

## The work of teaching considering the anthropological concept of exchange

### O trabalho docente pela noção de troca

### El trabajo docente desde la noción de trueque

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**Abstract:** By first considering the anthropological concept of exchange defined by Marcel Mauss, this text will seek to define a concept of teaching work that is attributable to specifically school-related experiences by means of observation, reading and interpretation of the archive (in the sense used by Michel Foucault). Divided in two parts, the first section presents the concepts and symbolism with which the notion of work gained positive and dignifying forums, while leisure became vile and disdained. In the second section I will present a form of understanding the work of teaching through exchange values existing in the relationship between teacher and students inserted or not in a capitalist sociability. It concludes that today, work is not a source of values, but of information, whose strongest consequence is the idea that the school is the finality of life.

**Keywords:** Teaching work. Exchange. Property. Leisure.

**Resumo:** Ao partir da noção antropológica de troca definida por Marcel Mauss, este texto buscará delimitar um conceito de trabalho docente imputável às experiências propriamente escolares por meio da observação, leitura e interpretação do arquivo (no sentido atribuído por Michel Foucault). Dividido em duas partes, na primeira seção será exposto por quais conceitos e simbolismo a noção de o trabalho ganhou foros positivos e dignificantes, enquanto o ócio houve se tornado algo vil e desprezível. Na segunda seção, apresentarei uma forma de compreender o trabalho docente pelos valores de troca existentes na relação entre professor e alunos inseridos ou não numa sociabilidade capitalista. Conclui-se que, hoje, o trabalho não é a fonte dos valores, e sim a informação, cuja consequência mais forte é a ideia de que a escola é a finalidade da vida.

**Palavras-chave:** Trabalho docente. Escola. Troca. Propriedade. Ócio.

**Resumen:** Al partir de la noción antropológica de trueque definida por Marcel Mauss, este texto buscará delimitar un concepto de trabajo docente imputable a las experiencias propriamente escolares por medio de la observación, lectura e interpretación del archivo (en el sentido atribuido por Michel Foucault). Dividido en dos partes, en la primera sección se expondrá a través de qué conceptos y simbolismos la noción de trabajo ganó fueros positivos y dignificantes, mientras que el ocio se había convertido en algo vil y despreciable. En la segunda sección, presentaré una forma de comprender el trabajo docente mediante los valores de intercambio existentes en la relación entre el profesor y los alumnos, insertados o no en una sociabilidad capitalista. Se concluye que, hoy en día, el trabajo no es la fuente de los valores, sino la información, cuya consecuencia más fuerte es la idea de que la escuela es la finalidad de la vida.

**Palabras-clave:** Trabajo docente. Escuela. Trueque. Propiedad. Ocio.

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## Introduction

For the purposes of this discussion, it is interesting to return to the notion of exchange formulated by Marcel Mauss, in his *Essai sur le Don* (1950). For Mauss, primitive exchange appeared to be an eloquent example of a total social fact, because it simultaneously manifests economic, legal, moral, religious and aesthetic aspects; as well as the profound trace of the total social fact designated by the symbolic exchange that is located in knowing that there is a force within things: after all, things exchanged contain a virtue that forces the gift to circulate, to be made concrete and to be retributed.

The situation is different in contemporary society where exchanges are very complex, and their economic and legal aspects have overcome moral, religious, and aesthetic aspects existing in primitive exchange. Moreover, the economic and legal aspects cloud the moral, religious, and aesthetic aspects, causing this type of exchange to not be configured as a total social fact. This is because it is only in total social phenomena that are “expressed, simultaneously and in one blow” wrote Mauss (1950, p. 147) – ‘all the types of institutions: religious, legal, moral (political and familiar, simultaneously); economic (forms of production, consumption or better: service provision and distribution); as well as aesthetic and morphological phenomena that manifest these institutions’.

In current society, a plane is configured in which exchanges multiply exponentially, and this occurs often and quickly at increasing acceleration; although economic phenomena, and *ad hoc*, legal phenomena, absorb and annul other phenomena. The most eloquent effect of this has been the overlapping of the *strength of things* by an *obsession for things*. This obsession for things is not something imposed, but the consented realization of the opportunity to immaterially enjoy various relationships in daily life. That is, consumption is not a material practice, because it is not defined by the food that is ingested, or by the clothes that one wears, or the car that one uses, or by the oral or visual substance of images and messages.

