

# VOICE AND EXCESS: SPECULATIVE, ETHICAL-POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES TO ORALITY

## La voz y el exceso: aproximaciones especulativas, ético-políticas y educativas a la oralidad

PEDRO BRAVO REINOSO\*

Hochschule für Philosophie München / Munich-Alemania

Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador /Quito-Ecuador

pedroabr@hotmail.com

Orcid code: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3619-4057>

### Abstract

This article explores an unattended component in the field of language philosophy, namely: the voice. Through the theoretical apparatus of representatives of the so-called Slovenian psychoanalysis, especially Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, it is intended to show that the voice is a communication component that resists its registration within the significant chain and on the contrary it is presented as a limit and, at the same time, an excess in meaning, which opens possibilities to think about the way in which the integration of the subjects occurs in the existing social order. In this way, the voice contains in its core a component that shows the antagonistic gap of the social, which would allow renegotiating the senses that order the social. The work constitutes a dialectical philosophical reflection on the phenomenon of the voice, since it explores speculative, ethical, political and educational aspects concerning this phenomenon, which aims to contribute to an understanding of orality over its instrumental aspects in the communication. That is, instead of understanding the voice as a secondary phenomenon in communication aimed at serving as a means to transmit a message, the voice appears as that which enables, interrupts and exceeds the communicative intentions of the subjects participating in the communicative dialogue. Finally, the article uses examples taken from the contemporary educational context, in which the way in which the voice bursts into education as an element of an eminently political nature is shown.

### Keywords

Voice, phonocentrism, education, ethics, politics.

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\* PhD in Philosophy at the Hochschule für Philosophie, München. Master's Degree in Culture Studies (Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Quito). Degree in Philosophy and Pedagogy (Salesian Polytechnic University-Quito). Professor of Philosophy of Education at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador. Research topics developed: youth studies, philosophy of education, cultural criticism. He is currently investigating the link between the Latin American philosophy of liberation and German idealism.

### Resumen

El presente artículo explora un componente poco atendido en el campo de la filosofía del lenguaje, a saber: la voz. Por medio del aparato teórico de representantes del denominado psicoanálisis esloveno, Slavoj Žižek y Mladen Dólar especialmente, se pretende mostrar que la voz es un componente de la comunicación que se resiste a su inscripción dentro de la cadena significante y por el contrario se presenta como un límite y, a la vez, un exceso en el significado, lo cual abre posibilidades para pensar la forma en la cual se da la integración de los sujetos en el orden social existente. De este modo la voz encierra en su núcleo un componente que muestra la brecha antagónica de lo social, lo cual permitiría renegociar los sentidos que ordenan lo social. El trabajo constituye una reflexión filosófica de carácter dialéctico sobre el fenómeno de la voz, ya que explora aspectos especulativos, éticos, políticos y educativos concernientes a este fenómeno, lo que pretende aportar a una comprensión de la oralidad por encima de sus aspectos instrumentales en la comunicación. Es decir, en lugar de comprender la voz como un fenómeno secundario en la comunicación orientado a servir de medio para transmitir un mensaje, la voz aparece como aquello que posibilita, interrumpe y excede las intenciones comunicativas de los sujetos que participan en el diálogo comunicativo. Finalmente, el artículo se sirve de ejemplos tomados del contexto educativo contemporáneo, en los que se muestra la manera en que la voz irrumpe en la educación como un elemento de naturaleza eminentemente política.

### Palabras clave

Voz, fonocentrismo, educación, ética, política.

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## As an introduction

Hegel in the introduction to the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (2010) questions the image of knowledge as a mere instrument to know reality, in the manner of some lenses that we use to look more or less clearly at certain phenomena that are beyond the cognizant subject. In this perspective, the function of scientific theory and, in our case, philosophy, is to refine this instrument so that reality appears as clear as possible, without spots or signs of manipulation. However, contrary to this conception of knowledge as something neutral, Hegel (2010) categorically writes:

For, if cognition is the instrument for getting hold of absolute being, it is obvious that the use of an instrument on a thing certainly does not let it be what it is for itself, but rather sets out to reshape and alter it. If, on the other hand, cognition is not an instrument of our activity but a more or less passive medium through which the light of truth reaches us, then again, we do not receive the truth as it is in itself, but only as it exists through and in this medium. (p. 143)

From this quote it is inferred that knowledge is an activity that always affects the studied reality as such, either as a passive mediator, that is, as a capture of the object that only happens within the limits of consciousness, or as an active mediator, in the sense that consciousness continuously distorts the studied object. One way to avoid such intrusions of

consciousness in access to reality would be to eliminate the elements that correspond to consciousness from the object, but as Hegel observes, the final product would still be an effect of consciousness. Therefore, both consciousness and objects are trapped in a dead end: either we know reality only as scattered fragments that cannot be integrated, or conscience has to pay the price of giving up any accurate and absolute knowledge of reality.

