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sisyphus@ie.ulisboa.pt

Universidade de Lisboa

Portugal

Araújo, Alberto Filipe

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**CAN WE TALK OF EDUCATIVE MODERNITY WITHOUT METAPHORS?
THE EXAMPLE OF THE AGRICULTURAL METAPHOR IN THE
PEDAGOGICAL WORK OF CÉLESTIN FREINET**

ALBERTO FILIPE ARAÚJO

afaraujo@ie.uminho.pt | Universidade do Minho, Portugal

ABSTRACT

In this study we shall try to understand the way educative modernity, through the pedagogical work of Célestin Freinet (1896–1966), can be expressed by the use of metaphors. In this case, the agricultural metaphor. In this context, the author, influenced mainly by the work of Paul Ricoeur, Daniel Hameline and Naninne Charbonnel on metaphor, will attempt to understand whether or not the agricultural metaphor is opened to symbol and to question the nature of the symbol itself, which starts in the metaphor and goes up to a semantical level which is more speculative in nature than properly educational. In this context, the pedagogical work of Freinet will be analysed in order to illustrate in a better way not only the massive use of the agricultural metaphor but also to question the educational and hermeneutical meaning of that use itself. This questioning will be in itself part of the answer to the initial question and it also opens the way to other and new interrogations even if they generate themselves a “conflict of interpretations” (Paul Ricoeur, 1969).

KEY WORDS

Educative modernity; Metaphor; Horticultural metaphor; Célestin Freinet.



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Can we Talk of Educative Modernity without Metaphors? The Example of the Agricultural Metaphor in the Pedagogical Work of Célestin Freinet

Alberto Filipe Araújo

It is not at all indifferent that the student might be compared to a vessel one might fill up, or to a plant that grows. (...) everything that has been said about education locates us at the uncertain borders of Rhetoric, a place ruled by metaphor, in the ambiguity of its repetitive compulsions and its creative snappishness

Daniel Hameline, 1981, pp. 121 and 131

INTRODUCTION¹

The educators and pedagogues of educative modernity, in particular those belonging to the New Education movement, like Célestin Freinet (1896-1966) (Acker, 2007; Audet, 2010, pp. 253-269; Barré, 1995-1996; Clanche, Debarbieux & Testanière, 1994; Legrand, 1993, pp. 403-418; Maury, 1988; Nunes, 2002; Pain, n.d.; Peyronie, 1994, 1999; Sivell, 1994), see the spiritual development and the psychological maturity of the child as a plant that has its natural cycle of development and see the educator as a gardener², who patiently needs to take care of it during its integral development (Freinet, 1994, T.2, pp. 107-108; Nóvoa, 2005, p. 79)³. Because of this, for all these authors it is not at all indifferent “That the pupil is compared to a receptacle which is filled or to a growing plant” (Hameline, 1981, p. 121). In fact, it is not totally indifferent considering that both pedagogical metaphors lead to quite different conceptions either of the pupil or the teacher: the first, and reminding here Montaigne and

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2 Cf. “Le bon jardinier, ou le cycle de l’éducation” (Freinet, 1994, T. 2, pp. 107–108).

3 António Nóvoa calls the attention to the fact that the concept of integral education “is probably the one which defines more accurately the educative modernity, and which implies the necessity of articulating the physical, intellectual and moral education. Later on, the necessity of an integral social conscience is also required” (2005, p. 79).

Paulo Freire, points to the idea of “full heads”⁴ and of “banking education”⁵ (Traditional School in its general sense); the second, and having the two previous authors in mind, points already to “well-made heads” and the “problematizing education” (New School). It is this last conception that the New Education prefers by having recourse to a set of metaphors, in particular the agricultural metaphor, in order to better legitimate its educational “sayings”, and also in order to give them the respectability they long for. And when we write respectability we mean pedagogical eloquence too and also the persuasion of the rhetoric of the pedagogical-educational “sayings” where the idea of “similitude” is never too far away (Charbonnel, 1983, p. 157; 1994, p. 52; Hameline, 1986, pp. 125-127).

In this context, facing the question whether educative modernity can be spelled out without metaphors, having in mind the pedagogical work of Célestin Freinet, we shall divide the present study into two parts: in the first, we shall deal with the importance of the agricultural metaphor in educative modernity; in the second, we shall deal with the agricultural metaphor in the work of Célestin Freinet. In the conclusion we shall say that it is hardly possible that one of the greatest fundamental currents of pedagogy of western educational modernity—the New Education movement (Hameline, 2000, pp. 15-95), can dispense of the place and function of the metaphor when its actors, and in particular Célestin Freinet, write and speak about education.

THE FASCINATION OF EDUCATIVE MODERNITY FOR THE CHARM OF THE AGRICULTURAL METAPHOR

Educative modernity cannot escape the power and charm of the metaphor, in special by what Daniel Hameline has called “the great horticultural ‘dreamery’” (*songerie*, in the original) (1986, pp. 182-185). The horticultural metaphor has the heuristic gift of taking us through a semantic detour (Hameline, 1981, p. 122), starting with the figurative sense and going then to the questioning of the meaning of the human formation (*Bildung*) (Gennari, 2006, pp. 4413-4418), to that which Hameline has designated the “fundamental”, “structuring” and “originary belief”:

4 We refer here to the work of Michel de Montaigne who, in his *The Education of Children* (2005), Chap. XXVI—*Of the Institution of Children*, stresses the following: “people should be careful to choose him a preceptor who rather have a well made head than a well filled head and it should be required of him both things, plus the customs and the understanding rather than science; and that he should behave in a new way” (2005, p. 44).

5 See chapter 2. The conception of “banking” education as a tool of oppression. Main arguments and critics, pp. 57–61 of the book by Paulo Freire titled *Pedagogia do Oprimido* (*Pedagogy of Oppressed*) (1968–1970). See chapter 2 – *La Tête Bien Faite*, p. 23–36 by Edgar Morin in his book *La Tête Bien Faite* (1999).



if anything is transportable from one word to another, if the pupil is, in a sense, a growing plant, it is so because there is between the pupil and the plant an *analogy* that does not belong to the order of ornamentation of the discourse but belongs to the order of being. (Hameline, 1981, p. 123)

In comparing the child to the growing vegetable, that meant to consecrate the idea of “the creative spontaneity of the child” (precisely the theme of the Congress of Calais, in 1921) as one of the dearest ideas of the progressives of the New Education.

