

Dialogism and the Ethics of the Person: convergences and Tensions Between Paul Ricoeur and Paulo Freire

Dialogicidad y ética de la persona: convergencias y tensiones entre Paul Ricoeur y Paulo Freire

Dialogicidade e ética da pessoa: convergências e tensões entre Paul Ricoeur e Paulo Freire

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the convergences and tensions between Paul Ricoeur's ethics of the person and Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, taking dialogicity as the central axis of interpretation. The study adopts a qualitative approach based on bibliographic review and theoretical-hermeneutic analysis of key works by both authors, complemented by selected secondary literature. The objective is to examine how Ricoeur's reflections on recognition, solicitude, responsibility, and just institutions may be placed in dialogue with Freire's concepts of dialogue, humanization, autonomy, and transformative praxis. The analysis demonstrates that both authors converge in their defense of human dignity, otherness, ethical responsibility, and social justice, while also revealing important differences regarding the role of institutions, education, and social transformation. Ricoeur emphasizes the ethical constitution of the person and the mediation of just institutions, whereas Freire highlights critical consciousness, dialogical education, and the struggle against oppressive structures. The findings indicate that dialogicity constitutes a fruitful category for articulating these perspectives, allowing a broader understanding of ethical formation as a relational process grounded in recognition, participation, and commitment to humanization. The study contributes to contemporary Philosophy of Education by highlighting the relevance of dialogue, justice, and alterity for educational and social practices.

Keywords: dialogicity; ethics of the person; Paul Ricoeur; Paulo Freire.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza las convergencias y tensiones entre la ética de la persona de Paul Ricoeur y la pedagogía crítica de Paulo Freire, tomando la dialogicidad como eje central de interpretación. El estudio adopta un enfoque cualitativo basado en la revisión bibliográfica y en el análisis teórico-hermenéutico de obras fundamentales de ambos autores, complementado con literatura secundaria seleccionada. El objetivo es examinar cómo las reflexiones de Ricoeur sobre el reconocimiento, la solicitud, la responsabilidad y las instituciones justas pueden ponerse en diálogo con los conceptos

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freireanos de diálogo, humanización, autonomía y praxis transformadora. El análisis demuestra que ambos autores convergen en la defensa de la dignidad humana, la alteridad, la responsabilidad ética y la justicia social, al tiempo que revelan diferencias significativas respecto al papel de las instituciones, la educación y la transformación social. Ricoeur enfatiza la constitución ética de la persona y la mediación de las instituciones justas, mientras que Freire destaca la conciencia crítica, la educación dialógica y la lucha contra las estructuras opresivas. Los hallazgos indican que la dialogicidad constituye una categoría fecunda para articular estas perspectivas, permitiendo una comprensión más amplia de la formación ética como un proceso relacional fundamentado en el reconocimiento, la participación y el compromiso con la humanización. El estudio contribuye a la Filosofía de la Educación contemporánea al destacar la relevancia del diálogo, la justicia y la alteridad para las prácticas educativas y sociales.

Palabras clave: dialogicidad; ética de la persona; Paul Ricoeur; Paulo Freire.

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa as convergências e tensões entre a ética da pessoa de Paul Ricoeur e a pedagogia crítica de Paulo Freire, tomando a dialogicidade como eixo central de interpretação. O estudo adota uma abordagem qualitativa baseada na revisão bibliográfica e na análise teórico-hermenêutica de obras fundamentais de ambos os autores, complementada por literatura secundária selecionada. O objetivo é examinar como as reflexões de Ricoeur sobre o reconhecimento, a solicitude, a responsabilidade e as instituições justas podem entrar em diálogo com os conceitos freireanos de diálogo, humanização, autonomia e práxis transformadora. A análise demonstra que ambos os autores convergem na defesa da dignidade humana, da alteridade, da responsabilidade ética e da justiça social, ao mesmo tempo em que revelam diferenças significativas no que diz respeito ao papel das instituições, da educação e da transformação social. Ricoeur enfatiza a constituição ética da pessoa e a mediação das instituições justas, enquanto Freire destaca a consciência crítica, a educação dialógica e a luta contra as estruturas opressivas. Os resultados indicam que a dialogicidade constitui uma categoria fecunda para articular essas perspectivas, permitindo uma compreensão mais ampla da formação ética como um processo relacional fundamentado no reconhecimento, na participação e no compromisso com a humanização. O estudo contribui para a Filosofia da Educação contemporânea ao destacar a relevância do diálogo, da justiça e da alteridade para as práticas educacionais e sociais.