‘Consumption’ – in the words of Baudrillard (2015, p. 206) – ‘by the fact that it possesses meaning, *is a systematic activity of signs*’. For this reason, according to Baudrillard’s logic (2015), what is consumed through an exchange are never objects but the relationship, which is simultaneously, signified and absent, included and excluded. It is the *idea of relation* that is consumed in the series of objects that makes it visible. However, Baudrillard (2015, p.

206) warns, 'the relationship is no longer lived: it becomes abstract and is annulled in a sign-object in which it is consumed'. Baudrillard is notably teaches that objects are consumed, but not totally consumed. For this reason, there are no limits to consumption because it is irrepressible, because it is based on an *absence* by the system of objects.

Thus, the exchange is realized contemporaneously, because the needs, feelings, culture, projects, and demands are materialized in productive forces to be sold, bought and consumed. However, this type of exchange does not manifest a strength of things that imprints an automatic retribution that existed in a primitive society, where a present received was mandatorily retributed. In our society, this flow is interrupted by a formal logic of the commodity analysed by Marx, and whose consumption precedes its production.

Marx's theory of labour-value, especially as presented in the first chapter of *Capital*, helps to explain why, in a capitalist sociability, objects are replaced by the movement of distribution and exchange. But these objects, once inserted in this sociability, are culturally contradictory, because a commodity is simultaneously use value and exchange value, a sensitive and supersensitive object, it retains and arms one of the pillars of this capitalist sociability, without this meaning that these objects *realize* their effective use that is contained in their use value. Objects, despite their noematic references (when objects are described by their objective references) and thus organized within the context of instrumentality, are also caught daily in a network of obstacles that impede their use (Giannotti, 1985). In addition to a *phenomenology* of the instrument in which, for example in a supermarket, there is an enormous quantity of objects that are presented there in the same instrumental reference between the chair and the table, between the fork and the knife, depending on a reference to other individualities, there is a form of social relations that imposes another behaviour that is linked to an operative and expressive scheme, whose social logic integrates natural objects in a language of commodities and capital. Thus, imagining ourselves in a supermarket, we find there:

An enormous quantity of objects [...]. However, each one of these objects presents a tag that impedes its use unless we comply with a series of the only rituals that allow us to take these objects home. The knife refers, according to its use, to the fork. But to use the knife and fork, that is, to be able to enjoy this promise of use made in the supermarket, I must take the object, go to the cashier, pay the equivalent price. To be able to pay the equivalent price I must

have money, receive an allowance from daddy, or given philosophy classes, or get a job in a factory or in some service, to be able to obtain a certain salary. This instrumental world presents itself in such a way that it not only displays noematic relations between objects, but also reveals obstacles to the promise that these objects make. (Giannotti, 1985, p. 23)

Inserted in our capitalist sociability guided by our desires, we are bewitched by the objects and trinkets that circulate inertially around us, in our mind, in our form of experiencing the past-present time, the present-present, and the future-present. This world, to which we are attracted and absorbed by the incessant circulation of things and objects, is historically generated by the *animal laborans*, and by the belief that no man should ever be enslaved again, because machines and their consequent automation free us from the need to conduct all that which enslaves us daily. In fact, as Vilém Flusser (2014) affirms,

The suffix ‘-mático’ [as found in the word infor-matics] means the belief that no man should be enslaved; that any enslavement, any force, any politics can be transferred to machines; that the dignity of the human being is to politicize machines so that man himself becomes depoliticized; that machines should pay taxes; that machines should conduct wars; that machines should make politics, however you call it, and we should not be concerned with this. (Flusser, 2014, p. 318)

I believe that what we seek with this is the freedom for *negotium*. Leisure is increasingly valued. Etymology as a research method helps us to understand: *ócio* [which in Portuguese means leisure, rest, or idle time] comes from the Latin word *otium*, whose antonym is *negotium*. There has been a growing sense of an increase in leisure time, divided among things like rest after a workday, vacations, or retirement to be occupied with things like traveling, passing time with children and grandchildren, contemplating nature etc. That is, leisure is no longer considered something bad.

