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OTHER THEMES

The Fundamental Metaphor of Sophistry

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ABSTRACT – The Fundamental Metaphor of Sophistry[1]. This paper analyzes the metaphor as a discursive strategy to explain and disseminate the concepts that support doctrines in general and educational doctrines in particular. It examines the CULTIVATION metaphor as a fundamental metaphor for education, as well as its supposed origin in Sophistry, and proposes to replace it with the NAVIGATION metaphor. This substitution makes it possible to assign new meanings both to the practice of the sophists and to the profession of educating today and throughout history, imposing challenges on the training and continuing education of teachers.
Keywords: **Metaphor. Sophistry. Contemporary Education.**

RESUMO – A Metáfora Fundamental da Sofística. Este artigo analisa a metáfora como estratégia discursiva destinada a explicar e a difundir os conceitos que sustentam as doutrinas em geral e as doutrinas educacionais em particular. Examina a metáfora CULTIVO como metáfora fundamental da educação, bem como a sua suposta origem na Sofística, e propõe substituí-la pela metáfora NAVEGAÇÃO. Esta substituição permite atribuir novos significados tanto à prática dos sofistas quanto ao ofício de educar no decorrer da história e na atualidade, impondo desafios à formação inicial e continuada de professores.
Palavras-chave: **Metáfora. Sofística. Educação Contemporânea.**

Introduction

Metaphors are useful to explain figuratively and also to spread notions and reasoning components of the most diverse theoretical fields. *Fundamental metaphors* are those that fully establish the definition, purposes and procedures of a certain domain of knowledge and the corresponding work. Often, the collective mentality maintains certain metaphorical expressions without questioning for centuries, as if they were asleep, which makes it difficult to examine their adequacy, as well as to discuss the purposes of the area to which they apply.

Education is described by a fundamental metaphor that benefits from this lethargy: CULTIVATION[2]. Its permanence in the discourse of educators is at the expense of a critical examination of its theoretical meaning and the consequences it entails for the exercise of teaching[3]. The origin of the idea of education as a work similar to agriculture or gardening is associated with the enactment of the first thinkers who dedicated themselves to pedagogy as a professional activity, the sophists who acted in Classical Greece.

In this paper, we will initially make a general exposition about metaphors, in order to contribute to their theoretical elucidation, highlighting their relevance in the pedagogical discourse. Next, we will discuss the problems involved in adopting the CULTIVATION metaphor as representative of the educational enterprise of Sophistry. This questioning will lead us to propose a new fundamental metaphor to define the goals and educational methods of the sophists, more in line with the political attributions they assumed.

We hope that such analyzes contribute to the fulfillment of two basic objectives in line with the research movement that has been developing since the last century in open opposition to the Platonic tradition, we intend to contribute to recover the relevance of the sophists in outlining the founding traits of the teaching profession; considering the persistent legacy of the CULTIVATION metaphor in the field of education and the suggestion of a new fundamental metaphor to define Sophistry, we will seek to debate the pedagogical trends currently dominant.

The Metaphors in Pedagogical Discourse

When we explain to someone a meaning that is unknown to them, we resort to something that is known to them and that is in some way similar to what we want to communicate. This procedure constitutes an argumentative strategy present in both colloquial speech and in scientific discourse, revealing, most often, the intention to obtain the audience's agreement to a given thesis. It is a metaphor, a figure of speech with valuable persuasive potential for being able to guide the thoughts of those who listen to us or read (Lemgruber; Oliveira, 2011, p. 49).

The argumentative potential of the metaphor must be evaluated considering that its origin lies in an analogy. We reason through analogy when we establish similarities between terms that were originally

distinct from each other. Its typical scheme is the claim that A is to B as C is to D, and these components must be as different from each other as possible so that the intended equivalence does not reduce to simple proportionality (Perelman, 2004, p. 334). The analogy aims to elucidate terms A and B, called *theme*, unknown to the audience, and its persuasive efficacy lies in using terms C and D, called *phoros*, whose meaning belongs to the cognitive domain of the listeners (Perelman, 2004, p. 334; Mazzotti, 2008a, p. 2).

By condensing an analogy, we get a metaphor. Instead of saying that A is to B as C is to D, we will just say that A is C of B, an expression resulting from the fusion of one of the terms of the *phoros* with the terms of the *theme* (Perelman; Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1996, p. 453). Considering that, in Greek, the word *metaphor* (*μεταφορά*) means *transport*, to reason metaphorically is to transport to A and B the attributes supposedly inherent to C and D. The operation is the same as present in the analogy, but abbreviated, resulting in a shorter and incisive statement.

Black (1962, p. 35) states that metaphors have unique characteristics for the study of the nature of the intended interaction between theme and phoros, a statement that applies to any type of social ordering. One of these characteristics is the *substitution view*, which consists in the use of metaphor as an *equivalent literal expression* of the phoros. Its argumentative power rests upon the assumption that the theme, as a whole, is similar or analogous to the meanings of the phoros. The identification of these meanings and the purpose of the analogy or similarity allows the audience to retrace the path taken by the speaker in the construction of the metaphor, reaching the literal meaning of what is intended to be explained (Black, 1962, p. 35). A special case is the *comparison view*, when the speaker presents the metaphor as a demonstration of the underlying analogy or similarity, ensuring that the metaphorical statement can be replaced by an equivalent literal comparison (Black, 1962, p. 37).

