entry into the public service, that is, the principle of personalisation becomes the focus, the hallmark of an undemocratic society. In other words, the discourse of the abolition of ideology is at the service of an ideological, antidemocratic and personalist perspective. These statements confirm the ideological orientation of the pedagogical process proposed by these projects, something paradoxical since it defends a school without a party, without ideologies, as we will discuss in the course of this article, based on the Arendt’s philosophy.

## EDUCATION, FAMILY AND IDENTITY: BETWEEN INSTRUCTING AND EDUCATING

In line with the goal of ensuring “the right of parents to have their children receive religious and moral education that conforms to their own convictions,” the Projects no. 867/2015 and no. 193/2016 (Senado Federal, 2016) present an understanding of the school that must limit its scope to instruct, and transmit knowledge. Thus, education, in its broadest sense, would only concern the family, which could lead to indoctrination rather than education. On this distinction, Hannah Arendt (2002, p. 246-7) stresses that “one cannot educate without at the same time teach; an education without learning is empty, and therefore degenerates very easily into moral and emotional rhetoric. It is very easy, however, to teach without education, and one can learn throughout the day without being educated.” Here we agree in part with what the author says, especially with regard to the danger of educating without instruction.

However, going beyond Arendt’s inquiries, it is possible to look at the ethical impossibility of instructing without educating. The very understanding of the teaching and learning process as a transmission of predetermined content and not open to debate has significant educational implications (Apple, 1993, p. 222). That is, to educate the student to understand that things are as they are, that the process of History is irresistible and irreversible, and thus, the action of individuals in History, and actions which run contrary to the given History (understood as process) are seen as irrelevant. Then, this characterizes a fatalistic and uncritical educational and political position. There are always political elements in knowledge,

especially in knowledge chosen and defined as “scholarly,” even though they are “simply neutral descriptions of the world” (Apple, 1993, p. 222). Arendt (1995), too, understands the same when reflecting on the faculties of the spirit and on the distinction between knowing and thinking. Savater (1997, p. 21) states that a reflection on the objectives of education is invariably a reflection on the destiny of humanity, on the relationship with nature, and on human beings in their diversity. That is, the contraposition between instructing and educating is obsolete and misleading. He further affirms that separating these two dimensions is much more than undesirable; it is impossible. This understanding is corroborated by Morgan and Guilherme (2015, p. 1-2), who argue:

Education has two distinct but interconnected layers. There is an outer layer concerned with knowledge transfer, with the development of skills and the capacity for creativity and criticism; and most educators recognise this outer layer as a characterisation of “education.” However, education has also an inner layer concerned with the formation of the human being, with the development of character, providing the individual with a perspective and understanding of reality. This is not always recognised by educators, who are sometimes too concerned with a syllabus and in achieving externally set targets. If national educational systems are examined for such layers, some will be revealed as concentrating on the outer layer, while others prioritise the inner layer; but this does not mean that a balance between the two layers should not be sought. The inner layer is as important as the outer because it concerns the development of individual character, of the individual’s relationships with others, both individually and socially. In consequence the inner layer provides the individual with the capacity to influence and to change society. In that sense, such an inner layer is “political.”

This understanding is important, because proposals such as those that were inspired by *Escola sem Partido*’s project do not simply seek to withdraw politics from school spaces and classrooms, but deliberately seek to establish barriers to the full development of humanity. What makes a human being a human being is the capacity for action, for inauguration, which is political (Arendt, 2007, p. 189). The *Escola sem Partido*’s projects promote a process of an instrumentalization of life, a perverse reduction of relationships with others and with oneself, a normalization of behaviour which is obedient to what is considered to be the only valid possibility (Arendt, 2003).

It becomes even clearer when we consider Arendt’s reflections on the distinctions between knowing and thinking. Arendt does not refer to the absence of thought as a cognitive deficiency, nor to stupidity or ignorance. The Adolf Eichmann’s Trial, in 1961, can be understood as the moment when this question appeared to the author. Eichmann was not a person with deficient cognitive ability. He was also a profound connoisseur of the death machinery and logistics of which he was merely a cog in the machine; he did not think (Arendt, 2003, p. 171). The greatest atrocities committed in the last century would be impossible without the application of high technical, scientific and technological knowledge. Arendt (2004) thinks that

even very intelligent people who have highly specialized knowledge in science and technology may not think if they do not reflect on the meanings of their doing. The understanding of the senses is political and, thus, it moves in often conflicting perspectives (Arendt, 1995, p. 143).

As stated before, it is impossible to educate without instructing. In this way, in defending a school that promotes thought, the non-transmission of knowledge cannot be advocated. It means, moreover, that defending that option is false and mistaken. Transmitting knowledge is essential, but, as Andrade (2010, p. 124) reminds us, educating for thought seems to be an urgency, since it is the only possibility to protect oneself from the banality of evil, to build an environment that does not promote intolerance, and to awaken oneself and others to the inert state brought on by thoughtlessness, thereby abrogating empty and unthinking opinions that exist under the domain of an unquestionable truth. Thinking (which differs from knowing) implies the ability to understand and problematize the meaning and the sense of human experience in the world (Almeida, 2010, p. 863).