Etymology also tells us that the word school signifies leisure, given that its origin is the Greek term *scholé*. In classic antiquity, this was extremely positive, but for us, modern men, this valorisation of leisure acquired a strange impression, and moreover, going to school became mandatory, leisure became pernicious. Thus, today, a radical change is underway, as Flusser (2014, p. 314) teaches us: ‘leisure begins to become a central problem. The school becomes problematic. We no longer know what should be done in school’.

Can the notion of exchange be attributed to the work of teaching generally conducted in school space today? By attempting to answer this question, through observation, reading and interpretation of the *archive* (in the sense attributed to it by Michel Foucault), this essay will offer, following this presentation of the problem, two other sections, in addition to the conclusion that I was able to formulate. One section, after the introduction, will present concepts and symbolism that allowed the economic sphere (and as a consequence the legal sphere) to overlap the other spheres of reality and we were thus able to have exchange be experienced only as an exchange by means of values in their strictly monetary sense. From this symbolic perspective, work gained positive and dignifying forums, while leisure become something vile and disdained. Then, in the third section I will present a way of understanding the work of teaching through the anthropological notion of exchange, in the sense of showing the work of teachers by the exchange values existing in the relationship between teachers and students, whether they are inserted or not in a capitalist sociability. Arguments presented by Vilém Flusser are used to defend this, but it is increasingly clear that work is not a source of values, but of information. The strongest consequence of this is the idea that the school is the purpose of life.

## **Man, the owner of himself**

The studies of Eric Voegel in (1974) show, by considering the state of political theory in the early seventeenth century, that man was left alone. Men were abandoned, because the large institutions of Western humanity, the Church and the empire, had passed, but the new mystic bodies, the nations, had still not grown enough to support an organization of political thought; it was a real state of man without the shelter of a *cosmion*.

Thus, the umbilical cord that links man to the universe of God was cut as never before. Man was 'cast out' on the surface of the globe and had to do the best he could. He was reduced to his physical structure, his senses, his will to live, his passions, his power of memory, his intuition and pragmatic reasoning, and finally, his fear of death. With this legacy, he had to create a new preliminary order, and then slowly reconquer the kingdom of the spirit, of consciousness, and moral obligation, of history, of his relation with God and with the universe.

In this sense, the first big task was to accept that the central problem was *Homem*, because he became the starting point of the new thinking. This man is a fragment, reduced to his so-called natural elements, including the ability to reason. Political theory had to return to man his passions, his consciousness, his feelings, towards God, and Man's place in History.

This is seen in the writing of John Locke, who developed his principles of human nature, which present a core based on a new post-medieval anthropology. He did not try to penetrate elements of human nature but sought to describe man as men appeared to Locke, and by gauging the people in his social group.

For work to be considered the source of all values, and inversely, for leisure to become something negative, shameful, immoral, and stigmatized, the concept of property was symbolically forged, whose source came from the idea of God as the owner of Man, to then affirm that Man is the owner of himself. This symbolism gained forums in the ideas formulated by John Locke about the principles that he found to guide human nature.

These principles, analysed with the symbolic perspective developed by Eric Voegelin (2017), are found in those parts of John Locke's study of political philosophy in which he developed his principles of human nature by describing men, as they appeared to him.

The ideas formulated by Locke, like the classification of the human person as a capital good, whose undisturbed economic use is a natural right, whose brusque assertion is to argue that man is a tool of economic production, that man has a right of ownership of his living body, and to the 'labour of his body' and the '*work* of his hands'. This, combined to Voegelin's (2017, p. 180) peculiar idea of the Lord's Supper, are an unprecedented attack in the history of political thinking to the dignity of man.

