

Praxis de-historicization in philosophy teaching: Critiques of the Delors Report

A des-historicização da práxis no ensino da filosofia: Críticas ao Relatório Delors

Francisco Joatan Freitas SANTOS JUNIOR
PhD in Education from UECE. Collaborating
Professor at PROF-FILO UFC.
Professor at SEDUC-CE.
E-mail: joatan.freitas@prof.ce.gov.br

ABSTRACT:

The article deals with praxis de-historicization in the teaching of philosophy. Presented with the crisis of capital, it is considered relevant to discuss the role of social subject's praxis. The text addresses the topic by asking: How is social praxis de-historicization characterized? What are the de-historicizing implications of the Delors Report in the teaching of philosophy? The objective is to understand the process of social praxis de-historicization and its implications for the teaching of philosophy. It is methodologically guided by historical-dialectical materialism, based on the works of Marx and Engels (2007), Mészáros (1995), Vázquez (2007), Gadotti (1998) and Gallo (2012). It concludes that the Report reinforces the ideological content of capital, contributing to the process of social praxis de-historicization.

KEYWORDS: De-historicization; Praxis; Philosophy Teaching; Delors Report.

RESUMO

O artigo trata da des-historicização da práxis no ensino da filosofia. Diante da crise do capital, considera-se relevante discutir o papel da práxis dos sujeitos sociais. O texto aborda o tema, questionando: Como se caracteriza a des-historicização da práxis social? Quais as implicações des-historicizantes do Relatório Delors no ensino da filosofia? O objetivo é compreender o processo de des-historicização da práxis social e suas implicações no ensino da filosofia. Orienta-se metodologicamente pelo materialismo histórico-dialético, a partir das obras de Marx e Engels (2007), Mészáros (2002), Vázquez (2007), Gadotti (1998) e Gallo (2012). Conclui que o Relatório reforça o teor ideológico do capital, contribuindo para o processo de des-historicização da práxis social.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Des-historicização; Práxis; Ensino de Filosofia; Relatório Delors.

INTRODUCTION

A fetish haunts the world – the fetish of capital.¹ All bourgeois unite to sacralize the market, declare the death of the historical subject through the de-historicization of social praxis and, decisively, announce the “end of history” (Fukuyama, 1992). In the Marxian view, it is understood that the capitalist system de-historicizes social praxis in the commodity production process. Thus, through the exploitation of labor value, it subjugates the social subject to alienated, reified and fetishized praxis, with ideological reverberations in education and, particularly, in philosophy. The text takes an unprecedented approach to the implications of praxis de-historicization in the teaching of philosophy, considering its inception in the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien (Thailand, 1990).

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in association with the World Bank, held this Conference to ensure the quality of education in “developed and developing countries”. To this end, it created a Commission of Notables, led by French economist Jacques Delors, intended to produce a synthesis document entitled Learning: The Treasure Within, known as the Delors Report (1996). This Report, however, reinforces the ideological content of capital which presents itself as a natural, meritocratic, and fair system, while simultaneously denying social and labor rights and exploiting workers to the point of de-historicizing social praxis, in the context of a “structural crisis” unprecedented in history (Mészáros, 1995).

The research begins with two central questions: How is social praxis de-historicization characterized? What are the Delors Report de-historicizing implications to the teaching of philosophy? That said, the main objective is to understand the process of social praxis de-historicization and its implications for the teaching of philosophy. The specific objectives are summarized as: (1) to present the concept of social praxis de-historicization; (2) to investigate the Delors Report de-historicizing implications to the teaching of philosophy.

The article is methodologically guided by historical-dialectical materialism, adopting an exploratory study of documentary sources and bibliographic references, with the works of Marx and Engels (2007), Mészáros (1995), Vázquez (2007), Gadotti (1998), Gallo (2012), and others as its theoretical framework. Thus, the dialectical method presupposes that the researcher is embedded in social relations and, therefore, subjective positioning is a pre-existing condition in the face of a given historical and social reality. Therefore, it is understood that social research cannot be neutral and impartial,

¹ Paraphrasing the Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels (1998).

especially when dealing with a subject that is essentially political, reflecting the subjective mediation of the interests of social classes. Hence the importance of engaged social research as a philosophy of praxis.