Thinking, then, is not limited to the facts of the world and history, in laws of physics, technical procedures, grammatical and mathematical, but it is more fully realised in freedom, in critical rationality, morality, in the cultivation of a “free spirit.” Nietzsche (2000, p. 189) states that a “free spirit” is “one who thinks differently than one would expect based on his or her background, position, and function, or on the basis of the opinions that predominate in his time.” He agrees with Arendt when he says that not thinking is not due to incapacity, but by the action of an education that taught how to know, eventually in a profound way, that instructed, but which did not enable thought as an essential activity and even a necessity of human life.

Further focussing on thinking, education is an activity that involves risk. According to Biesta (2013, p. 45), it is possible that in the educational process the individual learns something that he does not want to learn, including something about himself, about his social or ethnic group. As reported by the author, it is only possible to speak in education when one is willing to take risks. Thus, the education promoted by the school must be different from that one promoted by the family, which proposes to reproduce its perspective of the world, of morality, of law, of the family itself. That is, there is no risk, there is no overcoming of oneself and there is no educational process. Overcoming oneself is not a pleasant activity (Biesta, 2013, p. 41). Education must be seen as a response to what is different, to what is “external” to the individual, to what defies, annoys and disturbs, to the unsettling (Biesta, 2013, p. 47).

The family also educates and does so differently from the school, in methods and objectives. What one learns from family, due to the strength of familial relations, has great persuasive force that can serve to construct positive moral principles that will accompany the individual throughout his life. However, by the same strength of familial relations, it can create and crystallize psychological and social understandings that will hamper the relations of this individual with “others.” As Savater (1997, p. 34) points out: “It is good for children to acquire habits of cooperation, respect for one’s neighbour and personal autonomy, [but] these useful empirical lessons are mixed with others and are not as edifying [such as] the occasional valuing of lying, adulation, and abuse of force.” In any case, the family is the social institution *par excellence* that pro-

motes the primary socialization, of inculcation and internalization of values (Savater, 1997, p. 26). The idea that school-age individuals absorb values by attending classes, Savater recalls (1997, p. 34) may be relevant to early childhood education, but in the following years this relationship becomes more tense. In school, the underlying and inherent (explicit and implicit) sense of ethical choices must be taught through themes and content (Savater, 1997, p. 34). It is the school's task, because it is not just routine social acts, but also rational ideals, theoretically and methodologically grounded. In this sense, what is proposed by Subsections VII of the *Escola sem Partido*'s projects, which establishes that the school cannot oppose the opinion of the family, weakens the concept of opinion and imposes the understanding that individuals have their own ethics, and that every opinion has the same value. Savater (1997, p. 34) argues that, with regard to values, "one can argue for the ethical superiority of some over others, beginning with the very value of pluralism that allows and appreciates diversity." The value of democracy, for example, is superior and must overcome a defence of dictatorships that persecute, torture and kill. Positioning in favour of democracy is a political act that can oppose — and must oppose if necessary — the opinion and the morality of the family. In this sense, Souki (1998, p. 92) states that Eichmann is exemplary in the sense that it is possible to be, simultaneously, a mass murderer and a kindly family man. In the words of Arendt (2002, p. 235),

Human parents, however, not only brought their children to life through conception and birth, but simultaneously brought them into a world. They assume in education responsibility at the same time for the life and development of the child and for the continuity of the world. These two responsibilities in no way coincide; in effect they may enter into mutual conflict.

Following Arendt's thinking, no one can prevent an individual from forming racist assumptions, or see in the "gods of others" the manifestation of what in its religious conception is the very incarnation of evil. It is a right that these convictions be respected in their private dimension. However, racist action, contrary to racist thought, is not a private dimension since it implies subjugation and damage to others and to society. It is right to believe that the only form of family is that which is composed of marriage between a man and a woman, just as it is a right to behave according to your own convictions. It is not a right, on the other hand, to act and to impose this conception on the totality of citizens who may not agree with this, because this is a criterion that belongs to religion and not to ethics, although for a religious person these spheres can be intertwined (Savater, 1997, p. 34).

The *Escola sem Partido*'s projects operate in the sense to establishing and effecting a distinction between instruction and education, defining that the school comes first and the family second. This is clear in the provisions of Subsection VII of Article 2 of both projects, but also in the unique paragraph of the same article in Project no. 193/2016, in Article 3 of Project no. 867/2015, as well as in Article 1 of Project no. 7,180/2014, which was the 2015 draft. According to the text of the unique paragraph of Article 2 of Project no. 193/2016 in the Federal Senate,



The State will not interfere in the sexual choice of the students nor will it allow any practice capable of compromising, precipitating or directing the natural maturation and development of its personality, in harmony with the respective biological identity of sex, being prohibited, especially, the application of the postulates of the theory or ideology of gender (e-Cidadania, 2016).

Manipulating the facts, the project transforms internationally recognized academic production into mere ideology and, anchored in purely ideological pre-suppositions, seeks to ban it from the space that should promote the popularization of recognized scientific production. By deliberately confusing the biological identity of gender and social gender identity (or simply stating that it is an ideological invention in the sense of “non-existent in the real world”), the project ignores the human condition of “double birth.” According to Savater (1997, p. 12), “the child goes through two gestations: the first in the maternal womb according to biological determinisms and the second in the social matrix in which it is created, subject to various symbolic determinations and rituals and techniques of its culture (free translation).” In other words, it is born first, by biological determination, as male or female of the human species, but, later, it becomes man or woman, by socio-cultural conditioning. In justifying the proposition favouring the project, the Senator Magno Malta starts from a non-academic assumption and attempts to present it as common sense, when affirming that:

It is a well-known fact that teachers and writers of teaching materials have been using their classes and their works to try to obtain students’ adherence to certain political and ideological currents to cause them to adopt standards of judgment and moral conduct - especially sexual morality - incompatible with those taught to them by their parents or guardians (Escola sem Partido, 2017).

