

## Marilena Chaui, professor: authority against authoritarianism\*<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This article examines Marilena Chaui's teaching experience, linking her teaching activities with a focus on plurality. To this end, it searches for elements that can reveal what constitutes a communicative authority in the sharing of a presence that invites the singular and plural expression in the reports of former students, testimonies of participants in meetings, study groups and in the published material about the classes. Based on the bibliographic analysis, it discusses to what extent the intention of sharing knowledge confers a force of action that both disarticulates processes of submission and authoritarianism and discards elements of oppression and intellectual coercion in academic activities. It highlights in this story the inseparability between teaching and research activity, in the commitment to reconcile the established and the instituting in the confrontation of barbarity. In order to highlight the trajectory of Professor Marilena Chaui as an affirmation of public debate in contrast to the multiple forms of authoritarianism, the article highlights the mark of a teaching style capable of revealing presence and authority through communicative sharing. Thus, considering educational work in the form of care made present in the classroom, the article investigates the composition of pedagogical processes between elements such as inviting, stimulating, challenging, persuading, in the intersection between rigor and sensitivity, spontaneity and criteria. The article concludes by defending the resumption of teaching authority with a view to plurality as the indispensable aspect to be taken care of in the academic experience.

### Keywords

Marilena Chaui – Teaching – Teaching authority – Communicative sharing.

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\* English version by Dyego Fernandes Saraiva Silva. The author takes full responsibility for the translation of the text, including titles of books/articles and the quotations originally published in Portuguese.

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## **Marilena Chaui:** between abundance and deprivation of words

The keyword “Marilena Chaui” was the result of a search in virtual search engines that gave definitions of the Brazilian writer and philosopher, a specialist in the work of Spinoza and professor emeritus of History of Modern Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo. The information included is that Marilena Chaui is one of the most important philosophers in Brazil and one of the most influential intellectuals in the country, with emphasis on her books and academic productions. The recognition also extends to her trajectory and engagement with the political scene, whether through participation in decision-making bodies, through the diligence of involvement in reflection on current affairs, or, rather, through the importance of her fight against dictatorial repression in the Brazilian context of the late 1960s.

Of this last element, we highlight the way in which the implications of the dictatorial repression (1964-1985) that stain the history of this country resulted in acts that were considered arbitrary, not only due to the control of speech, but also due to the management of the fundamental right to life. It is worth questioning, from then on, to what extent the coercion of this period compromised freedom of thought and expression, the structuring matter of intellectual life.

According to Professor Marilena Chaui, the devastation of freedom of expression demands that teachers commit to and seek mechanisms to dismantle the harmful consequences of barbarity and make the active flow of reflection possible. Chaui points out how the dominance of repression demanded resilient action from students and professors in defense of the continuity of the university, because, as she reports, “it was the moment when you entered to teach knowing that there were police officers in the classroom, that the DOPS was there to register. [...] We worked not under tension, but under terror, and an unlocalizable terror. [...] None of us knew if there would be a next day” (Chaui, 2011b, p. 183-184).

The relationship between the context of repression experienced in the Philosophy Department of the University of São Paulo (USP) and the trajectory of Professor Marilena Chaui provides evidence of the link between intellectual activity and political struggle. Based on her testimonies, it is possible to perceive the construction of a strategy of action that sought to imprint legitimacy on academic work for its own support. Chaui (2020) reports that this was the time when she studied the most, researching and supervising countless final papers so that there would be sufficient intellectual and bureaucratic support for the continuity of the Philosophy Department. “Where did we get the strength to survive?” she asks, to which she herself answers: “In the particular case of the Philosophy Department, a journal was created (by Dona Gilda [de Mello]), theses were written and defended, the Department was restructured, a postgraduate program was created, and the undergraduate courses were completely reformulated” (Chaui, 2011b, p. 184). One wonders how it was possible for these individuals to fulfill the demands of intellectual production in a scenario of control, tension, and arbitrariness. How did they continue to operate with the core of an activity that encompassed exactly the element to be disfigured? In response, Marilena Chaui (2011b, p. 184) presents an idea sustained by the feeling of a “deep political conviction that it was not possible to allow a minimum of cultural production and work

of thought to be destroyed, that we could not allow the deepest obscurantism to prevail in the country.”