Social praxis under the fetishism of capital: alienation and crisis

The “structural crisis of capital” (Mészáros, 1995) negatively impacts human life, while the system seeks to overcome its limits in order to perpetuate itself as a global social way of life. In fact, contrary to the reformist intentions of bourgeois economists, cyclical crises are resolved palliatively through the “destruction of capital,” while the structural crisis intensifies through the process of “destructive production”. In this sense, this crisis moves in a universal, creeping, and continuous manner toward the self-valorization of capital, which engenders a civilizational apocalypse and, therefore, this situation does not point to the perpetuation of capital (Mészáros, 1995).

In the process of exploiting labor value, aiming to increase productivity and profits, capital accelerates the development of productive forces, beginning to dissonate from social relations of production while becoming the fetishized subject of history. Ideologically, the system influences the human spirit to the extent of perpetuating in it the simplistic desire for commodified, artificial, and alienated social relations. In this way, fetishized capital rises to the “naturalized” status of master of the future!

It is in this context that the unique role of the praxis of social subjects in human history is discussed. Praxis is understood as the dialectical unity between theory and practice in the activities of subjects, ontologically, as collective work in the material and immaterial production process of society, according to Vásquez (2007). Praxis is the advent that transforms individuals into subjects of their own history; therefore, it occurs through productive work, constituting the fundamental condition of human existence, undergoing a long process of historical development of societies. Productive praxis is the fundamental element that historically distinguishes human beings from other species.

Social praxis, then, involves a very particular notion of work, since “[...] Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature” (Marx, 1909, p. 197).² In this process of transforming natural resources, human beings establish praxiological relationships with nature and with other human beings, changing their own nature and the set of social relationships, creating possibilities for historical transformations. For this reason, Marx and Engels (2007, p. 534) state: “All

² Modern translations often prefer “labor” (emphasizing the processual character of human activity) and “metabolism” (German Stoffwechsel) to better capture the dimension of Marx’s concept. This note acknowledges this terminological evolution while maintaining the historical formulation.

social life is essentially practical. All the mysteries which lead theory towards mysticism find their rational solution in human praxis and in the comprehension of this practice.” It is this praxiological view that demonstrates that change only happens in the dialectical unity between theory and practice.

In capitalist society, consolidated after the bourgeois revolutions of the 18th century, social praxis developed under the yoke of commodity fetishism, such that the alienation of the subject has manifested itself through this historical-temporal process. Thus, “[...] the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands” (Marx, 1909, p. 83). In fact, fetishism does not represent a supernatural belief; it has a material origin.

The fetishism of capital has a direct relationship with the surplus value hidden by the movement of commodities and money, and these are nothing more than “different modes of existence of value itself” (Marx, 1909, p. 171). Thus, money exists in a universal form and merchandise in a specific form. In fact, value originates in the production of goods as unpaid labor, hidden in mystified relations with the products of labor and, as such, appears as value that comes to be represented by the general equivalent in the form of money. Therefore, “[...] value is here the active factor in a process, in which, while constantly assuming the form in turn of money and commodities, it at the same time changes in magnitude, differentiates itself by throwing off surplus-value from itself; the original value, in other words, expands spontaneously” (Marx, 1909, p. 171).

Capital value transcends the fetishism of commodities and money through a movement of self-valorization, becoming the “automatic subject” of this process and thus alienating and subjugating the social being, de-historicizing the life of the real subject of production. Marx (1909) understands that value becomes value in process, therefore, commodities and money in process are forms of value and, consequently, it can be said that in this movement, value in process is capital itself, which self-valorizes and becomes the “automatic subject” of production. The real subject (proletariat) enters the process of value-capital as a non-subject (de-historicized), being totally devalued in the social process of capitalist production.

The Labor Force, therefore, presents itself as a subjugated commodity in the production process of capitalist society. Thus, fetishism rises above the value of labor in process and, in this way, depersonalizes the subjects of labor such as commodity and money in process. Value becomes fetishized capital that relates to itself, that is, capital that hides social relations in its depersonalizing the subject of labor and, apparently, personifying itself in the non-subject (capitalist).