Black (1962, p. 38) also mentions the *interaction view*, in which two thoughts about different things act together and give foundation to a single word or phrase whose meaning is the result of this interaction. When we say that man is a wolf, the theme is the word *man*, to be explained by the phoro *wolf*. Obviously, the metaphorical sentence will not be effective for a reader ignorant of what wolves are, but Black (1962, p. 40) reminds us that it is not necessary to know the standard, dictionized meaning of the word *wolf*, nor for the reader to know how to use it in a literal sense; it is enough that it appropriates a *system of associated commonplaces* with the word. If a layman is asked to say what he considers true about these animals, the *resulting set of statements* will be close to what Black (1962, p. 40) classifies as a commonplace system concerning the word *wolf*. Black (1962, p. 40) maintains that a commonplace system may include "[...] half-truths or absolute errors", like when a whale is classified as a fish. It is undeniable that a metaphor operating in one society seems absurd in another, since the commonplace system is not universally shared. A group that believes that wolves are reincar-

nations of dead humans will claim that man is a wolf – a different interpretation from the one than we are used to.

The meaning of the word *wolf* is part of a system of ideas that, although not clearly delineated, is sufficiently defined to compose a *detailed enumeration*. To call a man a *wolf* is to evoke a system of related commonplaces, such as assuming that the man is like a ferocious animal or that he behaves like a hunter, involved in constant fights, and so on. Each of these characteristics or implicit statements is easily added to the subject, the man, "[...] in both normal and abnormal senses". Driven by the system of implications of the word *wolf*, a certain listener may construct a corresponding system of implications about the main subject, but these implications may not be the ones usually associated with commonplaces concerning the literal uses of the definition of *man* (Black, 1962, p. 40).

Black (1962, p. 41) suggests that we can explain the metaphor using another metaphor: when looking at the night sky through a glass where some lines are transparent and others opaque, we will see only the stars that the translucent lines allow us to see. The metaphor would be like this glass: the system of commonplaces is the point that converges our gaze turned to the object and the words, and the transparent lines of the glass are the argument that employs the metaphor. Thus, in the metaphor, the main subject is the stars, the subsidiary subject is the sky with the other stars, and the transparent lines are what delimits the explanation given by the speaker to the concept of a *star*, disregarding everything that he is not allowed to see – the other celestial stars.

Doctrines in general – philosophical, theological, pedagogical, etc. – always use metaphors to communicate and make the worldviews they defend prevail. When analyzing their arguments, we can identify the *fundamental metaphors* that compose them, responsible for bringing together reasonings that aim to express the real in the way that seems most appropriate to them (Perelman, 1987 as cited in Lemgruber; Oliveira, 2011, p. 49-50). Pedagogical doctrines, in particular, inhabit a controversial field in which educational conceptions are expressed through different fundamental metaphors, always with the purpose of structuring, organizing and guiding the audience's thinking (Lemgruber; Oliveira, 2011, p. 49). Their characteristics and potential are identical to those of other areas of knowledge, which is why they are subject to the same dangers as the others.

Despite the variety of metaphors that can be used to explain what education is, Mazzotti (2008a, p. 1) argues that all educational doctrines are condensed and coordinated by a single metaphor, PATHWAY. The justification is that the activity of educating is defined by the intention to lead someone from a *less educated* state to a *more educated* state (Mazzotti, 2002, p. 128). In pedagogical propositions, the presence of words such as *pathway, route, curriculum* and similar ones evoke the meaning of guiding the student from one state to another (Mazzotti, 2008a, p. 3).

Two competing and antagonistic meanings are intrinsic to this generic metaphor: a perfectly determined and determinable pathway

and a pathway permeated by uncertainties, a process that is not subject to determinations (Mazzotti, 2002, p. 127). The first meaning allows us to visualize a pedagogical doctrine in which teaching can be previously established and, even more, submitted to controls planned in advance (Cunha, 2004, p. 118). The thinkers of education postulants of the perfect determination of the pathway count on experiences that guarantee this possibility, removing, as much as possible, everything that impedes accuracy. The bastion of this notion is the idea that, once the pathway is known, it is possible to interfere with it and carry out everything that is desired and desirable (Mazzotti, 2002, p. 128)[4].

The second meaning of the metaphor Pathway postulates that the route to be taken by the student is a process that can only be exposed and evidenced after it is carried out, implying the thesis that no prediction is feasible (Mazzotti, 2002, p. 128). The metaphor Indeterminate Pathway suggests that educational progression is not subject to rigid planning precisely because it is unpredictable, uncertain, and it is only possible to know it when it happens (Cunha, 2004, p. 118). The thinkers who are aligned with this notion understand education in a flexible way and impregnated with unpredictability, a walk that must be reviewed and often remade in face of the contingencies that will be presented along the way[5].

Although the most efficient resource for understanding pedagogical doctrines is the analysis of their fundamental metaphors, it is possible to identify in their argumentative *corpora* the presence of other metaphorical formulations that contribute to their characterization. The expression *kindergarten* used by Fröebel to explain the value of childhood education belongs to the domain of the metaphor Determined Pathway, constituting one of the most powerful dormant metaphorical expressions in the mentality of educators: Cultivation. The idea that the child is like a seed that requires care and attention to develop his/her natural potential is associated with the commonplace that it is up to the teacher to act as a gardener who works on human nature, which, in turn, derives from the divine. It is a dormant metaphor due to the recurrence of its appearance in the pedagogical discourse, without presenting a reflection on the meanings conveyed by it.