The teaching identity constitutes the struggle for the dignity of the word – in the daily affirmation of creative freedom and the right to expression. As Chaui (2019, p. 146-147) points out: “classes are the place to learn to listen, speak, read and write, an extraordinary learning experience that the dictatorship steals from young people: the world of expression. Philosophy classes serve as an initiation and access to the slow work of thought”. It is important to recognize the gradual processes undertaken by individuals focused on the primacy of language. These individuals develop and refine their abilities to move from private contemplation to collective expression, effectively finding ways to transform symbolic concepts into articulated language. In the case of teacher Marilena Chaui, the evidence of the political attitude combined with the activity of intellectual sharing as a fundamental structure of teaching combines sufficient elements for the plural composition of the world.

Chaui’s trajectory highlights a struggle between the macro and micropolitical spheres. It is important to examine the experiences of women, intellectuals, and educators within the academic environment of the 1960s. To provide insight, we will consider an account by Chaui that discusses the particular context of the Philosophy department at USP.

I have had all the experiences of interdictions. More than you who are young and who here and there encounter these interdictions in a very camouflaged way. I belong to a generation in which there was no disguise whatsoever. And when you broke the interdiction, when you took a step beyond what was allowed, the immediate reaction was that you were considered to be unwise. It was an expression that was often used: ‘she has no sense’, that is, it placed [the woman] in the dimension of madness or in the dimension of prostitution. I went through both experiences all the time, in the beginning, in which it was either because I was unwise or because I was in a process of seduction. [from this perspective] I should not be taken seriously because I was a girl who wanted to seduce the professors. [...] The philosophy department is organized like a male horde and it is not perceived that way, but that is what it is. [...] The most anti-philosophical thing is the prejudice that has reigned in the Philosophy department for decades regarding women (Colloquium [...]).

Some of the political conditions are indispensable to the analysis of the constitutive set of teaching. It is plausible to question, for example, how philosophical and/or academic activity, in which openness to speech is expected, can derive limitative thinking. Or, even, how the environment of familiarization and amplification of the artifices of reflection can result in unrestricted segregation of the very right to the condition of being and thinking. This can be observed in the way teacher Marilena Chaui’s journey is positioned within the context of limited and extensive expression; in how she accessed the cultural legacy through school education, and in how the school environment affects her ability to express herself, with a focus on gender issues.

In fact, addressing the gender-related experience demands consideration of numerous aspects. This requires a comprehensive and meticulously developed theoretical framework,

which may be impractical given the constraints of the current textual proposal. However, if the eyes that follow this line do not represent the figure of the subject who has assured access to social privileges, they will know, to a greater or lesser degree, the impacts of segregation that demarcate our culture. This reader, with whom I now share this moment, will know the weight that adversities of a social, racial or gender nature impose on the process of a person's educational formation, when they are not guaranteed entry, fair permanence, freedom or, ultimately, the dignity to compose the spirit of plural expression.

So, taking the case of professor Marilena Chaui and considering the glimpse of contradictions posed in each system, it is worth asking: what does each teaching subject experience imply in what they have to offer, in their teaching work?

## **A work of teaching in Marilena Chaui**

The way Chaui views the relationship with teaching in Philosophy is reflected in her entire achievement – in more than four decades of dedication to teaching. As Chaui (2019, p. 151) states: “I think I was born to be a teacher. It is what I know how to do and what I like to do. The core of my intellectual life, the core of my philosophical life is being a teacher”. And, on another occasion: “the moments of systematization, of evaluating the meaning of philosophical work have always come to me through my work as a teacher more than through academic exercises such as my master's and doctorate” (Chaui, 2011b, p. 180).

It is worth starting by mentioning how Marilena Chaui's teaching identity resonates with what she reports having received from the instigation of her teachers. Or, even from the fact that Marilena is the daughter of a primary school teacher, a journalist, and the granddaughter of a professor of Arabic and French literature. However, for the purposes of this text, it will be relevant to note how several of her teachers, from the beginning of her schooling, have figured as essential to the composition of her life trajectory.

Considered from the first year of high school, with the case of Philosophy teacher João Villalobos, whom Chaui points out as a definitive figure, even in his decision to study Philosophy. This is a teacher who, by presenting the philosophy of Heraclitus and Parmenides in class, and by offering a course on Aristotelian logic and another course focused on Socrates and the sophists, gave the young students the dynamic of thinking. Considering these reports (Chaui, 2011b), the figure of teacher Villalobos represents the search for encouraging students to work alone, bringing to light the movement dear to philosophical activity: the possibility of sensitizing the gaze based on intellectual operation. Chaui (2011b, p. 179) highlights on this occasion the feeling of a “fascination at seeing, for the first time and in its pure state, thought working”.