Palavras-chave: dialogicidade; ética da pessoa; Paul Ricoeur; Paulo Freire.

1 INTRODUCTION

The social, political, and cultural transformations of recent decades have brought ethics back to the forefront of philosophical and educational debates. In a context marked by deepening inequalities, the weakening of social bonds, and the emergence of new forms of exclusion, it is necessary to reflect on the ethical foundations that guide human relations and educational practices. From this perspective, philosophy and education are called upon to contribute to the construction of ways of living together capable of promoting the recognition of human dignity, respect for otherness, and the strengthening of institutions committed to social justice.

In societies characterized by diversity, complex conflicts, and the erosion of social bonds,

ethical education requires the recognition of otherness as a fundamental aspect of the human experience. In this sense, education is called upon to promote ways of living together based on dialogue, respect for differences, and responsibility toward others (Hermann, 2023).

Among the thinkers who have made significant contributions to this line of thought, Paul Ricoeur and Paulo Freire stand out. Although they belong to distinct intellectual traditions, both have developed perspectives that converge in their defense of the human person as an ethical agent, capable of acting responsibly in the world and of building relationships grounded in dialogue, recognition of the other, and the pursuit of justice. Ricoeur, drawing on philosophical hermeneutics, develops an ethics centered on the aspiration to “the good life, with and for others, in just institutions” (Ricoeur, 2014, p. 186), while Freire, within the framework of critical pedagogy, views education as an ethical and political practice aimed at humanization, autonomy, and social transformation (Freire, 2003).

The connection between these two authors is not merely due to the presence of common themes, such as ethics, justice, responsibility, otherness, and freedom. The most significant point of convergence lies in the understanding that the formation of the person always occurs in relation to others. For Ricoeur, personal identity is inseparable from mutual care and recognition; for Freire, human formation is achieved through dialogue and transformative praxis. For both, human experience rejects individualistic perspectives and takes on a relational dimension that places central importance on the encounter with the other.

In this context, dialogicity emerges as a fundamental category for bridging Ricoeurian philosophy and Freirean pedagogy. For Paulo Freire, dialogue constitutes an existential and pedagogical imperative, as it enables the shared construction of knowledge and the formation of critical consciousness. As the author states, “no one educates anyone else, no one educates themselves; people educate one another in communion, mediated by the world” (Freire, 1983, p. 79). In Paul Ricoeur, although the concept of dialogicity does not appear with the same terminological centrality, his ethics of solicitude and recognition presupposes a permanent openness to the other, a necessary condition for the realization of an ethical life.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that the similarities between Ricoeur and Freire do not eliminate the differences between their intellectual projects. Ricoeur develops his thinking from the phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions, focusing on the ethical conditions of human action and the mediating role of just institutions. Freire, on the other hand, operates within the field of critical pedagogy and emphasizes the political-pedagogical dimension of the liberation of historically oppressed subjects. These differences, far from precluding dialogue, enhance its theoretical richness, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between

ethics, education, and social transformation.

In light of these considerations, this article seeks to analyze the ethics of the person in the thought of Paul Ricoeur and the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, using dialogicity as the connecting thread between the two. It argues that dialogicity constitutes the main point of convergence between the two authors, since it enables an understanding of the ethical formation of the person as a relational process grounded in the recognition of the other, in responsibility, in justice, and in the construction of social and educational practices committed to humanization.

To develop this analysis, the text is organized into four sections. First, it presents Paul Ricoeur's conception of the ethics of the person, highlighting the categories of the good life, solicitude, love, and justice. Next, it examines Freire's understanding of ethics in education, emphasizing dialogue, loving care, autonomy, and transformative praxis. Subsequently, the main convergences and tensions between the two authors are discussed, highlighting the role of dialogicity as a category of theoretical rapprochement. Finally, concluding remarks are presented, in which the contributions of the analysis to the fields of the philosophy of education and contemporary ethics are revisited.

