53 - THE BODY IN PLATO: AN INVESTIGATION BASED ON PHAEDO AND PHAEDRUS

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INTRODUCTION

The pre-Socratic main thinkers, like Heraclitus of Ephesus and Parmenides of Elea, did not put or did not do it in a clear way the psychophysics opposition situation due to their body and soul conceptions were confused with cosmologic ideas (CARDIM, 2009). To Reale (2002), the man's understanding in Homer was not dual because in his language there were not terms to design a soul and a body to an alive person. Those words were just used to a death situation: psyche, to a soul of a dead person and soma, to a corpse. Santos (1991), explains that the Orphism, an ancient religious movement, already defended the existence in man of a divine and immortal part, opposite to the body. In spite of the possible influences suffered by Plato, he is appointed as the founder of a well structured thought that divides and contrasts the body and soul, which mark the comprehension in a predominant occidental way of thinking about those elements.

In platonic works, if compared with the soul, the body is considered inferior. Because of this, a few times it is the central theme in his dialogues and in his commentators' books, shown always as an element opposite to the soul and its virtues. So this work is justified by the importance of knowing and discussing the body's conception and its characteristics in the thought of one of the most influential philosophers of the world to discuss the epistemological foundation of the Physical Education.

The methodology used in this work is bibliographic. Some Plato's dialogues were studied, mainly Timaeus, Phaedo and Phaedrus. Some commentators who approach general themes or specifics themes about the soul and the body were also considered. Initially, this research tries to explain the platonic theory that divides the world into two parts. In the next topic, the man's nature is the central theme, where the elements body and soul will be approached. At last, the death conception and the implication of disconnection of the body will be explored.

TIMAEUS AND THE TWO WORLDS

To understand the body's view in Plato is necessary to know before his philosophy general ideas' base.

Differently of some Ionians philosophers, like Heraclitus of Ephesus and Diogenes of Apollonia, who believed that the universe genesis happened “by art”, in other words, through a casual organization of material elements (fire, water, earth and air), Plato defended a source created by a supernatural intelligence that organizes those same material elements fixed before, in a chaotic way. (VLASTOS, 1975, p.25-26)

In Timaeus, Plato explores the origin of the world. In this dialogue, Timaeus, appointed as an astronomy expert and the one who put most efforts in exploring the cosmos' nature. His theory exposition began with the differentiation between what is immutable and, therefore, it can be understood by reason and what is becoming, that is, what is always susceptible to changes and it is “the object of the opinion followed by the senses' irrationality”* (PLATÃO, 2011, p.94)

Plato defended that the sensible world genesis, the one where we live, happened through an intelligible dimension. A creator god, called demiurge, formulated the sensible world taking as archetype, an immutable and eternal world. The sensible world, in spite of being based on a perfect model, could not follow this model faithfully since it was composed by material elements visible and/or tangible, in other words, elements apprehended by the senses that are susceptible to changes.

Thereby, how the world can be seen, touched and it is the owner a body, so, can be concluded that it is becoming. And everything that moves does it because of something, being this reason assigned to demiurge, who created the world bases in an unalterable archetype. Therefore, the sensible world is nothing but an imperfect image of an ideal, eternal and immutable model. The sky, for example, is stated as a still image that is always present, but varies with time, that is: it is “a mobile image of the eternity“* (PLATÃO, 2011, p.109), and not the eternity itself.

Thus how the world in Plato is divided in two dimensions, an intelligible one and a sensible one, his view of duality between soul and body seems to be an extension of this thought that separates the world in two poles.

THE DUAL HUMAN NATURE

The man in Plato has a dual, disassociated and contrary nature still widely accepted by the common sense. A part is the body, the element that represents the sensitive, and the other is the soul, intelligible, which represents the reason and it is close to the divine.

The body understanding in Plato, the goal of this research, is broadly connected with its contrary, the soul, since the opposition between them is almost symmetric. The body is not shown as an essential element to achieve wisdom, but as an obstacle to it. Therefore, the main theme of the platonic dialogues and his commentators studies are not focused directly on the body, but on the soul. So, it will be presented, the soul concept and qualities in Plato to better situate the body.