The strategy deployed by Hegel to overcome this impasse, as commented Žižek (2015), lies in a shift in the way the problem of access to reality is understood, since this happens to be an epistemological problem, understanding the conditions of possibility that make valid the knowledge of the phenomenal, to a fundamentally ontological one, since the representations that the subjects make of the reality are not external marks that adhere to the objects, but they are a constitutive part of the same. Said in a summarized way: reality is also constituted from what the subject knows about it. Consciousness is not the problem to eliminate, but to integrate into the object, hence for Hegel (2010) there is a speculative identity between the subject and the world, but not in the sense of an 'I' abstracted from reality, around which reality has to be accommodated, but for him the objects of the world are not neutral data that need to be processed and interpreted by a subject, but the objects are understood as they really are and only by the reference and relationship that they establish with the subjects. Consciousness does not distort reality, but due to it, new aspects of objects can be revealed, which in turn open up the possibility of thinking about new horizons of understanding reality.<sup>1</sup> Hence, in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel proposes, through consciousness that reaches absolute knowledge, to overcome any metaphysical foundation of reality<sup>2</sup>, that is, for the German philosopher there is no noumenal reality that hides behind the world of appearances. There is no absolute foundation of reality that transcends the limits of what can rationally be known and justified, since for Hegel the speculative identity between subject and object is nothing other than the recognition that the rational foundations that the subject establishes to understand the reality has an absolute character, and they are not mere theoretical constructions or biased images of reality. The truth lies in appearances, since, paradoxically, the only way to access the absolute is through a point of view located in reality. We must insist, the subjective is the door that opens the way to the knowledge of the fundamental structure of reality.

Following this line of thought, the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, states that a subjective displacement in the form of observation



of an object leads to an ontological transformation in the object as such. This is what he calls the parallax vision:

subject and object are inherently “mediated,” so that an “epistemological” shift in the subject’s point of view always reflects an “ontological” shift in the object itself. Or—to put it in Lacanese—the subject’s gaze is always-already inscribed into the perceived object itself, in the guise of its “blind spot,” that which is “in the object more than the object itself,” the point from which the object itself returns the gaze. (Žižek, 2016, pp. 25-26)

This has nothing to do with a certain relativistic attitude according to which there is no alternative but to accept that reality is a set of opposing narratives, all with the same or equal explanatory power over the world. The parallax is not a truth about the reality that lies behind our partial observations, but the truth is a certain gap that constitutes reality as such and that prevents it from being completely itself. Read in this perspective, what the Hegelian dialectic shows is the way in which negativity is located within objects, which means that they are never reconciled with themselves, but inhabited by an inherent contradiction that becomes visible through the place which are observed. The inconsistencies of our knowledge are not flaws in the observation or analysis of data, but reveal the strength of negativity as the fundamental component of the world.

*Mutatis mutandis* this also happens with language. That is to say, this is not a mere instrument or support for communication, nor is it a means oriented solely to transmit a knowledge ‘about’ the world, but there is a discursive nature of reality, since the different components that make up Human communication reveal ontological aspects of the structure of reality, in such a way that the subject not only enunciates something in relation to some aspects of the world, but that through his statements the world as such manifests itself. Language, as will be discussed more in depth later, does not form a closed network of meaning, but is crossed by an excessive presence, by a point of negativity that puts in suspense the order of the symbolic and, as such, allows to visualize the antagonisms that constitute reality, and for the objectives of this article, the split that is found in the social reality of the educational field. This element is the voice, which, from a parallax displacement like that proposed by Žižek, is revealed as the gap in the significant chain, as the point that exceeds the scope of meanings. In other words, the voice is the element that instead of serving as a vehicle for communication is rather the obstacle that makes it possible and threatens to dilute the meaning of language emissions.