2 PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVE

Ethics occupies a central place in both Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy and Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. Although they come from distinct theoretical traditions, both authors develop reflections that attribute decisive importance to the recognition of the other, to responsibility, to justice, and to the construction of human relationships grounded in dialogue. However, the similarities between their ideas remain relatively unexplored in the field of the Philosophy of Education, especially when considered from the perspective of dialogicity.

Given this context, the present study seeks to answer the following research question: What convergences and tensions can be identified between Paul Ricoeur's ethics of the person and the ethical conception present in Paulo Freire's pedagogy, and in what way does dialogicity constitute an interpretive framework capable of bringing these perspectives together? Based on this problem statement, the general objective is established as follows: to analyze the convergences and tensions between Paul Ricoeur's ethics of the person and the ethics present in Paulo Freire's pedagogy, taking dialogicity as the organizing axis of the reflection.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative research project conducted through a literature review and theoretical-interpretive analysis. The choice of this approach is based on the understanding that

investigating the ethical categories present in the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur and the pedagogy of Paulo Freire requires a conceptual examination of the texts and the contexts in which their respective thoughts were produced, seeking to identify similarities, differences, and possibilities for dialogue between the authors.

The research focuses on an analysis of the ethics of the person and dialogicity, drawing primarily on works considered fundamental to understanding the intellectual output of Paul Ricoeur and Paulo Freire. In the case of Ricoeur, priority was given to the works *Oneself as Another* (2014), *On the Political* (1995), *At the Frontiers of Philosophy* (1996), and *Critique and Conviction* (2009), as they present reflections directly related to the categories of ethics, otherness, justice, recognition, and responsibility. Regarding Paulo Freire, the works selected were *Pedagogy of Autonomy* (2003), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1983), and *Pedagogy of Indignation* (2000), as they address central discussions regarding ethics, dialogue, educational praxis, autonomy, and humanization.

In addition to primary sources, secondary studies were consulted that were identified through searches on Google Scholar using keywords such as “Paul Ricoeur,” “Paulo Freire,” “ethics,” “dialogicity,” “otherness,” “justice,” “philosophy of education,” and “critical pedagogy.” The selection of secondary texts took into account their thematic relevance, their contribution to understanding the concepts analyzed, and their relevance to deepening the dialogue between the authors.

The analytical procedure adopted consisted of three complementary stages. In the first stage, the ethical categories present in the works of Ricoeur and Freire were examined and systematized. In the second stage, the convergences and differences between the authors were identified, particularly with regard to their conceptions of the person, otherness, justice, responsibility, love, and dialogue. Finally, an interpretive analysis was developed aimed at understanding dialogicity as a unifying category between Ricoeurian hermeneutics and Freirian pedagogy, highlighting their contributions to contemporary ethical and educational reflection.

Although this is not a systematic review of the literature, the study seeks to establish a critical dialogue among the selected theoretical frameworks, acknowledging both the points of convergence and the tensions present in their intellectual projects. Thus, the analysis seeks to go beyond a simple juxtaposition of ideas, favoring an interpretive reading that allows us to understand how the ethics of the person and dialogicity can contribute to strengthening educational practices guided by justice, the recognition of the other, and the humanization of social relations.

4 THE ETHICS OF THE PERSON IN PAUL RICOEUR'S PHILOSOPHY

Ethical reflection occupies a central place in Paul Ricoeur's philosophy, constituting one of the fundamental pillars of his understanding of the human person. Distancing himself from both individualistic perspectives and conceptions that reduce the subject to social structures, Ricoeur develops an ethics focused on understanding human action in its relational, historical, and institutional dimensions. His concern is to understand how the person constructs their identity in relation to others and how this experience relates to the demands of justice and collective life (Ricoeur, 2014).

