Vocation of education

También en Português • Español

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some words about the exercise of the educational worker

The signs of life would be everywhere.
Planted between life and death and yet again life, they would be everywhere.
Thus, there would be flowers. Rough, tough flowers from a time long before our own.
Back then, many millennia ago, the multiform form of life would have brought from the moving waters to the dirt of the ground, the seeds of these ancestors. Beings of life amongst blue and lilac, red and yellow.
The great reptiles would have disappeared and then, among other large sized animals the small humming bird flew between colors and smells, fertilizing life.
Back then the beings from which we came from slowly climbed down from the trees, with great effort, they rose up on their rear parts and looked forward at the horizon. Like the beast that hunts, they had their eyes on the front of their faces.
But only they learnt, in a different way, how to see the same faithful image with both eyes. They lost the panther's instinct, but learnt to pay more attention than angels.
Throughout many other millennia they would have used their hands for crafts until then unknown, and four-legged beings learnt, standing on only two legs, a rare, new and unique body posture.
And of all the fingers, the thumb turned out to oppose the others. And for the first time, life produced a hand as wise as the mind that would create with it. A hand that has forgotten how to walk, bearing the weight of the body, like those of monkeys. A subtle and interrogating hand, to bring into existence the touch of love, science and art.
And the architecture of the mouth, little by little, lost its carnivorous ferocity and prepared for the miracle of speech.
For a being that walks standing straight, that watches with curiosity, attention and wisdom, that conquered the freedom of gestures, of the hands first, and then, of speech through the audible signs of symbols, the road for concentrated attention was open, the smart look and the unique gestures of reasoning.
At the beginning a small brain like that of their related beings: gorillas, orangutans,

gibbons and chimpanzees, grew, enlarged, and became complex and differentiated. Another million years were needed so that this place of reasoning and imagination would learn how to think, to know and to think, and to know whilst thinking, and think whilst knowing. And feeling whilst knowing and thinking whilst feeling. For they were born there, like immortal flowers: the memory, the sense of the future, the wish to trade with others, the anticipated fear of death, devotion, affection controlled by reasoning and the act of thinking transformed into reflection. One day Gaston Bachelard would say: *“estou só logo somos quatro” (I’m alone, therefore we are four)*. And we are more, because each and every one of us can be the frontier to infinity.
After all, life, conscious of itself in any being-of-life, becomes acknowledged of its own conscience. It grows from a reflex conscience to a reflexive conscience. It jumps from sign to word and from word to symbol. It creates culture, that natural way of the human being. To the Creature that finally emerges from sound to sense, and from sense to meaning; And it creates words and establishes the beginning of communication of feelings through the cultural symbols of life and feelings.
From there we came from, and from this we are made.

I
Grandmothers and grandchildren in the middle of the night

how would the night have been maybe forgotten by all memories?
A primitive and ancestral night in the aurora of history,
When a small living being, a million years later known as: “Man”.
Called his grandson to a place closer to the lit fire
And then, pointing at a star, with two fingers of his right hand,
amongst many others in July’s sky, pronounced for the first time
its first name. How would that night have been?
with what gestures of rude affection, but nevertheless filled with a strange light,
brighter than the one from the fire, brighter than the one from the winter stars
would that have happened one day…in the middle of the night?

How would it have been, preceding a thousand millennia
one other night, even more forgotten in the silence of time
when an ancestor even older than those first men
rested the weight of his arm upon the shoulders of a boy
and with the movements of only his hands, and his stares
he taught him for the first time a little secret

in a time when there is nothing, not even words under the trees and the stars,
not even the names of the world?
how would the drawing have been of those voiceless gestures
and so humanely simple that under the protection of the stars
the man and the boy fell asleep without ever knowing
that they had created right there the miracle of teaching-and-learning
so that knowledge does not die, nor people, nor the stars?

What birds awake in the night and what other beings from the skies
and what nocturnal flowers from which the perfume alone
already makes life and the world so full of mysteries
would have assisted, one time and another, separated by a million years
from those fleeting moments of history when, first the gesture
and then the word, would have created the ploy of inventing the exchange
between symbols, between meanings and between the feelings of the world
through gestures of life in consciousness and knowledge?
transformed in what others, so many times,
called by the name of education, between men and the sons of men.

