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Positioning and Conceptualizing  
Adult Education and Learning  
within Local Development

Proceedings Book

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**Positioning and Conceptualizing Adult Education  
and Learning within  
Local Development**

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## **“Technique of Thinking”, Information and Communication Technologies: Cinema and Philosophy of Education**

Rosemary Dore<sup>1</sup>

### **Summary**

If methodical thinking is not spontaneous but results from education, could Cinema help students understand concepts? Aiming at developing the “technique of thinking”, an experience at the Brazilian University, since five years, uses Cinema for debating concepts. Introduced by an analysis on using new information and communication technologies in education, is this paper’s focus.

### **Introduction**

In order to present reflections on the role of the media and of information technologies in relation to educating young people and adults, we refer to the science fiction tale "Profession", of Isaac Asimov (1957, 1971). In this short story the author suggests that future technologies will radically alter educational scenarios. He imagines a future in which teaching techniques have evolved to the point that learning occurs through a system of electrodes connected to the brain. At age eight people rapidly and electronically acquire the ability to read, write and count. At eighteen, they receive a professional formation by a methodological marvel that seemed to replace the slow traditional learning process we know. However, amidst the mind-blowing teaching scenario, Asimov describes the drama of a person whose professor prevents him from getting his professional formation by means of the electrode system. The young man feels he is different from others, and gets depressed. Why could he not be electronically educated computer programmer?

The answer to this question is rich with reflections on the relationship between the new teaching technologies and the process of producing and distributing knowledge. From the perspective of scientific production, Asimov stresses that production of new knowledge still depends on traditional investigation methods. These methods would not have their basic principles altered. They would still require the active intervention of individuals, in the old process of confronting the subject and the object, theory and practice. They would still demand a patient work of observation, reflection and experimenting. Only so would it be possible to create things new in science and technology. It was precisely this classic procedure that permitted the development of "cognitive packages" – knowledge that was compacted and inserted into the electrode system, in order to be transferred to the brains of individuals. And it is exactly because the traditional forms of producing knowledge did not change that the young man's drama becomes a privilege. Contrary to the other boys his age, his brain could not be electronically moulded, for it presented the necessary characteristics of a scientist. Therefore, instead of being submitted to the electrode system, he should rather follow the old path, which would allow him to be a producer of knowledge and technological innovations. But why could only a few individuals, in this tale, become scientists?

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Asimov transports the inequality that characterises culture and knowledge acquisition and the insertion in social and productive life in capitalist society. In this system, school organisation expresses its inner conflicts. Since it is one of the largest institutions discussing ideologies, the school constitutes one of the arenas of civil society in which the social classes dispute the direction of an educational project translating their own interests. On one hand, the dominant groups see school as an instrument to create consent favourable to maintain them in power, to the valorisation of capital, to formation of workers for tending to the demands of productive activities. On the other hand, lower classes see school as a space that enables them to accede to knowledge, capable of being articulated to their desires of social emancipation, insofar as it creates conditions for cultural ascension and strengthens their political struggles. The clash of contradictory social theories and practices currently influences the orientation and working of the school, which translates into different educational movements and pedagogic tendencies. It was this conflict that Asimov transported to the future, though without approaching or questioning its economic, social, historical and political bases.

Taking into account, therefore, that political and ideological struggles are expressed in school organisation, which direction should be taken to break with the unequal production and distribution of knowledge?

In contrast to Asimov's supposed future, Gramsci (1977) proposes to elevate simple common sense to the level of coherent and systematic thought. His preoccupation is the formation of lower classes for the role of leaders, thinking about the creation of a new hegemony. In other words, the intellectual and moral direction of society based on social equality. Beyond the formation for citizenship, he has in mind the formation of leaders: able to acquire abilities and skills that permit the lower classes to critique those who direct and to, in their own stead, direct and govern. Seeking this, Gramsci focused on how to develop capacities of comprehending the world, of abstracting, of judging – i.e., the logical reason so essential to the development of a new hegemonic project. Reflecting on this problem, he points out that logical reason is not spontaneous, innate. "Technique of thinking", "art of elaborating concepts", is acquired; it is a "qualification". Therefore, it depends on teaching. In the educational work for the development of the capacity of comprehending and creating concepts, "there must be a combination of deduction and induction, formal logic and dialectic logic, identification and distinction, positive demonstration and destruction of the old" (Gramsci, 1977, p. 2268). It is a matter as important as teaching how to read and write, and must be studied and taken into account when formulating didactic programmes.