A FEW WORDS ON EDUCATIVE MODERNITY

It is the pedagogical agenda of the “International League for the New Education” that sets the tone for the educative modernity that the French pedagogue subscribes: the International League’s title is not only suggestive but also prophetic: *Pour l’ère nouvelle*, a new era of peace where the terror and the horror of the World War I shall never be repeated and with “new men” formed by the new ideals of the New Education. Its supporters speak of a rupture with the pedagogical past, especially the ideas of the Traditional School and what only matters is to prolong “a current of ideas whose presence is already perceptible along the nineteenth century” (Hameline, 2000, p. 19). It is, then, the nineteenth century, the educative century as it is called by Hameline, that marks the educative modernity, which started in the eighteenth century with the philosophy of the Enlightenment and spans until contemporaneity (Hameline, 2000, p. 22) and is constituted by three “common places”: that of “progress”, that of “educability” and that of “egalitarian democracy” (Hameline, 2000, pp. 24-36).

All of these “common places” (Hameline, 2000, pp. 232-24) are conspicuous in the pedagogical work of Célestin Freinet: they can be found in his pedagogical conceptions and practices and in his political options. Symptomatically, these same “common places” hardly escaped the charm of the metaphor: as an example the use of the metaphor of light to celebrate the “common place” of *progress*: *Post tenebras lux* (Hameline, 2000, p. 25). Thus, there is no wonder that the pedagogical work of Célestin Freinet has not escaped that same charm: we should remember that the idea of the *educability*⁶ of the pupil was placed under the sign of the agricultural metaphor in opposition to the metaphors of modelling, of the receptacle, and of filling up.

6 The humanist educability creed must be understood having in mind Pindar’s famous adage: “Become who you are”.

Remembering the second part of our epigraph, which says that “all we say about education situates us, for a long time, on the uncertain edges of Rhetoric, where metaphor reigns supreme, in the ambiguity of its repetitive compulsions and its creative impertinences” (Hameline, 1986, p. 131), our approach is fundamentally hermeneutic. The reason for that is that we are not content only with the instauration of a new semantic pertinence (semantic domain), but we attempt to penetrate in the domains of thought and the symbolic with all the hermeneutical effort it requires, as Jean-Jacques Wunenburger has studied (2002, pp. 27-42, pp. 91-103)⁷. In this context, we accept Paul Ricoeur’s position on metaphor (1976, pp. 45-69, 1994)⁸, although we are aware that not all educational metaphors are equivalent and much less can they present themselves as “alive”, in the sense that Ricoeur uses (1976, p. 52, 1994; Hameline, 1986, pp. 79-82, pp. 83-93). Thus, in short, the metaphor for this author appears in the intertwining of the literal meaning (denotation) with the figurative meaning (connotation); it has to do with the semantics of the sentence; it is a phenomenon of predication and not of denomination; the metaphor is the result of the tension between two terms in a metaphoric enunciation; and a metaphor of tension is not translatable because it creates innovative meaning; it offers new information because it tells us something new about reality; finally, a metaphor does not exist in itself but in and through an interpretation (Ricoeur, 1976, pp. 46-53):

What is at stake in a metaphorical utterance, in other words, is the appearance of kinship where ordinary vision does not perceive any relationship. (...) In this sense, a metaphor is an instantaneous creation, a semantic innovation which has not status in already established language and which only exists because of the attribution of an usual or an unexpected predicate. (Ricoeur, 1976, pp. 51-52)

7 Here we must acknowledge Paul Ricoeur’s teachings in his *The Rule of Metaphor*: “The passage to the hermeneutic point of view corresponds to the change of level that moves from the sentence to discourse properly speaking (poem, narrative, essay, etc.). A new problematic emerges in connection with this point of view: the issue is no longer the form of metaphor [in case of the rhetoric] as a word-focused figure of speech, nor even just the sense of metaphor [in case of the semantic] as a founding of a new semantic pertinence, but the reference of the metaphorical statement as the power to ‘re-describe’ reality. The most fundamental support of this transition from semantics to hermeneutics is to be found in the connection in all discourse between sense, which it its internal organization, and reference, which is its power to refer to a reality outside of language. Accordingly, metaphor presents itself as a strategy of discourse that, while preserving and developing the creative power of language, preserves and develops the heuristic power wielded by fiction” (2004, p. 5).

8 Concerning the “state of the art” on the metaphor analysis, see the book by Jaakko Hintikka, *Aspects of Metaphor* (1994) Raymond Gibbs, Jr, titled *The Cambridge handbook of metaphor and thought* (2008) containing a discussion of the aim and the character of the metaphor in several domains, namely in education. Following the same argument, see *Metaphor and Thought* edited by Andrew Ortony (1979) and according to the philosophical perspective of the metaphor a book by Mark Johnson titled *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor* (1981). However, the work of Max Black is also considered in our study on the metaphor, namely the book *Models and metaphors*. Studies in language and philosophy, such as the classical work by Georg Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Les Métaphores dans la vie quotidienne* (1986) (*Metaphors We Live by* – 1980).



Thus we can say, with Daniel Hameline, that one of the main functions of metaphor is “to make thought appear” (1981, pp. 130-131, p. 138), that is, it should attribute a (con)figuration to thought which is told in language. And as all the educative “sayings” are said in and through language and always intend to think about the educative “thing”, then metaphors are a constant presence in educational thought (Charbonnel, 1991a, 1991b, 1993; Hameline, 1986; Scheffler, 2003, pp. 73-88).

But whose metaphor are we talking about in education? It is the metaphor in *absentia*⁹ that one which, by resorting to “similitude”, is better prepared to express the “sayings” in education, that one that is better prepared to make eloquence pedagogical, or the eloquence of the “sayings” on education a success either on the level of “the declarative exposition of ideas of conventional evidence” or on the level of “the sermonizing incitation about feelings that are not less” (Hameline, 1986, p. 139). Finally, although Daniel Hameline stresses that the analogical “it is like...” constitutes a “poor’s hermeneutics” (1986, p. 127) and that “the triumph of similitude” is modest (1986: 135-139), the author, in detriment of the symbol and of its own hermeneutics (1986, p. 129-135), ends by opting for the metaphor, that is, by the “triumph of similitude”. This is because of his admiration for rhetoric and argumentation (Hameline, 1986, pp. 166-172; Perelman, 1988, 1989; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1992; Reboul, 1994). The “similitude” offers to the pedagogical and even to the educational discourse, respectability, reasonability and the legitimacy that it lacks. Why? Because as the “sayings” in education belong predominantly to the domain of the plausible¹⁰ and less to the domain of the true and the scientifically experimental, thus it needs the metaphor, that gambles on similitude (Hameline, 1986, pp. 126-127), in order to see, to convince, to act and to touch¹¹:

In reality, in what it is said about education, the effect of metaphor is at service of the project of sharing a conviction, of inciting to action, to legitimize one practice or to disqualify another. It is itself part of pedagogy. The ‘as if...’ is used to improve understanding of the often heavy and convenient illustration. Convenient in the acquired form: the comparison instruments are very visible; convenient for the perspicacious pertinence of *imagerie* [as in the original] according to expectations. (Hameline, 1986, p. 136).

