

## **Teaching philosophy in secondary schools: Reflections on academic language and the language of the vogue public**

**Ismael Braz de Sousa Silva<sup>1</sup>.**

### **ABSTRACT**

This article proposes a reflection on the teaching of philosophy in high school, considering the challenges imposed by academic language and the need to adapt to the language of the contemporary public, especially in a context marked by the dissemination of digital technologies. Based on an analysis of current demands and available tools, we seek to explore strategies to make philosophy more accessible and relevant to students, promoting greater integration between academic knowledge and the culture of vogue.

**Keywords:** Philosophy, High School, Language, Academic Knowledge.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The teaching of philosophy in high school today faces the challenge of reconciling the depth of philosophical concepts with the language that is accessible and attractive to students, in a context marked by the predominance of the culture of vogue and the influence of digital technologies. In this sense, it is essential to rethink pedagogical strategies and explore the potential of the technological tools available to promote a more dynamic and meaningful approach to philosophy in the school context.

The teaching of Philosophy in High School in Brazil is a trajectory marked by challenges, achievements and transformations. The inclusion of the subject in the Brazilian school curriculum dates back to the end of the nineteenth century, with the enactment of Law No. 1,331, of 1890, which established secondary education in the country. However, it was only in the 1930s, with the Francisco Campos reform, that philosophy acquired a more consolidated space in the curriculum, with the institution of disciplines such as "Introduction to Philosophy" and "History of Philosophy".

During the military regime (1964-1985), the teaching of philosophy faced severe restrictions and censorship, due to the critical and reflective character of the discipline, which was seen as a threat to the regime. The subject was almost completely excluded from the school curriculum, being replaced by subjects such as "Moral and Civic Education" and "Brazilian Social and Political Organization", which had a more ideological character and aligned with the interests of the government.

With the redemocratization of the country in the 1980s, the teaching of philosophy went

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<sup>1</sup> Federal University of Uberlândia – Minas Gerais



through a process of restructuring and resumption. The Federal Constitution of 1988, in its article 210, determined the mandatory teaching of philosophy and sociology in high school, as a way to promote the integral development of the student and the exercise of citizenship. However, the effective implementation of philosophy in the school curriculum still faced obstacles, such as the lack of adequate teacher training and the absence of specific teaching materials.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, there is a movement to value and strengthen the teaching of philosophy in high school, with the creation of public policies and continuing education programs for teachers, in addition to the production of didactic materials and specific pedagogical resources. Philosophy is recognized as a fundamental discipline for the development of critical thinking, ethical reflection and citizenship training of students.

The teaching of philosophy in high school in Brazil is an area in constant evolution and transformation, sometimes of retrogression, which often reflects the political, social and educational changes of the country throughout history. Despite the challenges faced, philosophy maintains its relevance and importance in the education of Brazilian students, contributing to the construction of a more democratic, critical society that is aware of its rights and duties.

In this brief history placed here, we will have as a starting point, if not the main problem of teaching Philosophy in High School, at least the most evident, although there are many other problems to be considered, let's start with language. It is important to point out that the symbiosis between language, literature and contextualization and Philosophy is manifested in their discourses and therefore didactic, in a junction of ideas and reflections. Through the art of the written and discursive word, literature places symbolic universes, beyond the layers of meaning, that nourish philosophy in its incessant search for the understanding of human existence and the world that surrounds it.

Literature, in its poetic and imaginative nature, emerges as a rich source of narratives that explore the depths of human experience. It addresses the complexities of the human condition, probing existential questions and moral dilemmas. Through metaphors, allegories and archetypal characters, literature provides a deep dive into the bowels of subjectivity, engendering a broadening of perspectives and a visceral connection with the intricacies of existence.

Philosophy, on the other hand, underpinned by reason and critical analysis, seeks to decipher the enigmas of the world through a rigorous intellectual discipline. It uses conceptual thinking to question, problematize and reflect on reality. Philosophy challenges established dogmas, instigates debate, and incites the relentless search for truth and wisdom. It is in this context that literature becomes an inexhaustible source of philosophical stimuli, providing empirical material for philosophical analysis and inquiry.

The difficulty in interpreting and understanding texts can be a formidable challenge in the



teaching of philosophy. Philosophy, by its abstract and dense nature, requires a careful reading and a thorough analysis of philosophical texts. This task becomes even more arduous when students do not have a solid command of reading and interpretation skills, as well as a literary foundation that allows them to move with ease through the intricacies of philosophical writing.