Elevating "common sense" to the level of scientific knowledge demands, therefore, active work of educators, as intellectuals who perform the mediation between theory and practice. It demands conscience of the contrasts between the kind of society and culture they represent and the society and culture students represent. The professor's work, according to Gramsci, is a dynamic work, and his task is to "accelerate" and "discipline the formation of the child in accordance to the superior type that struggles with the inferior one" (Gramsci, 1977, p. 1542).

Amongst the great challenges now facing professors who wish to develop the "technique of thinking", there is dealing with diverse and varied information students can obtain from different media and Internet resources. How to develop with students the capacity of systemising, organising, relating and interpreting information, thus transforming it into knowledge?

## Technique of thinking and information and communication technologies: Cinema and Philosophy

Information sources, including the Internet and other audiovisual, such as cinema and television, are now disseminated in such a way that individuals can obtain information on any subject. This can bring about an "overdose" of information that, instead of helping produce knowledge, leads to paralysis. If today information is very democratised, its production, as in Asimov's tale, is restricted to small groups of researchers who control it entirely. Thus, while a small group is dedicated to conducting research, obeying rigorous methodological procedures, the vast majority of the population consumes the research products and is attracted to the new teaching technologies. Just as though it were possible to magically overcome all of the difficulties inherent to any scientific and technological production.

And how can we, teachers who are concerned with the formation of critical and participative subjects, face the challenges posed to teaching by informatics and electronics?

In Brazil, students who get to higher education – after an extremely selective process – carry, marks of problems related to quality that accompany primary education. One of the main and most serious deficits created by contemporary culture, reinforced and not yet overcome by primary education, is the formation of thinking, the capacity to rationally organise the fragments of information and to seek their meaning. The "technique of thinking", considered by Gramsci as essential to didactic and pedagogic programmes, is not being adequately developed. There is a lack of intellectual instruments for analysing reality, which would allow going beyond merely empirical and superficial impressions, yet rather strive to understand the complexity that sustains the appearances.

Information and Communication Technologies have emphasised the use of many audiovisual resources to diversify the means through which the educational activity is carried out. But when it comes to Philosophy – and especially the Philosophy of Education – there is a greater challenge. Not because we must necessarily be consumers of new educational technologies but, above all, because we aspire to improve the possibilities of developing the "technique of thinking" and the comprehension of philosophical concepts, fundamental as they are to the acquisition of intellectual and moral autonomy.

It is in the pursuit of creating conditions for analysing, discussing and acquiring concepts that we adopt didactic and methodological procedures bringing together Cinema and Education. Our pedagogic proposal for the teaching of Philosophy of Education, in the Pedagogy course of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (FUMG), is inspired in Gramsci's reflection on the development of the "technique of thinking". It seeks to promote the growth and intellectual autonomy of students as a group, and not just individually.

Moreover, we refer to Gramsci's well-known principle that "all men are philosophers" (Gramsci, 1977, p. 1342). We thus do not consider Philosophy something distant from every one's daily life, but rather as an important dimension of the process of abstraction and formulation of concepts, which allows one to comprehend the world and locate oneself in it – and, thereby, discover how to transform it. It is precisely due to the fact that Philosophy is a reflexive dimension of human activity that Gramsci considers it present even in the life of the most common people. This is what allows him to formulate the expression that universalises

philosophic activity, that "all men are intellectuals" (Gramsci, 1977, p. 1516). This does not mean that all men socially exercise the activity of a philosopher or a scholar; the philosopher "does not only 'think' with greater logic rigour, with more coherence, with more intense systemic spirit than other people, but he also knows the history of thought, i.e., he knows how to recognise the reasons why thought developed as it did, also being able to revisit problems, approaching them from the point they were after the attempts to solve them had failed etc." (Gramsci, 1977, p. 1342). Although thought itself is intrinsic to man, logical thought results from education. In other words, it is necessary to learn how to think.

The idea of bringing together Cinema and the Philosophy of Education aims at teaching how to think, how to transform information into knowledge. This depends upon orientations on how to construct and reconstruct the meaning of the film and its multiple relations to the reflection on life, considering the latter as historically organised and systematised in fields of knowledge. The film can be conceived as a new way of thinking, one that inspires a language animated by forces, intensities and variations of pace. It is not a matter of the film in itself, for every film contains worldviews allowing diverse readings.

Only very recently, has cinema been dealt with in the field of Philosophy. The issue is being subjected to many interpretations, amongst which those of Gilles Deleuze (1984, 1987), Umberto Curi (2000, 2002) and Julio Cabrera (2000, 2006).