II
When a gesture teaches, what’s to do?

between gestures of power and love: movements with hands, swings of the eyes
some murmuring of words and the first short phrases of reasoning, traveling between
infinite mornings and nights
and multiplying more times by a thousand the variation of the inventories
of the ways of passing on from father to son the secrets of the tribe
between grandmothers and granddaughters, from village to village, from one house to another
education invaded the planet and transformed the beings we were into: women and men.
Why is it that from there on, between war and peace, the beings that we are discovered
that knowledge and conscience are of very little value
if it doesn’t exist amongst the people who gather around the fire at night
the collective feeling of sharing everything
and giving out, like as with fish and bread, the gestures of the hands and voice

as if learning from the others their names and their flour kneading secrets
and cooking the dough in the oven, that someone made when they learned how to make it…
And with the women and the men of the forgotten nights of history
education is everywhere, their journey full of light and dreams,
but also of dark hours, hours filled with torment.

Throughout the sinuous road of hills and valleys divided like history
what many other primitive days and nights
might have witnessed the infinite tricks of the mysteries
where, learning with life and soul, experimenting the thread of nature
little by little, men from this world transformed everything
touching water and stone with their hands and spirit as tools?
They…we, fragile lords of everything, brothers of the universe,
Beings who through life accomplished a consciousness: sons of clay,
Of flame and flesh, metal workers of words, clerk of symbols.
Creator of the time and culture, to which they gave a name and a face to all
And signed everything with the mark of their power:
Marks of soul and blood of the dreams of men.

And amongst everything: people, words, signs, symbols and feelings
Around the fires, in the huts on the great rainy nights,
Touching each other's bodies with their hands: they learnt and taught
And again, sometimes, they taught and learnt.
Thus, just as the people did with their chattels, after the first,
That hunted for work, picked, created and threaded, it was so that amongst them, some made the rituals of knowledge go round. And revealed secrets.
And they put words to knowledge and gave to the others, like with meat and bread
So that death wouldn't come too soon and so that the children would be wiser than their parents, and the grandchildren wiser than the grandparents. So it was done.

"- When I was born the big fish were long gone…
– And when were you born?
– After the big fish were long gone!"

Living together is always some form of community, experimenting the world

and touching with the same gestures what they had seen being touched before by other hands
the men of the world before us learnt more than the lessons that the world gives.
by being touched by love and fury between body and mind.
They learnt more than the lessons that life offers and that open before your eyes
-of all, the best mentor – because beyond the individual life, but also through it,
they discovered the lessons lived between them and surrounded by bodily heat.
looking famished at the fingers of the artisans and the hands of the wise
and murmuring into the spirit the words they heard…
That, through the multiplication of life and the transformation of its quality
by looking at one's own life with a conscious thought
like the daughter that learnt from the mother, and taught the mother
That, that repeatedly countless times goes from gesture to teaching,
from teaching to knowledge and, sharing, from knowledge to culture.

III
education is as great as everything that is human

like the dirt ground of the tribal clan, in the living map of the signs of the village,
inside the canoes, on the tray of the first yam or wheat plantations
followed by the grownups steps on the trails of the wilderness,
looking in silence at the mother who's making a straw mat, watching, accomplice of a happy moment,
the father fishing out some fish.
How would it have been that the girls and boys of the first tribes
Of the nations of men, knew how to sing songs and say prayers
To the flowers and gods of their worlds?
How did they learn, with the passing of time, how to unreel the endless canvas of the names of everything
And decipher the complicated equation of people's social categories
With whom did they cohabit: in their time, their way?
How did children learn from an early age, who was who amongst each other:
To cohabit, to avoid, to play with, to respect, to hunt
To marry, to fear, to breed, to wait for, to help die?
And how were the tribes' mysteries unevenly kept
Before writing, in the ephemeral flower of the group's memory
And from one generation to another, among many, crossed the sleeping of centuries?