9 Here we are talking about metaphor in its strict sense (Hameline, 1986, p. 125).

10 The metaphor seeks to produce, in the economy of the discursive argumentation, persuasive effects, if not even, in the limit, to shake or to contribute to the fathoming of the convictions of the interlocutor or the reader (Hameline & Charbonnel, 1982, p. 5).

11 Daniel Hameline calls the attention to the fact that it is not surprising that in the metaphoric of education: “it’s the doceat [show or teach] that prevails” (1986, p. 138).

The authors of the New Education movement use the metaphor, namely the agricultural metaphor, in order to say more than they would say when they talk about development and growth of the child because “The cultivation of the soil, a matrix in many of our thoughts on culture, is one of the great reservations on which they are based to understand human things” (Hameline, 1986, p. 184).

UNDER THE CHARM OF THE AGRICULTURAL METAPHOR

The great majority of the authors of the New Education movement use the “horticultural metaphors” in order to best “celebrate the miracle of infancy” (Hameline, 2000, p. 49). The New Education ideals and its authors promote an authentic cult and ritual of the plant (Hameline, 1986, pp. 182-185). And it manifests itself in the agricultural comparison, or in the vegetable, with a set of naturalistic images which belongs to the same comparison and is also used to consecrate in a better way the excellency of infancy:

A metaphor is thus proposed to celebrate the childhood miracle, as long as it unfolds naturally. It is charged with “revealing” the little being which develops on its own according to a plan the child brings along with him and could not be dictated from the outside, like the plant around which the good gardener pedagogue’s main role is to prepare and care for the soil. (Hameline, 2000, p. 49)

From all this, it is understandable that the agricultural metaphor has strongly attracted several authors of the New Education movement, like Édouard Claparède (1873-1940)¹², Adolphe Ferrière (1879-1960), Pierre Bovet (1878-1965), and Célestin Freinet among others, who convincingly used the vocabulary of horticulture in order to talk about infant growth and development (the culture of the child) in opposition to the metaphors of moulding, of furnishing, of feeding and of the receptacle used by Traditional Education (Snyders, 1975, pp. 13-54), even though this opposition may be attenuated (Hameline, 1986, pp. 145-155)¹³: “The horticultural metaphor is a constant presence in the pedagogical currents that opposed the common place of the

¹² On this matter, we can read in *Psychologie de l'Enfant et Pédagogie Expérimentale. I. Le développement mental* the following passage: “That pedagogy should rest on the knowledge of the child as the horticulture rests on the knowledge of plants is an elementary truth. However, it is entirely unknown to the majority of pedagogues and of almost all school authorities” (Claparède, 1946, p. 71).

¹³ We write “attenuated” because Daniel Hameline reminds us that the “furnishing” metaphor does not seem to shock Edouard Claparède himself (Hameline, 1986, p. 155).



living being to make (or let) grow, to the common place of the product to mould (mechanical but more often social)” (Hameline, 1986, p. 182).

The New Education pedagogues loved to talk about the gardener and compared him to the teacher and the educator: “The gardener’s metaphor is a paradigm that is used as an instrument to see and understand, in a first approach, the possibilities it affords to say immediately what is essential” (Hameline, 1986, p. 180). In this context, the agricultural metaphor was utterly in line with the New Education conception of the child and the way the child should be educated. This analogy between pedagogy—as a scientific knowledge of the child—, and horticulture—as a (scientific) knowledge of plants—, was clearly accepted by the “apostles” of the New Education as an (almost) elementary truth and became a “common-place” of the new educational ideas (cf. Daniel Hameline, 1986, pp. 61-72): “The plant and the child are both living beings and both the result of culture: in the same way as there is a horticulture so we can speak of ‘puericulture’” (1986, p. 181). A comparison which may be or not sophisticated, under the form of similitude, (1986, pp. 124-127), and which is quickly expressed by a “ought to be” or even by a “should be”. In this way, we go from rhetoric to ethics, as we also go from rhetoric to the pedagogy and the philosophy of education, when we admit that plants and children are a serious object of study because it is scientific, even when we know that: “The horticultural metaphor of education can only express the romanticism of non-intervention by the abstraction, in *imagerie* [italics in the original], of the reality of scientific horticulture, briefly industrial” (Hameline, 2000, p. 49).

In this context, we can hardly approach the pedagogical and educational texts of the New Education movement without facing metaphors: the horticultural metaphors (the ideas of growth and vegetal culture); the metaphors of light, the nautical metaphors, the travel metaphors (with the ideas of route and dislocation); the metaphors of moulding, of feeding and filling up, among others¹⁴. This set of metaphors has always been used, even though with different degrees, more or less voluntarily and in the limit involuntarily¹⁵ by the New Education pedagogues, psychologists and educators, to better illustrate or see, almost sensibly, almost optically, the education and the pedagogical relationship between the child and the educator. In particular, the agricultural metaphor, frequently used in these new pedagogical texts, expresses synthetically the symbolic and symbiotic relationship between the education of the child and the vegetable’s growth or culture. This type of

14 Nanine Charbonnel draws attention to the following range of metaphors in the educational discourse: “Sculpture and pottery, feeding and filling, gardening, farming, domestication, various crafts, marching and navigation” (1983, p. 157). On the metaphors of “filling”, “feeding” and modeling, see Nanine Charbonnel, 1991b, pp. 179–251 and 1993, pp. 5–54. In this regard, one should read Israel Scheffler, 2003, pp. 73–88.

15 In this regard, see the words by Daniel Hameline: “but the character of the metaphor itself is the fact that the ones who use it wish it to be non-metaphoric. This is a fundamental truth that comparison has spread” (1986, p. 182). Which therefore means that many authors never even admitted that in their writings the metaphorical naturalist game could play a role other than a mere stylistic or rhetorical effect.

metaphor intends to compare, even though it can vary in form and substance, the cultural and educational cycle of the child with the naturalistic cycle of the plant: the throwing of the seeds, in a prepared and cared for soil, and its gradual growth until it becomes, like the child, sometime later, a flower or even a tree in its plenitude. This way, we can perceive why pedagogy uses the agricultural metaphor as a kind of elementary truth, something that *va de soi*, that is, that naturally imposes itself on those who write and talk about the educative thing: “We know that the horticultural metaphor has returned, almost as an obsession, in the early twentieth century, among those who preconize the new education” (Hameline, 2000, p. 49).