The starting point to understand the soul conception is conceiving it as immortal because it can move itself. According to this view, anything that is moved by something else and moves another one has its movement abrogated. But the understanding of the movement principle presupposes that nothing created it and, therefore, it will never be destroyed since it came from nowhere. Like this, the movement principle determines itself and the others and, as cannot be destroyed, it is immortal. The soul essence, as is presented in Phaedrus, is the immortality and, because it is the movement principle, it determines the body's movement too: “Every body that receives an external movement is inanimate, while the one with an internal movement is animate because this is the soul nature”* (PLATÃO, 1974, p. 864)

Another way to understand the character of the immortal soul is through the theory of the contrary exposed in the work Phaedrus. The life and the Idea of life is the soul essence because it is the body's animation principle and it never ceases existing once it is immortal. To this theory, death and life are contraries and like all contraries, they suffered a double process which one contrary generates the other and vice versa:

> So that is what we should examine: I wonder with necessarily in all cases that there is a contrary, this is born from another thing rather than its own contrary? E.g.: when something becomes bigger, is not necessary that previously it had been smaller so that after it could become bigger?* (PLATÃO, 1991, p.127)

So when something faces its contrary or its essence, stops existing. This reasoning allows a new prove of the soul's immortality, as the soul has the life essence within itself, it would never accept the death. And the body, the soul's contrary, an element susceptible to death, suffers with its arrival. (REALE, 2002, p.208)

Through the Chariot Allegory, Plato defended a soul's nature divided in three, made of two winged horses, one beautiful and good which represents a passionate part and the other that is bad and naughty which represents a concupiscent part, and a charioteer who represents the intellect, element able to guide the horses.

The man's chariot, unlike the gods', are hybrid, that is, composed of "mortal souls", connected with sensitive aspects: the concupiscent, located between the diaphragm and the navel, and the passionate, located between the diaphragm and the neck; and the "divine soul", located in the head and separated from the rest by the neck.

Only through the intellect (represented by the "divine soul") is possible the wing's development to meet the truths in the heaven. Otherwise, if they do not follow the gods it will have the wings diminished becoming heavy and falling to the ground.

This way, as the wings can "lift what is heavy"* (PLATÃO, 1974, p. 864), they would provide a contact close to the divine despite the inevitable contact with the body:

> The divine is beautiful, wise, good, and everything about that; and that's what feeds the most and make the wings grow; otherwise, the embarrassing, the evil and all the contraries things to those consume the wings and make them parish.* (PLATÃO, 1974, pg. 864)

Therefore, this metaphor shows that there is the possibility of the man following the guided soul by the intelligence that contemplates the reality that is truly colorless, shapeless, impalpable"* (PLATÃO, 1974, p. 865), developing, therefore, its good side; as can also be taken by the evil side, dominated by the desires and connected to body sensibilities.

Thus, also it is possible to realize Anamnesis due to the eternal and divine character of the soul. The soul has already contemplated the "Eternal Truths", during the period that it was connected with a body, so it just remembers what already knew it, that is, "learning is not other thing than remembering"* (PLATÃO, 1991, p.131)

It can be noted that Plato defends (i) an eternal soul; (ii) a soul that moves itself and the other things; (iii) it has a connection with the divine; (iv) it is responsible for what is intelligible, in other words, what can just be seized by reason and is not becoming (the world of Ideas):

> The soul is capable of knowing immutable and eternal things such as the equal itself, the pretty itself and the good itself. It's about realities that remain always in the same conditions, equal to themselves and I mutable (…)* (REALE, 2002, p.207)

The body is presented in a clear inferior position, though, because: (i) it parishes; (ii) it has its movement determined by something else, that is, the soul; (iii) it departs man from the divine; (iv) it is inexact due to its character of sensible apprehension

> And, without a doubt, the soul reasons better when any obstacle comes from anywhere, not from the ear, nor from the sight, nor from a suffering, nor especially from a pleasure – but when it isolates the most within itself, abandoning the body to its luck, when breaking apart as much as it can from any union, any contact with it, searches for what is real? (PLATÃO, 1991, p.117)

Thereby, as says Cardim (2009, p. 23), the body is presented in an ambiguous way because at the same time that it is controlled by the soul, it is also considered a tomb where the man is "imprisoned like an oyster to its shell"* (PLATÃO, 1974, pg. 866)

THE END OF THE BODY AS AN OBJECTIVE

According to Plato, the philosopher that has his goal is to search the truth should try to release from the body the most and go beyond the purely terrain dimension, leading a life guided by reason and abstaining from pleasures, desires, pains, anyway, any form of apprehension of the world considered uncertain in its theory.