At another point, in the justifications, the senator asserts that “a state that defines itself as a secular — and therefore must be neutral in relation to all religions — cannot use the education system to promote a certain morality, since morality is inseparable from religion” (Escola sem Partido, 2017). The senator’s statement, by inseparably linking morality and religion, shows absolute ignorance of the philosophical production on the subject. He does not even consider that it is the duty of formal education to promote moral formation that prevents the practice of evil, i.e., that allows the promotion of moral decision making, that values life and individual dignity of the people who inhabit this world<sup>1</sup>. On the relationship between morality and religion, Kant’s position, written in 1793, although still in a metaphysical perspective, is radically and profoundly opposed to the provisions of Project no. 193/2016: “Moral, while founded on the concept of man as a free being that, precisely for this reason, binds itself to reason by unconditioned laws, does not

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1 However, it is impossible to say whether formal education is successful in such an endeavour, since it is not confined only to formal education for especially considering the relevance and impact of informal processes in educational and moral development.

even need the idea of another being above man to know his duty, or other motive other than the law itself to observe” (Kant, 2008, p. 9-10).

In eliminating, for students and teachers, opportunities to discuss controversial issues and individual family values, the intention becomes an attempt at giving more credence to family beliefs (which may be radically opposed to the democratic defence of plurality) and make their set of values, formed through religious choice, to be understood as universal and unquestionable values. There will therefore be an indoctrination. Taking into account the distinction between ethics and religion, that is, the differentiation between rational principles that everyone can share critically and the religious doctrines that only some accept as true, Savater (1997, p. 34) proposes an opposition to the extremes of the *Escola sem Partido* stance: “Precisely this may be the first topic, ethics and religion, that a good philosophy teacher will offer as initial ethical reflection to his students.” From Andrade (2010, p. 121), education of values, or moral education, can help overcome situations of violence and intolerance which are present in everyday life, and occur as “natural things” without actually being so. Therefore, moral education illustrates the banality of evil and, above all, teaches children moral responsibilities — which are beyond religion. This can be very painful (Biesta, 2013, p. 49).

## THE SCHOOL BETWEEN KNOWING AND THINKING

In German-speaking countries, two terms are used to differentiate between an education whose objective is the full development of the individual and an education that provides technical instruction: respectively *Bildung* and *Erziehung* (Morgan & Guilherme, 2014, p. 57). The first one, since the Enlightenment, is characterized by the search for overcoming obscurantism and mysticism from an education of character, with a strong appeal to morality. As Gur-ze'ev (2006, p. 11) points out, *Bildung*, as an Enlightenment promise, aims to enable the individual to develop in the sense of living in full autonomy. Through *Bildung*, men and women would become “different from what they are manipulated to be.” The failure of the Enlightenment project of *Bildung* and consequently of *Erziehung*'s hegemony is characterized by the return of an anti-rational and anti-intellectual mythical world in which reality has become less human because it has become standardized. In Gur-ze'ev's (2006, p. 11) words: “Society has become a rationalized and totalized space, an arena in which the human subject has been dehumanized, standardized, and almost completely swallowed up by the system.” The statement indicates that, even in a world taken by dehumanization, there is still the possibility of action and the realization of autonomy, even if law and tradition must be disregarded.

In a sense, similar to the distinction between *Bildung* and *Erziehung*, Savater (1997, p. 22-3) brings the differentiation between two sets of capacities, called “open” and “closed.” They comprise of a set of useful and even essential skills for daily living and without which it is very difficult to reach the former. What characterizes a capacity as “closed” is that it is possible to master it completely and sometimes perfectly: walking, dressing, brushing, bathing, reading, writing, calculating, playing a musical instrument, practicing a sport, parachute

jumping, etc. Open abilities are characterized by gradual mastery and, in some cases, continuous mastery. Skills that can never be completely mastered, perfectly, are those that the individual who develops in them can never say that they already know enough. One will never come to the exhaustion of an art form, writing poetry, musical composition, interpersonal relations, scientific knowledge thought, just as no one reaches the limit of the ethical attitude. It is clear that, for some open capacities to develop, it is necessary to master some closed capacities, which points to the inseparability of education and instruction (Savater, 1997, p. 22). This leads to the false contradiction between the advancement of knowledge and the increase of ignorance. The dialectic relationship between the advance of knowledge as an open ability and the realization of ignorance points to, since Socrates' "I know that I know nothing," the fact that one feeds the other one. It means that in the elaboration of any problem it is necessary to maintain a dialogue between those two dimensions: between what is already known, but that cannot account fully for what the problem presents, and what presents itself as a challenge that needs to be "faced", that of which we are ignorant (Paviani, 2013, p. 27). To acknowledge one's own ignorance is one of the most important open capacities, and only a school that is not limited to instruction can help to develop this capacity, although there are no guarantees (Biesta, 2013, p. 51).

