


KAFKA GOES TO SCHOOL - METAMORPHOSIS, FREUD, RANCIÈRE
AND ADORNO

KAFKA VAI À ESCOLA - METAMORFOSE, FREUD, RANCIÈRE E ADORNO

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lasneaux@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

Gregor Samsa, one morning, upon waking up, realizes that he had become a cockroach. Cockroaches are the totemic representation of the paralysis of the intellect, and Gregor's room represents what is of the order of the psychic. The traditional school is cheap. Only in the domain of what is internal, Gregor Samsa does not interfere in the world and his attempt at revolt does not appear in the subject. The system is so orchestrated by its apparatus that even in its absence, it is present. Away from the real oppressor, who profits from all the quarrels inside the Samsa residence, they all reveal the true character of what they are, Freudian parapraxia; everyone turns out to be system employees. In the classroom, it is no different. Gregor Samsa is the stupid student. This is a work of bibliographic review, in which a critical reading of the theme is sought. The purpose of this article is to detect possible links between the work Metamorphosis with school education. The fantastic brought by Kafka permeates the social criticism of a time that can be connected with the pedagogical process. The baratal, objectified being is the silhouette of the school student. When Rancière points the way to intellectual emancipation, he wants to claim the individual's right to assume his will and his intelligence. Kafka, Rancière and Adorno signal us: there is an organized world that orthopedizes our thinking. In an attempt to make the content understand, the teacher-system interrupts the movement of reason, destroys confidence in itself, expels the proper path of acquisition by offering the disconnected image from the path of the other, the teacher.

Keywords: School student. Metamorphosis. Role of the teacher. Teaching practice.

RESUMO

Gregor Samsa, certa manhã, ao acordar, percebe que se transformara em barata. As baratas são a representação totêmica da paralisia do intelecto e o quarto de Gregor representa o que é da ordem do psíquico. A escola tradicional forma baratas. Apenas no domínio do que é interno, Gregor Samsa não interfere no mundo e sua tentativa de revolta, não comparece no sujeito. O sistema é tão orquestrado por sua aparelhagem que até na sua ausência, ele se faz presente. Distante do verdadeiro opressor, que lucra com toda a querela no interior da residência dos Samsa, todos eles revelam o caráter verdadeiro do que são, a parapraxia freudiana; todos se revelam funcionários do sistema. Em sala de aula, não é diferente. Gregor Samsa é o aluno embrutecido. Trata-se de um trabalho de revisão bibliográfica, em que se procura fazer uma leitura crítica da temática. O objetivo deste artigo é o de detectar possíveis ligações da obra Metamorfose com a educação escolar. O fantástico trazido por Kafka permeia a crítica social de um tempo que pode ser ligado com o processo pedagógico. O ser baratal, coisificado, é a silhueta do aluno escolar. Quando Rancière aponta os caminhos da emancipação intelectual, quer reclamar o direito do indivíduo de assumir sua vontade e sua inteligência. Kafka, Rancière e Adorno nos sinalizam: há um mundo organizado que ortopediza nosso pensar. Na tentativa de fazer compreender o conteúdo, o professor-sistema interrompe o movimento da razão, destrói a confiança em si, expulsa a via própria de aquisição, oferecendo a imagem desconectada a partir do caminho do outro: o professor.

Palavras-chave: Aluno escolar. Kafka. Metamorfose. Prática docente.

INTRODUCTION

As a teacher experiencing and being able to observe the teaching practice, the need of developing a research in the doctorate that would bring reflections on the teaching practice emerged. As a support for this reflection, Kafka and his social criticism in *Metamorphosis* were used as part of the theoretical framework.

Within a school universe, the teaching role requires constant criticism and self-criticism of its scope, and of its direct impact on the teaching-learning process. Facing innumerable changes in the organization of human thought combined with the repositioning of information in the digital age, the use of technology as a mediator and the introduction of active learning methodologies, this student who still exists in the classroom of our schools must be questioned. The understanding of this student is fundamental for the effective change of teaching practice and the consolidation of an updated pedagogical model that keeps up with the changes that were already taking place, even before the pandemic started in 2019.

Before starting to write this article, a research was made in databases to check the condition of the art on the subject, seeking to detect relationships between Kafka's work and the teaching practice.