Another set of notes worthy of note is the way in which Marilena Chaui's intellectual trajectory was formed based on a fruitful academic environment, supported by the encouragement of study and the abundance of dialogue. As she points out, from “conversations that aroused the desire, the need or the importance of reading and writing” (Chaui, 2011b, p. 180). The relevance of the study environment for the academic experience is highlighted, as well as the significance of the experience with teachers for the subject of teaching.

Taking as an example the research conducted by Maria Isabel da Cunha (1989), with twenty-one teachers (thirteen of them from UFPEL and eight working in high school in different schools in the city of Pelotas/RS), and published in the book “The good teacher and his practice”, 70% of the teachers interviewed stated that their behavior as teachers is related to the pedagogical practice experienced with their former teachers. The author discusses how the influence of teachers can originate from attitudes remembered as “positive”, with striking examples of “honesty and love for the profession”; or the opposite, with “anti-teachers”, also making us think “about the teacher whose example we do not want to repeat”, as in the following statement: “In college I saw teachers speaking a language that no one understood. It was a stage for exhibitions. I try to do the opposite”. In another excerpt: “Two of my teachers influenced me a lot: one is the confident, but traditional, distant type. The other got very close to us. It seemed to him that the student was the most important thing. I tried to take what was good in both of them” (Cunha, 1989, p. 90-91). It is worth extending the author’s argument when noticing the predominance of the reproduction of teaching behavior, highlighting the possibility of dubious aspects of influence, after all, as she points out: “if this has positive aspects, there is also the risk of repeating practices without reflecting on them” (Cunha, 1989, p. 92).

In the case of Professor Marilena Chaui, the following records are significant regarding what she considers to be teachers who have had an impact on her career:

The figures of Lebrun, as an exemplary teacher, and Bento Prado, as an exemplary dialoguer, were decisive for me. Lebrun and Bento’s classes influenced my way of relating to philosophy. Later, as a professor in the Department, Maria Sylvia was of great importance, as she brought me something that I had been searching for and unable to find: the possibility of perceiving the connection between Philosophy and History, Philosophy and Politics. Maria Sylvia’s presence meant a turning point in my activity. Evidently, the most important person in my education is Claude Lefort, not only because of the radical nature of his thinking and the fruitful novelty of everything he wrote, but also because of his passionate relationship with philosophy. [...] It has always been said (given the extreme importance that pedagogical work has for me) that my texts were oral, that I did not write, that my texts were spoken, colloquial. In this regard, I owe a great deal to Dona Gilda [de Mello e Souza] who corrected (countless times) my first articles, showed me the bad habits I had when writing, and suggested ways to write the article. She was incredibly patient and generous with me (Chaui, 2011b, p. 181).

From this report, some elements deserve emphasis: dialogue as a hallmark of action; the teacher’s passionate relationship with the object and activity of study; the teaching expertise in articulating knowledge, allowing us to see beyond the strict confines of each area; the patience and generosity of the procedural work of training in following the demands of a student. Student Marilena Chaui was therefore able to have the privilege of an environment conducive to the work of thought because she was given the opportunity to participate in a school context with professionals capable of authorizing the plural face of presence.

The possibility of an opportunity to enter not only the symbolic apparatus of what is conceptually stabilized, but also the incorporation of what remains from the experience with teachers, stands out. It is pertinent to conjecture that student Marilena Chaui learned from teacher Gilda de Mello e Souza, for example, in addition to the grammatical treatment of writing and a way to better write her texts, a form of interaction supported by attributes such as resilience, willingness to share and constancy of analysis.

As a common factor in Marilena Chaui's teaching and, therefore, as a guiding principle of her teaching activities, it is worth highlighting the search for establishing thought in contrast to authoritarianism. Considering the teaching presence under the aegis of an authority that opposes the authoritarian exercise of expression, the dynamic attitude of reflection stands out as a way of opening up possibilities for the teacher. This purpose is evidenced by Chaui's choice to work in the classroom with a set of authors such as Merleau-Ponty (especially in *Humanism and Terror*), Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*, Sartre's *The Question of Method* or Montaigne's reflection on torture and cruelty – conceptual interlocutions listed to explore what Chaui (2011a) points out as the recurring theme of her teaching, namely: the multiple forms of authoritarianism.