In this way, Édouard Claparède, in his work *Psychologie de l'enfant et pédagogie expérimentale* (1946 [1905]), could but write that “it is an elementary truth” that “pedagogy should rest on the knowledge of the child as horticulture rests on the knowledge of plants” (1946, p. 71). These words summarize the postulate of the “primacy of the biological” that characterizes the “Copernican revolution” that the New Education represented for the western educational tradition and by using the Latin adage *Discat a puero magister*¹⁶—the master should learn from his pupil—as one of its main *leitmotiv*. The authors of the New Education movement use the agricultural metaphor as an “emblem of spontaneity” in order to stress the fact that the natural growth of the child should be respected such as the gardener respects the natural growth of the plants he cares for (Hameline, 1986, p. 183).

The texts on education can hardly avoid speaking of metaphors and of symbols because nothing can be more dramatic in education, according to Olivier Reboul, than to see “an education without symbols facing symbols without education” (1992, pp. 217-219). It is exactly to oppose the possibility of an education without symbols and metaphors or, in the limit, an education with dead symbols and metaphors that we chose the agricultural metaphor in order to illustrate that educative modernity, especially the New Education movement as exemplified in the pedagogical work of Célestin Freinet, cannot be either thought or written without the semantic resort (Charbonnel, 1991b, pp. 111-115) and even the hermeneutic resort (Ricoeur, 2004, 1976, pp. 46-53) of the agricultural metaphor.

16 This is the Latin adage that is used as an emblem at the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute founded by Édouard Claparède, in Genève, 1912 (Claparède, 1946, pp. 50-51). Daniel Hameline, when referring to one of the key characteristics of the New Education Movement, writes that “the role of psychology is to bring about the ‘copernican revolution’ that will make the school programmes gravitating around the child, and not the child turning as best it can around a programme decreed without reference to him in the circumvolutions of the programmes. The only postulate of this revolution is the primacy of the biological” [*italic of author*] (1986, p. 182). On the New Education Movement we can consult, among many others, the following authors: Bloch, 1973; Hameline, Helmchen & Oelkers, 1995; Médiç, 1995, pp. 9-40; Nóvoa, 1995, pp. 25-41, 1997, pp. 71-96; Snyders, 1975, pp. 55-130 & Vasconcelos, 1915.



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AGRICULTURAL METAPHOR IN THE PEDAGOGICAL WORK OF CÉLESTIN FREINET

Célestin Freinet uses abundantly the horticultural metaphor in his pedagogical work in order to illustrate more accurately his pedagogical and scientific-prone ideas about education. In his pedagogical work we specifically single out *The Wisdom of Matthew* (1949) and his *Essay on Sensitive Psychology* (1950–*Essai de psychologie sensible*). In this way, it is not surprising that the agricultural and naturalistic images used by Célestin Freinet serve, in the name of “the triumph of similitude” (Hameline, 1986, pp. 135-139), to illustrate and consecrate the philosophical-educational substratum of his thought contaminated by naturalism and by the principles of natural hygiene, besides the belief in the virtues of nature, very often equivocal (human nature or nature in itself), a nature that regenerates and welcomes man himself (Piaton, 1974, p. 202). Finally, it must be emphasized that the agricultural metaphor is a founding metaphor which specially determines our author’s work and which consists precisely of the comparison of the child as vegetal growth (Charbonnel, 1994, pp. 51-59).

The child, like the plant, is nature at liberty which the agricultural metaphor seeks to translate in its utmost expressivity. This kind of metaphor is intended, in the hands of Célestin Freinet, to help to understand better the evolution and formation of the child, and also to show that the child was in possession of “the same nature as the adult”. The child then emerges as “a tree that has not yet finished its growth, but that feeds, grows and defends itself exactly as an adult tree” (Freinet, 1994, T.2, p. 387).

THE MEANING OF THE AGRICULTURAL METAPHOR IN THE PEDAGOGICAL TEXTS OF FREINET

The metaphoric enunciations selected by us in the pedagogical work of Célestin Freinet (1994, T.1 and T.2) are inscribed in what Nanine Charbonnel has designated the semantic-praxeological regimens (*praxéologique*) or the praxeo-prescriptive (1983, p. 158; 1991b, pp. 82-88, pp. 164-177, 1994, p. 54, 1999, p. 35) and cognitive regimens (1994, p. 56). The grammar of these regimens can be thus described: the semantic cognitive regimen expresses the knowledge of reality, the understanding of being: “When Niels Bohr said about the atom’s nucleus, around which the electrons turn, ‘it is the sun of the electrons’ [and that is true—or false]” (Charbonnel, 1999, pp. 34-35). The



semantic-praxeological regimen or the praxeo-prescriptive regimen, which is that one that expressly commands, prescribes and imposes something in relation to praxis, its enunciations

do not limit themselves in conveying an act of the language of expressivity. They do another thing: by appealing to a comparator (always heterogeneous) and valued (as in the semantic expressive regimen), they command the reader, the interlocutor, to do something in the extra-linguistic praxis. To say: “The child is a plant that needs a lot of sunshine” (Michelet) is to expressly command the father to be affectionate towards the child. (Charbonnel, 1999, p. 35)

One of the major characteristics of this regimen is that “What characterizes the comparator in the semantic praxeological regimen is that it is not only seen as similar but also as imitable” (Charbonnel, 1999, p. 54—the italics by the author). Nanine Charbonnel points out that the mechanism of the metaphoric enunciation is the same in both cases and that it rests at the basis of all metaphorical enunciation: it consists in identifying (or in making a relationship, in approximating) two entities that do not belong to the same kind provoking, in this way, a dissymmetry, because in comparing two entities that do not belong to the same kind we are making the “comparator entity the bearer by excellence of a semantic trace not ontologically constitutive” (Charbonnel, 1999, p. 34).

When Nanine Charbonnel affirms that all the written work of Freinet has, as its goal, “to induce into action, to counsel the good action” (1994, p. 51), we think that she is correct in her statement, especially with the exception of Freinet’s *Essay on Sensitive Psychology*. We agree because Célestin Freinet uses in special a lot of the agricultural metaphor in order to convey injunctions of the praxeological type (Charbonnel, 1991b, pp. 164-177, 1994, pp. 52-55). These kind of injunctions are appeals to acting properly, that is, appeals to the practice of the “good action”¹⁷ and to act in the right way in the form of an advice:

we are from the beginning [referring to the book *The Wisdom of Matthew*] inserted into the universe of counselling and deontology (in order to avoid using the words either of moral—here immediately understood as moralism—, or of ethics which, incidentally, is not appropriate here). No: it is more suitable the notion of counselling (taking from Erasmus his *Boulè-Phore*: Mister Counselling Bearer, Master Adviser, what I call *boulèforic* [*boulèphorique*]) and deontology: that which I should do professionally. It is precisely what this book is about. (Charbonnel, 1994, p. 54)

17 As an example of horticultural metaphors that are part of this regime, present in *The Wisdom of Matthew*, one may just consider the following: “Life goes always up!” (Freinet, 1994, T.2, p. 112), “To make the child thirsty” (1994, T.2, pp. 114-115) e “To go in Profoundity” (1994, T.2, p. 188).