In summarizing his ethical proposal, Ricoeur asserts that ethics corresponds to a vision of the good life, with and for others, within just institutions (Ricoeur, 2014). This formulation, referred to as "minor ethics," brings together three inseparable elements: the pursuit of human fulfillment, relationships with others, and the mediating role of institutions. The good life is not reduced to the satisfaction of individual interests, but involves the construction of reciprocal relationships and participation in forms of coexistence capable of promoting human dignity.

Inspired by the Aristotelian tradition, Ricoeur understands that human existence is guided by purposes and projects that give meaning to action. Ethics emerges as a reflection on this quest for fulfillment, questioning the values and ends that guide human choices. However, unlike a conception centered exclusively on the individual, the philosopher maintains that personal fulfillment can only be understood in relation to others. A person is not constituted in isolation, but through bonds, shared narratives, and experiences of mutual recognition (Ricoeur, 2014).

In this context, otherness plays a decisive role. For Ricoeur, understanding oneself involves recognizing the presence of the other as a constitutive condition of one's own identity. This understanding finds its most fully developed expression in *The Self as Other*, a work in which the author demonstrates that human identity is constructed through constant dialogue with those who share our experience of the world. The subject is not a consciousness closed in on itself, but a relational being whose identity is formed through interaction with others (Ricoeur, 2014).

This interplay between identity and otherness constitutes one of the most original contributions of Ricoeurian philosophy. According to Dosse (2017), Ricoeur seeks to overcome both individualistic conceptions of the subject and interpretations that dissolve the person into historical or structural determinations. Human identity is understood as a dynamic reality, constructed in relation to others through language, narrative, and ethical responsibility.

Openness to others manifests itself in the category of solicitude. While morality tends to emphasize universal norms and obligations, solicitude refers to the concrete experience of care, responsibility, and attention to human vulnerability. As Nascimento (2019, p. 76) observes when

interpreting Ricoeurian ethics, “the difficulty, and perhaps the task, of an ethics of solicitude consists in welcoming another who has always been distant from us and who now presents themselves as something entirely new.” This observation highlights that the ethical challenge consists not only in living alongside those who are close to us, but in recognizing the dignity of those who present themselves as different or strangers.

Care finds its most concrete expression in mutual recognition. Recognizing the other means acknowledging their uniqueness, their capacity for action, and their status as a subject worthy of ethical consideration. In this sense, the ethics of recognition distances itself from both indifference and the instrumentalization of people. The other is no longer perceived as an object or a means for the realization of particular interests but is understood as a legitimate participant in the construction of the common world. One’s own identity and the recognition of the other thus become inseparable dimensions of ethical life.

In reflecting on the conditions that make this ethical relationship possible, Ricoeur engages critically with the modern moral tradition, particularly with Kant (1984). While he acknowledges the importance of moral universality and the autonomy of the subject, he considers an ethics grounded in the application of universal norms to be insufficient. For this reason, he draws a conceptual distinction between ethics and morality. According to the philosopher, “by convention, I shall reserve the term ethics for the aim of a fulfilled life and the term morality for the articulation of this aim in norms characterized simultaneously by a claim to universality and by a coercive effect” (Ricoeur, 2014, p. 184). Ethics offers the horizon of human fulfillment, while morality provides the normative criteria necessary for social coexistence.

Reflection on justice represents a fundamental extension of this perspective. While solicitude allows us to understand interpersonal relationships, justice becomes necessary when social coexistence transcends the bounds of closeness and comes to involve the plurality of individuals who share in social life. Ricoeur draws, at this point, on elements of the Aristotelian tradition of distributive justice, recognizing that every society is permeated by processes of distributing rights, duties, responsibilities, and opportunities (Ricoeur, 2014).

The concern for justice takes on particular significance in light of the inequalities present in contemporary societies. Ricoeur recognizes that formal equality before the law, while indispensable, is not sufficient to ensure truly just relationships. Social exclusion, the concentration of resources, and difficulties in political participation demonstrate that justice requires institutional mechanisms capable of promoting more equitable conditions for coexistence. In this sense, institutions play a decisive role in the realization of an ethical life.

The philosopher emphasizes the importance of institutions by stating that they constitute the “structure of living together in a historical community” (Ricoeur, 2014, p. 215). Political, legal, and social institutions function as indispensable mediators between individuals and collective life. However, their legitimacy does not stem solely from their formal existence, but from their effective capacity to promote recognition, participation, and human dignity. When they reproduce unjustifiable exclusions or privileges, they become a legitimate target of ethical criticism.