It is possible to say that the domain of a closed capacity, when deprived of the relationship with open capacity, can lead to catastrophes yet unimaginable. A school that only instructs and does not provoke thought does not allow the individual the basic conditions so that he can reflect on the meaning of his attitudes, on the meaning of the instruction that he has been given. Arendt (2003, p. 64-5), reflecting how individuals with high technical backgrounds in different areas of knowledge were able to be part of a killing machine like Nazism, concludes that, even if they have made use of knowledge and procedures of high complexity, they did not think. They were not psychopaths or fools; they just did not stop to think, to ask themselves about the meaning of their actions. They were educated to disregard that the world is the place of plurality. Savater (1997, p. 23), from this, goes so far as to argue that not even the shallower form of utilitarianism would authorize the disregard for moral formation in favour of a school limited to instruction.

The school, in its educational task — which is not only instructive —, competes with a great number of "anti-schools," mainly with regard to the construction of the identity. Often, in these competing institutions, the anti-school, a set of values are offered, which not open to discussion and with potentially dangerous consequences for society as a whole, these constitute what Cerri (2010, p. 271) calls unreasonable identities. Cerri (2010) affirms that, facing with the crisis of the great explanatory systems, of the great philosophies of history, which, among other things, sought to define the destiny of entire individuals and societies, the objectives of school education must overcome mere instruction and move towards "identities that can be reflected and assumed selectively and critically by the subject rather than imposed from the outside" (Cerri, 2010, p. 271). Thus, instead of a list of contents, the focus is the effort to promote identities with greater autonomy,

capable of asserting themselves without the need for the “other” to be annulled, that is, reasonable identities. The family, the Church, the club, etc. are institutions that have an ideal type of behaviour and, directly or indirectly, impose this ideal on the individual. The school will, if it abolishes the debate on ethical and moral issues, become another type of institution which merely imprints one type of identity, unable of accepting the right of the “other” to live with dignity and have their choices respected. Unreasonable identities are characterized by radicalizing what constitutes, in essence, all identity: delimiting and excluding. They are not only destructive, but self-destructive, because they question the very meaning of “humanity.” For Cerri (2010, p. 271), “when an identity implies the denial of humanity, the rights and the life of the other identities, we have an unreasonable identity that needs to be prevented, for the good of the collective.” At the limit, they question the very right to the existence of the “other.”

Although all identity presupposes limitations with respect to understanding the “other,” it remains, however, a necessity to establish one (or several) identity (Cerri, 2010, p. 271). Likewise, taking on the task of combating unreasonable identities does not mean imposing an ideal identity. It means to be attentive to reality, which is not limited to the immediate environment, and does not neglect the multiplicity of identities that coexist in school and society. Cerri (2010, p. 276) recalls that it is in this sense that Laws no. 10,639/2003 and no. 11,645/2008, which establish the obligation to teach Afro-Brazilian, African and indigenous culture, especially in the subjects of art, history and Portuguese language, even in communities in which these groups are minority or even (which is virtually impossible) non-existent. One of the main contributions of disciplines such as art, history, philosophy, sociology and languages (Portuguese and foreign) is not to limit the individual to its reality and thus enabling the individual to recognise that their identity is not the only one of value, and it is not the only possible way of living. The school is the place *par excellence* where, in a respectful manner, the individual can reflect critically on self-identity and those of others. This challenging arena of identity debate is what Biesta (2013, p. 41) calls “transcendental violence,” the condition for an education that includes the “other” without abandoning the self altogether.

Education is for exploring the world in all its complexity, whether we like it or not. In the school, the relationship occurs between adults and non-adults, which does not mean in any way that children are not capable of action. The adults, Arendt (2002, p. 230-231) recalls, have a responsibility to the world not to ignore the novelty and development that occurs in each new generation. The elimination of the new can take place by direction and/or ignoring. The understanding that public education must conform to family beliefs and opinions implies that the State needs, if the family wishes, to create situations in which discrimination is encouraged. Just as the State cannot compel any citizen to agree with the choices/guidelines (whether political, ideological, sexual, philosophical, religious, etc.) of another citizen — just as it cannot prevent the individual from thinking (personal morality) as racist, xenophobic, homophobic, sexist, etc. —, the State cannot create mechanisms for such practices to be lawful, since racist action cannot be allowed even for an individual whose personal morals understand racism as acceptable.

As Arendt (2004, p. 270) states, more serious than the social practice of discrimination (common in all societies) is its legal imposition. The author, writing at the time of the events in Little Rock in 1957, while defending the right of parents to choose in the company of whom their children will be educated, does not offer the same defence regarding the content of education and emphasizes the influence of the State in the educational process, because of the fact that the child should grow up and become the adult, the citizen of the future.

The concern, voiced by the project, about avoiding partisan activities in school, for which teachers have used the right to speak, to make their passions become the passions of students is legitimate. Likewise, the use of didactic material with ideological content which is not open to the possibility of the most varied interpretations of the same phenomenon is also understandable. It is even possible that the defence of legitimate values is based on authoritarian presuppositions, but this is only manifested by the perversion of these principles, or by a mistaken interpretation of them. Thus, it is possible that the necessary expression of the most legitimate values can fall into propaganda, or worse, into proselytism, and consequently into indoctrination (Savater, 1997, p. 71). However, this possibility is only effective if we consider as true the statement present in the objectives of the *Escola sem Partido* movement, in which it is expressed that the teacher is seen as the ultimate authority, limiting the “action” of the student to a submissive state, respecting and obeying. In this scenario, in fact, everything the teacher presents is taken as a truth, since the student’s active voice is vetoed.