In order to view a work of thought within the context of her work, Chaui (2011a) states that it is not possible to single out a specific way of philosophizing, which she evaluates as part of her quest to respond to the dynamics of events, or, in her words, “the feeling that I have an obligation to say something or do something in relation to what is happening around me.” She continues: “That is why I think I do not have ‘a thought’, that I do not have ‘a work’. I am there, a little loose in the world, for whatever may come” (Chaui, 2011a, p. 204).

A teaching work is made up of that which is legal, that which makes possible a dissemination that is always more unpredictable than the desire to circumscribe the stages of the profession. The teacher is only allowed to suppose or conjecture the scope of his/her performance, never the measurement of a direct causal relationship. A class or a course can reverberate immediately, having little or no repercussion. Experiences inherited from the classroom, such as readings, assessments or study strategies, dynamize forms of appropriation so unique that from them and with them it is only possible to weave a compound of expectations, but not the factor that guarantees their effectiveness.

The case of Marilena Chaui's experience with teaching Philosophy reveals teaching activity as a work based on a core sufficient to affirm the commitment to reflection and, also, what can be given as an invitation to the composition of expression. From the students' reports, we highlight a mode of announcement that finds, for example, in the reading of a text, the form of participation in philosophical frequency. Let us look at some of these possibilities.

Silvana de Souza Ramos (2017, p. 110) (currently a professor in the Philosophy department at USP) reports that this was Marilena Chaui's first statement when she heard the proposal to work on Montaigne's essay *On the Art of Conversation*: “I love this text. Let's read it together! Make a copy of the text, come next week at the same time, and let's get started.” Chaui had been assigned to supervise Silvana's master's degree in the USP Philosophy Graduate Program and, as she tells it, she and her supervisor met during this first conversation in the 1990s. To which Silvana Ramos continues:



The following week I was there, still intimidated by the situation. Marilena took the text and decreed: “Let’s read one paragraph per week.” And it went something like this: she read a sentence, explained the meaning of the words used, their origin, the argument that was formed, spoke about the type of construction of the text, about the rhetorical aspects, about the probable interlocutors. She explored the history of philosophy, the problems of ethics and politics. And so, each sentence was a world that opened up. I listened to all of that with total attention [...]. After that, I listed everything I could remember: the expressions, the references, everything. This lasted about two months. We managed to advance three paragraphs (Ramos, 2017, p. 110).

Three paragraphs in two months. Each word, each sentence. A teacher, a student, a text written by a French Renaissance philosopher. Between the three, the opening of a new world. Professor Marilena Chaui’s strategy speaks of rhythms, temporalities, and the dynamics of reflection. It bequeaths the possible depth of an encounter given with the right arrangement of presence and attention, so that in (and of) the school encounter the novelty and stabilization consistent with the experience of thinking are highlighted. “Let’s read one paragraph per week.” In two months of work, three paragraphs read.

An encounter is constituted by what is possible to accomplish beyond the immediate occasion. Either something called an encounter generates and derives from itself something +1, that is, new ways of seeing, feeling and thinking, unfinished and unprecedented processes, or it will not be an encounter. A soliloquy is more stable than an encounter, because clashes, some disturbance and discomfort are part of the nature of encounters, otherwise it is not worth leaving the comfort of particular images. A teacher who inhabits the place of dialogue with the world seeks a tone of confluence – the dialogue between thought and the world. That is, if the teacher’s interest is not expressed in the attempt to radiate something with him/her, but beyond the mere hierarchization of his/her role as tutor, one must ask about the meaning attributed to the pedagogical experience. This something, after all, cannot be the centralizing design of the dialogue. Therefore, a critical pedagogy questions “this everyday risk: where does the seduction of becoming a guru come from and why does it come from? Where does the desire for there to be a Master, the appeal to the figure of authority, come from and why does it come to us and to our students?” (Chaui, 2016, p. 257).

The privilege of encounter is the core of the pedagogical experience. In the example cited above, two people inhabit the history of philosophy, learn to grasp the intimate meaning of the words in a text, and sustain the experiment of a literate culture. And, more: of literate culture, a way of inhabiting time, in its thicknesses and anachronisms; a way of taking the text in their hands, of taming or not taming the silences, of interweaving questions and queries; the intersection between presence, form, and attention and what can derive from it. Therefore, in this case, in addition to asking what Montaigne says, we ask what, how, to what extent, and in what way Professor Marilena Chaui brought to light (with and beyond the curricular content expressed in the reading of Montaigne) from and with the realization of her teaching.