Ricoeurian ethics also takes into account the fragility of the human condition. Human beings are capable of acting, making decisions, and assuming responsibilities, but they remain equally vulnerable to error, injustice, and the possibility of transgression. For this reason, Ricoeur rejects idealized views of the moral subject. In his words, “self-esteem is linked to the capacity to act intentionally, to bring about changes in the course of events, to initiate something in the world; in short, to exercise initiative” (Ricoeur, 1995, p. 162). Ethical responsibility arises precisely from the awareness that we are the authors of our actions and of their effects on others.

Thus, Paul Ricoeur’s ethics of the person is presented as a reflection on human fulfillment grounded in otherness, recognition, justice, and responsibility. The person is constituted through relationships involving care, reciprocity, and participation in institutions committed to human dignity. This understanding allows for a fruitful dialogue with Paulo Freire’s pedagogy, especially regarding the valuing of the other, the construction of ethical relationships, and the search for more just and humane forms of social coexistence.

5 ETHICS IN PAULO FREIRE’S PEDAGOGY

Ethics constitutes a fundamental dimension of Paulo Freire’s pedagogy, permeating his understanding of education, politics, and the human condition itself. Unlike perspectives that restrict ethics to compliance with norms or codes of conduct, Freire understands it as an expression of the human vocation toward freedom, autonomy, and the building of relationships grounded in respect for human dignity. Education, in this context, is not a neutral activity, but a human practice laden with ethical and political implications (Freire, 2003).

The centrality of ethics in his thought is directly related to the conception of the human being as a historical and unfinished subject. For Freire, women and men are distinguished by their ability to reflect on the world, intervene in reality, and transform the conditions of their existence. Human incompleteness does not represent a deficiency, but rather the condition that makes learning, creativity, and the ongoing pursuit of personal and collective fulfillment possible. Education participates in this process by creating conditions for individuals to develop critical awareness of

themselves and the society in which they live (Freire, 2003).

This understanding leads Freire to reject forms of education that reduce learners to the status of passive recipients of information. In his critique of banking education, the author denounces pedagogical practices that treat knowledge as something ready-made, to be deposited by educators into students. According to Freire (1983), such practices reproduce relations of domination by denying individuals' ability to critically interpret their reality and participate in the production of knowledge.

In contrast to this logic, Freire proposes an education grounded in dialogue. Dialogue is not merely a pedagogical technique or a methodological tool; it is an ethical imperative that recognizes individuals' capacity to participate in the construction of knowledge. In this sense, educational practice requires relationships marked by respect, active listening, and a valuing of human experience. As the author states, "no one educates anyone else, no one educates themselves; people educate themselves in communion, mediated by the world" (Freire, 1983, p. 79).

The centrality of dialogue in Freirean pedagogy goes beyond the methodological realm and extends to the very ethical foundation of education. As Streck, Redin, and Zitkoski (2008) point out, dialogue is not merely a teaching strategy but a democratic form of knowledge production, grounded in the recognition of individuals as active participants in the educational process. This perspective reinforces Freire's understanding that educators and learners jointly construct learning experiences guided by listening, participation, and mutual respect.

The importance attributed to dialogue is linked to Freire's understanding of humanization. For the Brazilian educator, the ontological calling of human beings is to become more fully human. However, this possibility is often denied by structures of oppression that limit freedom, silence voices, and perpetuate inequalities. Education thus assumes the ethical task of contributing to the overcoming of these dehumanizing conditions through the formation of critical consciousness and democratic participation (Freire, 1983).

In this context, compassion plays a central role in educational practice. Freire does not view love as sentimentality or a paternalistic attitude. On the contrary, compassion represents an ethical stance of commitment to human dignity and to the building of authentic relationships between educators and learners. In *Pedagogy of Indignation*, the author emphasizes that the struggle for a more just society requires the ability to combine courage and love, since the transformation of reality presupposes an effective commitment to people and to life (Freire, 2000).