Workforce exploitation is an existential necessity of capital itself, almost as if it were a natural phenomenon, and if in these “natural” relations, the measure of all things becomes value (reification),

human historicity as an activity of social praxis ceases to have ontological meaning. Thus, the subject of praxis, being reified as a part of the system, becomes a non-subject through the logic of the false "naturalness" of this fetishized way of life. Capital value dominates the productive process also through the reification of the real subject of capitalist production.

In this logic, the real subject (proletariat) is subsumed by the unreal subject (bourgeoisie), which becomes the owner of the means of production. This apparent (unreal) subject assumes the function of controlling the production of commodities with the sole purpose of appropriating surplus value in a form of profitable subservience that makes it an affluent hostage to the dictates of capital. In this sense, the de-historicized subject (real or unreal) becomes a subject submissive to capitalist social relations.

The Dialectic of Social Praxis De-Historicization

The problems arising from the process of social praxis de-historicization can only be solved by bringing theory and practice closer together, that is, through revolutionary praxis. In this sense, the existence of the problem itself already indicates a crisis of social reality which can only be overcome by revolutionary action. Therefore, the definition of a philosophical concept on the "de-historicization of praxis" presupposes a crisis of historicity in history itself, as well as a crisis of social praxis in the realm of philosophical reflection.

In history, ultimately, the "structural crisis of capital" (Mészáros, 1995) is the historical basis of the social praxis de-historicization process, and therefore the basis on which various types of historical denialism are sustained, such as the denial of class struggles and the underestimation of the revolutionary role of the social subject. It is interesting to note that Bourdieu (2012) uses the expression "historical work of de-historicization" to refer to the structures of male domination that exclude women's participation in history. In the case of an adaptation of this category, it can be understood that there is a historical work of de-historicization of social praxis throughout class struggles, where its meaning involves the social role denial of the historical subject, the denial of human being itself as a historicized being who transforms the world.

In philosophy, the category of praxis seems to be undergoing an onto-epistemological crisis, crystallized in anti-dialectical and immediate reflections, with archetypes of positivist theories and even so-called Marxist conceptions. It can be said that the philosophy of praxis is under pressure to overcome the conformism that paralyzes political struggles, as it is also marked by a process of alienation and reification, a process that affects all subjects in their subsumption under capital. However, "[...] The transition from radical criticism from the theoretical to the practical level is precisely the revolution."

(Vázquez, 2007, p. 117), which is why only in revolutionary praxis is it possible to overcome the philosophical dichotomy between reality and thought.

In the epistemological field, de-historicizing has been a paradox of the being that makes history by denying its historicity, rejecting historical praxis and awareness of its activity, making history by attempting to delegitimize history. This implies removing historicity, scientificity, and truth from the objective historical fact, detaching the subject from its historical context. However, the ideological basis of this process stems from a concrete reality, since the subject of labor de-historicizes itself in the production of surplus value through unpaid labor, in the commodity production process, the main objective element of the fetishism of capital.

In the logic of commodity production, therefore, the subject is reduced to the categorical reification of capital; meanwhile, the non-subject is inflated to the status of subject of history, in the process of a non-identical subject/object relationship that occurs in the capitalist society productive mode. The subject (labor), demoted to the condition of a commodity in the productive process, by disposing its energy to generate surplus value and its fetishized representations (commodities, money, capital), becomes the primary tool of the production system. Then, this subject's labor force (commodity) is the basis on which the production of surplus value is sustained in a fetishized form and, consequently, the alienation and reification of labor, establishing the historical process of social praxis denial.

In commodity production, the labor force sold to the capitalist alienates itself in the process, hence no longer recognizing the product of its labor, much less recognizing itself as the subject of production and its own history. While simultaneously alienating and separating itself from the product it enables reification through the autonomy of things in relation to its activities, denying itself the real condition of historical subject. Therefore, fetishism, alienation, and reification are elements which arise from the process of commodity metamorphosis, triggering social praxis de-historicization.

Paraphrasing Marx (1978), everything that appears in the subject's praxis (proletariat) as natural, de-historicized activity appears in the non-subject (bourgeoisie) as a natural state of de-historicization. The effective (de-historicized) practical behavior of the subject in production and with the product, as a spiritual state, appears in the non-subject before it as theoretical (historicized) behavior. Concluding, “[...] the non-worker does everything against the worker which the worker does against himself; but he does not do against himself what he does against the worker (Marx, 1978, p. 81)”.