In addition, with respect to teaching materials, especially textbooks used in public schools, there is a strict vigilance on the political dimension of the content by the Programa Nacional do Livro Didático (National Textbook Program), created in 1985, but reorganized many times since 1996 (Amaral, 2012, p. 1098). Unlike the directed studies booklets, common in the period of the civil-military dictatorship, books approved by the Programa Nacional do Livro Didático and used throughout the country are screened by the Instituto de Pesquisa Tecnológica do Estado de São Paulo (Institute of Technological Research of the State of São Paulo), a public agency of São Paulo State, and after, need to be analysed by specialists from the different areas that are included in the calls for proposals for each triennial cycle of the program. According to Knauss (2011), the evaluation is based on eliminatory criteria, so that the publishers and authors need to be attentive to the requirements to remain in the market. Many of these criteria aim to correct inconsistencies in conceptual and ethical issues, requiring that various perspectives be recognized of the scientific community on the same phenomenon being presented. The text of the *Movimento Escola sem Partido*’s projects, although clad in democratic colours, aims to recreate the educational model in effect in the last period of the Brazilian dictatorship (1964-1985), especially regarding the veto of gender discussions and the focus on one interpretation of family values, no mattering how antidemocratic and unscientific they are. Martins (2003, p. 146) argues that the concept of education of the military dictatorship, in addition to focusing on the theory of human capital (acquisition of technical skills), understood that the school should reinforce and, if necessary, inculcate values conforming to the roles of male and female, as well as the undeniable respect for family precepts.

Eliminating discussions of an ethical and moral background is giving up the responsibility of adult relationships. Savater (1997, p. 24) argues that, if the school, by some fearful decision, renounces its educational, ethical and moral functions by falsely justifying the need for “neutrality,” or even by admitting fundamentalist relativism, other institutions will follow suit without the same any concern. In terms of Cerri (2010), if the school does not promote reasonable identities, young people will form their identities in other spheres, in which destructive and self-destructive values are dominant. When abnegating its discursive responsibilities, the school is more concerned with a shallow transmitting of content, in instructing, and not in critically discussing identities, in a relation of civilized, but not servile rational, debate (Savater, 1997, p. 48). This failure is felt socially and permits groups with the most varied political-ideological objectives, among which Escola sem Partido is one, to raise their alarmist concerns, which diverts focus from true education and increases the risks of simple production and reproduction of non-reasonable identities. For Savater (1997, p. 27), as a result of this deliberately non-reflective alarm of supposedly well-intentioned people, the most counterproductive pedagogical models are reinforced.

## ESCOLA SEM PARTIDO: TOTALITARIANISM AND OBSTRUCTION OF THE FUTURE

Although many of the proposals in projects no. 867/2015 and no. 193/2016 and in the draft available on the Escola sem Partido’s website show authoritarian traits that go back to the official education of the military dictatorship, which seeks to prohibit ethical and moral discussion and political argument in the school spaces, it brings with it a much more serious ideological problem than authoritarianism, under the veil of ideological cleansing. It is totalitarian, or, in the wake of Arendt, a totalitarian element in democracy. Excluding politics from the school environment — apart from being a political stance — results in the exclusion of action and freedom. In other words, it is an education of inculcation that in the world change does not come from free, individual or collective action, but as a result of an uncontrollable, irresistible process independently of will and action. It also insists that some things never change. It is a denial of plurality and complexity in favour of a simplistic and reductionist narrative. For Arendt (1973, p. 352), totalitarianism is characterized by a fictitious reality that, by altering and denying facts (in this case, religious, cultural, sexual complexity and free and political action as a transforming element of the world), establishing its dominion over history, or rather creates a reductionist narrative that states that the world is what it is because there was no other alternative and that, furthermore, any proposed alternative will lead to a worse world. Novelty which presents itself in each new generation is suffocated by a normative education that does not promote thought, does not problematize the world and human relations with the planet and discourages action.

A background element that brings Escola sem Partido closer to totalitarianism is the fiction of the “loss of the world” to the enemy among us. Again, Arendt



helps us to understand this process. For the author, the fictional reality constructed by the Nazis was sustained by a meticulous and frightening lie: the world was dominated by the Jews, so it was necessary for the greater good that the goodmen and goodwomen to prevent this supposed domination. The philosopher understands that an already existing idea that the Jews orchestrated a conspiracy to rule the world caused the Nazis to produce a similar conspiracy, to oppose and destroy the supposed Jewish project (Arendt, 1973, p. 76). The Nazi formula of “enemy among us” and “conspires against us” serve as a backdrop for the totalitarian narrative of projects no. 867/2015 and 193/2016, the subject no longer being the Jews. Proponents believe, or want to believe, that Brazil is on the way to a “Marxist-oriented gay dictatorship.” In that sense, in April 2013, a federal parliamentarian, then chairman of the Chamber of Deputies’ Human Rights and Minorities Commission, said in an interview to reporters from a news portal available on the web that “the [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] LGBT movement stands with a national indoctrination. They stand up in our country as a dictatorship, a gay dictatorship” (GospelMais, 2013). And in April 2014, when discussing the National Education Plan (PNE), another federal deputy argued that “we do not see why a movement wants to introduce gender ideology into PNE. The ideology of gender is Marxist, it is the same ideology that spread throughout Europe and, in the future Europe will realize that they are working against themselves” (GGN, 2014). The PNE, which should guide education policies between 2010 and 2020, was only approved in 2014 and only after the exclusion of the obligation to insert in the curricula the perspectives of gender studies (Agência Brasil, 2014).