Freirean ethics are also expressed in the defense of autonomy. For Freire, teaching does not mean transferring knowledge, but rather creating conditions for individuals to develop their ability to

understand, question, and recreate reality. For this reason, he asserts that “teaching is not the transfer of knowledge, but the creation of possibilities for its own production or construction” (Freire, 2003, p. 47). This perspective shifts the focus of the educational process from transmission to the active participation of individuals in the production of knowledge.

The development of autonomy is closely linked to the development of critical consciousness. Freire believes that individuals are not liberated merely by access to information, but by the ability to critically interpret the historical conditions that shape their lives. Conscientization enables individuals to understand the contradictions present in social reality and to recognize themselves as agents capable of transforming it. It is an ethical and political process that integrates reflection and action in favor of humanization.

This interconnection between reflection and action finds its most well-known expression in the concept of praxis. For Freire, the transformation of reality requires a unity between critical thinking and concrete intervention in the world. Reflection without action runs the risk of becoming mere verbalism; action without reflection can turn into uncritical activism. Praxis thus constitutes a permanent cycle of action-reflection-action guided by the pursuit of justice and the liberation of historically oppressed subjects (Freire, 1983).

The relationship between ethics and freedom also occupies a central place in his pedagogy. Freedom is not conceived as a pre-existing individual attribute, but as a historical achievement built through social and educational relationships. Therefore, the experience of freedom requires responsibility, dialogue, and respect for the autonomy of others—elements that reinforce the ethical dimension of education.

Freire’s concern with ethics is also evident in his critique of various forms of discrimination and social exclusion. The educator advocates for what he calls the universal ethics of the human being, understood as a commitment to overcoming injustices, exploitation, and practices that deny people’s dignity. In his words, it is the ethics that condemns “the exploitation of the human workforce [...]. The ethics I speak of is the one that is known to be challenged by discriminatory manifestations of race, gender, and class. It is this ethics that is inseparable from educational practice, regardless of whether we work with children, youth, or adults” (Freire, 2003, p. 16). Education committed to this ethic takes an active stance against inequality and all forms of oppression.

Thus, ethics in Paulo Freire’s pedagogy is presented as an ongoing commitment to humanization, autonomy, dialogue, and social transformation. Education becomes a privileged space for the formation of individuals capable of critically reflecting on reality, assuming responsibilities, and participating in the construction of more democratic and just relationships. This perspective

aligns with the ethics of the person developed by Paul Ricoeur, particularly in its emphasis on valuing others, responsibility, and human dignity, although the two authors draw from distinct theoretical frameworks and place different emphases on institutional mediation, education, and social transformation.

6 CONVERGENCES AND TENSIONS BETWEEN PAUL RICOEUR AND PAULO FREIRE

The connection between Paul Ricoeur and Paulo Freire does not stem from a theoretical or methodological identity between their ideas. On the contrary, they are authors rooted in distinct intellectual traditions who developed their ideas within different historical contexts and in response to different challenges. Ricoeur builds his philosophy on hermeneutic phenomenology, focusing on the ethical constitution of the person, otherness, recognition, and just institutions. Freire, in turn, develops his critical pedagogy within the context of Latin American social inequalities, emphasizing consciousness-raising, dialogue, emancipation, and the transformation of structures of oppression.

Despite these differences, both share a common concern for human dignity and for building ethical ways of living together. In Ricoeur, this concern manifests itself in the pursuit of the good life with and for others; in Freire, in the defense of humanization as the ontological vocation of the human being. In both cases, the person is not conceived as an isolated subject, but as a being constituted in relation to others and responsible for the construction of the common world.

In this sense, dialogicity emerges as a category capable of establishing a fruitful dialogue between the two authors. Although the notion of dialogue occupies different positions in their works, both understand that the ethical constitution of the person depends on the encounter with the other, on openness to otherness, and on the construction of relationships guided by recognition, responsibility, and justice.

However, the convergence between Ricoeur and Freire does not eliminate the tensions existing between their perspectives (see Table 1), which must also be considered for a more comprehensive understanding of their contributions to the Philosophy of Education.