The subject's praxis (proletariat) is de-historicized, almost as a natural fetish, while the non-subject's praxis (bourgeoisie) is artificially historicized, as if it were the determining praxis of social relations. In this case, there is a double negative of the praxis of social subjects that causes structural

alienation and, thus, praxis control is hegemonically taken by capital, which becomes the fetishized subject of the production system.

In the commodity production process, therefore, the subject undergoes a transmutation that is, the subject and the non-subject deny each other and, apparently, assume each other's positions. This gives rise to the de-historicized subject (proletariat) and the historicized non-subject (bourgeoisie), which are already contradictory in their own terms. Consequently, the real subject (proletariat) becomes de-historicized by transforming itself into an unreal non-subject. The real non-subject (bourgeoisie) becomes historicized as an unreal subject. The real subject (proletariat) becomes the unreal non-subject of history through the historicization of the non-subject (bourgeoisie), and this non-subject becomes the unreal subject of history through the de-historicization of the real subject (proletariat).

This double negative produces a de-historicized praxis that replaces the social subject and, therefore, leads to a historical process of praxis de-historicization. In this dialectic, the subject and the non-subject (real or unreal) are denied and nullified as subjects by the fetishism of capital-value, thus the effective subject of the social process of production becomes capital, which creates a structure of “control without a subject” (Mészáros, 1995), rather, without the objective need for a human subject. In this way, “[...] capital as such is the real (however perversely reified) commanding subject, remaining ‘always capital’ even in its personified instances” (Mészáros, 1995, p. 619).

Concrete historicity becomes de-historicization, as labor becomes a “natural” appendage of capital in the process of social production, even more so under the new domains of the industry's socio-digital, robotic, and computerized devices, the proletariat is forced to relinquish its status as a historical subject. Capital, as an unequal social relation, dominates the historical process and, apparently, becomes the subject of history. However, this process can only occur amid the contradictions of production itself, which presupposes an unequal social relationship between the workforce and the unilateral command of the bourgeoisie.

In capitalist society, the formal contract for the purchase and sale of labor force seals the subliminal pact of exploitation, evidenced in the appropriation of core value by capital and fulfilled by private ownership of the means of production. De-historicized subject (labor) becomes the desired enemy of capital because it generates surplus value embodied in the form of fetish value. Labor becomes the “intimate enemy” of capital, without which value would not exist. For this reason, the latter seeks to de-historicize social life in order to legitimize itself, naturally, as the sole subject of history.

In this reified, fetishized, alienated, or estranged process, the more workers strive in their work processes to possess the right to private property, the further that property moves away from them. “*Private property* is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of *alienated labor*, of the external

relation of the worker to nature and to himself" (Marx, 1978, p. 79). Because if this the fetishistic process of commodities reaches its peak in private property, composing a totality that interconnects alienation and reification and, consequently, praxis de-historicization of the social subject.

The proletariat, as the real class subject of the social life production process, can recover its status as a historical subject through revolutionary social praxis, under specific conditions, at a given moment of crisis in the capitalist system. The decisive confrontation between the development of productive forces and social relations of production is only defined in the arena of class struggle. Therefore, this is the challenge that feeds back into the political organization of labor, given that the theme of overcoming this fetishized way of life is at the root of class struggles.

Therefore, despite liberal and postmodernist fads, class conflicts arising from the processes of capital crises indicate the possibility of overcoming the system and point to situations of revolutionary praxis. Contrary to recent denialism, these struggles point to a latent historical moment of geopolitical and sociocultural transformations, moments in which subjects are forged in the daily struggles of class warfare, sometimes openly, sometimes in the disturbing silence that precedes social tsunamis.

Delors Report: A technicist view of the role of educational subjects

The aim here is to investigate the de-historicizing implications of the Delors Report (1996) in philosophy teaching. However, it should be noted that the document deals with education as a whole, focusing on traditional areas (languages and mathematics), while limiting the humanities to ethical and moral aspects. The term praxis does not appear in the text either, but the role of the education subjects (teachers, students, families, and school heads) runs throughout the document and is even considered by Delors (1996) to be an essential part of the political success of educational reforms.