The difficulty in interpreting texts compromises the understanding of philosophy on several fronts. First, it obstructs the apprehension of philosophical concepts and arguments, preventing the absorption of the central ideas of the thinkers. In addition, the difficulty in interpretation makes it difficult to identify the nuances and subtleties present in philosophical texts, which are often full of metaphors, analogies and figures of speech that demand a sensitive and attentive appreciation. In this way, this difficulty also affects the capacity for critical analysis and reflection, essential skills for the study and practice of philosophy. To mitigate this problem, it is essential to invest in improving students' reading and textual interpretation skills by providing them with appropriate tools.

It is also necessary to emphasize the importance of teacher training, due to its local reality, where it may happen that teachers, without qualification in the area, assume the content due to lack of qualified teachers, a real problem throughout Brazil, with more or less intensity depending on the region. This is without punctuating the remuneration, which is also tragic. So there are clearly other preponderant factors that make it impossible to a great extent to learn philosophy and here we see, from our point of view, basic elements for one of the most important things. The concepts, the language and the abstractions, this inevitably goes through reading, interpretation of reading, reading comprehension and of course, the contextualization of it all.

Bearing in mind that, in some moments of student life, the student hears what we often do not say, this presupposes the gaps previously delimited as the basic elements for a good understanding of what is said, what is heard, what is understood and what is inferred. Almost a spiritual activity, the competence to make oneself understood transcends too much the intention of the word itself, would the word give an account of life? In this process, destructions and creations are always fundamental, because not being able to cope with life, words, almost always fragile, their signs are easily distancing themselves until they no longer make sense in vogue the following week. So, as Nietzsche (1882) suggests:

"Only as creators can we destroy! (...) to create new names, evaluations, and possibilities to, in the long run, create new things." (Nietzsche, in *The Gaia Science*, aphorism 58)

## **OBJECTIVE**

Philosophy, as a discipline that involves the reading and interpretation of texts, sometimes too complex, leads us to an immediate, but not immediate, reflection. If students do not have solid reading



skills, they may have difficulty understanding the concepts and arguments presented in philosophical texts. Lack of proper understanding can lead to misinterpretations and a superficial understanding of philosophy. Philosophy requires students to be able to articulate their ideas clearly and coherently through writing and speaking. Thus, if students have difficulties in the Portuguese language, they may face obstacles in expressing their philosophical ideas in a precise and cohesive way. This can limit their ability to effectively participate in philosophical discussions and to develop convincing arguments.

Philosophy involves critical thinking and building well-reasoned arguments. To develop these skills, students need to be able to read, analyze, and evaluate philosophical arguments accurately. Mastery of the Portuguese language and also of the school discipline of Portuguese is essential to carry out an in-depth critical analysis and to build logical arguments.

The study of philosophy involves understanding and appreciating the philosophical tradition throughout history. This implies the reading and interpretation of classical philosophical texts written in Portuguese, such as the works of Lusophone philosophers (e.g., Camões, Pessoa, Machado de Assis). Poor performance in Portuguese can limit students' ability to fully engage with these texts and appreciate the richness of the philosophical tradition in the Portuguese language. Thus, the mastery of the language and the discipline of Portuguese, especially the reaffirmation of literature in an aggressive and assertive way in Elementary School, would be essential for the effective study of philosophy in High School, as it affects the comprehension of texts, the clear expression of ideas, critical analysis and argumentation, as well as the appreciation of the philosophical tradition. Therefore, poor performance, which has repeatedly been consolidated as a national failure for decades, can hinder the learning process and the development of essential philosophical skills.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **ACADEMIC LANGUAGE AND THE CHALLENGE OF ACCESSIBILITY**

The philosophical language traditionally employed in academic environments is not always accessible to high school students, which can lead to distancing and disinterest.

It is necessary to rethink the way philosophical concepts are presented, seeking a clearer language that is closer to the students' experience.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) was undoubtedly one of the influential philosophers of the twentieth century and, why not say, the main responsible for the linguistic turn of philosophy, a movement that placed language at the center of philosophical reflection, no longer appearing only as a means to name things or transmit thoughts.



Things, by themselves, are meaningless, for they gain meaning when they are related to other things. In the same way that we can't think of something outside of space and time,

"nor can we think of any object outside the possibility of its connection with others" (Tractatus, 2.0121).

## THE LANGUAGE OF THE VOGUE PUBLIC AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

The culture of vogue, marked by the speed and fluidity of digital communication, directly influences the way young people understand and interact with the world around them.