Franz Kafka's work is universal. In view of such importance, his productions, such as *Metamorphosis*, have been used under various interpretations that include associations with psychoanalysis all the way to religious criticisms and the capitalist system (CARPEAUX, 2011). The goal of this essay is to link the work *Metamorphosis* (summarized below) to school education, going through the subsidy and connections with other authors such as Freud, Adorno and Rancière.

Metamorphosis

Gregor Samsa is a traveling salesman. He travels to pay his father's debt to his current boss. He does not want this job, but he believes in the mission of saving his family, even for something he did not suppose or question. One morning, when he wakes up, he realizes that he has become a disgusting arthropod: a cockroach. In the face of misfortune, he cannot get out of bed, although it occurs to him that he must work. Considering this impasse, even the boss comes to question his absence. In vain. His body does not allow him to leave: his new body must not be seen by anyone.

Taking his impossibility to leave the room and the imperative of his family to go to work into consideration, his new appearance is revealed.

Amid disgust and impatience, the family misunderstands Gregor. Only his sister seeks some interaction, hoping that he will be as he was before. The family is looking for a new source of income because Gregor no longer works. Guests are welcomed and amazed by the hexapod creature. Over the months, he is forgotten even by his last line of humanity, represented by his beloved sister.

Apart from socializing, in his forgotten room, Gregor does not eat and scares everyone at every meeting. Without his function to repay the debt, Gregor is a nobody. Without being gear, he languishes. Until one day he is found thin and dead. Thank God.

METHODOLOGY

Before starting to write this article, a research was made in two databases to check the condition of the art on the subject. *Google school* and *Scielo* were chosen. As descriptors, it started with "Kafka", then the descriptor "metamorfose" was associated to the one before and finally the search was refined with the association of the term "prática docente".

With the research it was observed that when using the term Kafka, it was obtained on *Google* approximately five hundred and thirty-seven thousand insertions. When searching with the terms Kafka + metamorfose, seven thousand nine hundred and forty citations were found. And when using the terms *Kafta + metamorfose + prática docente*, one thousand two hundred and forty citations were

found. When doing a dynamic reading of these publications, it was observed that none had a focus on the teaching practice, they treat the practice in the following approaches: language and power; teacher authority; literary materials; psychology and psychoanalysis; unwell teaching, among others, but none about the teaching practice in the context of the school.

When searching on *Scielo*, seventy-nine articles were found using the descriptor “Kafka”. When associating the term “metamorfose”, three articles were found. And when searching with the keywords "*Kafka + metamorfose + prática docente*", no article was found in the search. With these data, we understand that the research, as well as the “Kafka goes to school” analogy, is innovative and can enable reflections in the fields of education and the teaching practice.

Regarding the methodology, this is a bibliographic review article,

[...] the bibliographies or the consulted authors, also lead to deepen the problems and questions that generated the knowledge, to elucidate the methods, the strategies, the theoretical and paradigmatic conflicts and the confrontation of the results; they still allow to reveal the conceptual voids, the limitation or extension of the categories and the historical perspectives of a particular science. (GAMBOA, 2012, p. 67).

Gamboa highlights the importance of bibliographic review for scientific work when he shows the need to understand what has already been researched and to move beyond the limits of what is already known.

This essay brings reflections, from the work *Metamorphosis* and its correlations with other works of contemporary thought related directly or indirectly to traditional school education. To make those correlations possible, a complete reading of the works cited here was made and theoretical alignments between these authors were sought, in association with the author's experience supported by bibliographic research on the issue. Next, the developed reflection begins.

DEVELOPMENT

What does Kafka, creator of Gregor, want?

What Franz Kafka represents in his short story can escape the criticality of many of his readers. There are no trivialities or puerile traits in his speech. In addition, Kafka instruments his horror tale, his fable, his text, with the ingredients of those who think and reflect socially. Still writing at the beginning of the 20th century (ROIZ, 2011), Kafka presents the bourgeois world, the capitalist world, in his fantastic literature, resorting to disgust. Several interpretations and approaches were made from the work of Kafka:

It is known that *The process*, *The castle*, *The metamorphosis*, *The penal colony* have already been interpreted as documents of personal religiosity, as manifestations of the subconscious, as a kind of great satires against bureaucracy and the organization of society. Of these interpretations, the religious one was accepted by most of the critics. But it has been tacitly rejected by most fictionalists, who prefer to use Kafka's ‘way’ for other purposes. This is perhaps the best proof of the fact that Kafka is inimitable (CARPEAUX, 1966, v. 7, p. 3.469 in ROIZ, 2011).