This article has an approach to the phenomenon of the voice and its participation to understand the field of education.

This article constitutes an approximation to the phenomenon of the voice and its relevance to understand the field of education. For this purpose, we intend to follow the speculative reflections that Slovenians Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, in a Hegelian-Lacanian code, to situate the voice as a phenomenon that disrupts the relationship with the world of the symbolic. In this way it is intended to outline some theoretical elements relevant to the philosophical understanding of the field of education. To this aim, it is shown that within postmodern reflection there is a lack of attention to the problem of the voice, since the Frenchman Jacques Derrida has installed the idea that the deconstruction of *logos* has to be oriented towards the field of writing, since orality would enjoy greater privilege. Thus, in the first section, it is intended to refute this idea. Next, the relationship that the voice has with the so-called order of the symbolic, and how the voice, in its phenomenal aspect, is shown as the condition of communication impossibility. Finally, in the last section, some inferences that affect the educational field and the philosophical understanding of communication within educational and specifically school relationships are presented.



## Is metaphysics reduced to the logocentric/phonocentric pair?

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1985) in his deconstruction of Western metaphysics states that it has been erected on the concept of presence as a guarantor of the unity and consistency of phenomena. A sample of that, according to Derrida, constitutes the Husserlian phenomenology, in which the phenomenon is approached as presence identical to itself, unconditioned, and fully accessible to the subject by means of phenomenological reduction. This is what is known as the return to the same things (*Zurück zu den Sachen selbst!*) Posed by Husserl (2006): “Phenomenology expresses descriptively, with pure expression, in concepts of essence and in regular statements of essence, the essence apprehended directly in the essential intuition and the connections founded purely on that essence” (p. 216). For Husserl, thinking is directed on objects which are presented as units that can be identified and represented.

Now, in order for the unity of the object to be presented as such, the perception of it must contain a temporal space unit that ensures the unity

of the phenomenon. If for example I observe a building that is in front of me, I must be certain that in the immediate past and in the near future this object will contain the characteristics of a building, as well as, if I observe only its front face, I must be sure that in the back it will remain a building and not become an object outside of that convention. The presence of the phenomenon is a certain agreement that the subject makes with the objects so that they can interact with each other in a coherent way.

Derridean deconstruction is aimed at destabilizing these presuppositions, since he emphasizes that difference is a constitutive part of phenomena. Derrida (1985) intends to dismantle the entire system of thought of Western metaphysics, for which he finds in difference the condition of possibility of presence, and of the representation of it. There is no access to identity itself, because there is no such entity; what there is access to is to difference, which is a non-presence:

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This relationship with the non-presence, once again, does not come to surprise, to circle around, even to disguise the presence of the original impression: it always allows its emergence and its renascent virginity. But it radically destroys any possibility of identity with itself in simplicity. (p. 119)

If there were no such difference, things would always be perceived and represented in the same way. With this, Derrida does not want to affirm that we inhabit a fictional world in which things, like the building of the previous example, spontaneously transform into mythological beings or implode into nothingness. For Derrida there is an aspect in phenomena that cannot be fully symbolized and whose meaning varies from context to context. However, this openness to difference is achieved for Derrida only by means of writing, since the texts would offer an expressive and interpretative plasticity that everyday language, specifically speech, does not. Hence, deconstruction is developed primarily through literary studies.

In this perspective, the literary shows itself as a resource of emancipation, while the sound, the voice, appears rather as a retardant element, so to speak, since it resists capturing the difference as such, and takes refuge in a certain substantial unity of the phenomena. That is why for Derrida the metaphysics of presence is nothing but another name for phonocentrism, since the logos has always been immanent to the spoken word. Writing, in this perspective, has been subject to the phonetic because the voice is pronounced on the presence of an object, while writing does not refer directly to an object, but it is presented as absent, for that reason, for the Western thinking, writing has led to misunderstandings:

Insofar as the ideality of the object seems to depend on the voice, and thus become *absolutely available* in it, the system that links phenomenality to the possibility of the Zeigen [point, point] works better than ever in the voice. *The phoneme is given as the dominated ideality of the phenomenon.* (Derrida, 1985, p.136)