With a view to plurality, the study demands familiarity with objects and relationships that are closer to the human world than those established by the application

of instrumentalized and quantified learning. This is what the report of the student Silvana Ramos in relation to Chaui makes us think: “Marilena said: ‘we read the first paragraphs together. Now, I want you to read the next one by yourself. Bring it to me in writing and we will discuss your reading’. I went home, me and my paragraph. That paragraph had become the reason for my existence” (Ramos, 2017, p. 111).

It is necessary to ask to what extent the educational experience provides a tone of security and tranquility necessary for the emergence of the new; how much it provides a familiar welcome with the study to make the unprecedented emerge in the face of the established legacy. In the case of Professor Marilena Chaui, the testimonies of her former students add important elements to the composition of an image in the form of a “work of teaching”. This can be seen from the question that Professor Olgária Matos uses to recall, based on her trajectory as a student, the marks left by the one she considers as a teaching model: “And why is Marilena Chaui a model teacher? Because she is a type of intellectual for whom intellectual life is an end in itself. It is a passion for knowledge. Marilena transmitted, in her classes, the pleasure of learning this knowledge” (Matos, 2019, p. 165-166).

Although it may not be feasible to follow a path that guarantees the best teaching experience, the importance of commitment to preparing each meeting and class can be highlighted. This involves the careful preparation of the topic to be discussed, focusing on a subject, organizing it in writing, and presenting it effectively. With the example of professor Marilena Chaui (2019, p. 150): “when preparing a class, my principle is to first measure the level that the students are at. Based on these decisions, I do my readings, collect my own material, what I have already written on the subject, everything I have available on the subject”. This zeal of organizing everything one has with a view to the topic, writing each topic and then giving its manuscripts to the class event, although it is not a formula, will be a fundamental attitude of the profession.

And the teaching experience will be present in the participants’ memories, in different ways, as perceived in the speech of Henrique Piccinato Xavier, a former student of Marilena Chaui, when he reports how he was taken by what he calls the teacher’s philosophical thunder – while it seemed unusual to him that someone who is “a powerhouse of speech and whose thoughts are ‘on the tip of her tongue’ would be concerned with practically always bringing a text to be read” (Xavier, 2017, p. 194). The question is highly relevant: why would an effective speaker provide the audience with a structured format found in written and read text? The concern is pertinent: why would someone who is a master of oratory offer the audience the linearity stabilized in the written and read word?

Alcir Pécora, for example, explains that he never appears in the classroom as if he were going to give a lecture, armed with a ready-made solution or with a text he wrote himself to be read on the issue. In the afore mentioned work, the professor claims not to read anything he has written to the audience: “No way! If I am there, in person, I can say whatever I think, I don’t need to read. If I read myself, I will feel like I am repeating myself, lost somewhere in my past thoughts” (Pécora, 2019, p. 39-40). In a passage by Gilbert Highet about Henri Bergson’s teaching style, we see the following: “[Bergson] spoke without any notes, slowly and musically, composing each sentence under the cadence of



the expression of his bold and subtle thought; the sentences unfolded into well-articulated sets” (Highet, 1967, p. 233).

Teaching requires rite, form, correctness and foundation. Each teaching choice contains a sum of pros and cons, therefore, no strategy will be unanimous and irrefutable. The effectiveness of a teaching method will always depend on the due consent of (multiple) perspectives. Thus, based on the example mentioned above, how can we validate the best teaching strategy in relation to sharing content in class?

Considering all the points mentioned, it’s crucial to examine the inherent dynamics of philosophical activity to explore the meanings and forms of teaching. From the choice of exposition not centered on reading a text, the continuation of the question for elements that seek to account for the objectives of the class and the meanings placed in the act of teaching. To what extent does this teacher, the focus of the exposition, integrate a broader perspective that goes beyond individual experiences by demonstrating the dynamics of the world’s cultural diversity in their interactions with the class? On the other hand, the choice of exposition centered on reading a text can support other elements, among which the following deserve to be highlighted: What is the desired objective of such reading? What appeal does such reading respond to; what does it refer to; what does it seek to begin or end; what stands out from the act of decoding words?