This article specifically intends to bring the work *Metamorphosis*, with the traditional school education and the position of the student as a subject within this pedagogical practice.

The cockroach is a cosmopolitan insect, found in any dirt, anywhere in the world. It is content with the remains and is not concerned with its origin. It is a resistant but marginal insect. Like any insect, it is irrational. He carries in his body, despite his will, a bunch of diners: viruses, bacteria, fungi and worms. Diners for the cockroach, but parasites for humans. Cockroaches multiply fervently:

they seem to run counter to the selective nature proposed by Darwin and Wallace. Cockroaches are the totemic presentation of paralysis of the intellect. The traditional school forms cockroaches.

According to Pellegrino (1969), Kafka denounces that when we fall victims of the social order, we suffer the change of form, we metamorphose into a cockroach. For him, a six-legged Gregor is an admittedly alienated Gregor, the fate of everyone alienated by the system. The alienated bodies receive chitin as a coating and antennae as a sign of their final resignation. The system treats us like the nymph waiting for the transformation into imago. While being an imago, we were canceled. While being a cockroach, we are dehumanized. Gregor is expelled from the social context, unable to get out of his room. Incapable of leaving the room, the subject died, as Adorno reported. Cockroaches multiply in the classroom, under the metamorphic effect induced by the system, and Gregor's room is symbolic of the silence of actions in the face of this.

Gregor's room is his intrapsychic: an approach to Freudianism

Pellegrino (1969) presents Gregor as: "the flag of everyone's unconsciousness, a summary of the world's disease". By advancing layers, we can see Gregor's room as the spectacle of internal speech, the regime of the intrapsychic who no longer advances towards the movement, towards political action. Imprisoned in a conscience full of judgments and whining, he does not exceed the space beyond his door. Crossing the door would represent the Freudian cleavage. Only in the domain of what is internal, Gregor Samsa does not interfere in the world and his attempt at revolt does not appear in the subject, since he does not walk through his door.

Gregor's room represents what is of the psychic's order; it is the psychic of those alienated by the project of systematization of the world, of the economic hegemonic order. The irascible system screams when Gregor no longer works for him:

Mr. Samsa! (...) What's the matter with you? You lock yourself in the room, you don't answer anything, you unnecessarily afflict your parents and neglect your professional duties in a way that has never been heard of (KAFKA, 1969, p.21).

Gregor responds with his anxiety and his weakness of so many years anesthetized by the systematic conduct of his wishes. "Sir, I will open the door immediately! Of course I will open it!" (KAFKA, 1969, p. 22)

Imprisoned in his ideas, the father becomes impatient and decides to operate radically so that the door opens: "Ana! (...) Go get the locksmith, quickly!" (KAFKA, 1969, p. 23) The system is in a hurry.

The feeling of helplessness is revealed when, after two months of the transformation, Gregor "has long been used to his furniture." Ahead, Kafka announces to us: "Furthermore, wouldn't he [Gregor] feel abandoned in his empty room?" (KAFKA, 1969, p. 42). The empty room is furnished with things, but they no longer represent structuring nuclei of agency. They took everything. If it cannot be offered to the system, there is nothing left. Not for him, not for his sister, not for his manager.

Ghastly, when Gregor left the room, he made his mother pass out. Nothing that advances outside of Gregor's intrapsychic is normal. His movement is teratological, the silence is reported by not advancing beyond the border of his door, the limit of consciousness, interdicted by the world-of-things.

When Gregor left the room, his father threw apples at him haphazardly. The red apples huddled on the floor and one of them hit Gregor's flesh. Without anyone speaking, the injured Gregor retires to his room, without any help. Now Gregor cannot even move in his own room, the Kafkinian metaphor for his conscience. There was no need for a powerful weapon, no organized artillery. Apples tossed erratically were enough. One was enough.

Over time, Grete - sister and only hope for humanization and subjectivity in Gregor's life skyrocketed:

- We need to get rid of this thing! (...) It is the only way out. You [Gregor's father] need to get it out of your head that this is Gregor. We already believe that too much; and there is the cause of our unhappiness. How could that be Gregor? If it was really him, he would have realized long ago that he cannot live among human beings, and he would have left voluntarily. (KAFKA, 1969, p. 63).