Such perspective could be treated as absurd if one were not mindful of the fact that they reinforce unreasonable identities. Schmitt (1999), one of the leading Nazi theorists, in 1927 in the work *The concept of the politician*, defended the necessary distinction between friend and enemy. The friend was “we,” the enemy the “other.” The relation between friend and enemy would only become hostile if the enemy were public, that is, not of the individual only (as a competitor or adversary), but of the group of friends (Schmitt, 1999, p. 59). Thus, for Delgado Parra (2011, p. 180), Schmitt’s friend-enemy relationship, or the idea of the “enemy between us”, which is one of the backdrops of the projects discussed here, presents something very specific: it is possible to love the enemy in the private sphere and, in the public sphere, to promote the most radical antagonism in which even physical death is a present possibility. This relationship between loving in private life and fighting in the public sphere is clear in the speech of a religious leader who supported the Escola sem Partido’s act projects in an interview to *Época* magazine in 2011 when asked how he would react if one of his children or grandchildren told him that they were homosexual. He equated homosexuality with homicide and other forms of crime by stating:

I will improve your question, deepen it. If my son was a murderer, if my grandson was a drug dealer, if my son was a serial killer and had cut up 50, I would continue to love him in the same way, but reproach his conduct. My love for a person does not mean that I support what it does (Revista Época, 2011).

The actual non-existence of a “communist-gay dictatorship” is irrelevant, if the facts are somewhat distorted by linking in a seemingly logical way and if the propaganda so uses them, especially considering the potential of amplification and capillarity of social networks. Arendt (1973, p. 380) says that what convinces the masses is the coherence of propaganda, so their adherence to totalitarian ideas disregards the facts that oppose and endanger the narrative of the propaganda. Escola sem Partido assumes for itself a historical mission, to prevent the supposed ideological domination of that which would have taken over the universities and the state. Thus, all academic production (for example, gender studies and decolonial studies) is only a manifestation of this domain and contributes to the doctrine of those who are “still free.” According to Arendt (1973), factual perspectives were converted into mere opinion and, therefore, liable to challenge by any other opinion, even if unsubstantiated, because:

The object of the most varied and variable constructions was always to reveal official history as a joke, to demonstrate a sphere of secret influences of which the visible, traceable, and known historical reality was only the outward facade erected explicitly to fool the people (Arendt, 1973, p. 333).

Among all the phenomena already experienced by humanity, totalitarianism is the most serious one, given its potency in annulling the humanity of individuals, even that of those adhering to it. The statement implies that it is clear that totalitarianism is present contemporaneously not in the condition of a dominant phenomenon, but through the presence of totalitarian elements in modern democracies. The denial of plurality, of the “other,” the composition of a fictitious reality legitimising a set of actions that envisage the creation of a homogenous world eliminating one’s own action, and the elimination of politics and thought constitute totalitarian elements which can be attractive, especially when they purport to be purist, non-ideological or anti-ideological. Totalitarianism is characterized by the attempt to annul plurality, essential for the existence of political life, in order to create a world of equals. The desired equality, however, does not comprise individual freedom nor equality of rights, since the annulment of politics prevents the individual from being born into the world, that is, appearing in his individuality. It is as if the whole society were a single individual, this is the equality of Escola sem Partido. By denying the plural, totalitarianism seeks to establish a fictional reality anchored in the negation and alteration of facts. It considers ideological what is scientific and scientific what is ideological, as long as it corroborates with the maintenance of the rationalization of fictitious reality being defended (Arendt, 1973, p. 352).

To maintain unity, the movement must manipulate history in order to withdraw from individuals the ability to act. Action is, for Arendt (2004), the quintessential activity linked to political life, its main concern being the search for the common good, “corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not man, live on Earth and inhabit the World” (Arendt, 2004, p. 15). It is the capacity for action that enables the inauguration, that is, the exclusively human capacity to create something new (Arendt, 2002, p. 94). The condition, then,



for action to take place is human plurality, which points to a double aspect, which are equality and difference. Equality makes possible the world, the public space, because it is as equals that understanding is made possible. However, it is only within the scope of the difference that the public space legitimizes itself (Arendt, 2004, p. 188). It is in discourse and action (discourse itself is an action) that human beings appear in their differences, in their individuality (Arendt, 2004, p. 189). This discursive action, a second birth of the individual, is only possible in a proper space for the development of this type of activity, that is, of a public space (Arendt, 2004, p. 193). Totalitarianism seeks to eliminate all public space, i.e., any space in which politics can manifest itself, starting with the school.

While espousing the necessary denunciation of the philosophies of history, the Escola sem Partido conceals in its project an illiterate philosophy of history: that of the historical process as an irresistible phenomenon in the sense that there is a natural movement before which any interposition, any action, is unnecessary, irrelevant, unwanted, impeded, denied (Arendt, 1973, p. 323); the irony being clear to all in the consideration that this is precisely the Marxist view of history. Such a conception is known as the “Ideology of Progress” (Benjamin, 1994, p. 224). Every technological and technical advance is overvalued at the expense of reflection on its meaning, to the detriment, therefore, of thought.