According to this, voice and logos are presented as elements linked in a line of continuity, as those that ensure the consistency of reality in its ontological aspect.<sup>3</sup> However, is the voice a mere evanescent mediator who submits to objects? Is literature the only escape route to any kind of metaphysics? For the Slovenian philosopher Mladen Dolar, the logos/voice articulation is not as simple as deconstructivism shows, since within the history of metaphysics the discontinuities between them are much more evident than Derrida considered<sup>4</sup>, which would imply a revision of the role that voice occupies in its relationship with phenomena. The Dolar's goal is to show that the voice is not the mere companion of the logos, the vehicle of the rational, but that there are elements in the voice that transgress the logos as such and that must be made visible.



## The excessive character of the voice

Dolar proposes a political analysis of the phenomenon of the voice, for which he points out how from Aristotle the voice is not a mere sound articulation by means of which the signifiers are communicated, but in it lies the origin of the politics. In this regard, the Stagirite notes the following:

The reason why man is a social being, more than any bee and that any gregarious animal, is evident: nature, as we say, does nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. For the voice is a sign of pain and pleasure, and that is why animals also possess it, because their nature reaches a sensation of pain and pleasure and indicates it to each other. But the power of speech is to manifest the convenient and the harmful, as well as the just and the unjust. (Aristotle, 1988, pp. 50-51)

The fundamental distinction between men and animals lies in the possession of speech (*logos*), which unlike the mere voice (*phonē*), is not limited to the field of the sensible, to the mere perception of things and in a quasi-instinctive behavior, but is able to generate a mediated relationship with the world and therefore ethically judge the acts to identify that which is good for the community, that which is close to the ideals of justice and political rectitude. In this case, speech comes to signal the

point of rupture of the animal with the human, its lack of continuity, but as observed by Dolar (2007), this does not rest on a mere naturalism, that is, on a biological phenomenon, but that the constitution of the word has a political nature, while the definitive question of the *polis* consists in the question of whom to grant and also to whom to deny the ability to speak<sup>5</sup>. Thus, in the public sphere there are some subjects that emit rational discourses, and others, that despite using language, border the threshold of animality and their discourse is reduced to exclamations motivated by impulses that have no validity or legitimacy. The logos retroactively establishes those subjects who only emit sounds (mere voice), of those who can only communicate ‘sounds’ in the public space.

The voice is not any kind of remnant of a precultural biological state, but is the product of the logos, it is that which invigorates and at the same time disturbs speech. For this reason, for Dolar (2007) the concept of phonocentrism does not do justice to the fact that the voice, instead of being an epiphenomenon of the rational, has been rather characterized as an element associated with the residual, the sensual, the animality and it is contingent, contrary to the written word, particularly the law, which rests above its condition of being or not pronounced:

The history of “logocentrism” does not quite go hand in hand with “phonocentrism,” that there is a dimension of the voice which runs counter to self-transparency, sense, and presence: the voice against *logos*, the voice as the other of *logos*, its radical alterity. “Metaphysics” has always been very well aware of that, as we have seen, compulsively clinging to a simple exorcizing formula, repeating it over and over again, compelled by the same invisible hand throughout millennia. Maybe what defined it as metaphysics was not just the demotion of writing, but also the banishment of the voice (Dolar, 2007, p. 67).

What is the need to prohibit or at the least control the voice? What is the monstrous aspect that it contains? Slavoj Žižek (2007) comments that in the voice there is no relation of transparency between the subject and the pronounced thing, much less the subject with itself. When the subject listens to himself speak, his identity is short-circuited, as he fractures and when he hears his voice there is recognition of a foreign body that inhabits him.<sup>6</sup> The ‘voice of conscience’ paradigmatic figure in children’s stories is a very good example of this situation, because it indicates the irruption of a foreign agent that prevents the character from listening to himself. Or one can also think of the reaction of a subject when listening to himself talk through a radio recording: ‘That is what I sound like? Am I the one who is really talking?’ Žižek says in this regard:





The voice's 'self-identity' resides in the fact that the voice qua medium of transparent self-presence coincides with the voice qua foreign body which undercuts my self-presence 'from within'. In the antagonistic tension between signifier and object, voice is thus on the side of the object: voice, in its fundamental dimension, is not the ideal (totally transparent, pliant, self-effacing) signifier, but its exact opposite, the opaque inertia of an objectal remainder. (2007, p. 100)