Table 1 – Convergences and tensions between Paul Ricoeur and Paulo Freire

Area of analysis	Paul Ricœur	Paulo Freire	Convergences and tensions
Ethical basis	A good life with and for others	Humanization and liberation	Both uphold human dignity as their ethical guiding principle.
The Nature of the Person	Narrative identity and recognition	Critical education and awareness-raising	Convergence in the affirmation of the individual, but through different paths.
Relationship with others	Consideration and mutual respect	Dialogue and kindness	Strong ethical alignment
Justice	Fair institutions and social participation	Transforming structures of oppression	Consensus on justice, but tension over the means.
Freedom	Ethical responsibility and the capacity to act	Autonomy and emancipation	Partial convergence
Politics	Institutional mediation	Transformative practice	Work-related stress
Education	A secondary theme in his philosophy	The core of the discussion	Significant difference
Method	Hermeneutic phenomenology	Critical pedagogy	Epistemological tension
Social transformation	Ethical reform of relationships and institutions	Educational and political transformation of reality	Same goal, different paths.

Source: Compiled by the author, 2026.

The first significant point of convergence between Ricoeur and Freire lies in their understanding of the human person as an ethical subject. Both reject deterministic perspectives that reduce individuals to social conditions or historical structures. Ricoeur understands the person as a subject capable of acting, interpreting, and taking responsibility for their actions, a perspective that, according to Dosse (2017), constitutes an attempt to articulate identity, otherness, and responsibility without reducing the subject to either modern individualism or structural determinism. Freire, in turn, emphasizes the human capacity to reflect critically on reality and intervene in its transformation. In both cases, the human condition is associated with freedom, responsibility, and the possibility of constructing new horizons of existence.

Another relevant perspective concerns the centrality of otherness. As Hermann (2023) observes, the ethical experience is not limited to compliance with norms, but implies openness to the other and a willingness to learn from difference. This understanding aligns with the reflections developed by Ricoeur and Freire, albeit through distinct paths. Ricoeur explores this issue through the categories

of solicitude and recognition, demonstrating that the subject's identity is constituted in relation to the other. Freire, in turn, understands dialogue as an indispensable condition of educational practice and humanization.

Streck, Redin, and Zitkoski (2008) point out that Freirian dialogue represents a form of mutual recognition among individuals and a democratic construction of knowledge. Although they use different conceptual frameworks, both argue that human fulfillment depends on openness to others and on overcoming relationships marked by domination, indifference, or exclusion.

The importance of recognition for the formation of the person is also supported by the reflections of Honneth (2009), for whom the formation of identity depends on intersubjective experiences of recognition capable of ensuring self-esteem, respect, and social participation. Although he draws on different frameworks than those used by Ricoeur and Freire, Honneth reinforces the understanding that human fulfillment does not occur in isolation, but through relational processes in which individuals are recognized in their dignity and capacity for participation in social life.

Justice also constitutes an important point of convergence. Both authors recognize that human dignity requires social conditions capable of promoting participation, recognition, and inclusion. Ricoeur emphasizes the need for just institutions that enable democratic coexistence, while Freire focuses his attention on educational and political processes aimed at overcoming inequalities. This shared concern for justice aligns with the reflections of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007), who advocates for the development of expanded forms of democratic participation and the recognition of diverse human experiences in the production of knowledge and social life. For both authors, ethics transcends the private sphere and takes on a social and collective dimension.

However, the differences between their views become more evident when one examines the paths, they propose for transforming reality. Ricoeur attaches great importance to institutional mediations, understanding that justice depends on the construction and improvement of the institutions responsible for organizing collective life. Freire, while not ignoring the importance of institutions, emphasizes above all the transformative praxis of individuals and the processes of consciousness-raising capable of confronting historical structures of oppression.

This distinction reveals a productive tension between the authors. Ricoeur is primarily concerned with the ethical and institutional conditions of human coexistence, while Freire emphasizes the educational and political processes of social transformation. In other words, Ricoeur asks how to build more just institutions; Freire asks how to form individuals capable of transforming unjust realities. Far from being incompatible perspectives, both can be understood as complementary

dimensions of the same concern for human dignity.