Thus, it is acceptable, and even imposed, that school is limited to instruction and not to waste time on debates that do not lead to any measurable progress. The Escola sem Partido’s ideology manifests itself as the logic of an idea, that of the historical process. However, Arendt (1973, p. 382) recalls that, for the proponents of such totalitarian perspectives, this logic presents itself as “the Truth” and not as ideology (i.e., socialism is ideological and liberalism is not, defending the expansion of LGBT rights is ideological and doctrinal, but defending heteronormativity is not). Being “the Truth” and not “mere ideology,” the supporters of totalitarian perspectives believe they are part of a grand achievement, it is an opportunity, perhaps the only one, to become historically important. Faced with a meaningless life, there is the chance to insert oneself in the movement of history. It is noteworthy that totalitarianism is born of an action — it is an inauguration —, but it is an action that is intended to last, since it seeks to prevent all subsequent action. From Arendt (1973, p. 461), the novelty of totalitarianism is characterized by the obstinacy in eliminating the very possibility of novelty. The partisan must believe that, by doing nothing that opposes the movement of historical progress (which does not act politically, therefore), it actively participates in the construction of a world free from the domination enemies, albeit imaginary enemies.

The ideal subject of totalitarianism is not the believer, the partisan, but the individual who is no longer able to judge between fact and fiction, between what it is true and what it is false (Arendt, 1973, p. 474), and thus believes in the fictional reality of the totalitarian narrative that establishes a world in which plurality is denied. It is with a view to the formation of this individual unable to think, to judge considering the perspective of the “other” and, from this broad perspective and the liberating effects of thought, to act, that the Escola sem Partido movement, through Projects no. 867/2015 and no. 193/2016, proposes the exclusion of political, ethical

and moral discussions in the school. The learned inability to think, judge and act are due to the non-critical and conformed adherence to the movement of progress. Kohn (2001, p. 14) states that Eichmann's mind was full of ready-made sentences, *clichés*, supported by a self-explanatory logic that ignored all forms of contestation and thus reality itself. From Arendt (1973, p. 465), this adherence consists in the submission itself to the historical process, in which all are innocent, but only a few have the right to exist. However, this association between totalitarianism and the irresistible movement of history implies that everything that opposes it must be eliminated. Arendt (1973, p. 465) points out that this begins with the elimination of politics, succeeded by political elimination itself and physical elimination. The banishment of unwanted individuals occurs in two moments: the first is theoretical, the second is physical.

The submission to a movement and the annulment of self allow for atrocities. While accompanying Eichmann's judgment, Arendt noted that the totalitarian experience took place without the parties being constituted as individuals of action. It was not personal hatred that moved the Nazis. The "terrible news" of totalitarianism is that individuals practiced evil "unintentionally," or else, believing they were doing good actions (Arendt, 2003, p. 35). That is, what moves totalitarianism is the movement itself, which, when moving, grows to the point of seeming irresistibility. Arendt (1973, p. 417) argues that the adepts (and therefore the educated in such a perspective) are characterized by complete disregard for the immediate and, above all, the long-term consequences and the complete lack of scruples (acquired and constructed by the exercise of thought). It is the unshakable faith in the fictitious world and in the struggle, as fictitious as it is, against an enemy that is exercising mastery (the gay-communist dictatorship) and not in the desire for power that makes the Escola sem Partido's project inject into the social dynamics a more disturbing element than opposition and even isolated aggression. The element that Projects no. 867/2015 and no. 193/2016 bring is totalitarianism, the political annulment of the plural and of thought.

Another consequence of the exclusion of politics and explicit positioning (since the implicit, as we have stated before, is always present) and the understanding of history as an irresistible process is the difficulty, or even the incapacity, to stand before history itself (or of the group, of the nation, etc.). It is to live life as a spectator of life itself, as if it were a work of art to be contemplated (Arendt, 1994). In her study on Rahel Varnhagen, Arendt (1994, p. 63) took an important distinction between the affirmative attitude (political action being attentive to the plural reality of the world) and passive behaviour (departing from reality, fiction, submission to fate). The individual who does not understand his history nor the political disputes that enabled him does not act upon it and becomes hostage to it. Censoring politics in school is to create barriers for the individual to take control (always fragile and relative) of life itself, to force him to believe that it is inevitable to be swept away by the unidirectional process of history, by progress, by destiny. The assumption of destiny is possible only by the recognition of history. It is this recognition that will provide support for thought and extended judgment (Arendt, 1995). One agrees with Nietzsche (2008, p. 15) when he states that "we need history, but not as the

idlers who walk in the garden of science need it.” Nietzsche’s free-spirit (2000, p. 189) is the individual who stands before its history (even if it is to deny it and refute it as a way). Rejecting plural reality, as proposed by the Escola sem Partido’s act projects, sustaining a world where there are no conflicts and individuals are erased does not constitute an exit in the sense of building a better world, but only puts the individual as a hostage of causality. The deliberate loss of reality obstructs the future insofar as it prevents non-reductionist and non-normative alternatives from being experienced (Arendt, 1994, p. 93), as well as hindering the construction of reasonable identities (Cerri, 2010). It is this sequestration of the future that is being offered by act projects no. 867/2015 and no. 193/2016.