The voice is not defined by its utilitarian aspect, it is not oriented to satisfy a need, in this case to generate the conditions for communication between subjects, but it has a disruptive nature, it is plagued by an excess that makes the dialogue lose its character of being a mere face-to-face link, since the voice, in its ephemeral irruption in the intersubjective encounter, is that part of the signifier that resists meaning, because the meanings of a statement can become its opposite by a certain mode of presence of the voice. This is similar to when an educator asks his students if they have understood the lesson, and everyone in chorus responds in unison and almost stridently, 'Yes!' The voice, in this case, fulfills a function contrary to communication, since it is the surplus that puts at risk the generation of meaning in speech, therefore, the educational dialogue in this case, so that it can work, requires certain self-deception in the part of subjects that participate in it, and one have to pay a price: cancel the excessive component of the voice to take the meaning in its literal form, although neither educators nor students really believe what they have heard and said respectively.

Seen this way, the voice is in an ambiguous position. On the one hand, its existence depends on the subject, it needs someone to pronounce it, but on the other hand, its consistency and credibility is acquired by its reference to another (the other<sup>7</sup>), to the order of the symbolic, to the cause in which the subject is engaged. This is similar to what Heidegger (1993) proposes with the 'call of conscience', in which, the only way that *Dasein* has of leaving the anonymity of an existence in which it is already interpreted and immersed in the mass, it is to listen to that voice that impels it to assume its condition of project and projected in the world. This voice does not have a transcendent origin, but emerges from *Dasein* itself although it does not belong to it completely:

The fact that the call is not something which is explicitly performed by me, but that rather 'it' does the calling, does not justify seeking the caller in some entity with a character other than that of *Dasein*. Yet every *Dasein* always exists factically. It is not a free-floating self-projection; but its character is determined by thrownness as a Fact of the entity which it is;



and, as so determined, it has in each case already been delivered over to existence, and it constantly so remains. (Heidegger, 1993, p. 300)

This allows us to pick up another of the fundamental aspects of the voice. In its reference to the Other, the voice does nothing more than show the inconsistency or incompleteness that characterizes it. In this lies the ethical aspect of the voice, since it is the point of coincidence of two faults: both the lack in the subject (the subject is not the one who emits the voice), as well as the lack in the Other (the cause to which the subject seeks to commit is not fully realized either, it is a project, it does not exist by itself). The ethic of the voice consists in showing that the social order to which it appeals, to the possibility of an intersubjective consensus that allows to coordinate intentions and actions, is actually plagued by an inherent antagonism that prevents it from *being*. Furthermore, when the voice tries to suture the void of the Other, it becomes authoritarian and repressive uses of the voice. Dolar (2007) offers two extreme cases to understand this.

The first case he refers to is the voice of Hitler, the charismatic leader who dazzled audiences for his rhetorical capacity. The *Führer's* voice owes its effectiveness, as shown by Dolar, to occupying the voice of the Other, that is, what it mentions performatively produces the legal order of the social and the mode of insertion of the subject within that order. His voice, by itself, articulates the meaning of the nation and the political. It is a voice that runs over the laws, which rewrites them, since their enunciation has the effect of generating orders that must be immediately fulfilled.

The other example cited by Dolar is the case of the Soviet bureaucracy in the Stalinist period. In this case the voice of the officials is a voice devoid of vivacity, it is an opaque voice that limits itself to repeating mechanically the letter of the documents. This atonal use of the voice fulfills the function of serving a bureaucratic order, which shows itself as the representative of the people. Therefore, it generates the fantasy of a social order that works and sustains itself due to the inevitable obstacles of bureaucratic mediations.

Dolar, as has been said, comes to the conclusion that the voice emerges in the intersection of two absences: that of the subject and the Other, hence the ethnicity that is announced implies assuming the indeterminate character of the social, since the voice it is the excess that, at the same time, transgresses and sustains the functioning of the symbolic.