This involves seeking to consider the structuring element of sharing, the amount of possibilities that the method offers, in order to provide opportunities from and with the form, for something beyond the form. The effort to identify, in the set of strategies and teaching choices of each teacher, a path of support and management, a link capable of highlighting the accessory – and also very revealing – dimension of the methodology. A search, therefore, to study and improve the teaching profession; to invest – continuously – in the composition of teaching as an attitude and activity.

The chances of success of a teaching method depend on such multifaceted subtleties and conditions that it would take much more than a yes or no to answer whether or not an author’s text should be read in class. And, after all, the genuine desire for a pedagogy tuned between nuances that will lead to an encounter with the human world will be able to accompany and guide each and every one. Regarding the teacher who relies on writing texts with presentation in class, the impression made from Henrique Xavier’s perspective is the following:

When Marilena reads the texts, she is not simply teaching philosophy, but questioning philosophy to its fullest potential, even after more than forty years of career. It is as if with each class, with each text, she is delving deeper into an endless question. And this genuine questioning is present in her reading, it is present in her listening to the students, she stimulates in the students their own desire to question. There is a student here in the Philosophy Department who is a researcher of teaching methodology and who is radically against reading in the classroom; I asked him what he thought of Marilena, and he answered that she was wonderful. Then I asked: what about reading? He answered that he had taken all of her courses and that she did not read. In fact, he answered: ‘she does not read’. This happens because you do not feel the reading, but you feel the movement of a question, you feel the desire to know. I think that this type of reading and writing

produces the specificity of a voice, a voice that knows and seeks to show why it came, class after class, group meeting after meeting, lecture after lecture, argument after argument, daily it is a voice that seeks to support philosophical questions (Xavier, 2017, p. 195-196).

The voice that expresses a purpose and the voice that knows how to ask questions. Not the voice that merely announces the data of an alphabetical sequence and clashes with the established. We must therefore question the core of the enunciative proposal if it simultaneously disseminates the statement and the chance to state, the experience of thought and a tone of invitation. Finding the right tone of voice is essential to the teaching experience. A tone that is with and beyond the mechanical modulation of the voice because it composes a form of relationship with knowledge, an intention to share.

## **The teaching authority in an inviting tone**

The virtue of excellence in one's craft is as rare as it is mysterious. Many of us have had or are fortunate enough to witness the virtuosity of these individuals with precise (and precious) techniques in the adjustment of their craft. That is why I emphasize, because the occasion is opportune, how much I was impacted by attending lectures given by Professor Marilena Chaui. On three separate occasions, I was in the auditorium following her presentation on central themes of the events at hand: one in which Merleau-Ponty's philosophy figured prominently; another on the relationship between politics and philosophy; and the last on Spinoza's ethics. I highlight elements of the lecturer Marilena that I imagine are like to those of Professor Marilena.

To begin, it is necessary to note that the method employed in this observation involves temporarily suspending the value attributed to various aspects of her trajectory during the conferences under analysis. I examined her contributions while attempting to disentangle preconceived notions shaped by numerous factors, among which, Marilena Chaui is recognized as the notable author of textbooks considered fundamental conceptual resources for the teaching of Philosophy. I tried to deactivate the gaze tainted by a vivid example of political implication (of a politicized pragmatics and of Politics with a capital P) – or to suspend the esteem of those who have a precious writing style and exceptional handling of forms of philosophical expression. I sought to disregard the adage expressed by Walnice Nogueira Galvão (2015, p. 11) about Marilena as “a rare creature: a woman, a philosopher and a fighter” or to disregard the “Marilena the lioness” that Bento Prado noticed in his student, just as I sought to remove from her image the robes of the accumulator of Honoris Causa titles, of USP emeritus, of Jabuti awards, among other decorations. It is not that a set of experiences should necessarily be lifted or definitively separated from those to whom we decide to give voice and time, but I decided to carry out this process of phenomenological decantation to be able to ask, simply: after all, what would this communicative being have to communicate? And how does he do it?