The Delors Report (1996) is divided into topics called horizons, principles, and ethical-moral guidelines, with universal content, serving as the philosophical basis for the four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. A detailed analysis of these pillars can be found in the article *The key to knowledge: a critical examination of the new educational paradigm* conceived by the UN, by Maia Filho and Jimenez (2013), which is therefore recommended as further reading.

In the historical context of the late 20th century, the Delors Report (1996) expresses the desire for a bourgeois political articulation that addresses the crisis of real socialism, ushering the beginning of a new international order under American hegemony. In this context, the document considers the observable horizon that the world is a village that extends from grassroots communities to global society,

bringing the local and the global closer together. Thus, it considers that the planet is overpopulated, intertwined by a mutual interdependence with countless multiple risks, reinforced by free trade theories, crises in the Soviet bloc, new information technologies, and, therefore, humanity is experiencing an uncertainty climate (Delors, 1996).

Under the logic of global financial-speculative capital, nevertheless, this mutual interdependence between countries seems to trigger a process of loss of autonomy for peoples and nations in the face of the power of capital, even the most developed ones, however progressive they may be. This is because this market logic overrides the decisions of states and governments, threatening the ecosystem and the well-being of populations. Therefore, “Subject to a logic of their own which stresses short-termism, the global financial markets no longer simply reflect the constraints of a given country's economy, but sometimes seem to dictate the terms of national economic policies” (Delors, 1996, p. 41). Thus, the mechanism of global circulation of capital, speculative easing and free flow of trade guides the document to recognize a certain autonomy of financial markets in dictating economic laws.

The diagnosis made by the Delors Report (1996) regarding the peoples' loss of autonomy in the face of the influence of capital, a process that naturalizes labor exploitation and financial speculation, is in fact also consistent with the Conference's proposal for technical education. This educational logic, focused exclusively on the labor market, reinforces the exclusion of social subjects in the development process of countries, revealing itself as a mechanism for denying human choices as well as individual and collective freedoms. Therefore, it can be inferred that, although slow and gradual, this may provoke a continuous process of praxis de-historicization, and thus a denying process of the historical subject role in social transformations.

According to Delors (1996, p. 51), the main fear is “[...] that of a gulf opening up between a minority of people who are capable of finding their way successfully about this new world that is coming into being and the majority who feel that they are at the mercy of events and have no say in the future of society, with the dangers that entails of a setback to democracy and widespread revolt”. Therefore, the document diagnoses the problem but does not reflect on a solution outside the status quo, remaining at a technical level that aims only to guarantee cheap labor for a flexible labor market, following the neoliberal proposals of the World Bank (1995, p. iii): “The rate of acquiring new knowledge and the pace of changing technology raise the possibility of sustained economic growth with more frequent job changes during individuals' lives”.

In the Report, the teaching practice becomes a hostage of a technical conception of education, focused exclusively on fostering a scarce and flexible labor market, while reinforcing in students a conception of the world based on moral and voluntary values, with a de-historicized practice. Thus, this

technicism interferes with the role of the subjects (teachers and students), especially when the teaching practice appears in a reduced form, because, as Delors (1996, p. 30) states, “[...] the young people with whom the teacher has to deal, though receiving less parental or religious guidance, are also better informed. Teachers have to take this new situation into account if they are to be heeded and understood by young people, give them a taste for learning [...]”. The observation that young people are increasingly free seems to contradict the idea of transmitting values.

In fact, this young person (student) is reduced to the status of a “receptacle” that does not fit into the educational process, even when “appealing” to the force of religious dogmas or moral precepts, which hinders the technical mastery of knowledge and social control by educational bodies. Therefore, in internal (school) and external (SAEB and ENEM)³ assessments, this young person does not appear in the grading index as an active subject (praxis) in the knowledge process, but as a number that indicates only academic success or failure, the average in school dropout, indiscipline, and socioeconomic status, reflecting the differences between social classes themselves. This dichotomy in education also reflects the pedagogical complexities of attempting to draft a document with universal guidelines and global reach, in addition to the political and economic disputes involving developed and peripheral countries.