## The voice in education: the case of banking education and its interpellations

The philosopher of education Paulo Freire (2005) emphasized the role that language plays as a decisive component of the liberating educational practice. He warned about 'banking' education, that is, an education devoid of dialogue in which the learning contents are mere bureaucratic requirements that must be deposited in students, is based on the ability to transmit a message in a transparent way and without vestiges of residual elements in the act of teaching. This education, we say, shows that the voice of the teacher and the voice of the students fulfills the function of serving the institutional rituals that aim to ensure the alleged full character of the school, the nation, the culture, etc. This education, from the perspective we have been working on, is part of rites that help satisfy the Other, in which the subject surrenders, donates a part of himself, so that the Other acquires its impossible consistency. Think, for example, of acts where the voice is predominant: the raising of a flag, the singing of a hymn, civic or religious discourses, among others, are a performance of the voice in which the objective is to show that the social order in which the subjects are immersed really works, that there is effectively a collective identity to which the subjects can be ascribed and that gives them security. But its very enunciation, as we will try to show, makes the elements that exceed these representations based on social reconciliation re-emerge through the voice. Let's take some examples.

In June 2018 in the city of Quito a group of high school students from a major public educational institution spread a video through social networks in which the following scene can be observed: a teacher, with a stick in his hand, orders that a group of students form a line in front of him, since presumably they have committed some serious disciplinary offense. The video shows that, as a sign of punishment, the teacher proceeds to inflict a blow -not so hard- on the backside of each of these young people.

The scene, which seems to be taken from The Wall-Pink Floyd, has spread and, as expected in this type of case, provoked different reactions among those who support such measures as exemplars to correct the behavior of young people, and those who reject it because of its lack of relevance. In any case, the most striking was the reaction of the parents of that institution, since once it was known that the teacher was sanctioned and separated from the institution by the educational authorities, the parents organized a march not only to ask for the re-entry of the



teacher, but also for that type of practices to return more firmly to the schools. Nostalgia for the voice of the Other that breaks into the social out of all mediation? This is a sample of how the ideological fantasy of banking education works: it is not interesting to judge the institutional mechanisms that a school has to solve problems of coexistence, nor is it of interest to judge the effectiveness of physical violence -anyone knows that a blow with a stick it is not going to change a young person's life, much less when it is staged before a camera-, but that ideology creates the image that children or young people are the ones that cause such disorders in the school and therefore, the punishment shows that they are the necessary exception that strengthens institutionalism and traditional pedagogical practices.

In the same way, educators need to know that what they do is still working, that the methodologies they apply are still relevant and that the content they teach still has some meaning, even if they recognize that this is not the case. As Žižek (2003, p 57) would say "they know very well what they do, but still, they do it", since there is confidence that the school is still the place of the great Other, the space that can provide meaning and orientation to their lives and that of the students, or at least they have to stage or ritualize the school as if it can still work with the structure that saw it emerge and through the reinforcement of the banking-type pedagogical methods.

However, as suggested by the Argentine pedagogues Ignacio Lewkowics and Cristina Corea (2005), we find ourselves at a time when the pedagogy of bored is prevalent since there are educators who 'simulate' teaching and students who 'simulate' learning; educators who 'simulate' disciplining and students who 'pretend' to obey; educators who 'pretend' to have the monopoly of the word and students who 'simulate' listening, etc. The simulacrum school is one that is not capable of dealing with cultural transformations and one that externalizes its problems in particular subjects: students who are 'dysfunctional' or problematic. But what Freire comes to put in tension is that the school can only fulfill that task if it becomes a site of constant dispute, if it dares to take the step of reconstructing and de-structuring itself. In other words, a space that allows the ethical irruption of the voice.

The ethical, we must emphasize, lies paradoxically in an unethical element, namely: in the possibility of showing that the social is crossed by a constitutive failure that puts at risk all kinds of social conventions. This is what the Slovenian philosopher Alenka Zupančič (2011) calls an ethics of the real. That is, an ethic in which the subject is not only defined by his



commitment to a cause, but also, this commitment can lead to the sacrifice of the cause as such. Sacrifice in the sense of stripping ethical ideals as a field of values that remains beyond the contingencies of the material and finite world, as if the ideals were always the safeguard or resource that will help the subject in moments of deep anxiety. What Zupančič shows, repeating a Hegelian movement, is that values are not something that is 'beyond', but that the contingent, abrupt and inconsistent social reality is crossed by an excess, which is possible due to an infinite aspect, absolute. Reason why we must find the gap, the point at which the social breaks down and cannot be reconciled with itself. The voice, in this case, expresses a moment of duplicity of reality, of an unfolding in the finite reality that shows the infinite abyss that constitutes it.