As an audience member in the auditorium, I observed Marilena Chaui's method of using words, including a cadence that contributed to effective communication in teaching. The speaker arrived, bringing with her the assured authority of experience, the

articulation of expression, and a commanding presence. An intersection between rigor and exactitude, spontaneity and foundation. Marilena Chaui laid out on the table the pages she had written for the occasion and, one by one, the words took their course in the auditorium. Somehow, the argumentative link gradually filled the walls of the large room like a second coat, finishing off the structure of bricks and ironwork. The firm structure of words (when well-designed) has some support of its own, of connection and solidity. The tone of Marilena Chaui's expression became the founding contour that, although invisible, participated in amplification, meaning and value together with the institutional concrete. The form of writing emerged that adequately represents Merleau Ponty's philosophy—an intricately constructed theory that, while shielding from external influences, allows for internal flexibility wherein new words, activities, or facts can emerge.

As a structuring part of a teaching work, Marilena Chaui's expression highlights the act of projecting the voice with a view to the human world. There are elements in her form that synthesize the idea of a teaching authority: what she accomplishes is not just a speech or a conceptual exposition, but an implied speech, and an exposition filled with pathos. Whether she speaks of Merleau-Ponty or Spinoza, what she makes manifest is a certain gaze endowed with study. It is, therefore, this link of involvement with theory that bequeaths an authority capable of the experience of approximation, that is, of bringing the idea closer – unraveling, developing and extending the concepts.

The work of teaching carries out and reveals ways of familiarizing with plurality. But a number of criteria are needed so that the intimate dimension of reading is extended in shared exposition. Picking up knowledge by making some addition in the transposition of a work from the library to the auditorium will either be worthwhile or will always fall short of what the intimate journey with the work itself bequeaths to a reader, when he or she participates in the habit of reading. Thus, teaching becomes an invitation if there is someone capable of seeing and showing, at the same time, past, present and future in an act of reading the world. To take the following statement from Silvana about the teacher in question:

Marilena changes each of the spaces she occupies (at the University, in the classroom, in the research supervision position, in the party, in the government, in the newspaper...) and by the people who circulate there, into islands of disorder. Places where relations of power and knowledge are transformed, distorted and debureaucratized. Places where asymmetries are not simply erased (the differences between experts and the curious, among teachers and students, between activists and philosophers); in some way, they are resolved, rearticulated, but never transformed into relations of command and obedience. [...] Marilena positions herself as one of the parts of this whole, of this body that renews and reinvents itself with each generation (Ramos, 2017, p. 112-113).

Finding the right tone for a communicative exchange is one of the central tricks of teaching. However, showing presence and authority, expressing oneself well, persuading, inviting, clarifying and deepening, opening up and touching the heart of the communicative attitude demands meticulous preparation. When a person shares a text about Spinoza or

Merleau-Ponty with an audience, a special space of protection for the memory will be provided. Judging by Antônio dos Santos' account of his teacher Marilena Chaui, it is likely that the intangible channel of memory allows us to recognize the encounter as a form of persistence over time.

How can I forget Professor Marilena Chaui's many classes, always enjoyable and humorous, on the preface to Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise? How can I forget the detailed reading of the text or translation? How can I forget the dramatic power of reading the beginning of the Preface to the TT-P? Professor Marilena's influences remain with me and, as long as I can, she will be a source of inspiration and a theoretical and personal reference [...]. For all this, I am grateful to Professor Marilena for having taught me, with joy, the experience of education and for having empowered me to take political action (Santos, 2017, p. 29-36).

Based on Spinoza, and by establishing a frequency of communication, neither given only in her individuality as a speaker, nor in the exclusivity of the Spinoza volume, Marilena Chaui offers an invitation to compose the construct instituted together with the signs of a cultural legacy. It is, therefore, in a culturally circumscribed context, that the student Antônio meets the teacher Marilena and both compose the dialogue with knowledge, supporting the word of the ancestors and enhancing the arrival of the new.

The core of teaching is not to seek to occupy the place of knowledge, but to always leave it empty so that others can aspire to it, points out Chaui (2016), emphasizing the need to maintain an asymmetry between teacher and students so that they, alone, can achieve a relationship of symmetry and equality with knowledge. "The teacher is not supposed to say 'do as I do', but 'do with me'" (Chaui, 2016, p. 257). As long as the unfinished and open line of knowledge prevails, the asymmetry of the training process will not simply be a starting point, but, on the contrary, will legitimize the scope and effort of the living frequency of intelligences.