Deleuze considers filmmakers as thinkers, and cinema is approached through concepts, as a thought mechanism. The film is a way of expressing thought, and one that articulates it differently from philosophical discourse. Deleuze's reflection uses Henri Bergson's thought as reference.

Bergson (1959) considers that the film, which is made up of instantaneous and immobile segments (photograms) succeeding one another, moving in an abstract and uniform time, is both measurable and impersonal. In a certain sense, he associates photography to cinematography, granting the latter a stronger illusory force. The film "can unroll ten, one hundred, a thousand times faster, without altering anything it creates (...)" (Bergson, 1969, p. 10-11). Conceiving the human perceptive apparatus as similar to the cinematographic apparatus, Bergson states that cinema produces the "illusion of movement". So cinema cannot acknowledge time. Existence, on the other hand, means time as duration, which is not conceivable as segmented and homogeneous moments, but rather as a complex movement that implies past, present and future.

Regarding Bergson's reflection, Deleuze agrees that cinema makes use of immobile segments. But he set differences between natural and cinematographic perception, explaining that the conditions that make perception possible also "correct" the "illusion of movement" in tandem with the exhibition of the images. In cinema, therefore, movement is not added to the image, but it appears conjointly to the image. The latter thus is a "movement-image", a "middle" image that possesses movement as an immediate piece of information (Deleuze, 1984, p. 15). From this concept arises the conception that cinema is movement itself.

Considering cinema a discipline as any other, Deleuze sees the making of a film as the creation of concepts. Philosophy is also the field of the formulation of concepts, and the latter, in order to exist, must be determined, must be "fabricated". The author thus seeks to suppress the distance

n art and science, stressing that both occur through the creation of concepts. When the  
t formulates concepts, he "creates", modifying the object of his own creation. Cinema, in  
s a continuous reinvention of stories, a process of creation. The same happens with  
phy, which is not a reflection on anything, but rather an invention. Analysing cinema as  
an of thought" and a new practice of images and signs, which creates its own concepts,  
e proposes the encounter of Philosophy with this conceptual practice. For him, it is not a  
n of philosophically representing cinema, but of considering cinema's images and their  
establishing parallels with the problems set forth or created by Philosophy.

to Curi (2000, 2002) has been analysing the relationship between Philosophy and cinema.  
ing to him, the deepest and most promising result is close to what Deleuze proposed. It is  
ective that had already been presented by Aristotle, when he said that "poetry is the most  
and philosophic thing". He stresses that Aristotle gave poetry a higher standing than  
because *poiesis* deals with the "universals", whereas History limits itself to the  
ars. Poetry is thus more philosophic, insofar as it refers to that which is "feasible" (*eikos*),  
History turns itself to what actually happened.

g Aristotle's thought to the sphere of cinematographic production, Curi explains that the  
ties of plot development, and not the content itself, are the decisive factor for inserting  
to the Greek philosopher's reflection on poetry, on tragedy. Nevertheless, after years of  
ality, there are now many signs indicating that the philosophical reading of cinema is  
g prominence. There is now a movement seeking to extract from cinematographic works  
ought" they preserve – and this movement no longer needs to justify itself. Based on this,  
roposes eliminating the conjunction that separates cinema from Philosophy. It is now time  
gnise that *cinema is Philosophy*.

zil, Julio Cabrera deals with the use of cinema in Philosophy. For him, the philosophical  
ion of cinema and literature is to be found in their concept-generating power. He  
ers that cinema is the only one capable of generating "logopathic" concepts (*logos*: word,  
reason; *pathos*: emotion, feeling, animus). Cinema's approach is based on "cognitive-  
ve" concepts, which overcome the traditional method of Philosophy. The latter is still  
etic", which is to say it still depends on the "purely intellectual [use] of concepts". The  
concept, says Cabrera, is "explicitly developed in conflict with the idea-concepts. It stages  
he idea-concept only talks about what it can only exteriorly refer to. The image-concept  
into the thing itself, being able to do so because it eschews traditional written  
phy's affirmative moralism in its compromise with pure reason, pure objectivity, pure  
ality, pure morality etc." (Cabrera, 2006, p. 44).

s why the image-concept enables the conjunction of Philosophy and cinema. Cinema  
es the experience of the cinematographic "image-concept", to the extent that it produces  
otive impact. And this impact also conveys a kind of knowledge that could not receive  
tic expression, but only a visual one, when exhibited through a live experience. Cinema  
nhances the conceptual possibilities of literature and philosophy, for, as it enlarges the  
sion of reality, it represents "the plenitude of a live experience, since it includes in itself  
rality and movement" (Cabrera, 2000, p. 15). It is not necessary the film be philosophical  
er for it to allow a philosophical reflection. It is sufficient for us to "dispose ourselves to

read the film philosophically", imposing the dimension of universality to the process of reading, independently of the intentions of the film director (Cabrera, 2000, p. 27).