This discussion highlights the argumentative value of metaphors in educational doctrines and highlights the importance of their identification and analysis. We should be aware that, when faced with this argumentative strategy in discourses on education, we should not limit ourselves to checking whether the relationship between the terms is feasible or not, but note that, when giving the approval to the proposed comparison, we accept the transported conceptions by the metaphorical relationship (Lemgruber; Oliveira, 2011, p. 49).

Analyzing a metaphor consists of interpreting the analog components implied by it and the commonplaces triggered by it, so that one can discuss the relationship that the speaker intends to establish with the audience around the object he/she wants to explain. It is a

commitment of a scientific and political nature that requires sensitivity and willingness to expand the acuity of our gaze and reach beyond the transparent lines of glass, aware that such lines elucidate certain educational ideas, but also cover an extensive constellation of others. Whether as an audience or as researchers, what is incumbent on us is to problematize metaphors and the commonplaces associated with them, in order to make the foundations of our own discourse and of the educational practices in vogue known.

The Cultivation Metaphor as a Problem

When analyzing the moral, physical, poetic and theological education undertaken by the sophists, Jaeger (2010) includes these thinkers in the list of masters in the history of education, an innovative and bold option, since Sophistry remained for centuries on the sidelines in textbooks, receiving only obscure and derogatory mentions. Jaeger (2010, p. 356) highlights that, given the assertion that nature is the *basis for all possible education*, those rhetoric teachers concluded that educating consists of instituting a *second nature*. The sophists took the idea of *physis* – the totality of the universe – to the space of individuality and developed a broader concept, that of *human nature*, meaning the totality of body and soul (Jaeger, 2010, p. 357).

Jaeger (2010, p. 363) says that it is through agriculture, seen as "[...] cultivation of nature through human art", that Plutarch explains the relationship between the three components of education: nature, teaching and habit – *the pedagogical trinity of the Sophists*. *Good agriculture* requires, above all, fertile land, a competent farmer and good quality seed. When these terms are related to the task of educating, we have that the terrain is the nature of man, the farmer represents the educator, and the seeds are the doctrines and precepts transmitted by voice.

These three well-articulated components result in something good, but even a *poorly endowed by nature* can receive *adequate care* through knowledge and habit, and have its shortcomings partly compensated for. Conversely, even an *exuberant nature* can decay if left unattended. Jaeger claims that the Plutarchian metaphor, developed this way, elevates education to the level of indispensable art to human progress. It becomes possible to *cultivate and educate the physis*, provided that at the right time, when nature is malleable and allows the content to be "[...] easily assimilated, imprinting itself on the soul" (Jaeger, 2010, p. 364).

Jaeger thus institutes what would be the fundamental metaphor of Sophistry, whose meaning penetrated into Western thinking and gave rise, in its translation into Latin, to the idea of education as a *spiritual culture*, from which the educational doctrines of humanism were later used (Jaeger, 2010, p. 365). Based on the idea that education is to human nature as cultivation is to the land, the Cultivation metaphor emerges: education is the cultivation of human nature, as it is presented later in the Froebelian theory.

The commonplaces associated with it would be part of the philosophical and educational conception of Sophistry: as a student, man is endowed with a spirit that has a first nature governed by innate laws arising from a *physis*, a general law that governs the universe, transposed for human individuality. The novelty introduced by the sophists would reside in the belief that *physis* can and should be cultivated through education, endowing man with a second nature – let us say improved.

As the first nature is not equal in all individuals, and may manifest itself precariously in some and excellently in others, it is up to education to promote indistinct and universal improvements, whether in conditions of precariousness or excellence, acting on any habits, doctrines and precepts to obtain the constant development of mankind. Education, therefore, is guided by the Pathway metaphor, as it consists of taking the student in a lower state and leading him/her to a higher state.

More precisely, it is the Determined and Determinable Pathway metaphor, as the route to be taken by the student is previously established by its first nature, which, once properly observed, allows anticipating what is required to fill gaps or expand natural values. Here we have the notion of the student as the bearer of innate qualities that can be worked on in the educational process. In the metaphor of the sophists, knowledge becomes a means to advance the primary condition of each individual, maintaining, however, the form of an anticipated pathway.

In line with the previous section of the present work, to give assent to this dormant metaphor means to assume the implicit and explicit definitions conveyed by it. Since our purpose is to adopt a questioning behavior, positioning ourselves as an active audience and willing to diligently examine the metaphorical formulations of the authors we research, we must awaken and debate the metaphor that supposedly underlies Sophistry. We ask, then, if the analogy established by Plutarch and endorsed by Jaeger is acceptable to define the educational and philosophical precepts of Sophistry. Can we safely say that the idea of cultivation best describes the sophists' understanding of education?

Let us first analyze the arguments of those who elaborated the aforementioned analogy and, consequently, condensed its meanings in that metaphor. Plutarch (2015, 4, 2A) states that what we are used to saying about the arts and sciences should also be said about virtue; in order to have *absolute rectitude* in this thematic field, three elements must converge: nature, reason and habit. The reason concerns learning, while habit is exercise and the principles of nature represent "[...] evolution through instruction, the benefit of care and excellence for these all" (Plutarch, 2015, 4, 2B).