On the other hand, teachers are overburdened beyond their teaching duties, undergoing not only a didactic-pedagogical effort that affects their psychological well-being, given the countless socio-educational difficulties, but also the systemic logic of ensuring their income along with the success of the entire educational process. Delors (1996, p. 30) even seems to regret the role of teachers' movements, understanding that “[...] Most teachers are members of unions – in some cases, powerful unions – which are, undeniably, committed to the protection of their corporate interests”. Thus, he advocates dialogue between teachers and society, public authorities, and trade unions, but “under a new light,” one that is overly subsumed by neoliberalism under the guise of democratic dialogue.

The pedagogical vision of the Delors Report (1996) falls under the category of technical education, in a bureaucratic model, adopting standards to evaluate teaching and learning and meritocratic selection. Thus, “[...] within a technocratic conception of education, the educator takes on the role of a controlling agent, a defender of the interests of the State within the school and not a defender of the interests of citizens before the State” (Gadotti, 1998). In this technocratic system, educational subjects therefore play different roles within the logic of capital, but ones that are indispensable for the success of educational reforms.

According to Delors (1996), the main players or subjects should be: UNESCO, the World Bank, political leaders (national and local), intellectuals, businesspeople, school heads, teachers, volunteers,

³ SAEB – National Assessment System for Basic Education and ENEM – National Secondary Education Examination

parents, and students. The relevance of each of these subjects can be ranked in the following order, according to Delors (1996, p. 29): “[...] first of all, the local community, including parents, school heads and teachers; secondly, the public authorities; and thirdly, the international community”. Therefore, the document concludes that, without these political agents, educational reforms tend to fail.

The ideological contradictions of this technobureaucratic [rigidly bureaucratic and technical] practice, therefore, appear in Delors (1996) in the aspects that define the role of subjects (teacher and student) in the teaching-learning relationship. At first, the document states that “[...] It is the responsibility of the teacher to impart to the pupil the knowledge that humankind has acquired about itself and about nature and everything of importance that it has created and invented” (Delors, 1996, p. 22). And, at another point, it states that one might “[...] even imagine a society in which each individual would be in turn both teacher and learner” (Delors, 1996, p. 21). Thus, technocratic pedagogy, anchored in the system of competencies and skills, ignores teachers' epistemological elements of academic training that guide the teaching-learning relationship.

There is another obvious observation in the document, according to Maia Filho and Jimenez (2013): “Nothing is more contradictory to the paradigm of learning to learn than proposing an educational model that, strictly speaking, essentially appeals to the transmission of knowledge.” This concept presents a conformist, fickle, and dissociated subject (teacher and student) in educational practice. This phenomenon seems to reproduce the social contradictions of the Conference itself, marked by human diversity, political plurality, and historical differences, in addition to the private interests of investors and associates of the World Bank.

According to the Report, it is the role of education to provide access to technical knowledge for all, from an individual perspective, linked to an intimate psychological process, so that it can “[...] helping people to understand the world and to understand others” (Delors, 1996, p. 51). This proposal of compartmentalized knowledge, in the sense of a “banking education” in Freire (1982), therefore, an abstract, evaluative and selective education, fragmented into the molds of a technocratic, entrepreneurial and voluntarist knowledge, seems to be a conformist and pedagogically limited response, in order to adapt to the reformist interests of capital.

The system articulates political, economic, sociocultural, and educational elements, as Delors (1996) points out, intending to establish an ideological crusade against any possibility of essential transformation of reality. In this way, it encourages a market-driven naturalization that fuels a process of praxis de-historicization and, in a daily basis, alienates the future of humanity. However, the desire to perpetuate capital does not seem to hold up against class struggles, under in the light of philosophy and praxiological criticism, or even the simplest dialectical analysis of historical and social reality.

Delors Report: The Ideological Process of De-historicization in Philosophy Teaching

The de-historicizing guidelines of the Delors Report (1996) are revealed by the way the document approaches education and, above all, the teaching of philosophy, presenting it in a universal, timeless, and functional way, detaching it from specific historical, social, and political contexts. Here are some key points from this analysis.