Abandoned by the last thread that stretched between humanity and Gregor, he surrendered himself to his room, and now, he cannot move even inside it. This progressive reduction in movement, the progressive immobility is not only mechanical; it is accompanied by a progressive distance to any authentic thought process. Alienated work prevented any possibility of self-management of thought. The work of a traveling salesman, to pay off the debt imposed by the owners of the system, made freedom of thought impossible, affected the advance of conscience, responsibility, criticism and politicization. Without the possibility of enrolling in the world, what remains is the sad testimony of an individual in absolute renunciation of himself, formed in the mass, lost of his libidinous connections (FREUD, 2017). The apple that rots in Gregor's flesh is the algorithm implemented for the end of the subject; it is the phantasmatic representation of dysfunctionality, for a society forged in neoliberalism, Gregor never exhibits the work that ensures the added value of the system.

He thought of the family with tender solicitude. He realized that he must leave, and his opinion in this regard was even more firm than that of her sister. He remained in that state of empty and peaceful meditation until the clock struck three in the morning. He saw that things, outside the window, were gradually clearing up; then, against his will, his head dropped to the floor, and his last, weak sigh passed through his nostrils. (KAFKA, 1969, p.65).

In Gregor's intrapsychic "set", the film of his life, he himself does not appear in any capital moment: it is the portrait of the schooled student. The child is born, time passes, and little by little, the student is born. But the student already born does not develop, does not engage. What happens is that the school process is capable of transforming that healthy childhood with radiant intelligence into a proto-adult with mental weakness. Freud's prediction is made here: "the child is the father of the man" (VOLTOLINI, 2011).

In Freud, the educational process and the civilizing process appear as synonyms. And he points out that, before creating a certain type of man, it is in hominization that education finds its most determining task. Whenever he advances in the discussion of the civilizing process, Freud draws immediate consequences for education. (VOLTOLINI, 2011, p.48).

In addition to the boring metamorphosis that prevents Kantian adulthood and facing the structured system, subjectivity drains from the individual, as denounced by Adorno.

Adorno

Adorno had warned us of the incredible power of domain naturalization that the system has. The system is so orchestrated by its equipment that even in its absence, it is present. Gregor's boss, father, mother and sister represent the system when it is absent. Distant from the true oppressor, who profits from all the quarrels inside the Samsa residence, they all reveal the true character of what they are, Freudian *parapraxis*; they all turn out to be employees of the system. In the classroom, it is no different. Students and employees of the system incorporate it, warning us that there is no other pedagogical truth (or possibility).

Adorno presents his perception of the system. The system is the entire schematic apparatus that totals the world-of-things. He is the pretentious organizer, discipliner of movements, a breviary

to be always consulted, a project that spreads out in space and time, that enters the psychic superstructure of individuals, until they resign from their human agency. The system's greatest presumption is the request for truth. The system is the constructed artifact, the result of the pettiness of a given elite, people who rejoice in the controlled movement of men considered to be average, who do not assume their humanity, who become traveling salesmen, traveling salesman sisters, parents of salesmen -travelers, schooled students. They are the same ones who amuse themselves with the employees who have become agents of Brazilian education.

In such a powerful system of ideas and accompanied by so many employees, we are left with the dialectic. According to Adorno, “dialectic is the ontology of the false state” (ADORNO, 2009). Dialectics can liberate the fair state, demystify the concept, subjectify knowledge and offer the subject's resumption. Thought must have in itself the critical germ, the enjoyment of synthesis, in the face of its antithesis. This is the hope of facing the system, modifying the school and returning the student's intellectual role.

Metamorphosis and the school

Gregor, in his room and already transformed, is the representative of the annulment of the subject about which Rancière and Freud consider:

It is inegalitarian irrationality that makes the individual renounce himself, renounce the incommensurable immateriality of his essence, and that engenders aggregation as a fact and as the reigning collective fiction. The love of domination requires people to protect themselves from each other in the heart of a conventional order that cannot be reasonable (...) (RANCIÈRE, 2017, p. 116).

It wants to be dominated, oppressed, to fear its masters. Deep down, completely conservative, she has the deepest aversion to all news and progress, and an unlimited respect for tradition (FREUD, 2017, p.51).