The abstract concept of *virtue*, the object of Plutarch's argument, is thus related to the cultivation of the land: as in agriculture, we must start with the good land; then by the educated farmer; then for the good seeds. Nature is likened to the soil; the teacher to the farmer; the principles, words and precepts, to the seed (Plutarch, 2015, 4, 2C). Plutarch

(2015, 4, 2C) believes that anyone who thinks that those who are not well-born and therefore have a *limited nature* cannot be guided to virtue through instruction and care are mistaken; for indolence destroys the virtue of nature, but discipline corrects their ignorance (Plutarch, 2015, 4, 2D).

In the work in which Plutarch formulates the analogies in defense of the educability of human nature, there is no mention of the sophists. Although the introduction to the text states that ancient thinkers serve to compose the arguments developed there, most of the explicit references are to Plato, from whose philosophy Plutarch extracts a good part of his educational guidelines. This is evident in the ensemble of Plutarchian works, when we are faced with the indication of four basic virtues in the formation of a virtuous man: courage, intelligence, justice and temperance. The resemblance to the sayings of Plato (2006) in *The Republic* (427d-e) is remarkable, when the sophists are held responsible for teaching unjust acts and Glaucon argues in favor of four essential virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance and justice (Frazier, 1996 as cited in Silva, 2015, p. 12).

An admirer of Plato, Plutarch (2015, 5, 3F) qualifies him as *sent by the gods*, which does not necessarily imply agreement with the Platonic criticisms of the sophists. What interests us is not his intellectual ties, but whether Jaeger is right in saying that sophistry education is included by Plutarch in the list of doctrines described by the Cultivation metaphor. If so, it is that the sophistical educational principles are based on the Plutarchian idea that human nature is naturally good, endowed with certain qualities attributed by the gods; qualities or innate virtues which appear, however, to a greater or lesser degree in each one, and whose cultivation through instruction achieves the full development of those who possess them in a degree of excellence and corrects the course from those who possess them precariously.

If the Cultivation metaphor is indeed applicable to the educational proposal of Sophistry, the sophists would have claimed that there is a right route for the instruction of individuals, with the purpose of righteously attaining virtue and happiness, and that it would therefore be possible to prescribe a set of instructions to be applied in a fixed way to all students, a position that qualifies for the Determined and Determinable Pathway metaphor. Even if there is only one way to build the second nature of each man, the sophistical pedagogy would be applied differently to each one, based on the differences present in the particularities of the innate individual gifts.

Admitting that the Cultivation metaphor is adequate to describe the purpose of the sophists has serious pedagogical and political implications, making its conception very similar to Socratic maieutics and Fröebel's *kindergarten*, metaphorical expressions that translate the notion of human nature as a determinant of the student's educational pathway. Politically, it is a conservative view of the purposes of education, with regard to the possibilities of progress of the student in the

scenario of social life. For now, we will neither affirm nor deny such adequacy, limiting ourselves to adopting the skeptical attitude of suspending judgment and following the path of investigation, taking this problem as a genuine puzzle to be solved through another interpretation of the Sophistical pedagogy.

In this new approach, the performance of the first generation sophists is understood within the intense process of transformation experienced by Athens between the 6th and 5th centuries BC, when democracy came to rule the entire life of the *polis*. It was then that Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias and other thinkers prospered, offering the necessary training for new citizens to act politically and, even more, providing Greek culture with a broad "[...] humanistic worldview" (Crick, 2015, p. 31).

The first sophists had to face large opponents, such as Parmenides, who, contrary to those who saw reality as a constant flux in which everything changes and becomes, asserted that the Being is one, that every movement is illusory and that the senses cannot be trusted when they indicate that things have changed (Schiappa, 2003, p. 122). Thinkers affiliated with this conception believed that, beneath the apparent multiplicity and confusion of the universe, there was a fundamental simplicity and stability that reason was capable of discovering (Guthrie, 2007). It was a *physis*, a nature independent of human action, to which concrete reality should be molded to guide all social phenomena.

Parmenides' extreme monism challenged the evidence of the senses, accused concrete reality of being unreal and overvalued theoretical knowledge, which motivated a *violent reaction* in the first sophists, whose ideas produced a shift in the current philosophical axis. By denying the existence of a *physis*, they chose as the central theme of their philosophy the political and cultural relations of man in the world. This is what explains the statement made by Protagoras: "[...] man is the measure of all things, of those that are while they are and those that are not, while they are not" (DK, 80 A14). The Protagorean man-measure suggests that it is not the *physis* that defines what is and what is not, but man himself, through norms, conventions, laws and beliefs that man creates within the broad cultural system of each society – what the Greeks called *nómos*.

This new approach also allows us to understand Protagoras' saying about the gods: he claimed not to have "[...] the certainty that they exist or that they do not exist", considering the obstacles in front of him – "[...] the obscurity of the subject, as well as the brevity of human life" (DK 80 B4). Examining together the fragment about the gods and the man-measure phrase, one understands Protagoras' rejection of purely theoretical speculation. As Philodemus rightly observes in his *Metaphysics* (996a29), quoted by Schiappa (2003, p. 149), the language of the fragment about the gods reveals that Protagoras' refusal is due to intellectuals distanced from concrete experience and practical utility, what integrates his philosophy with the primordial objective of Sophistry: to educate man for the city, placing him at the center of political life.