The spirit of thought makes teachers and students equal, although the baggage that the former carries, acquired over the course of life experience and in the intersection between study and teaching, legitimizes a hierarchical difference with the latter. It is important to leave the place of knowledge empty, that is: given the non-transferable and infinite nature of knowledge, it is not the size of the baggage that is the definitive ultimatum, because the legacy of the word, dynamic and open, always asks for more. Teacher and student will thus be synchronized in their ability to hoist the shared expression and with each new attempt the gesture of the search will be improved, without either of them being, completely, the possessed and unison voice.

It is from this perspective that the structuring element of Philosophy teaching is to suspend the intention of possessing knowledge, keeping in motion an arrow that will not point exclusively to a (supposed) authorized speaker and, therefore, will not occur in univalence, but that will respond to the transformation of knowledge so that it reaches, returns and is continued (symmetrically) by the human novelty. The horizontal educational gesture, with the stimulus of participation and renewal of the cultural legacy, is capable of moving frequencies between intelligences. With teaching authority, the multifaceted encounter of human action and speech enhances the expressions of these intelligences.

Let us look at the following account that Sílvia Saes (2020, p. 53) tells about her professor Marilena Chaui: “being competent, [Marilena] criticizes the ideology of competence; as a specialist, she combats the figure of the specialist or opinion maker who imposes himself by inculcating ideas or by intimidating people about how to assert reason”. And also the excerpt in which Juvenal Savian Filho (2020, p. 129) tells of the construction of the master’s and doctoral research under the supervision of this professor: “what seduces those who work with Marilena Chaui is the atmosphere of trust, freedom and joy. Without trust, freedom and joy, there is no true creativity”. Also, the following excerpt from an article in which Olgária Matos (2017, p. 15) presents the philosophical vocation and the academic and political scope of the work of thought of her, who was also her student: “Marilena Chaui has created a history of philosophical, literary and historical erudition, her writings and teachings are generously intended for specialists, apprentices and the general reading public”. And, finally, the account by Henrique Piccinato Xavier (2017, p. 182): “the dialogue of guidance with Marilena always values a vivid act of creation, because the meaning of philosophy that she affirms to us is never limited to a professional technical activity, but it is philosophy as a way of life”.

Creating an environment where both new and existing elements are appropriately positioned is essential for education. This setting promotes familiarity with creativity, which is crucial for connecting present innovations with historical foundations. As Marilena Chaui (2003) articulated, it encourages the transition from the established to the innovative. Such a passage requires the cursive transit of feeling, thinking and saying, that is, the entry into the thin membrane neither given in the shallows of facilitation, nor taken to the extreme of such an obscure depth that little can be understood.

From this perspective, it follows that the erudite gesture is not the same as the narcissistic gesture conditioned by the literate fortress. The distancing from enlightenment may be comforting for the ego, but inefficient for the communicative intention. Communicating demands that the erudite contribution be centered on the interest of finding another. Therefore, while refining one’s personal evidence and constructing logical arguments through the articulation of thought into speech (despite showcasing a sophisticated structure) does not necessarily ensure effective communication. After all, communicating is discovering a frequency so that the word flows from one to the other. The dialogical course of the word, that is, when it is not intimidating, subservient or confined, represents the height of the effort to express well so that it can be understood well. However, devoid of the will to encounter, the erudite gesture, by perfecting mechanisms and developing more whims, will only reflect strict individualism in narcissistic waters.

## Final considerations

The active core of Philosophy teaching is constituted by the willingness of each teacher to offer themselves to the encounter by sharing time and attention – asking questions such as the following: Does my erudition hinder communication or invite for communication? Does my communication effectively use shared language to convey ideas that can influence our understanding of the world?



In relation to teaching activities, a work of thought demands a commitment to the reverberated word as the main substrate of the relationship between teachers and students. The teacher's expression in his/her teaching work reflects the relationship present in the encounter with students. Teaching authority makes the invitation to plurality viable, reaffirming the dimension and scope that are essential to the protection and transformation of the human world. It is in this sense that it is worth recovering the value of teaching as a work. While there are administrative structures that might affect the conditions for fully realizing the teaching profession, it is essential to recognize the importance of authority and sharing in the academic experience.

In the case of Professor Marilena Chaui, the invitation to communicative frequency is the core of teaching achievement. The method of sharing established knowledge provides an opportunity for communicative frequency to allow the instituting element to pass through, rather than relying on authoritarian monologues or the instrumentalization of knowledge. When she invites presence, Professor Marilena Chaui highlights the possibility of teaching in sharing a common world, safeguarding and transforming the expression of plurality.

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