In a nutshell, the metaphoric enunciations, voluntarily or involuntarily used by Célestin Freinet in his pedagogical work, particularly in *The Wisdom of Matthew*, incite to the “injunction to action” (1994, p. 55)¹⁸. It is in this direction that point the two first quotations that we shall shortly make and that were taken from *The Wisdom of Matthew*, while the two last quotations were taken from *Essay on Sensitive Psychology* and already tend to be inscribed in the cognitive regimen, although Nanine Charbonnel, in this case, prefers rather talk of “pseudo-cognition” (1994, pp. 55-59).

The pedagogue, like the “good gardener” who zealously cares for his plants, should behave like him when taking care of his children. Just as the “good gardener” takes care of his plants, so that they may flower and be fruitful, so must the educator be patient and wait until the child, just like the plant, may develop, grow and mature in the environment that the educator previously prepared. Just like the gardener, who must possess the necessary *savoir-faire* to choose correctly the good seeds and prepare them to be fruitful in the future, so the educator must also deal with infancy as it were a delicate seed and so help itself to build by itself its personality in the best possible conditions that necessarily include an “environment”, a “material” and a “technique” susceptible to help its formation according to its aptitudes, tastes and necessities (Freinet, 1994, T.2, p. 108). The pedagogue must be alert in order to warrant to the child the healthy conditions so that it may develop invigorated just like the fruit that has a well fertilized soil may grow stronger: “The fruit [we can also read ‘the child’] is the result of the soil [that is society-school] where it stands, besides the root, the air and the leaf” (1994, T.2, p. 108). The pedagogue or the educator has to worry about the good living conditions of the pupil (Freinet, 1994, T.1, pp. 333-339), in the same way as the gardener has to worry about the soil that received the seed:

The gardener's apprentice was proud of his melons growing vigorous and lush in shallow cavities arranged in regular lines he/she would feed abundantly with water and manure. (...) How many parents, how many pedagogues, would do as the gardener's apprentice? And place within the child's reach the food about to be eaten: rich and abundant textbooks, intensive explanations and lessons, carefully designed home work to avoid the children all futile efforts. (Freinet, 1994, T.2, p. 188)

18 In *The Wisdom of Matthew*, where one can read *Aller en profondeur* (Freinet, 1994, T.2, p. 188), it is clear from the outset that we are immersed in a universe of counseling and deontology, in addition to the experienced observations: “And from the experienced observation comes out the injunction, the good advice” (Charbonnel, 1994, p. 54). What accentuates the effect of *bouleforico* and injunction is the similarity that makes the “sayings” convincing in that the various types of fruits, plants, flowers are so often described anthropomorphically).

In the same way as the plant enjoys and likes being taken care by the gardener so the pupil enjoys being guided, motivated and advised instead of being despotically forced to perform a certain task without understanding its need or even its reason (Freinet, 1994, T.2, pp. 391-392). Just like the gardener who cannot and should not use “brusque gestures that arise defence reactions” in its plants, so the educator and the pedagogue are asked to imitate the wise gesture of the gardener, because what the child needs, like the plant, is “trust, kindness, help and decision” by those who take care of the child (1994, T.2, p. 105). All those who take care of children must worry that the pupil, in order to mature, should slowly absorb the knowledge of “the school of life” (1994, T.2, p. 108)¹⁹ just like the gardener worries about the seed should absorb as long as possible the humus of the soil so that it may strengthen and grow: “Let the child feel, stretch its tentacles, experiment and dig, investigate and compare, handle books and papers, dive its curiosity in the capricious depths of knowledge, in search, sometimes arduous, of the food that is substantial” (1994, T.2, p. 188). The child is like a “small plant”, both are part of life and life can only be prepared through life, as Mathieu says²⁰. The pedagogical proposal of Célestin Freinet is based on laws that come from the tradition of the vitalistic psychology (Boumard, 1996, pp. 47-51; Piaton, 1974, pp. 173-198). The first author (Boumard) proclaims that “life is” (Freinet, 1994, T.1, pp. 335-336), and the second (Piaton) affirms the “dynamic sense of life” (1994, T.1, p. 339)²¹: “Education is not a school formula but a life work” (1994, T.2, p. 107).

The school should not be an abandoned garden that “does not prepare oneself for life”, but a garden where the jet of fresh water bubbles amidst the rocks (1994, T.2, p. 115). In other words, the “traditional school” thanks to a formal and passive instruction makes the students “wineskins well filled”, preventing them to contact with the fountains of life (the natural and familial environment) (1994, T.2, pp. 396-397), and preventing them to have “heads well done and dexterous hands”. That is, the “traditional school”, with its verbalistic methods that thwart the intellectual appetite of children, does not help them to build their personality and to develop and stimulate their creative and active faculties. In this sense, “good educators” should not follow the “scholastics” who let themselves “be hypnotized by those capricious lakes of observation and memory, and the formal theories heaped upon a desolate land of the old scholasticism” (1994, T.2, p. 115), and who make

19 This “school of work” is the same as “school of the future”.

20 The theme of life is recurrent in the educational and pedagogical work of Célestin Freinet, for example: “Education is not a school formula but a life’s work” (1994, T.2, p. 107) and “The life prepares for life” (1994, T.2, p. 119).