In line with Protagoras, Gorgias' *Treatise of Non-Being* privileges concrete reality, the only possible object of cognition (Kerferd, 2003, p. 125). Facing Parmenides, Gorgias argues that it is evident that non-Being does not exist; even if it existed, it would exist and would not exist at the same time, because if we apprehend it as a non-Being, it will not exist, but, as such, it will exist again. And it is completely absurd that something exists and does not exist at the same time (Sexto Empírico, 1993, VII, 67-68). If non-Being and Being existed, non-Being would be identical with Being, and neither would exist. Therefore, there is no Being, just as there is no non-Being, and not even both coexist. Furthermore, nothing is thinkable, nothing exists (Sexto Empírico, 1993, VII, 76).

Gorgias' conclusion that nothing exists completely rejects the founding assumption of all philosophical systems that adopted – and those that still adopt today – the Parmenidean assumptions that claim to exist, behind the *mutant panorama of becoming*, above the dark plan of appearances, a discoverable substance (Guthrie, 2007, p. 183). Like Protagoras, Gorgias does not believe in something absolute, one and integral, whose existence is independent of concrete reality and human action, a Being in itself, fixed and immutable (Dupréel, 1948). There is no *physis*, the abstract, superior and preferable reality, only the *nómos*, and that is what man has to deal with.

The Gorgian rejection and his new understanding of man and knowledge appear more clearly in the third thesis of the *Treatise*, in which it is stated that Being, even being understandable, "[...] is impossible to communicate or explain to others". To Gorgias, it is by the word that we identify things, but the word is not what presents itself to our sight, nor is the Being; therefore, we communicate neither things nor Being, only the word (Sexto Empírico, 1993, VII, 84-85). Since the word is not an expression of the exterior object, it is the exterior object that reveals the word (Sexto Empírico, 1993, VII, 85).

Calogero, cited by Dupréel (1948), explains that, when confronting Parmenides, Gorgias does not postulate a radical nihilism, as he does not affirm the impossibility of knowledge and truth. Like Protagoras, Gorgian philosophy only identifies the error of thinkers who confuse knowledge with the known being, and emphasizes that knowledge is always the combination of two elements, which comes from the perception of the external world and the dispositions of the subject himself. Epistemologically, recognizing this combination is to postulate that there are humanly determined patterns to explain natural phenomena; there are no natural patterns apart from the conscious intervention of the human intellect (Jarrat, 1998, p. 42). Like the truth, knowledge is constructed by men in the midst of concrete reality, not something undoubted, a reflection of the contemplation of a Being residing in an abstract plane. When we speak of a color, the recipients of our speech must have perceived that color for themselves, without which the word, *logos*, will assume no meaning for them.

Faced with the Parmenidean ontology, Hippias reacted differently from Protagoras and Gorgias. In the Platonic dialogue *Protagoras* (337d-e), he says to his interlocutors: "[...] gentlemen present here, I see you all as relatives, close friends and fellow citizens by nature, not by convention", because the alike seems alike by nature; convention, which *tyrannizes humanity*, often constrains us against nature. Apparently, this is a manifestation contrary to the other sophists, since it affirms the *physis* in detriment of the *nómos*.

Hippias' opinion of *nómos* is elucidated in the Platonic dialogue *Hippias Major* (283b) (Plato, 2016), in which Socrates asks if he made more money in the states he visited or in Sparta. Hippias responds negatively, stating that he gained nothing from the Spartans, and Socrates questions whether their failure to educate the children of that land meant that those people did not wish to improve their offspring (*Hippias Major*, 283c). Hippias explains that both adults and young people wanted education, but that they could not receive it due to a tradition, because the Lacedaemonians are "[...] prohibited from changing their laws or educating their children differently from what is customary" (*Hippias Major*, 284b). Socrates then asks if the law brings harm or benefits to the states, to which Hippias replies: "[...] I think the law is made to be beneficial, but sometimes, if done badly, it is harmful" (*Hippias Major*, 284d).

This passage is enlightening because it indicates that, to Hippias, laws, norms and conventions embodied in *nómos* should not be placed in the field of error and illusory, as suggested by his pronouncement in Plato's *Protagoras* (2007). In *Hippias Major*, it is noted that the *nómos* becomes the tyrant of men when it assumes the character of immutability and prescribes the *same thing to everyone and for all times*, disregarding individual particularities and the diversity of temporal circumstances (Dupréel, 1948).

Based on a new approach to the performance and theorizations of the first sophists, our questions lead us to conclude that the Plutarchian metaphor Cultivation is inappropriate as a fundamental metaphor for Sophistry. Apparently, Jaeger does not realize that those professors of rhetoric have developed a *growing awareness* of the inexistence of a natural law, a historical determination or a divine command capable of establishing in advance what is given to men to think and define the limits of the exercise of their thought (Valle, 2008, p. 496).

Protagoras, Gorgias and Hippias saw man as an active agent in the world and in the construction of himself as an individual, and not a mere reproducer of immutable nature, bearer of a predetermined nature that is awakened through education. It is the man's, *anthropos*, and each man's in particular, not some eternal transcendental entity underlying appearances, the responsibility for deciding what is and what is not about all things (Crick, 2015, p. 69). As man is the measure of all things, doctrines are nothing more than the results of human thinking, dependent on what men understand to be correct, true, desirable (Mazzotti, 2008b, p. 4).