Through the liberation of the spiritual personality of man, depriving him a public status, Locke turned to those elements of human nature that constitute the public sphere (Voegelin, 2017, p. 177-178). Man enters society, not with a spiritual personality, but as a human form, possessing pragmatic intelligence and power of reasoning, but (in terms of the *commonwealth*) nothing more. In this sense, for Locke:

The great and chief end, therefore, of men uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property. (II, 124, p. 159)

To argue why people should consent to initiate a political society to remain under government authority, whose sole purpose is the preservation of property, Locke considers that man in the state of nature is free and the absolute master of his own person and his possessions. But man renounces his state of nature to submit himself to the command and control of another power, because the exercise of that freedom is quite uncertain and is constantly exposed to violations by others. Man seeks and desires to join in society with other men who are already joined or plan to unite, to mutually conserve their property, that is ‘his life, liberty, and estate, against the injuries and attempts of other men, but to judge of and punish the breaches of that law in others, as he is persuaded the offence deserves, even with death itself’ (Locke, 2001, p. 141).

The state of nature is precarious because each man is his own executing judge and each one is exposed to invasion by the other. To avoid these inconveniences, men agree to incorporate as a community and create a government that assumes the task of making impartial rules for the protection of property and to execute them indiscriminately as among equals. ‘Men being, as has been said, by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent,’ – wrote Locke (II, 95, in: Locke, 2001, p. 146) – ‘which is done by agreeing with other men, to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living, one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties, and a greater security against any that are not of it’.

The reason that men join in society and abandon the state of nature is to avoid the state of war, a state of animosity and destruction. Although ‘for men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise Maker;’ (II, 6, in: Locke, 2001, p. 107), and for this reason, ‘they are his property’ (II, 6, in: Locke, 2001, p. 107), these men cannot presume the possibility of authorizing the destruction of each other, and thus have the obligation to protect each other.

In Locke’s conception, man is a property owner who takes control of his own property and recognizes his responsibility to not harm anyone, because God is a manufacturer who does not want his property to be damaged (Voegelin, 2017, p. 179). But what truly interests Locke is to show that man is the owner of himself, for:

every man has a “property” in his own “person.” This nobody has any right to but himself. The “labour” of his body and the “work” of his hands, we may say, are properly his. (II, 27, in: Locke, 2001, p. 116)

In the state of nature, humans who own themselves have the right to associate their labour power with nature, which God made common to all. The sphere of ownership can be extended beyond the human body, through the appropriation and transformation of natural materials for human use, by demarking portions of earth for cultivating fruit trees, hunting animals, fishing, etc. Any natural object in which work was invested thus becomes the property of the investor ‘For this “labour” being the unquestionable property of the labourer,’ –Locke affirms (II, 26, in: Locke, 2001, p. 116) – ‘no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good. left in common for others’. What was in nature and was common to all, becomes a particular right of whom, through work, took something from the hands of nature, and appropriated it. Work that the individual had to remove certain things from a common state in which were fixed, in this individual, his ownership over them. The sole limitations are that no one should appropriate objects that become, through work spent on them, the property of other people, and that no one should stock, confine, etc., more than the common treasure that they can use.

By affirming that ‘*labour* of his body and the work of his hands’ is the source of all property, Locke maintains a distinction between ‘work’ and ‘labour’, in a reminiscence to the ancient Greek distinction ‘between *ponein* and *ergazesthai*, the Latin between *laborare* and *facere* or *fabricari*, which have the same etymological root, the French between *travailler* and *ouvrer*, the German between *arbeiten* and *werken*’ (Arendt, 1998 p. 90). In this way Locke raises these two expressions to the most respected of human activities, considering that until then, all the European words for ‘labour’ signified pain and exertion, and were even used to refer to childbirth.

This positivity, by glorifying labour as the source of all values, also promoted the *animal laborans* to the position traditionally occupied by the *rational animal*, but surprisingly did not produce – in the perspective of Hannah Arendt (1998, p. 85) – ‘a single theory in which animal laborans and homo faber, “the labour of our body and the work of our hands” are clearly distinguished’. Thus, the expression work no longer had a negative connotation, and leisure

gained a meaning diametrically opposed to that which it had before the modern era had inverted all the ancient traditions.