The body takes such a damaging role that its desires can cause drastic consequences to the humanity:

> Nothing like the body and its concupiscence to cause the wars, arguments, battles; with effect, in possession of assets is where resides the origin of all wars, and, if we are irresistibly impelled to gather assets we do it because of the body to whom we are simple slaves.* (PLATÃO, 1991, p.119)

This way, the platonic thinking "starts from the thesis that the philosopher's life is an exercise of the death"* (REALE, 2002, p.176). This instigating conception can be understood in the Phaedo dialogue, contextualized moments before Socrates death, where the concept of the death is nothing else more than separation of the soul and body:

> Being dead consists in this: separated from the soul, the body is isolated in itself; the soul, on its turn, separated from the body and isolated in itself. Nothing else than the separation of the soul and the body, isn't it?* (PLATAO, 1991, p.115)

This way, as the philosopher cannot break completely free during life, because it is connect to the body, that is, it will not fully achieve the object of its desire, should wait positively for the death or the end of their body because those who fear death love their bodies.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The search in Plato for the truth, the superior, the divine, one more time, is beyond that which can be felt. The Allegory of the Cave philosopher divides the world and separates man's nature too.

However, it's only in death that the division is total. With it, remains a body that mudes and a soul that will keep existing in a supernatural world. Despite being defended by an ancient philosopher, this view is not strange to the western Christian thinking of the XXI century. The predominant theories have being modified and sometimes weakened, but they are still rooted because "people has beliefs, not theories."* (FONTANELLA, 1995, p.28)

The western man understands himself in a divided way: when he thinks, it is conscience; but when he desires, it is the body. However, how can we explain this very brutal separation in certain movements: like in the arts, in the sports and even in sexual acts? The question seems to appear in such a complex form and doesn't matter if there is any separation in some moments, the possibility of a human being unified can be great and even vaster.

As common sense, the predominant formal education privileges clearly a “soul education”. The classroom organization itself shows that. The bodies are statics and the conscience is in movement (not always in the right direction). Thereby since early the kids learn that they have a conscience and is through it that they perceive the world. The body and the senses are just important to vital needs, being ignored by such education.

The body study in Plato and in so many other thinkers that defend or have defended a dual human being nature can provide a reflection about the current man and the possible consequences to the societies, important to a creation of a new way to educate.

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ABSTRACT

Plato is appointed as the founder of a well structured thought that divides and contrasts the body and soul, which mark the comprehension in a predominant occidental way of thinking about those elements. That is why it is so important to discuss the body's conception and its characteristics in the thought of one of the most influential philosophers of the world to discuss the epistemological foundation of the Physical Education. Therefore, this research has the objective of reflecting about the body's conception in Plato. The methodology used in this work is bibliographic. Some Plato's dialogues were studied, mainly Timaeus, Phaedo and Phaedrus and some commentators who approach general themes or specifics themes about the soul and the body were also considered. Initially, general platonic's theory will be studied. In the next topic, the man's nature is the central theme. At last, the death conception and the implication of the disconnection of the body will be explored. As in platonic's world theory, the man is understood in a dual way. A part is eternal and it is connected with the divine: the soul. The other is always changing and it is corruptible: the body. Thereby, the philosopher should try to release from the body the most and go beyond the purely terrain dimension.