Rancière's harsh words find resonance with Freud. Gregor Samsa is the stunned, de-subjectivized student. An individual who turns from human to cockroach suddenly confirms Kafka's realistic fable but goes even further. The fantastic brought by Kafka permeates the social criticism of a time that can be linked with the pedagogical process: the scenario of strangeness of the student who reveals his role, or his non-role. The cockroach-like individual, objectified being is the silhouette of the traditional student, the school student. The student's psychic silence fulfilling the systemic determination corroborates the relationship with Metamorphosis. The system does not save the subject but desires the individual without his subjectivity. Metamorphosis is the revelation of the subject's absence. Metamorphosis presents the insignificance of the student, rejoices with his renunciation of subjectivity. What remains for Gregor is to see his sister hoping that he will return to be a traveling salesman and also to admit to himself the system's true will: to save the family's debt, external intent, a life not lived by his body. Vain hope. Kafka can be explained by Rancière. When Rancière points the way to intellectual emancipation, he wants to claim the individual's right to assume his will, his intelligence and be respected. The role of the stultifying master annihilates the subject, nullifies his possibilities, and does not teach him, does not make him learn, functionalizes the individual in his uniform social mask: to undertake for the system, not to think for himself. In the classroom, the equality of the pronunciation of knowledge from the mouth of the stultifying master is the guarantee of inequality among all. This is the daily tool that the stultifying master uses to conform the students. The stultifying master's monological and monopolized speech is the organizer of the student's progressive thing-fication, the conduction to the cockroach-like format. This master justifies himself by the structuring fiction that the student is unable to comprehend anything, thus the explanatory conception of the world is formed (RANCIÈRE, 2017). The stultifying master believes that he has the touch of Midas, he trusts his providence, supposes that he removes the veil of

ignorance: Rancière accuses this practice of “pedagogical myth”. The silencing of the student is the prosthesis for naturalizing this shaping education. Education does not mediate. The rhythm is never lively and plural. The pedagogical book is, for Rancière, a reduplicator of knowledge. The stultifying master does not emancipate. The stultifying master is a system’s employee.

Gregor Samsa did not emancipate. He was shaped by the advent of his masters (hardeners), determined to maintain the primitive passion for inequality. Without the pheromone of emancipation in the air, Gregor accepts the misfortune of his indebted family members and when fantastically revealed, it is not even a pulley anymore. With no readiness for the system, the never-subject, the cockroach-like Gregor dies.

CONCLUSION

Kafka, Freud, Rancière and Adorno signal us: there is an organized, given world that dictates our thinking. The system, totalizing and pretentious, teleologically seeks to relieve us of the need to think. Attempting to understand the content, the teacher-system interrupts the movement of reason, destroys its confidence, expels the proper path of acquisition by offering the disconnected image from the path of the other, the teacher. Gregor Samsa represents the subject annulled by massification of the system, a disposable cog in the administered neoliberal world, guided by debt and its status. The student's debt is his alleged inability to know, his non-knowledge, his passive ignorance. The student is in debt because he never knows: he is born due. Samsa takes on his father's debt and works alienated to the fatherly goal that transcends his father. Samsa, without the movement of the emancipatory master, reveals himself to be a cockroach-like individual, his true systemic denotation, his only social place. And we always hope that Metamorphosis is neither a balcony activism, nor a time-worn pamphlet, or even a useless denunciation. Metamorphosis is a serious and profound denunciation of how we accept the marked and guarded square of the world. It is a warning of what we have become, altered by the hormone of capital, massified by the general film work that seems to be the only surface of life, the only possibility that means work.

The school is involved and serves itself in the bays of that same organized world. Inscribed in this reality, it is prevented, through stupidity, from reaching development and clarification, ensuring the existence of the subject. Emancipation and enlightenment are not possible; being a cockroach is human’s fate, like the one of Kafka's character and his metamorphosis.

Recognition of what has happened allows us to change. However, we count on the degrees of freedom hoping there is another route, another possibility, another pedagogical place. Adorno admits that the possibility of a “remembrance of nature in the subject” (DUARTE, 2002, p. 33) exists. Adhered to this exit, is that hopelessness dislodges, moves from place. It is about coping, changing the educational paradigm, reversing the metamorphosis in an insect. It is the way to prevent the triple intent of the school system, forged in educational massification: the fossilizations of creativity, self-thinking and criticality.

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