## The work of teaching

Diógenes Laércio told the following story:

They say that one day, Protágoras demanded his payment (*misthós*) from a student, Euathlus, and, when he protested he had not obtained the smallest victory (*ou drepo niken nenikeka*), Protágoras replied: If only I should win (*ego mèn án nikéso*) it will be necessary to pay me because I would be the winner (*oti egò enikesa*); and if it is you, it is because you won. (IX, 58:80 A1 e 4 Diels *apud*: Lyotard, 1979, p. 175)

This narrative by Diógenes Laércio loses its obscurity – but without eliminating the various paradoxes within it that were explored by Jean-François Lyotard (1979, p. 175-190) – when the moment preceding Protagoras' response is explained. A contract was entered into between Protagoras and his student Euathlus, which stipulated the master would only be paid if, thanks to the lessons received, the student wins at least one of the cases that, during this period, he defends in court. The contract was thus formulated according to an alternative implication: if Euathlus wins at least once, he would have to pay Protagoras; if not, he should not. Euathlus declared that he had never won, and therefore, did not owe the master, who gave a brief and somewhat enigmatic response, according to the rules of the brachylogy.

To address our concerns – which are not to resolve the various paradoxes found in the tale of Diógenes Laércio – I will question, and to the degree possible, formulate responses, associated to this narration. In the relation established between Protagoras and Euathlus, something was exchanged, because Protagoras taught Euathlus the art of defending cases in court, who in turn promised to pay for the service of teaching.

But does this art of teaching, which can be thought of as an object that is born in the world of sensibilities, suppose a power that captures the individuality of this object, which is presented in multiple ways; later, in one way or another, suppose an understanding that unifies these various manifestations?

Given the expression, teaching, for example, we capture various profiles; later, in one way or another, this supposes an understanding. Teaching encompasses a range of practices from teaching to play football, teaching how to read, teaching to write, to teaching to do research, teaching to act (in the theatre), teaching to operate (as in medical surgery), teaching to argue (Azanha, 2006, p. 188-192). In the tale, teaching to defend lawsuits is equal to teaching to argue.

Thus, the objects, as does teaching, are multiple, but they can also take place in the very behaviour in which they appear and are individualized. To teach to play chess, if attention is paid to this teaching, is different than learning to read, as it is also different from learning to argue, for they are quite different meanings of the expression in these three cases. In turn, to know how to play chess also includes an understanding that means that if someone knows how to play chess it is because this person has the command of a technique that consists in the correct observance of certain rules. And this understanding is different when we affirm that a person knows to write, and when we say that a person knows how to argue (Azanha, 2006, p. 187-194).

According to the tale, Protagoras was paid to teach Euathlus the art of arguing so that he could defend lawsuits and win cases, or at least win a case – as found in the contract signed between the teacher and student. Yet teaching to argue is a *problematically teachable* (Azanha, 2006, p. 193) activity, because in this sense, the teacher must follow rules that are enigmatic and whose positive result is dependent on higher abilities previously existing in the student. To know how to argue is something that cannot be measured, nor would it be reasonable to say that someone ‘knows how to argue, but argues poorly’ (Azanha, 2006, p. 195).

When Protagoras responds to Euathlus, he does so because he taught Euathlus the art of arguing, and the proof of this is in the way that Euathlus protested, for if he did not obtain the smallest victory in the courts, nevertheless, he learned to argue. A good argument does not always win an argumentative dispute – the eristic is proof of this – so much so that Euathlus did not win at any time in the courts, which does not mean that Euathlus does not know how to argue. He learned so much about arguing, that he argued in his own favour and against Protagoras, considering what was agreed to between them. There lies the art of arguing of the master Protagoras: what was in play was the prediction, the logical organization of the

discourse, the logical individuality of the discourse and the logical individuality of the object of teaching; and this was fully realized, regardless of who had the victory in an argumentative dispute. For this reason, the brief statement of Protagoras' response can be understood in the following manner: 1º) that Protagoras considers the present controversy between himself and Euathlus as one of the cases defended by the student during the period covered by the contract; 2º) that Protagoras understands that the outcome of this controversy to be indifferent, whether it is won or lost by Euathlus, he must pay him in any case. In the terms of the contract, Protagoras' statement means, from this perspective, that Euathlus had won in both cases, even, when he had lost (Lyotard, 1979, p. 176).