21 It is this dedication to life, by Célestin Freinet, that allows us to say, along with Georges Piaton, that Freinet’s philosophy is steeped in naturalism and “naturism” (1974, pp. 201-205). Naturalism would allow the pedagogue to see nature as creative and restorative, i.e. as a role model for the growth and development of children. The author sought, through a natural hygiene and a natural environment, to provide students with both a physiological and psychological balance.



of the “study, copy, repeat” trilogy (1994, T.2, p. 123) its wand. This is why Célestin Freinet proposes that the “good educator” opposes the “pedagogical blasphemy”, that “scholasticism” is (1994, T.2, pp. 177-78), with a new educative cycle illustrated by “the school of work” as “the school of the future” (1994, T.2, p. 19, pp.173-174, 1994, T.1, p. 157):

If men could someday take care of the education of their offspring in the same way that the good gardener takes care of the bountifulness of his garden, they would stop following the scholars who produce poisoned fruits in their caves and lead to death both the producers themselves and those who are forced to eat the fruits. They [“the good educators”] would bravely reestablish the true cycle of education, that is to say: the choice of the seed, the particular care taken in the choice of the soil in which the individual will forever expand his powerful roots, the assimilation by the bush of the richness of this environment. Human culture would, therefore, be the splendid flour, a safe promise of the generous fruit that will ripen tomorrow. (1994, T.2, p. 108)

This type of school should elect as its main pedagogical orientation what Célestin Freinet has designated as the pedagogy of “good sense” (1994, T.2, p. 105), in order to form a subject “sufficiently strong and harmoniously constituted” like a tree which “knew how to respond to the effects of an obstacle according to its functional possibilities” (1994, T.1, p. 387):

If an individual were strong enough and of harmonious constitution, if external conditions were at best favourable, he would normally grow following his own nature and the specific laws of his constitution. He would be like a tree which grows in a blessed site, regularly exposed to the sun, well nurtured, protected from strong winds, and elevating itself on a trunk which deploys its branches and twigs according to its own allocation, in a harmony which is typically perfect. If the trunk is inclined, if some branches grow with more resolve than others, if there is an inflection toward a certain direction, this is a sign that some irregularity happened in the process of its growth and which the tree itself was able to respond to according to its functional possibilities in the face of the effects of the obstacle. (Freinet, 1994, T.1, p. 387)

For Célestin Freinet the “true cycle of education” should follow the example of the cycle of nature so that the child may develop him/herself in accordance to the specific laws of his/her formation. And so, he compares the child to a wheat grain:



A child is born and grows like a wheat grain. If the surrounding atmosphere is favourable, providing the basic elements of nutrition, neither too diluted, nor too concentrated, and is illuminated with bright light and attentive affection, the young being also grows with the utmost vitality it can muster. It then fulfils its momentary destiny which is to increase the cell number in organic harmony and to open to life. But if its organic needs are not satisfied, as its nature demands, the restless and disturbed individual stubbornly tries to find a way to compensate for the deficiencies that cause an obscure suffering. The body weakens, intelligence refrains itself, but until the last breadth of life there will be this endless effort leading to the fulfilment of an unclear but impetuous destiny. If the soil is very hard and meagre, the wheat sprout will elongate its roots unreasonably; it will deepen them doggedly searching for water and fertilizing materials; the sprout will grope, fight, it will try to go back and restart again, because it is a matter of life and death, and it is part of its nature to grow and prosper to bear fruit. (Freinet, 1994, T.1, pp. 334-335)

Based on this emblematic quotation, in *Essay on Sensitive Psychology*, we would like to underline that the use of the agricultural metaphor by Célestin Freinet, sends us to his conception of the human psychology, as Nanine Charbonnel observes: “Thus, it is not only that Freinet builds a human psychology on an image of a vegetal psychology, but, in fact, his vegetal physiology is nothing other than a disguised human psychology” (1994, p. 59). A human psychology, intimately connected to a general philosophy of life that in order to understand it better and the model of man that gives form to it, does not hesitate to use examples taken from the vegetal life; the second aspect does not compare, by the mechanism of *similitudo*, the pedagogue to the “good gardener”, but uses the *comparatio* to convince us that the child and the human organism, just like the wheat grain and the tree belong to the natural world. This is serious because it tries to establish a psychology (which has to do with the laws of behaviour) that aims to launch the scientific bases of an innovative pedagogy:

Is there a difference with *The Wisdom of Matthew*? Yes, and it is a considerable one: the gardener is no longer spoken of! We are here concerned with an *Essai de psychologie*: a very serious matter indeed. We are no longer preaching pedagogy, but providing it with foundations; thus, instead of proposing an imitation of the human (the good sheppard, the good gardener), the laws of nature must be unconcealed. (Charbonnel, 1994, p. 59)



But behind this cognitive effort (scientifically prone) visible in his *Psychology sensitive*, Nanine Charbonnel affirms that Célestin Freinet seeks to found a human psychology based on a vegetal physiology, “but also, in fact, his vegetal physiology is nothing but a disguised human psychology” (1994, p. 59). Behind this effort we would dare to say that Célestin Freinet hides his will to persuade the reader of the correctness of his psychological conception. In this respect, it is not perhaps despicable to observe that given the metaphoric enunciation, inscribed in the semantic cognitive or pseudo-cognitive regimen, that supposedly should know a determinate reality, to understand his *raison d’être* may occult a feeling (proper to the semantic expressive regimen)²² or a value judgment or a prescription (proper to the semantic praxeo-prescriptive regimen), leaving the reader very often confused and touched in his affectivity (*pathos*): “To see all under the optics of affective quality, but cover all under an appeal to Nature, to the animals or to objects, such is perhaps the genial but terrible contribution of the ‘metaphorical reasoning’” (Charbonnel, 1983, p. 158).

From this, we think that beside the agricultural metaphor, which is always a metaphor of growth, in the texts of Célestin Freinet we can also stress the place that the organic metaphor (Scheffler, 2003, pp. 80-88), intimately connected to the agricultural metaphor, has in his work, particularly in his *Essay on Sensitive Psychology*. In this work, which he intends to be his scientific contribution based on psychology, he does compare the individual to a tree. As he writes:

We compare the human organism to the tree that rises from the ground, more or less vigorous because more or less well rooted and nourished, and that grows much better if it comes from a good seed, and it is grounded in a convenient soil which feeds it well. If it emerges from the soil in the best conditions, it usually organizes its life according to the laws of its kind. If the light comes to the novel plant from all sides, if no nearby tree bothers it with unwelcome contact or shadow, if no wall prevents its expansion, if no accident maims it, it will grow naturally in width and height, balanced on its trunk which hardens and gains thickness as it grows. You will see then that breathes vitality and harmony. (1994, T.1, pp. 416-417)

Thus, he seems to reclaim the same organic status for the individual and for the plant. And this seems to imply that the vegetal culture and the psychological and anthropological formation of the subject are not equivalent but walk closely. In other words, the growth of the plant is

22 The expressive semantic regimen translates a certain feeling and also awards some value to a certain situation: “When Romeo says of Juliet ‘she is the sun of my days’” (Charbonnel, 1999, pp. 34-35).

analogous to the life and growth of an individual organism. In this way, the organic complicity established between the human organism and the plant (the tree, for example) seems evident, since the continuity of the life of the plant and of the human organism is similar: “The organic metaphor (...) leads to the comparison of the processes of acculturation to the processes of regeneration in the biological organisms” (Scheffler, 2003, p. 8).