Another significant difference lies in the theoretical frameworks that underpin their reflections. Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on the interpretation of human experience, narrative, and the formation of identity. Freire, on the other hand, develops his critical pedagogy in dialogue with historical, social, and political issues related to oppression and emancipation. This methodological difference explains why similar concepts take on distinct functions in each author.

Despite these tensions, dialogicity remains the central axis linking the two schools of thought. For Ricoeur, self-understanding requires mediation by the other; for Freire, the formation of critical consciousness takes place in the dialogue between subjects. The convergence between the two can also be understood in light of the hermeneutic tradition, according to which understanding emerges from the encounter between different horizons of meaning. As Gadamer (2015) observes, dialogue constitutes an experience of openness to the other and a willingness to revise one's own understandings in the face of otherness. For both authors, dialogue is not merely a communication technique, but an ethical condition for the construction of recognition, responsibility, and democratic coexistence.

Thus, the dialogue between Ricoeur and Freire helps us understand that a person's ethical development involves, simultaneously, recognition, responsibility, dialogue, participation, and a commitment to justice. The convergence of their ideas does not eliminate their differences, but rather highlights the wealth of perspectives that can contribute to the development of educational and social practices guided by humanization and human dignity.

7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The aim of this study was to analyze the points of convergence and tension between Paul Ricoeur's ethics of the person and the ethics present in Paulo Freire's pedagogy, using dialogicity as the central theme of the discussion. The study began with the assumption that, although the two authors belong to distinct theoretical traditions, their works offer significant contributions to the understanding of the ethical formation of the person, the relationship with the other, and the construction of social practices committed to human dignity.

The analysis conducted revealed significant points of convergence between the authors. Both Ricoeur and Freire view the human person as a subject capable of acting, interpreting reality, and assuming responsibilities toward oneself, others, and the world. In both cases, the formation of the person occurs through relational processes that value the recognition of otherness and reject individualistic or reductionist perspectives on human existence.

Another common aspect concerns the central role assigned to the other in the construction of an ethical life. In Ricoeur, this concern manifests itself in the categories of solicitude and recognition; in Freire, it is expressed through dialogue, affection, and humanization. Although they use distinct conceptual frameworks, both maintain that ethical experience requires openness to otherness and a willingness to build relationships grounded in respect, responsibility, and reciprocity.

The research also revealed that justice occupies a strategic position in both schools of thought. Ricoeur emphasizes the importance of just institutions as a prerequisite for the realization of an ethical life, while Freire highlights the need for educational and social processes capable of addressing inequalities and promoting democratic participation. For both authors, ethics transcends the realm of individual choices and takes on a social, political, and collective dimension.

However, the study demonstrated that the convergence between Ricoeur and Freire does not eliminate significant differences. Ricoeur develops his reflection based on hermeneutic phenomenology, focusing on the ethical constitution of the person and on the institutional mediations of justice. Freire, in turn, builds his critical pedagogy around consciousness-raising, transformative praxis, and confronting structures of oppression. These differences do not represent obstacles to dialogue, but rather reveal complementary perspectives for understanding human formation.

In this context, dialogicity has proven to be a particularly fruitful category for bringing the two authors together. More than a communication technique or a methodological procedure, it emerges as an ethical principle that guides the formation of the person, the recognition of the other, and the construction of democratic coexistence. Dialogicity allows us to understand that human formation is achieved through relationships that articulate responsibility, participation, listening, and a commitment to justice.

The main contribution of this study is to demonstrate that the dialogue between Ricoeur and Freire offers a relevant theoretical framework for contemporary philosophy of education. By linking the ethics of the person, recognition, dialogue, justice, and humanization, the authors provide insights that can broaden our understanding of the ethical challenges faced by today's societies and by educational practices committed to the holistic development of individuals.

Finally, it is acknowledged that this research has the limitations inherent in a theoretical-bibliographic study. Further research could deepen the dialogue between Ricoeur and Freire by focusing on specific themes, such as recognition, democracy, education for citizenship, the ethics of otherness, and teacher training. In addition, empirical studies could explore how these authors' contributions can be applied to the analysis of contemporary educational practices, thereby broadening the scope of the reflections developed here.

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