Digital technologies, such as social networks, video platforms, and interactive applications, offer new possibilities for the dissemination of philosophical knowledge in a more accessible and engaging way.

The language of the vogue public, a term that we understand here as a contemporary language characterized by fluidity, speed and informality, is intrinsically linked to the context of digital technologies. We live in an era where communication is largely mediated by electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, and computers, and online platforms such as social media, instant messaging apps, and content-sharing sites. This digital reality shapes not only the way we communicate, but also the way we think, learn, and relate to knowledge. In this sense, the language of the vogue public reflects not only a linguistic transformation, but also a cultural and behavioral change, influenced by the dynamics of the internet and social networks.

Digital technologies play a key role in the dissemination and consolidation of this language of the vogue public. Through platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp, users have the opportunity to share ideas, opinions, and experiences instantly and globally, using resources such as emojis, slang, memes, and short videos. In the school context, digital technologies have been increasingly incorporated into the teaching-learning process, even, perhaps, in a symbiotic way beyond the ideal world, providing new opportunities for pedagogical practice and the construction of knowledge. Tools such as educational games, simulations, virtual reality, and virtual learning environments allow students to explore complex concepts in an interactive and immersive way, contributing to more meaningful and engaging learning.

## STRATEGIES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF VOGUE PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

Use of videos, podcasts and other audiovisual resources to present philosophical content in a more dynamic and attractive way.

Integration of social networks and digital platforms in the teaching-learning process, promoting debates and reflections on philosophical topics relevant to young people.



Encouragement of the production of content by the students themselves, using languages and formats that dialogue with their experiences and interests.

The language of the vogue audience and digital technologies are intrinsically intertwined, influencing and being mutually influenced. In this context, it is essential that the teaching of philosophy in high school takes into account not only the academic language, but also the language of the contemporary public, seeking to establish a bridge between philosophical knowledge and the cultural experiences and practices of students in the digital age.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

According to the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the performance of Brazilian students in reading fell short of what was desired. PISA is an assessment conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that measures the performance of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics and science.

In PISA 2018, Brazil scored on average reading at 413 points, lower than the OECD average of 487 points. This score placed Brazil in the 57th position among the 77 participating countries. The difference between Brazil's average score and the OECD average was approximately 74 points.

The percentage of Brazilian students who reached the highest levels of reading proficiency was relatively low. Only 1.8% of Brazilian students achieved proficiency levels 5 and 6, which are considered advanced, compared with the OECD average of 9.4%.

These results indicate that there are significant challenges to be faced in the Brazilian educational system in relation to reading. Ongoing efforts are needed to improve students' reading proficiency, comprehension of complex texts, and critical analysis skills. The development of reading skills is critical not only for the discipline of philosophy, as mentioned earlier, but also for overall academic success and full participation in society.

When contemplating the data, we see factual images covered by a period prior to the COVID 19 pandemic that would ravage the world until the days in vogue, so we are waiting for the imminence of another report for December 2023 where, without a doubt, we will see something, if not more tragic, in the best of conditions the repetition of what is there.

When we reflect on language, the main theme addressed in this work, we inevitably bump into the locality, the culture, the history, the morals, the ethics and the politics of the same, thus, the visit often in the Nietzschean thought, a famous author of the nineteenth century who dedicated his work to the overthrow of idols that sought to leave life and becoming tacit and without any creativity. one of them that we will try here is the truth, a truth explained only in fruitless concepts said in empty and lifeless words, we will see a Brazil marked by the Judeo-Christian culture, a culture that Nietzsche



criticized in his time and this criticism, also pertinent to Christianity in vogue.

Nietzsche had a peculiar view of language, which is largely reflected in his work *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886). For him, language is not simply a means of communication between human beings, but is essential for the construction of the reality in which we live as destroyers and creators of it. Nietzsche argues that language shapes our thoughts, feelings, and perceptions in such a way that we are unable to separate objective reality from what is subjective and constructed through language. Nietzsche saw language as something dynamic and constantly evolving. He believed that language was not a tool for expressing ideas, but also a destructive force for the overthrow of idols in tacit conditions such as superior truths that subordinate us and a creative force that could generate new concepts in the future. He emphasized the importance of creating new words and subverting the meaning of existing words to expand understanding and knowledge.

Thus, Nietzsche also addressed the question of truth in language. For him, truth is not something that can be attained through language itself as cold, lifeless words and concepts, because language, thinking in this way, always reflects a perspective or point of view, which for him would be very dangerous. Instead, Nietzsche argued that truth was a matter of perspective and that the goal should be to broaden and enrich our understanding of the world, but of that world and not another idealized, metaphysical one outside of us.