FROM THE AGRICULTURAL METAPHOR TO THE VEGETAL SYMBOLISM

If the contribution of Nanine Charbonnel is original in the analysis of the agricultural metaphor based on its “semantic regimens” (1991b, pp. 128-177, 1999, pp. 34-35) under the similitude’s sign of “seeing as” (Charbonnel, 1993, T.3, pp. 99-106) and of the “it is like...” of similitude (Hameline, 1986, pp. 135-139)²³ (the semantic domain par excellence), however our intention is to adopt, in line with Paul Ricoeur’s theory of the living metaphor, a decisively hermeneutic perspective as we acknowledged in the first part of our work²⁴. The reason for this option is our conviction that this approach will allow us to interpret the agricultural metaphor in a more radical way, as furthermore his study of the relation metaphor-symbol seems to indicate (1976, pp. 45-69). This radical does not mean that we will overlook the semiotic and semantic plans of metaphor, but that we only intend to find the roots of metaphor in the plan of the vegetal symbolism with its renovation rites. In other words, we defend that the use of metaphor in the texts and in the discursive practices of the educators and pedagogues should not be restricted only to a semantic type approach which makes of “similitude” (Hameline, 1986, pp. 124-127, pp. 129-139; Charbonnel, 1999, p. 33) its corner stone, or even a mere “compare to make to act” (Charbonnel, 1999, p. 35, pp. 53-59) but, on the contrary, it should serve, as Paul Ricoeur has taught us (1976, pp. 45-69), to lead us, as a lighthouse, in the direction towards a deeper, a more under and a more radical substratum, which is the umbrageous and multivocal domain of the symbol (what Paul Ricoeur has identified as “The Non-Semantic Moment of a Symbol”, 1976, pp. 57-63) and, in particular, the vegetal symbolism that, for instance, Mircea Eliade has studied so well (1994, pp. 335-41; Araújo, 2004, pp. 177-191).

23 The agricultural metaphor is linked with similitude, as it compares heterogeneous entities belonging to different ontological genres, as exemplified by Célestin Freinet’s analogy when he compares a child with a wheat grain (1994, T.1, p. 334). The horticultural metaphor, as understood by Daniel Hameline, serves as a relevant means of expressing the analogy, the similitude between the growth of the natural plant and the growth of the child, between “The elements of the compared (the teaching) and the comparer (the feeding of the plant)” (Charbonnel, 1994, pp. 54-55). Note that we are talking about different ontological genres.

24 Cf. The metaphor and the metaphor in education in this same paper.



The metaphoric power, such as a brook, not only flows into a subterranean river called symbol but is also its symptom. Daniel Hameline, in our opinion, has forgotten that there is more in the symbol than in the metaphor because symbols, in their excess of signification rooted in a profound semantics: the oneiric, the poetical and the cosmic, “plunge their roots into the durable constellations of life, feeling, and they lead us to think that a symbol never dies” (Ricoeur, 1976, pp. 64, 53, 1988, pp. 167-186).

Thus we can realize that our hermeneutic attitude is not limited and is not complied with the semantic expressive, cognitive and praxeoprescriptive regimens of the metaphoric enunciations studied by Nanine Charbonnel in her analysis of educational texts (1991a, pp. 128-164), even though they reveal themselves heuristically useful and pertinent, but intend to go further as, for us, the metaphor functions as a kind of launching pad towards the world of vegetal symbolism with all the mythical implications that accrue from it (Araújo, 2004, pp. 169-194). In other words, we want to make it clear that, in line with Paul Ricoeur, if there is more in the metaphor than in the symbol, so there is also more beyond the semantic dimension of the metaphor and this “more” identifies itself with the vegetal symbolism which has in the symbol of the tree one of its best examples:

There is more in the metaphor than in the symbol in the sense that it brings to language the implicit semantics of the symbol what remains confused in the symbol. (...) But there is more in the symbol than in the metaphor. Metaphor is just the linguistic procedure—that bizarre form of predication—within which the symbolic power is deposited. [...] Metaphors are just the linguistic surface of symbols, and they owe their power to relate the semantic surface to the pre-semantic surface in the depths of human experience to the two-dimensional structure of the symbol. (1976, p. 69)

And this symbol of the tree articulates itself around the idea of a living Cosmos in continuous regeneration: “the tree-image of cosmos” (Eliade, 1994, p. 337); “the tree-symbol of life, of endless fecundity, of absolute reality (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, p. 89); “the tree as a symbol of the resurrection of vegetation in Spring and of the ‘regeneration’ of the year” (Bierdermann, 1996, pp. 42-46). If the vegetal symbol lacks the agricultural metaphor in order to be better looked at, it is because “There is more in the metaphor than in the symbol in the sense that it brings to language the implicit semantics of the symbol” (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 69)²⁵, it is also true that the agricultural

25 Hans Blumenberg in one very same line wrote: “Immediately, metaphors can be remains, rudiments in the way of myth to logos” (2003, p. 44). On the author’s theory of “metaphorologie” and its developments, see, for example, Anselm Haverkamp and Dirk Mende, 2009.

metaphor only becomes “alive”²⁶ when it absorbs and reflects the “aura” of the vegetal symbolism as “The symbol is bound in a way that the metaphor is not. Symbols have roots. Symbols plunge us into the shady experience of power” (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 69). In this sense, we defend that the agricultural metaphor can well be an open door to the vegetal symbolism as long as it is “alive” in the sense given to it by Paul Ricoeur, that is, when that metaphor produces an unexpected and unusual semantic innovation (1976, pp. 46-53), as it can also be promising from the point of view of the vegetal symbolism: “Through vegetation, it is the whole of life, it is nature that regenerates itself through multiple rhythms, it is nature that is ‘honoured’, promoted, requested. The vegetative forces are an epiphany of cosmic life” (Eliade, 1994, p. 404). In this context, accepting Paul Ricoeur’s theory that there is an osmotic relationship between the metaphor (the linguistic surface of the symbol) and the symbol (a bi-dimensional phenomenon where the semantic face does not refer to the non-semantic face) (1976, pp. 63-69), it is not hermeneutically prudent to face the horticultural metaphors present in the works of pedagogues and educators of the New Education movement as unconnected to the vegetal symbolism.

In our perspective, what we want to affirm is that the horticultural metaphors present in their works should not be seen just as mere metaphors closed to the vegetal symbolism since “vegetation incarnates (or means or participates into) the *reality* that is made alive, which creates without exhausting, which regenerates manifesting itself in innumerable ways, without wearing out” (Eliade, 1994, p. 403; Araújo, 2004, pp. 177-191). They are certain symbols of renovation, whose roots are plunged in the magma of vegetable life and why not, as would Paul Ricoeur say, “the durable constellations of life, feeling, and the universe” (1976, p. 64), which donate to the horticultural metaphor its specific semantic and hermeneutical contours which appeal, as it is known, to a purified theory of the metaphor by the *logos* which, by overcoming the semiotic and semantic levels of the metaphor, opens itself to the nourished and regenerated symbol of the “Discourse in Life” (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 59) and even of *mythos*.