Therefore, the voice rises towards the ethical and the political when it ceases to be a mere instrument to satisfy social rituals, and when it avoids its authoritarian enunciation, that is, when the subject is staged as the embodiment of social order. In this intermediate space, in the gap between the subject and the social order is when the voice acts as an ethical-political element. Ethical because it encourages reconsideration of social conventions and shows a subject that exceeds them, and political because it is oriented to generate other conditions, also contingent and provisional to live in society. Dolar (2007) says about this:

It is also here that we have to disentangle, from the sonorous and shrill voices, the non-sonorous voice of pure enunciation, the enunciation without a statement: the enunciation to which one has to supply the statement, the political statement in response to that voice—not by listening/obeying, not by merely performing social rituals, but by engaging in a political stance. (2007, p. 146).

A paradigmatic example is the ecological movement displayed by the young Swedish activist *Greta Thunberg Fridays* for future, which has attracted the attention of thousands of high school students in various parts of the world since, contrary to what one might think, it is not a mere strike school that seeks to replace education by a form of political activism, but that puts in evidence the same educational objectives, namely: the ability of educational institutions to train new generations in their full integration and participation in society. This youth strike puts the educational questions par excellence on the table for debate. What society do we educate ourselves for? What future does education advertise? The form of the strike is consistent with what we wanted to point out with respect to the voice, since the street demonstration is the expression par



excellence of the voice, of this ethical-political voice that wants to negotiate the meanings of the social, because it is a voice that shows the contingency and precariousness with which they are built.

Thus, by means of posters, slogans and other 'auditory' elements or elements that go beyond the mere literality of speeches, this voice reveals the abyss that constitutes the current democratic order. It is a political moment par excellence, which has provoked reactions that seek to appease this voice and re-circumscribe it within the limits of banking education. Sample of this last constitute the reactions of the German politician Christian Lindner who, at the beginning of March of 2019, facing the retorts that there were in the country regarding the climatic change school strikes, cataloged that the care of the climate is not a subject for children and young people, but for 'professionals', and therefore, the role of students within the school must remain the same: be academically trained so that in the future their voice will be inserted in the existing institutions. Within a few days of this statement, something really surprising happened. Scientists from Germany, Austria and Switzerland joined the strikes for a better climate policy and declared outright: *Wir sind die Profis und sagen: Die junge Generation hat Recht* (We are the experts and we say: youth is right).<sup>8</sup>

An educational policy of the voice is not limited to the letter of the texts or to the mere use of digital tools as educational resources, but it generates conditions of dialogue in which the voice fulfills a double function: to show the gap that crosses the Other and show, in turn, the excessive and disruptive character that subjectivity has. The case of *Fridays for future* is paradigmatic, because it is not only a claim directed at the political class, but it is a movement that is directed against itself, that is, they are young people who protest against their own lifestyle, who recognize that what they do in their daily lives has serious consequences for the sustainability of the planet. For this reason, the voice remains as a strange element to the subject and strange to the social, and it is in that opening where the educational operates as a liberating practice.

## Conclusions

There is a dialectical relationship between the voice and the word. That is to say, even though the rational tries to establish itself as an instance in which the argument prevails, it requires a surplus that makes it possible, otherwise, the logos remains as a "dead letter" incapable of generating any



kind of effect on the social. The educational is a space in which the voice manifests this role, since, although the content of teaching rests on school texts or is accessible through various digital platforms, its pronunciation in class makes it effective and gains legitimacy. There are even contents that are only transmitted through the voice, because they remain as the dark side of institutional planning. One can think, for example, of the 'hidden curriculum', which is not explicit teaching, but habits and ways of understanding reality that are formed by the excessive character of the voice.

The voice, therefore, escapes being a mere rhetorical device to transmit a message, or to lead a class before a group of students. The voice is the limit of intersubjective dialogue, it is what makes it impossible and at the same time allows communication, because it raises what crosses the symbolic, but in turn allows its redefinition. The voice, as excess, is what allows one to escape from the consensual narratives of language, in which communication, once it has eliminated antagonistic points, can articulate ideas and actions between subjects. As we have seen, in the voice there is a rest that resists meaning, hence the political and educational debate also revolves around the voices that can be heard, those that dispute the meanings, and the voices that are not audible because their single presence is an unbearable excess.