Here is presented the finding that the work of the teacher, even in a world steered both by the transformations that things receive for use and by the social obstacles that impede this use – because they are inserted in a world that establishes, basically, that under the form of commodities, the promises for use of objects can only be fulfilled after we undertake the entire ritual that has us possess the equivalent of the price marked on the labels of the objects placed for sale, in the market – this work is not part of the language of commodities.

The nature of teaching work is extemporaneous, even when it is revised. The use values present in a pedagogical activity between a teacher and student are so different that, in the very movement of exchange, there is no way to find the point of equilibrium that makes them measurable, nor manifestations of a single abstract identity, the value of the pedagogical relation.

In addition, despite the possible transitivity between teaching and learning, it is not automatic, because there is no indissoluble unity between teaching and learning. As H. S. Broudy (*apud* Scheffler, 1974, p. 52) warned: 'To teach means to deliberately try to promote certain learnings. When other factors interfere to frustrate these learnings, the teaching fails'. Thus, the use of the expression 'teaching/learning process', is false, because it confuses the dual use of the verb, to 'teach' as an indication of 'success' or 'intention' (Azanha, 2006, p. 16-17). Thus, the expression. 'teaching/learning process' is an educational slogan – in the meaning used by Scheffler (1974, cap. 2).

The nature of the work of teaching is extemporaneous because, in its movement of exchange, it maintains the logic of primitive exchange, a symbolic exchange that is identified

as a total social fact, whose power in the things exchanged presents a circularity of symbolic things to be given and retributed, which, necessarily, are presented in the triad: someone who teaches, something that is being taught and someone that learns, that is, teacher-content-student respectively (Passmore, 1980). In this sense, the task of teaching is essentially outdated. Consequently, the classroom – ‘the school device par excellence,’ according to Jorge Larrosa (2018, p. 186) – and by extension, the school, are extemporaneous, with tendencies to obsolescence.

This tendency towards obsolescence is a movement of resistance, resonance of the origin of the expression - school. As was reconsidered by Flusser (2014), the word school comes from the Greek term for leisure, *scholé*. In this meaning from ancient Greece, leisure was extraordinarily positive, so much so that its absence was disdained, written in the Greek as *askholia*. In his etymological excavations Flusser (2014) affirms:

There is no synonym in German [for the term *askholia*], in English it is *business*. *To be busy* is the opposite of *to have leisure*. *Business* as the opposite of school, is, therefore, something disdainful. Leisure in Latin is *otium*, the antonym is *negotium* business. Where does this valorisation of the leisure that gives us, formerly-modern men, such a strange impression? Indeed, we consider work the source of all values. (Flusser, 2014, p. 305-306)

Digging more deeply, it is known that *skholé* also means the state in which a person opens to the sacred. The Greek word Πολιτεία (*politeia*) consists in three spaces and times, the σπίτι (*oikos*, familiar space, particular place), the Αγορά (agora, market, public space) and περικοπή (*témemos*). Περικοπή (*témemos*) means ‘sectioned’, ‘section’, as well as *templum*, temple.

It is a section removed from public space. It is usually on a hill, for which reason it is called an acropolis. In this sectioned space are the ideas. They are non-spatial and atemporal. They can be noted when they are contemplated with a theoretical eye. The acropolis floats over the city, it is the god of the city. (Flusser, 2014, p. 307-308)

In this sense, people live in a city (*civitas*) to save the soul as a group and each one on their own, and attain the beyond and salvation, leaving this valley of tears, thanks to a final test,

called death. And culture is a mechanism for learning to die. ‘Consequently’, Flusser (2019, p. 47) indicates, ‘society in general, and culture in particular, was faced as a type of school, as a preparation for the test of maturity to enter heaven’. The ancient Greeks and the ancient Jews were convinced that the end of life on Earth is a preparation for another life. For this reason, the objective was *contemplative life, otium*, to go to school. Thus, the known saying from Sêneca (*Epistulae Morales* 106, 2 *apud*: Flusser, 2014, p. 47, nota ° 3): ‘*Non vitae, sed scholae discrimus*’ (‘We learn not for life, but for school’). After the Middle Ages, the saying was altered to: ‘*Non scholae, sed vitae vivimus*’ (‘We live not for school, but for life’). In the long period from the Renaissance to the French Revolution, school education, going to school, became mandatory. And leisure became something pernicious. Another revolution, the industrial revolution, also stimulated great alterations in relation to school. For Flusser (2019):