The Cultivation metaphor does not describe the educational conceptions of the early sophists because the word, *logos*, and knowledge were used in Sophistry not to speak of the *physis*, the *kosmos*, the Being, but to deal with those to whom one speaks, considering its effect in human life (Cassin, 1990, p. 254). It was up to the word to mean human perceptions and enable man to leave the state of contemplation through experience and observation, to build knowledge that is useful to human life. In Sophistry, the theories elaborated by the word have no value if they only teach the citizen to think, without acting; to contemplate without judging; to reflect, without overcoming adversity (Crick, 2010, p. 74).

The postulates of Sophistry inspire an experimental method in which the criterion for ranking knowledge is the achievement of its practical value. Nothing is undoubted and immutable, since everything is immersed in the flux of practical situations, and the truth cannot be other than human, since its origin is not a divine text that imposes on the reader a single, invariable meaning (Dupréel, 1948). Describing its pedagogy as similar to the gardener's or farmer's work would imply seeing the educator as merely taking care of what is innate, valuing the well-endowed and abandoning those scarcely favored by the gods.

The sophistic pedagogy aimed to encompass all interested parties, facing the challenge of operating even with the supposedly less virtuous and unskilled, contrary to the custom of "[...] transmitting notions as if they were dogmas, undoubted and watertight knowledge". It was an educational concept that dared to communicate innovations that could be "[...] useful as materials and tools for the creation of something new", and that was carried out in theoretical and practical ways, so that students could incorporate the necessary reflective bases to act in society (Silva, 2017, p. 150).

A New Metaphor for Sophistry

The inadequacy of the Cultivation metaphor to characterize the pedagogy practiced by the sophists motivates us to continue the investigation in search of the fundamental metaphor of Sophistry. For this, it is necessary to take into account that those *logos* teachers elaborated their conceptions about man in the space open to discussion offered by the nascent Greek democracy. The democratic climate allowed – and even required – that citizens stop seeing themselves as *pious servants of tradition, defenseless puppets of the divine will*, and that they assume themselves as active participants in the construction of history. This was the disposition provided by the art of *logos*, which strives to enable consensus, the main instrument of power in any truly democratic culture (Crick, 2015, p. 65).

As a unique, unprecedented system, when the Homeric narratives stopped making sense, democracy imposed on the Greeks a conception of the individual as something to be created, a being with initiative, in-

ventive spirit, ease to express opinions and deliberate in situations of conflict, capacity to take responsibility for choosing beliefs and behaviors. None of these components were gifts, but achievements obtained through the exercise of citizenship, through the adoption of behaviors that could be remade in an environment in constant transformation. *Logos* education, such as that offered by the sophists, was intended to provide opportunities for growth and emancipation through rich and significant experiences and knowledge.

Given this conceptualization, the pedagogical methods of the sophists deserve special consideration. Schiappa (2003, p. 47) informs that Plato was the first to use the term *rhêtorikê* to characterize the sophists, because before him there is no similar record, not even in Aristophanes, who always ridiculed them. Until then used in a general sense to designate the art of *logos*, in Platonic philosophy the term acquires the restricted sense of *exclusive training for political persuasion*, definitively associating itself with Sophistry. Admitting the characterization coming from Plato, the sophists' work consisted solely of teaching rhetoric, in the restricted sense, not in the broad sense of the word.

In another interpretive aspect, however, the methodological approach of the sophists can be called experimental because it teaches that knowledge and ideas should be assumed as provisional, admitting as true only what results from the investigation and proves to be useful in dealing with problematic situations lived by the community and, in particular, by individuals. As stated by Crick (2010, p. 41), a problematic situation is presented in shared experiences that carry conflict, urgency and uncertainty in them, which are open to questioning and provoke accurate examination and discussion. A problematic situation exists only in the realm of experience, not in some abstract reality or persuasive speech alone.

The sophists created problematic situations as exercises for their students, provoking them to develop the reflective process of investigation, to gather information, to draw up sketches of innovative perspectives of action and their consequent test in practice. Associated with the sophists, *dissoi logoi* operated as a genuine pedagogical method, providing learners with the opportunity to use the power of language to seek out unknown aspects of the subject at hand and new ways of acting. It was a teaching resource in which the chosen hypothesis emerged from the clash between the available hypotheses, which reveals the broader meaning of rhetorical art, beyond mere persuasion (Crick, 2004).

In this approach, the term *rhetoric* designates an educational effort dedicated to making the mind a space of creation capable of linking the multiple arguments that present themselves in a complex network of meanings, and giving them a simplified and eloquent form (Crick, 2004). In the pedagogy of the sophists, rhetoric is not limited to the purpose of influencing the audience through a mixture of vague appeals in order to win the debate at any cost. Rhetoric is the situated act of solving problematic situations through reflection, which constitutes an essential basis for the elaboration of collective judgments.

The essential part of the teaching program put into practice by Sophistry was "[...] nothing less than the formation of the mind to think" (Schiappa, 2003, p. 47). Like Hippocrates, according to Plato's characterization, students looked to the sophists for teachings on how to be a skilled orator, but, more than that, on how to "[...] acquire the mastery of *logos* that could allow them to constitute and direct power in private business and in the city" (Silva; Crick, 2021, p. 906). The art of *logos* goes beyond persuasion techniques, as it encompasses several areas of knowledge, such as astronomy, grammar and mathematics – the latter being developed by Hípias de Élis and considered essential in the composition of the curriculum necessary for the Athenian citizen (Ramos Oliveira, 1998).