Freedom is also put into danger by the fictitious reality proposed by the Escola sem Partido’s projects. By creating a world narrative anchored in a false reality, they prevent action and impose behaviour. Individuals cease to act and begin to behave according to normativity. There is no more space for plurality, because it establishes a unique way of being; there is no more space for freedom (Schittino, 2009, p. 121). Thus, the domain desired by the totalitarian elements present in the projects does not aim only at the body, but at subjectivity itself. The Escola sem Partido’s ideological logic aims not to merely extinguish freedom of action, but also freedom of thought in the name of what is proposed as “the Truth;” that scientific perspectives that do not fit family opinions are mere opinions and, as such, should be suppressed in favour of family opinion; heteronormativity as the only legitimate possibility. By subjecting one’s ability to think to an undeniable truth (be it god, science, experience, etc.), one’s own thinking is put at risk. Then, by subjecting the pedagogical relations and the contents of the various school disciplines to irrefutable truth, the possibility of an education that is not limited to formal knowledge, that is, an education that promotes thought and not mere instrumentalization is unfeasible. In addition, the very basic function of the school, which is to present the world to the neophyte, is compromised, because the world is, and this is what differs it from the planet, permeated by political relations built in the plural relations between human beings. The world, and also the school as a part of it, is a field of disputes, a place of struggle that involves ethnic, cultural, religious, regional and national issues; which constitutes politics.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the face of the advancement of public policies that have given previously excluded or marginalized groups access to fundamental rights and their consequent rise in occupations formerly restricted to individuals who fit into what is considered “ideal man” (heterosexual, white, Christian and within their view of family), Apple (1993, p. 227) argues that conservative groups form an alliance, draw up an agenda of reforms that are not limited to education, but which has a privileged space in it. A mixture of neoconservatism and neoliberalism groups propose the reduction of the state in the fight against inequalities and an expansion of the State in control of those who oppose this project (Apple, 1993, p. 228). In general terms, apparently contradictory elements merge: the defence of progress, the free market, deregulation,

and the return to an ideal past, with models of family, society and school romanticized (Apple, 1993, p. 227). Thus, conservative proposals that hold underprivileged groups in the subaltern are presented with a democratic and universalist discourse. This discourse operates as a veneer, a polish (Apple, 1993, p. 236), for an old and outdated project. The defence of plurality and freedom (present in subsections II and III, respectively, of Article 2 of Project no. 193/2016 and Project no. 867/2015) are just euphemisms.

In promoting an ideological education, that is to say based on a totalitarian ideology (although in its rhetoric it denies any ideological connection), Escola sem Partido opposes the Arendtian understanding of action, as a political and transformation of reality, and that of history, which must be understood as process. The fictitious reality defended rejects the present real plurality, but also the past and future plurality (Schittino, 2009, p. 107-8). This defended reality interrupts the possibility of action and goes in the direction of a process of dehumanization. By eliminating the possibility of action that is linked to the indeterminacy of history (since this is permeated by conflicts and contradictions), the totalitarianism present in the Escola sem Partido's perspective obstructs the future, since this is anticipated as a natural unfolding of the historical process against which no action is desirable. Ultimately, it denies history itself as a human construct, since it is precisely the presence of novelty, as Arendt (1973) reminds us, which is the key element of its unfolding. In this sense, for Cerri (2010, p. 277), to allow for the real future to unfold implies looking differently at the past, not merely as part of the process determined to unfold; that the perspective of the inevitability of the present as it is and the future as predisposed is problematized and not seen as determined. The supposed neutrality proposed by the Movimento Escola sem Partido is only possible from a totalitarian perspective, accepting uncritical, personal belief over true discourse. Only in a democracy true neutrality can exist, in which democracy itself is a political position and a value that overlaps with the others, allowing for the discussion of a plurality of views. For Savater (1997, p. 71), it is capitulation to barbarism to admit the defence of any opinion that supports the legitimacy of inequality, just as it is to capitulate to barbarism if the school renounces its task of forming citizens for the world in its entirety, complexity and plurality.

In Arendt's reflections (2003, p. 161), for whom everything that has ever been started by action is still present as a power and thus can be revived, even being presented and sustained as something new, the exclusion of political debate, freedom of action and the possibility of building a world that admits plurality as a wealth and not as a problem to be solved (and eliminated) is not new to humanity. In addition to denying advances in public policies and intellectual production in the field of education in the last 30 years, the Projects no. 867/2015 and no. 193/2016 offer the possibility of reviving in another setting and in another time an experience with serious consequences for humanity and that prevents the construction of the future from the action inspired by the critical thinking. Benjamin (1994), undoubtedly a free-spirit in the Nietzsche's conception, a victim of totalitarianism, produced a thought that offers itself as a testimony warning of the obstruction of the future:

There is a painting by Klee called *Angelus Novus*. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair [*verweilen*: a reference to Goethe's *Faust*], to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is this storm (Benjamin, 1994).

This tempest is what we call progress, the misguided view that history is simply an unfolding of an irresistible course. The vision of the nation proposed by the projects no. 867/2015 and no. 193/2016 leads Brazil into the eye of this storm.

However, just as Benjamin and others who lived and acted in dignity in the dark times of totalitarianism gave their lives testimony, totalitarianism never reaches its full success, because there will always be those ones who think and refuse to participate in the irresistible process promoted by the fictional and reductionist narrative. This fact constitutes a form of action repudiating totalitarianism (Arendt, 1968). This does not prevent the serious consequences of totalitarianism from being re-experienced, only (which is not a small thing) that it is possible to think of the “other” and to feel solidarity, to develop critical thinking, even when all situations indicate that it is the opposite of what “should be done.” In Nietzsche's terms, resisting the *Escola sem Partido's* projects is still possible, it is still possible to be a truly “democratic” free-spirit.

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