The Industrial Revolution *deformed the school*. It disfigured the original meaning of ‘theory’. It was no longer the contemplation of immutable ideas, and came to be the elaboration of ideas (models) that were increasingly ‘adequate’. Life in school was no longer contemplative. It was no longer the goal of politics, because theory came to be discipline at the service of active life. The hierarchy of the forms of life were reformulated. The school came to be a place of a knowledge at the *service of power*, the place of preparation for active life. Thus, society no longer lived for knowledge (contemplation, prayer), but for the realization (industrial) of works. (Flusser, 2019, p. 154)

This industrial school served two distinct proposals. It would serve the *transmission of information* to future agents of the industrial process. And it would serve the *elaboration of information* that would allow the progressive improvement of products. The inflation of information, accompanied by the rise of new devices and added to the brief validity of this information, made the industrial school superfluous. This is because the artificial memories learn better, think better, and forget better than humans. Another *design* is being formed by the emergence of a connected and telematic society, which can be considered as a permanent school.

It can be said – in Flusser’s (2014, p. 317-318) words – that telematic society is under the sign of the elimination, of the exclusion of work, as in the classic or Jewish city, to reintroduce the school as something that gives meaning to life and reaches in this school no longer hierarchies of competencies, but an

intersection of competencies [...] The connectivity has the unconfessed purpose, intention of mobilizing these competencies, including them in the connectivity and leading to creative contemplation.

The purpose of this society is not to produce values, but to confer meaning to life. If in modernity work was the source of all value, in telematic society, communication becomes the infrastructure of society. Thus, it is increasingly clear that work is not the source of value, but information. In telematic society, the school, leisure, is the purpose of life, to confer meaning to the absurdity of life in the face of death.

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## Conclusions

By looking for a response to the question if the notion of exchange is now attributable to the work of teaching that is generally conducted in school space, the essay first sought to show that it was John Locke who symbolically provided positive attribution to the expressions of labour and work – before this they were considered terms with negative connotations – by extending the notion of consent to the material institution of capitalist society, formulating that men consent to give predominance to their passions, because men have the desire to have more than they need.

The portion of this text about John Locke briefly presented the origin of the modern concept of property, from the relationship of Man=Property, according to which property must be associated to work. This led to the administration of what much later became denominated as the theory of labor-value. From this, labor gained a positive connotation, and leisure became negative. Since the term work gained positive and significant forums, leisure became something vile and disdainful – a diametrically opposite inversion realized in the modern era to the meanings previously attributed to the expressions of leisure and work in the classical period.

The following section presented a way to understand the work of teaching through the anthropological notion of exchange, but without returning to the distinctions that the modern era established between productive and unproductive work, between qualified and non-qualified work, and finally to the division of all activities into manual and intellectual work. The pedagogical practice in capitalist society today can very well be classified as intellectual work, given that teachers are non-manual workers, whose work, despite having many

mechanical and manual characteristics – in the case of the teacher-repeater – also encompasses those activities realized by the teacher that are strictly intellectual and creative. *Per argumentum contra*, what I sought to expose in the last section is that, if we follow the two great theorists of the distinction between productive and unproductive work, Adam Smith and Karl Marx, and thus define the concept of work exercised by teachers in their pedagogical activities in classrooms, the work of teaching would be classified as unproductive work and for this reason, possibly discardable.

For this reason, I followed the thinking of Vilém Flusser to argue that it is increasingly clear that labour is not the source of value, but information is. The most powerful consequence of this is the idea that school is the purpose of life. Perhaps in this way, the well-known question often formulated by students to their teachers becomes less enigmatic: – ‘Teacher, besides teaching class, what work do you do?’.

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