This curriculum aimed to give citizens conditions to use knowledge in favor of improving their life in particular, and that of their community. When ministering the art of *logos*, the sophists taught the fundamental art of "[...] economic self-government linked to *oikós*" (Crick, 2015, p. 233)[6]. In the private sphere, this instruction involved the "[...] art of rationally ordering one's household through reason and command" (Crick, 2015, p. 233). To Foucault (as cited in Crick, 2015, p. 234), it was a kind of *askesis*, a "[...] practical training that was indispensable in order for an individual to form himself as a moral subject", in a broad and general way, and as householder[7].

Encomium of Helen, written by Gorgias based on the narratives of Homer, is a good example of this pedagogy, as it puts students in front of a problematic situation: Was Helena guilty of the Trojan War, as it is said in the Homeric tradition? Gorgias, then, presents hypotheses about what could have led to the betrayal of Menelaus' wife, giving rise to several possibilities for reflection. The questioning of poets and tradition is not limited to showing the "[...] mechanisms through which rhetoric can fabricate an audience through words, shaping and manipulating these people towards the ideal aspired by the speaker" (Crick, 2015, p. 80). *Encomium of Helen* contains a model of discourse that can be imitated by the students of Gorgias, but it also shows the power of *poiesis*, the possibility of creating new narrative molds based on individual perception, breaking with the interpretations imposed by tradition[8].

The sophistic pedagogy sought to reconcile the individual "[...] located in a separate mind that perceives the world" and the subject as "[...] a member of a collective with the responsibility to participate in democracy" (Jarrat, 1998, p. 92). The axis of its pragmatic action with a view to individual and collective action allows us to understand that teaching then encompassed the broad context of a "[...] particular social vision, more than merely opportunistic or utilitarian in its more restricted senses" (Jarrat, 1998, p. 92). The sophistic *classroom*, to use a modern term, evidences a "[...] collective inquiry into the function of discourse and individuals within a democracy", shaping the foundations of "[...] a practical education, a form of action informed by reflection" (Jarrat, 1998, p. 95).

The propositions of the thinkers of the first generation of sophists reveal the commonplace systems contained in their arguments about the world, man, knowledge and education. With the abandonment of speculation about the existence of *physis*, a source of explanation of the phenomena of concrete reality, the world was presented by them as enveloped by the *fluidity of time*, a scenario in which are drawn "[...] all scenes that constantly flow, being permanently altered by the weather of nature and by the actions of men; nothing can be precisely determined in advance, before becoming" (Silva, 2017, p. 148).

In this uncertain terrain, the meanings associated with the word *man* exhibit a being who perceives that there are no absolute and transcendent laws guiding reality in motion, much less a superior and immutable Being acting as a source from which emanate truths accessible to a few enlightened ones. The cultural environment in which individuals develop and the relationship they establish with each other allows each one to have unique experiences that underpin what we can call *human nature*. It is not a question of a nature shaped by innate factors, but delineated both by these components and by those that derive from life in society, without being able to rigidly establish the weight of both.

From this uncertain equation it results that human nature is essentially social, which, in the view of the sophists, was translated by the priority of *nomos*, which ultimately defines the conduct to be adopted by the members of the group and the laws to be obeyed. Men learn, then, that the current consensus is not enough to solve all the problems, since the world is in constant change, and that each situation has particularities that cannot be resolved by past agreements. Consensus must be assumed to be provisional, leading the community to new deliberations so that life in society is kept in harmony.

In the pedagogy of the sophists, the master is not like the farmer who pulls out of the soil everything that might hinder the seed's development, or who places stakes so that the plant grows straight and firm, as in the Plutarchian metaphor. The teacher understands that the growth of individuals occurs in moments of conflict and crisis, during which, through past experiences, a new interpretation of the present and some projection of the future are sought, outlining actions that can help resolve the impasse. Their role in the process is not synonymous with a lack of guidance or strict control; its didactics consists of creating significant problems for students, instigating them with affection to search for solutions through the use of imagination and intelligence.

These attributes lead us to suggest that the fundamental metaphor of Sophistry is Navigation. Not navigation as it currently exists, full of technologies that give a wide margin of safety to crew and passengers, but what was practiced by the ancient Greeks, characterized by boldness in facing the unknown. This experience of navigating persisted for centuries, being portrayed by several artists: in *The Lusiads*, Camões (1916) uses it as a symbol of the struggle for a project of nation carried out by intrepid men who ventured into seas never before navigated; in

Moby Dick, Melville (2019) uses it as a representation of the human glories and misfortunes embodied in the insane combat against a dangerous marine animal; in *The Ship*, Dali portrays the unusual figure of a human body equipped with nautical sails, or nautical sails supported by a human body – either way, the artist suggests that sailing is a good metaphor for life.

As Pereira Junior (2011) analyzes well, navigation as a symbol for the experience of living occupies a prominent position in the work of Paulinho da Viola, whose *sambas*, in the words of the composer himself, show the transience of everything, conveying the "[...] sensation of anguish or resignation in the face of this instability of life, of the impossibility of talking about the future, of being sure about things", because life "[...] escapes us and the natural response that *samba* gives is to let oneself be carried away as a drifting sailor" (Pereira Junior, 2011, p. 52-53).