The approaches of Deleuze, Curi and Cabrera, albeit with differences between them, point to a direction we consider fruitful and useful for our work in the teaching of Philosophy of Education: considering cinema in a didactic-pedagogic perspective for discussing, assimilating and elaborating concepts.

### **Philosophy of education and cinema. The experience at the Federal University of Minas Gerais**

Watching a film does not necessarily create the possibility of identifying ideas. It is necessary to develop a theoretical framework that enables one to "see", that creates a "competence for seeing". Dominating the audiovisual language is a fundamental requisite in contemporary society, in which visual communication, through images and not only via written language, came to be valued. Learning to watch and analyse films is a rigorous work. It clashes with other forms of perceiving the audiovisual language, forms that come from a non-explicit education, apparently "informal" or "spontaneous", and does not act upon a conscious appropriation of what is seen or heard. Reading images – moving images, as in cinema –, is a process that allows for multiple interpretations. It is influenced by many instruments that affect the "act of seeing", since the film touches the spectator through different forms of representation.

We could say, as Umberto Curi (2000), that cinema is Philosophy. But the exercise of philosophical reflection in the field of education, based on a reading of cinema, follows a different, albeit related, path. In our didactic-pedagogic experience using cinema for debating and apprehending concepts, we follow certain criteria that have proven central to better developing the relationship between image and concept, and even to assimilating the image-concept, according to Cabrera. We thus allocate the concepts of the Philosophy of Education course in at least three units in a semester (as is usual in any of the university's courses). In each unit we discuss one or two films. The concepts related to each of the units are presented and analysed before the students get into contact with the film. The latter is, however, considered a "reading" reference, as are the texts indicated in the course's programme. The students are thus granted access to the films to be watched on extra-class hours. Afterwards, they are given a discussion guide, including a synopsis and an analysis that seek to relate the film to the discussed concepts – taking into account cinematographic language, sequences, montage, relationship between images and ideas, colours and luminosity, time and movements, amongst other aspects. As Cabrera puts it, only watching the film is not making Philosophy. It is necessary to interact with its logical elements, understand that there is an idea or concept to be transmitted by the image in movement (Cabrera, 2006, pp. 21-22). The end of each unit consists of a workshop on the film, in collaboration with the team that participates of the Cinema and Education group. Afterwards, there is a seminar open to manifestations regarding interpretations of the film, its relations to the studied concepts and to the discussion based on the given guide. In the whole process of analysing the films, Grup Embolic's (1998, p. 79) warning is borne in mind, according to which the first thing "to be asked when philosophically analysing a film is whether what we find is what the filmic text says due to its textual coherence or what the spectator is capable of seeing based on his own system of expectations".

The experience of bringing together Cinema and the Philosophy of Education as a didactic and pedagogic resource for analysing, discussing and acquiring concepts is being carried out in the Faculty of Education since five years. A number of films were thus related to the course's units, in order to promote deeper reflections on the concepts dealt with in the course programme. The students have responded very well to the experience. Some of them have even had a stronger participation, intensively collaborating in the production of film synopses and guides, which came to be references for other students of the same class or even of other Philosophy of Education classes (Lino, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c ; Souza, 2007, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d).