Brazil, a country of many social, political, economic problems and above all what we will address here, namely, education. These problems that seem unsolvable to us, perhaps because of their culture of the future always waiting for better days that do not come, in the case of the education of our children, adolescents and young people are not immune to this neglect.

A country of absolute truths, of cold concepts devoid of life, every day a new and uncreative concept appears trying to explain life and inevitably the curricular matrices encompass these idols as the current "savior", but the plan of salvation is always and will be frustrated by the lack of life. PPP without life, Evaluation without life, Curriculum without life, Knowledge without path, Teaching without life and in the midst of so many whitewashed sepulchres an immanent possibility in the words of Nietzsche (1882):

"(...) We must continually give birth to our thoughts in the midst of our pain, motherly giving them all the blood, heart, fire, pleasure, passion, torment, consciousness, fate, and fate that is in us. To live - this means, for us, to continually transform into light and flame all that we are, and also all that touches us; We cannot do otherwise." (Friedrich Nietzsche, in 'The Gaia Science', Prologue)

It does not seem to us to be a good tone, a language devoid of life, which may not have its effectiveness proven in the world of life. How can we talk about Human Rights when the urgency is



pain in the stomach, even hunger? How can the suppliant identity cries for resignification if those who continue to be arrested and killed in the favelas are the young black people? And the ideological representations, therefore not of this world, of this life that, in their condition of stillbirth, appear to us as opportunistic images of 513 hysterical, childish and diabolically evil parliamentarians in Brasilia/DF? Hope in these cases and in many others seems chaste to us.

If the intention is to communicate in education with the beings who are in it, the famous author suggests that everyone be filled with life, life experienced in tastes, smells, shivers, desire, frustration, fall, rise, everything that is said is said, feeling, living, participating, being a beginning, a middle, an end, a return. When Nietzsche (1882) affirms the need for a transvaluation of values, he refers to the possibility of deconstructing this structure. Rethinking language, evaluating the relationship that culture has established with communication codes, as well as the laws and principles that it has determined for utterances, is one of the conditions for our communication to begin to make some sense. The whys of life have changed a lot in the 21st century and empty representations didn't fit then, maybe now. Looking closely at these issues and things that we still worry about in the 21st century, such as: Basic sanitation, illiteracy, one of the worst salaries paid to teachers. It is important to remember that we initially addressed PISA in this work and now, after the COVID19 pandemic, we do not have, as predicted, not that there are prophets here, it is that you cannot expect different results having the same practice for decades, a considerable improvement in the picture.

Brazilian averages in 2022 were practically the same as in 2018 in math, reading, and science. Since 2009, results have been stable in all three disciplines, with small fluctuations that are mostly not significant. Although the OECD average in this edition of the study is the lowest in the entire time series (since 2000), students in Brazil scored lower than it in all three subjects.

**Mathematics** – In 2022, the average Brazilian performance was 379 points in mathematics. The score is lower than the average for Chile (412), Uruguay (409) and Peru (391), while there is no statistically significant difference between the average for Brazil, Colombia (383) and Argentina (379).

Of the Brazilian students, 73% recorded low performance in this discipline (below level 2). This level is considered by the OECD to be the minimum standard for young people to be able to fully exercise their citizenship. Among OECD member countries, the percentage of those who did not reach level 2 was 31%. Only 1% of Brazilians achieved high performance in mathematics (level 5 or higher).

**Reading** – The average Brazilian performance was 410 points in reading. The score is statistically lower than the average for Chile (448) and Uruguay (430), but higher than that of Argentina (401). There is no statistically significant difference between the average for Brazil, Colombia (409) and Peru (408).





Of the Brazilian students, 50% had low performance in this discipline (below level 2). Among OECD member countries, the percentage of those that did not reach this level was 26%. Only 2% of Brazilians achieved high performance in reading (level 5 or higher), while in OECD countries, the concentration was 7%.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

With this information, we see a long way ahead, we need to make a lot of progress in the numbers presented. We also point out that without the possession of basic elements such as reading and mathematical logical reasoning, not only philosophy but all curricular components of Brazilian High School suffer too many negative influences.

The teaching of philosophy in high school faces the challenge of adapting to the demands and languages of contemporary audiences, without losing sight of the depth and complexity of philosophical themes. In this sense, the integration of digital technologies and the search for a more accessible and engaging language are promising ways to make philosophy a relevant and meaningful discipline for students, contributing to the formation of critical and reflective citizens in the digital age.



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