It can be observed that there is a pedagogical trimming applied to philosophy, stimulating an instrumental function, making it overly abstract, utilitarian, and distant from the concrete elements of the reality of social subjects. Gallo's criticism (2012, p. 21) makes sense when he states that "[...] since Aristotle, philosophy has been defined as an end in itself, and not as a means to achieve a specific goal." Thus, in his view, justifying philosophy as an instrumental method in the core curriculum of basic education is, itself, an anti-philosophical statement.

In fact, the Report regards philosophy not as a field rooted in historical traditions (Greek, modern, Latin American, etc.), but as a rational and utilitarian tool for developing general skills to be assimilated by all students: critical thinking, social harmony, capacity for dialogue, diversity, tolerance, resilience, and global citizenship. According to Gallo (2012, p. 37), "philosophy can, in fact, contribute to the exercise of citizenship and even to its construction," however, it cannot be limited to this instrumentalization, so it is necessary to be clear about the role of philosophy.

Universalization and obliteration of historical and social context is also the hallmark of an educational project that does not include critical thinking, discarding the Humanities, especially the teaching of philosophy. The ideological philosophical discourse embedded in the Delors Report (1996) seeks to propose a "global model" of education, valid for any country and, perhaps, any historical period. However, according to Gallo (2012, p. 38): "One cannot speak of 'philosophy' in general terms without specifying which philosophy we are talking about. Similarly, one cannot talk about 'teaching philosophy' as if it were something general and universal." In doing so de-historicizes the social subject, ignores the differences between philosophical cultures and traditions (African, Latin American, Eastern, and Indigenous) and the local historical teaching conditions.

Thus, philosophy is presented in a generic and abstract way, detached from social reality, as a homogeneous field, when in fact it is multifaceted and historically situated. Although it recognizes the diversity and plurality of philosophical thought, the Delors document (1996) is based on a notion of truth rooted in Eurocentric philosophy conceptions. Therefore, this universalization of philosophy adopts a

peculiar model as if it were a universal phenomenon, thus erasing the historical and social context of peoples and the praxis of countless subjects throughout history.

It is interesting to note that in this document, Karan Singh talks about “Educating for World Society,” but he envisions it as a voluntary act, based on individualized actions, even ‘appealing’ for peace amongst major religions, proposing that citizens, “[...] Let us, then, with utmost speed, pioneer and propagate a holistic educational philosophy for the twenty-first century [...]” (Delors, 1996, p. 226). In fact, this holistic philosophy about the planet and humanity does not address economic and political inequalities and social differences with systemic justice, nor does it hold companies (joint venture and private) and governments accountable for the lives of thousands of people, limiting itself to stimulating immediate educational processes and de-historicizing approaches to the human sciences.

On the other hand, in terms of philosophy teaching, the Delors Report (1996) focuses on developing competence on the study of philosophy history. In this sense, pedagogically, philosophy is closer to narrative and linear history, moving away from reflective and contextualized philosophical thinking. The text emphasizes the idea that philosophy should have a naturally utilitarian role, when it is known that human history transcends the natural, that is, the document aims to train complying citizens as if these were critical, harmonious, and responsible citizens of the “globalized world.”

The Delors Report (1996), even when based on aspects of philosophy history, disparages its teaching to a secondary level, reducing the discipline workload, and above all, denying the relevance of the discipline to the idea evolution process in their proper historical and social contexts. The risk is a univocal and abstract vision of philosophy and, without a doubt, this is already a reality that limits philosophical knowledge to a mere technique of thinking, without roots in the historical development of ideas.

In this sense, the teaching of philosophy is presented in an artificial, moral, and almost vocational logic, contributing ideologically to the undervaluation of its teaching, pedagogically reducing it to instrumental, universalizing, timeless, and functional precepts of thought. This includes the deletion of its historical context, the curtailment of critical thinking development among students, the ideologization of consumption and servile entrepreneurship, focusing exclusively on an ethic centered in a flexible and precarious labor market. Thus, a philosophy that aims only at the dystopian supremacy of capitalist praxis and, therefore, predicts the end of the historical social subject

CONCLUSION

In summary, the Delors Report adopts a de-historicizing discourse since it presents philosophy in abstract and universalizing pedagogical terms, aimed at developing global and timeless competencies, detaching it from local contexts and their historical traditions. This reinforces a linear time-based didactic approach to philosophy, reduced to a temporal vulgarism of official history, reinforcing an abstract, albeit functional and utilitarian, vision, weakening its real, plural, and critical historical dimension.