The presence of the metaphor Navigation in Paulinho da Viola's songbook translates, according to Pereira Junior (2011, p. 58), the idea that

> The world, after all, is not a stable, welcoming, and continuous place; life is precarious, with no permanent foundations or strongholds, and although there is no clear place of arrival, the challenge is to walk with attention to the path ahead, enjoying the journey. The lack of confidence in achieving what is planned anchors us in what is provisional, in the intuition that chance is our most constant variable.

As with every metaphor, Navigation also presents risks, the biggest of which is to suggest that the profession of educating is an aimless activity, devoid of purposes, without method, at the mercy of the waves of chance. The artistic productions on which we are based give rise to numerous interpretations of navigation, which is why it is necessary to delimit the margins of our metaphorical proposal for pedagogy, applying to it the qualities of the Indeterminate Pathway metaphor, in contrast to the attributes of the Determined and Determinable Pathway metaphor.

Navigation is not without a destination, except when practiced for leisure; teaching is not to be confused with this meaning, as it is a professional activity that requires the establishment of well-founded means and purposes. Even equipped with maps and other resources to ensure the destination, navigation is subject to bad weather, which, in order to overcome, requires the use of intelligence, reasoning, inventive spirit and the ability to deliberate – repair the boat without interrupting the journey. Every vessel has a mate, the professional in charge of assisting the captain, with unique skills and authority resulting from experience. These qualities are recognized by the crew and make him/her worthy of the confidence of the captain and passengers, just like the teacher who earns the respect of his/her peers and students.

The waters the boat navigates are challenging, often distressing, as is the process of educating, but in such situations, paraphrasing Paulinho da Viola, it is necessary to keep on course and enjoy the journey, anchoring confidence in what is temporary and in intuition. Educating requires the intrepidity of the Lusiad who persists in unknown seas to carry out a personal and collective project, with the courage of the Melvillean sailors who persevere in combating elitist theories and projects that threaten the human and political content of pedagogical practice. In Sophistic-inspired education, the teacher fuses his/her body and intellect with the work of educating, and both become one creature, a being whose individual sense is indistinguishable from the collective experience in an unstable and unpredictable world – a metaphor for life in a democratic environment.

By carrying out this operation, the teacher, who metaphorically possesses the attributes of the mate, is no longer solely responsible for the vessel, as the democratic environment proposes that everyone – crew and passengers – assume equal responsibility for the destinations of a common trajectory. By releasing the creative potential of students, education inspired by Sophistry suggests a shared navigation, without despising those who have more knowledge and experience and, therefore, authority, but also without despising the value of those who are willing to embark on the search for knowledge. What is expected is that sailing will be a source of pleasure for everyone and that it will also lead them to the same safe harbor.

Final Considerations

The analyzes developed in this paper aimed to contribute to the understanding of metaphor as a discursive strategy aimed at explaining and disseminating the conceptual apparatus that support doctrines in general and educational doctrines in particular. They also aimed to question the metaphor that is considered fundamental in education, based on its supposed origin in Sophistry, a philosophical and pedagogical movement to which we seek to attribute a new metaphorical expression. By replacing Cultivation by Navigation, we aim to give new meanings to both the practice of the sophists and the work of educating throughout history and today.

We hope that such analyzes give rise to new studies dedicated to critically examining other metaphors currently operating, many of which, such as Cultivation, are subsumed by the Determined and Determinable Pathway metaphor. This is the case of the alleged similarity between the student's mind and computer programs, as well as the analogy between the behavior of students and consumers of goods. In each of them, it is possible to identify the common places that, once accepted by the audience, often passively, influence the behaviors and working methods of teachers and administrators, also affecting students and their families.

The possible contributions of this paper cover the theoretical field of education and may encourage academic debates and the development of research projects, but the most far-reaching challenge is not located in this plan. The real challenge is what is presented to those who wish to adopt new metaphors for education, analogical relations that transgress the pedagogical tradition, as proposed in these pages, and act through them in the initial and continuing education of teachers. This boldness will face a double difficulty: on the one hand, operating persuasively against a strongly established mentality; on the other hand, to invent instructional means so that trainees believe in themselves, as people, as professionals and as citizens capable of deliberating, creating and acting.

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Notes

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2 To write the metaphors, we used the SmallCaps typography used by Lakoff and Johnsen (2003).

3 Scheffler (1974) was one of the first to analyze the impact of metaphors on education, highlighting the limits and possibilities of the metaphors Cultivation, Kindergarten, Clay and Art, widely used to characterize this area.

4 This reasoning can be found in the propositions of Comenius, Plato and so many others who believe, each in his own way, that the educational path can be perfectly planned and carried out in an ideal time previously known (Mazzotti, 2002, p. 4).

5 Propositions such as those of John Dewey, among others, each with its peculiarities, exemplify this way of conceiving education (Carvalho; Silva; Cunha, 2014)

6 *Oikós* concerns the administration of the house, but it also includes the fields and possessions, wherever they were located, even outside the city limits (Crick, 2015, p. 233).

7 Foucault (1994).

8 Like Gorgias, Protagoras also breaks with the poetic tradition by making poetry an object of critical analysis, as can be seen in the Plato's (338e-348a) passage in which himself and Socrates discuss Simonides.

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