Seen this way, banking education is the 'utopian' place to which the educational institution aspires, since it is based on reciprocity in the exchange of signifiers: the statements are understood and reproduced as they are issued. Faced with this fantasy, the task of a liberating education, is not merely to generate another utopian scenario, but to risk showing that in the voice of educators and students, although there is a certain ventriloquist act, it also involves the possibility of living temporarily in the antagonism that structures the subject and his society.



## Notes

- 1 Rolf-Peter Hortsman (2008, p.74) summarizes the subject-object speculative identity in four fundamental aspects: 1) there is a subject that is related in different ways to the objects of the world; 2) each of these modes of relationship can be identified and differentiated; 3) within each relationship with the world there is a pretense of truth; 4) truth reaches its maximum point of expression when the object is identified with the concept that the subject has developed. But the latter is only achieved if the subject has gone through different stages of development or experiences of consciousness.
- 2 It surpasses the scope of this work to make a more detailed analysis of what Hegel understands by this absolute knowledge as the culminating point of the becoming subject of the substance. But what is important to consider is that it is not a deter-



ministic ontology that reduces the subject and the object to simple means of manifestation of an Absolute that is beyond consciousness, let alone Hegel intends to establish access to the eye of God 'as the point of view that brings together all points of view, or what is the same, a disconnected and abstracted view of all concrete reality. For a more detailed review of the postmetaphysical character of the Phenomenology of the Spirit, one can review Pinkard (1994, pp. 221-268), Solomon (1983, pp. 187-210; 295-318; 635-640), Taylor (2010, pp. 66-110; 183-192).

- 3 One can think, for example, of the role played by the voice-over as a cinematographic resource. This narrative element not only serves as orientation for the viewer to know first-hand the feelings and self-perception of the protagonist of the story, but also marks a point in which character is divided in two: on the one hand is the character that pursues a desire within history and that faces its antagonist to reach it, and on the other is its voice, which emerges as an element that has already been redeemed from the conflict that history is going through, because it is a voice that already knows what it will happen in history, and therefore, we, the spectators, somehow reassured us to know that the character will be victorious.
- 4 Proof of this is the metaphysical status that the voice has had in the philosophical reflection in antiquity and middle ages, specifically in regard to music, since on it, authors as diverse as Plato or Agustín coincide in the impossibility of voice as an element to show the essence of things, and instead propose a certain outlawing of the voice as it constitutes a corruption of the logos, since it is an element associated with sensuality and the accidental (Dolar, 2007, pp 57-67).
- 5 This approach is closely related to what is posed by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière (1996), who points out that the democratic order is founded through exclusion, a part-without-part in the social, who serve not as mere subjects that are outside the political, but that, in their exclusion, make possible the institutionality of democracy.
- 6 The voice, for Žižek, is the incarnation of a certain enjoyment, that is, of the obscene reverse that constitutes the social, as that inherent transgression that founds the social. Thus, for Žižek, politics is not the opposite of the domination of the impulses that threaten the social, but rather it is based on a way of regulating this enjoyment. For a more detailed explanation of the relationship between politics and enjoyment within Žižekian thinking, as well as the function that language fulfills in this interrelation, Finkelde can be reviewed (2013, pp. 19-76).
- 7 The concept of the Other in capital letters, the great Other, refers to what in the Lacanian field is known as the sociocultural network of linguistically mediated rules and customs that organize the social, or the insertion of the subject in the social. Hence, the Other is the one who structures the desire, because it is presented as the instance that can restore the loss that occurred to the subject by its insertion in the order of the symbolic. The Other implies a promise of completeness even if it remains inaccessible: "If speech is founded in the existence of the Other; the true one, language is so made as to return us to the objectified other, to the other whom we can make what we want of, including thinking that he is an object, that is to say that he doesn't know what he's saying. When we use language, our relation with the other always plays on this ambiguity. In other words, language is as much there to found us in the Other as to drastically prevent us from understanding him. And that is indeed what is at stake in the analytic experience" (Lacan, 1991, p. 244).
- 8 Personal translation In this regard, the following newspaper article can be reviewed (Brecht, 2019).





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