The first phase of the proposal comprised the revision of the literature on the relationship between Cinema and Education, and, more specifically, between Cinema and Philosophy. Based on these studies, periodical meetings were made so as to systematise the reflections of Deleuze, Cabrerá among other authors. Their approaches on the discussion of philosophical concepts on basis on films were the fundamentals for the methodologies adopted – i.e., elaborating synopses and film analysis guides. Another step was the creation of a database for organising a list of films with editions and plots associated to the themes and concepts present in the Philosophy of Education course programme. Integration with other units of the University, such as the Departments of Photography, Theatre and Cinema of the Communication Course of the Faculty of Philosophy and Human Sciences and the Fine Arts School, was also sought. The idea was to find references for analysing themes such as cinematographic language and dramaturgy; images in movement; genesis of expressivity, cinema and video; cinema and aesthetics of image; techniques, camera; image, montage and manipulation; illumination and sound design. These activities made it possible to improve methodologies for establishing relationships between film and reflections related to themes and concepts of the Philosophy of Education as well as support the development of didactic material. Amongst these are i) the elaboration of film synopses and discussion guides containing data and information on the film, reflections regarding themes and concepts of the course's programme, technical specifications, a summary, analyses of the main moments, comments and a bibliographical selection; ii) editing and exhibition of the films, selecting scenes for didactic-pedagogic reasons permitting the analysis of specific sequences, consonant to the discussion of themes and concepts. Interviews were made with students and teachers from the Pedagogy Course and Licenciatures on the use of films in class, with the objective of assessing adopted methodologies, films chosen for the course, criteria for selecting films and development of association between films and themes and concepts discussed, in addition to the interest in this didactic and pedagogic resource. A website on Cinema and Education was created, in the Faculty of Education webpage. This has enabled teachers to use didactic material made available there.

The Faculty of Education's experience has been expanded to some public schools of Belo Horizonte, by means of a university extension programme sought to contribute to training of high school Philosophy teachers to use cinema as a didactic resource. The initiative for the project came from the difficulties faced in Brazil, and especially in Minas Gerais, due to the lack of teachers to meet the demands for Philosophy studies in high school made compulsory since Law N. 11.684/08, which altered article 36 of the Education Guidelines and Bases Law, (1996).

According to UNESCO's (2007) perspective, teaching Philosophy in school permits approaching problems of human life and existence as social beings. Teaching Philosophy is one of the

main forces for training the faculties of judgement, critique, questioning and discernment. It thus indicates paths for answering questions such as: how to encourage students to recover their self-confidence, overcome their problems and propose rational questions about their own identity as individuals possessing freedom of thought? How to help students to question and be able to find themselves in a Philosophical attitude? What would be the didactic and pedagogic focus teachers could adopt in order to help students deal with problems that constantly enter their mind? How to help them overcome purely emotional approaches, finding rational answers when dealing with the problems of the world?

Considering the lack of Philosophical formation by the greater part of the public school teachers of Belo Horizonte, as well as the limitations of their experiences with Philosophy, the university extension project was designed with the goal of offering pedagogic and didactic contributions to teachers. This would be performed through a strategy of using cinema for assimilation of philosophical concepts. In order to configure the characteristics of the school community and of the Philosophy programme adopted by the discipline's teachers, information was collected on the particularities of the school environment and on how teachers dealt with the contents in their programmes. Based on the analysis of the collected data, the team defined the films they considered more appropriate to discuss the subjects taught. This was done through analysis of film synopses and comments found in books on the issue and sites on cinema and education. This activity also sought to produce didactic material, such as texts, proposition of questions and slideshows with the key scenes of the films, which were released in the webpage of Cinema and Philosophy Education of the Faculty of Education.

Amongst other aspects, were presented possibilities of approximating the Philosophical content of school programme and researched films. Issues related to cinematographic Technique and Aesthetics were discussed in order to explore the particularities of Cinema, so as to identify its artistic reference regarding the moving image. The experience of this teaching and extension activity constituted the basis for producing an end of course dissertation on Cinema and Education (Lino, 2010).

### **Final comments**

The formation of rulers is much more complex than most well-intentioned teachers can suppose. It requires a broad reform of school culture, of academic culture, upon which attempts to overcome problems associated to accumulated cultural deficit of our society have stumbled.

Amongst the policies that have been exhaustively emphasised by the government, as a form of democratising access to knowledge, are telematic media, and particularly distance education. And, amongst most praised teaching methodologies, for acquisition of knowledge, can be highlighted the use of Information and Communication Technologies, which include audiovisual media such as television and Cinema.

It is true that Cinema, after many years of disdain and indifference, received central attention in many disciplines. It is today considered the most seductive manner of providing experiences of theoretical and practical nature, of confrontation between different points of view. Philosophy, and particularly Philosophy of Education, needs many languages to be understood and the visual is but one of them. It is a discipline that can express both its concepts and its argumentation through images and visual arts. And, since languages are not neutral expressions of concepts and

argumentations, an important characteristic of Cinema, as a language for discussing Philosophy of Education, is the fact that it offers several possibilities for inspiring a wide horizon of meanings.

Nevertheless, the experience we presented here, in the field of Philosophy of Education, begs a question: how can the new educational technologies help us develop the essential "technique of thinking" that our school culture has not been able to supply?

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