De-historicization as a political strategy aligned with the logic of neoliberal and globalizing discourse, which is, to foster adaptable, flexible subjects and “citizens of the world.” Thus, philosophy is valued as a transversal competence, but not as knowledge rooted in critical traditions that could question precisely the economic and political-cultural foundations of this neoliberal project of big capital. In other words: the Delors Report (1996) recognizes the importance of philosophy, but frames it within a functionalist, utilitarian, and pragmatic horizon.

De-historicization of philosophy teaching implies treating social praxis as something “natural,” decontextualized, depoliticized, and reified, removing its historical context to make it timeless, universal, or inevitable, that is, treating it as a fixed “thing” or autonomous fetish. It implies the obliteration of social conflicts, contradictions, chance events, and chance that arise phenomena. This simplistic view results in depoliticization, denialism, and fanaticism, which generates dogmatic resistance to criticism, making reflection and political transformation unfeasible.

In this educational logic, capital, in its pursuit of maximum valorization, unleashes an ideological process of praxis de-historicization, denying the real role of the social subject so that it (capital) can transform itself into the singular subject of history. However, this process of social praxis de-historicization does not occur peacefully; under the dialectical effect of contradictions, crises, and systemic limits of capital, it results in resistance, conflicts, and struggles that further intensify the political, economic, and cultural disputes between social classes.

REFERENCES

BOURDIEU, Pierre. *A dominação masculina*. Tradução de Maria Helena Kühner. 11.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2012.

DELORS, Jacques (chair). *Learning: the treasure within*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996. 266 p. (Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century). ISBN 92-3-103274-7. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000109590>. Accessed: 17 Dec. 2025.

FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia do oprimido*. 11.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1982.

FUKUYAMA, Francis. *End of history and the last man.* (The Free Press - Macmillan, Inc.). New York: The Free Press, 1992.

GADOTTI, Moacir. *Pedagogia da práxis.* Prefácio de Paulo Freire, 2^a ed. – São Paulo: Cortez: Instituto Paulo Freire, 1998.

GALLO, Sílvio. *Metodologia do Ensino de Filosofia.* Campinas: Papirus, 2012.

MAIA FILHO, O. N; JIMENEZ, Susana. A chave do saber: um exame crítico do novo paradigma educacional concebido pela ONU. In: SANTOS, Deribaldo; JIMENEZ, Susana; VIANA, Cleide; RABELO, Jackline (Orgs). *Educação pública, formação profissional e crise do capitalismo contemporâneo.* Fortaleza: EdUECE, 2013, p. 113-134.

MARX, Karl; ENGELS, F. *A ideologia alemã: crítica da mais recente filosofia alemã em seus representantes Feuerbach, B. Bauer e Stirner, e do socialismo alemão em seus diferentes profetas (1845-1846).* São Paulo: Boitempo, 2007.

MARX, Karl; ENGELS, F. *Manifesto comunista.* Tradução de Álvaro Pina. São Paulo: Boitempo, 1998.

MARX, Karl. *Capital: a critique of political economy. The process of capitalist production.* Vol. 1: Translation of the 3rd German edition by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. Edited by Frederick Engels. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1909.

MARX, Karl. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.* In: TUCKER, Robert C. (ed.). *The Marx-Engels Reader.* 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978, pp. 66-125.

MÉSZÁROS, Istvan. *Beyond capital: toward a theory of transition.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995.

VÁZQUEZ, Adolfo Sánchez. *Filosofia da práxis.* São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2007.

WORLD BANK. *Priorities and Strategies for Education: A World Bank Sector Review.*

Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, March 31, 1995. Available at:

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/482491492970287534/pdf/multi-page.pdf>

Accessed: 17 December 2025.



SANTOS JUNIOR, Francisco Joatan Freitas. Praxis de-historicization in philosophy teaching: Critiques of the Delors Report. *Kalagatos*, Fortaleza, vol.23, n.1, 2026, eK26012, p. 01-15.

Received: 12/2025

Approved: 01/2026