26 It comes to mind Paul Ricoeur’s *The Rule of Metaphor* (2004), while Hans Blumenberg prefers to use the concept of “absolute metaphor” identified with the myth (2003, pp. 165-170), and Gaston Bachelard uses “axiomatic metaphor” to denote a kind of metaphor of excellence and absolute, which works, so it seems to us, as one of the strongest imagination reagents alongside the four elements (earth, water, fire and air) characterized as “the hormones of imagination” (2004, p. 19). The deepest psychic structures of imagination are the archetypes. Bachelard specifically organizes much of his research around the four imaginative elements – air, water, earth and fire. Bachelard also calls the four elements “the hormones of imagination”: “They execute the great syntheses which give a little regularity to the imaginative. In particular, imaginative air is the hormone which makes us grow psychically” (2004, p. 19).



CONCLUSION: CAN EDUCATIVE MODERNITY BE SPOKEN WITHOUT THE AGRICULTURAL METAPHOR?

In this last part, we should reflect upon what we can learn from the heuristic of the metaphor in education beyond what we already know: on one side that “It is not at all indifferent whether the pupil is compared to a receptacle that is filled or to a plant that grows”²⁷ (Hameline, 1981, p. 121) and, on the other, the metaphor, be it an agricultural one, a moulding one, a sculpture one, an organic one, a navigation one, or a travelling one, tends very often to look at us and to surprise us when we deal with education in different supports: texts, discourses, films, documentaries, interviews and pedagogical practices.

The agricultural metaphor, which took up most of our attention, very often comes close to the living metaphor which is the metaphor of invention, of semantic innovation, of creative impertinence, the one that produces a new information because it “tell us something new about reality” (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 53). The agricultural metaphor, in its quality of an “insistent metaphor”²⁸ (1976, p. 68), approaches the symbolic profundity of existence and not simply, as Daniel Hameline seems to defend, that it is about giving the first word to the “triumph of similitude” (1986, pp. 135-138), even though it can be pertinent, and it certainly is, as in the case of the use of metaphor in education:

We assume that a pupil is not a plant, nor a flask, nor plasticine, nor an explorer, nor an architect, nor raptor bird, nor a race car or a raccoon. But *comparing* a student to a plant, to a flask, to plasticine etc., or even to a raccoon allows us to consider *anything* that can be controlled and which is not a mere game or an effect of style. (1986, p. 139)

However, faithful to our hermeneutic-symbolic intention (Ricoeur, 1965, pp. 13-63; Wunenburger, 1997, pp. 76-85), we defend, as Paul Ricoeur has done before, that the living metaphor, as “insistent metaphor”, which is the case in education of the agricultural metaphor and of the metaphor of growth, cannot close its eyes to the symbols that involve and live with us, as it is the case of

27 Never be overstated that the metaphor of the container, by making the student a receptacle and submissive and the teacher a “dumper” (dumping something in the container) consecrates the idea of Traditional School’s “well-filled head” (Montaigne) (the idea of transmitting something), while the metaphor of growth, by making the student critical of the pedagogical and participatory authoritarianism in their learning and the teacher an attentive gardener to the growth and interests of the student, consecrates the idea of the New Education’s “well-made head” (Montaigne) (the idea of participation and of “centers of interest” (Decroly): “One can not transmit, it is not possible to transmit a thought such as one transfers a liquid from a full container to another empty” (Hameline, 1981, p. 124).

28 An insistent metaphor, which really is foundational and symbolically pregnant, values the figurative sense to the detriment of the literal sense, the equivocal sense to the detriment of the univocal sense and finally appreciates the connotation which triggers subjective associations, to the detriment of denotation which favours the objective and more informative referent.

the vegetable symbolism in its cosmic, poetic and oneiric dimensions, because these dive not only into the shady experience of the cosmic, poetic and oneiric power, but they also dive in the symbolic profundities of our existence and life. Thus, the agricultural metaphor, as we defended previously, cannot close itself to “the profundity of the symbolic” (Wunenburger, 2002, pp. 43-65), even though it can say, as Daniel Hameline referred, something that can be controlled in the texts and discourses on education, but that does not mean that its symbolic meaning, by its multivocal denotation, cannot escape the simple rhetoric of meaning in order to postulate an interpretation job on the hidden meaning that quite overflows the semantic configuration of the metaphor (Cohen, 1993, pp. 58-70; Levin, 1977).

This overflowing leads us naturally to “The Non-Semantic Moment of a Symbol” (Ricoeur, 1976, pp. 57-63), summoning us in the most intimate part of ourselves, just like the roots that lovingly murmur with Gaia (the Mother Earth), and just like the trunk and branches that communicate with the goddess Eos (the goddess of dawn and of dusk, of the glow of the sun and of the nuances of the sky)²⁹. That is the reason why Paul Ricoeur can pertinently say that “Metaphor occurs in the already purified universe of logos, while the symbol hesitates on the dividing line between *bios* and *logos*. It testifies to the primordial rootedness of Discourse in Life. It is born where force and form coincide” (1976, p. 59), and as Jean Brun could exactly write:

True symbols are not signs of acknowledgement, nor are they messengers of presence but, rather, messengers of Absence and of Distance. This is why they come to our encounter and not us who start out for them (...). Symbols are witnesses to what we are not; if we decide to listen to them it is because they come to irrigate our words with water that cannot be made to spring from any fountain. Quoting Beaudelaire, symbols look at us; whenever we feel their gaze, we have the impression of a presence that cannot be of a certain placement. This is so because symbols announce more than what they state. (1985, pp. 81-82)

In this way, the metaphors found in the pedagogical-educative texts of educative modernity, especially the agricultural metaphor interested in growth and in development, just like the symbols, announce more than they enunciate. Such was the case, in our study, of the agricultural metaphor that, in its own way, announced the way of the vegetable symbolism with all that this symbolism means in the cosmic, poetic, oneiric and existential planes.

29 Notice that an image becomes symbolic from the moment in which through its sensitive content evokes, or suggests, a chain of images guided by a virtual meaning (life, death, peace, happiness, etc.). If one looks at the plant example, besides seeing the real vegetal species that it represents (scientific knowledge), it can also awaken in our consciousness the following: “a cozy garden or the chopping of wood in order to heat, but which can orientate next into the direction of the thought of life and even of a life with an impressive longevity, and at last towards the idea of an eternity beyond death” (Wunenburger, 2011, pp. 16-17).



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