KEYWORDS: Plato, body, dual human nature

LE CORPS SELON PLATO : UNE ÊNQUETE BASÉE SUR LES DIALOGUES PHÉDON ET PHÈDRE

RÉSUMÉ

Plato est considéré comme le fondateur d'une pensée philosophique qui oppose et disjoint le corps et l'âme. Cette pensée constitue un marque de la compréhension de ces elements dans la pluspart de la philosophie occidental. Ce pour ça l'importance de discuter l'idée de corps, élémentaire au étude de l'éducation physique, sous le point de vu d'un de les plus influentes philosophes du occident. Cet article a pour objectif, alors, élucider la conception de corps pour Plato, en opposition a son concept de l'âme. La méthodologie utilisée dans ce recherche est bibliographique, basée principalment sur trois de ses dialogues: Timée, Phèdre et Phédon. Au début on abord une partie plus genéral de la philosophie platonic, ensuite, on comment sa vision sur la nature humaine bipartite en corps et âme et alors, sa interprétation de la mort. Dans la philosophie platonic, le être humaine est divisée en deux. Une partie est éternelle et s'attache à ce qui est divin: l'âme. L'autre partie peut changer et être pervertie: le corps. Le corps, pour Plato, c'est le sépulcre oú l'âme est apprisionée. C'est alors le devoir du philosophe se libérer de plus en plus de la limitation representée par le corps, quoi il peut faire en n'obeiant pas certaines demandes du corps. Il n'y a rien a faire de plus qu'attender l'arrive de la mort, pour lui libérer définitivement.

MOTS-CLÉS: Plato, corps, nature humaine bipartite

EL CUERPO EN PLATÓN: UNA INVESTIGACIÓN A TRAVÉS DE LOS DIÁLOGOS FEDÓN Y FEDRO

RESUMEN

Platón es apuntado como el fundador del pensamiento filosófico que separa y contrapone el cuerpo y el alma, su comprensión de esos elementos marca el pensamiento occidental predominante. Por eso, es tan importante discutir el cuerpo, base epistemológica del estudio de la Educación Física, en la visón de una de las figuras más influyentes del mundo. Este trabajo, por lo tanto, tiene como objetivo aclarar la concepción de cuerpo en Platón, poniéndolo en oposición al alma. La metodología de este estudio es bibliográfica con énfasis en tres diálogos: Timeo, Fedro y Fedón. Inicialmente es abordada una teoría más general de la filosofía platónica, después su concepción a cerca de la naturaleza humana bipartida en alma y cuerpo. Una parte es eterna y está relacionada con lo divino: el alma. La otra deviene y es corruptible: el cuerpo. Así, el cuerpo en Platón es la tumba en que el alma está presa. Es deber, por lo tanto, del filósofo escapar al máximo de esa cosa que lo limita, no considerando algunas demandas del cuerpo. Además, hay que esperar que la muerte llegue y lo liberte por entero.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Platón, cuerpo, naturaleza humana bipartida

O CORPO EM PLATÃO: UMA INVESTIGAÇÃO À LUZ DOS DIÁGOLOS FÉDON E FEDRO

RESUMO

Platão é apontado como o fundador do pensamento filosófico que separa e contrapõe o corpo e a alma, sua compreensão desses elementos marcou profundamente o pensamento ocidental predominante. Por isso, é tão importante discutir a compreensão de corpo, base epistemológica do estudo da Educação Física, na visão de um dos mais influentes filósofos do mundo. Este trabalho, portanto, tem como objetivo refletir sobre a concepção de corpo em Platão, colocando-a em contraponto com a alma. A metodologia desta pesquisa é bibliográfica com ênfase em três grandes obras, os diálogos: Timeu, Fedro e Fédon. Inicialmente é abordada uma teoria mais geral da filosofia platônica, em seguida sua concepção da natureza humana bipartida em alma e corpo e, por fim sua interpretação da morte. Assim como o mundo platônico, o ser humano foi concebido de uma forma dual. Uma parte é eterna e liga-se com o divino: a alma. A outra devém e é corruptível: o corpo. Assim, o corpo em Platão é o sepulcro em que a alma está presa. É dever, portanto, do filósofo libertar-se ao máximo dessa coisa que o limita, não atendendo a certas demandas do corpo. No mais, esperar que a morte chegue e o liberte por inteiro.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: Platão, corpo, natureza humana bipartida