How does one learn how to sing with their mother their first children's song
And how do the elderly pronounce between stuttering prayers
The beloved and feared name of the sacred beings? Rare names of love and fear
That the immemorial village myths invented between summers and winters
And their dancing rituals between clapping around the fire
Made everything look so full of life and reality?
How would it have passed from the adult to the boy so many times, in so many eras and places
The power to invoke the craft of magic, mother of science and her sister?
How did one teach to another the other names of the same things
And of the spirits of life from which the students and tutors' imagination
Resided everywhere an alphabet with endless meanings: the depth of waters
The darkness of the woods, the shapeless blue space, the sun and the moon, the map
The inside of trees, the soul of animals, the way of the errant winds
And the message of the desert?
How come someday someone set up a trap and taught somebody what it was for
And for the first time the evilness of man captured a yellow bird?
And, multiplied between good and evil the domain of man over the world
Transformed into power and wisdom. And the rituals that turns the woods into a desert
And then fructify the desert and then destroy it again, and then …

Just like who, of all known things, dreams to be the lord,
But just like a child, needs to learn everyday each step all over again
From the path of knowledge that inhabits at the same time its soul and the universe,
Hence, Man read and re-read throughout the thread of time the lessons to cohabit with one another and the world; with others of his world and of others;
With the world of his others; with the others of himself; with the worlds of himself, another.
And so to transform, at the same time, the world and himself
(for then Prometheus had already given fire to mankind…)
according to the images of the dreams that the mages had every night,
between sibling moments and opposites of hate and brotherly love
Cultured people learnt to create and build, know and share
Like the working-Wiseman the objects of his day: the bow and the basket, the prayer and the net,

The plow and threads of the sowing, the passing drawings of a dead man’s face, the necklaces
and the bracelets of the celebration of their sons’ bodies.
And, thus, in many ways, each one according to the grammar of their crafts
amongst all, the unequally equal, the tribe learnt to circulate
their work’s products from home to home, the people and symbols of names.
And from one door to another they should pass the beings of trade:
fish, people and parables …
and, in each culture, everything went to as far as education could reach
In a way to similar and different people and knowledge …
for there was a time where, nothing differed between a childish game amongst cousins
or a moment when both were looking at the fast stroll of a shooting star
or the routine work that three months later multiplies a seed by a hundred,
hence education passed hand in hand by the swing of any gesture.
And it was when it didn’t even have that name and that of its owners,
Because when free, it is released from the lords of knowledge and sense
Like the flowers that everybody picks and carries back home
A solitary education ripened the fruit that knowledge planted.

IV
It was then when…

Here and there, everywhere, when the wealth and the power grew,
Of the men before us, and the result of the work of all
Multiplied for some, the baskets of cereal grains, many times
And there, there was the unconsumed glut at the festivity around the fire
And the power of keeping what was no longer of all
transformed the use and the solidarity trade into possession and in the selfish exchange.
Then, from the men of the village-city, walls and soldiers emerged.
The coinage emerged: which piles in the cellars of the palaces and is not eaten
And the people of the world started to teach and learn the worst lesson.
It was when some became owners of cattle and others had the duty of keeping guard over it,
And some stacked the wheat that was lacking on the table of others,
And many weaved in weaver’s loom the clothes of few
And over the soil of the first worlds divided between the men

Some became owners of the land, of the riverbanks and of the streams
And where the owners of the cities and lords of the fortresses and of the power of saying:
“This is mine, it is my domain!”
And more and more where there were paths without doors, great shut doors were made
And where all were free and differently equal, inequality began to reign
And the curse that makes difference uniform and enslaves those who were free…And then the knowledge that gave name to images and made myths from dreams
And was the gain of work over the land and son of the astonishment and of the wonders
It was divided also between the sons of men, as the land and its fruits.
And that that was shared among all: names, secrets, memories,
Slowly left the surroundings of the campfires and the gaze of the first mages
And it hid also between the walls protected by stone enclosures and guards.
And it was so when the stolen grain from the table of others to the cellar of the wealthy,
That a powerful part of the craft of the flight of teaching and learning
Divided also under the white hands of the lords of silk
Forgotten, as the masters of who they belonged to, like they,
Of holding with the good weight of the arms the two plough beams …

Who do the stars belong to? Of whose are the figures that the soul of men makes of them?
Of whose are their names: ‘Antares’, ’Capella’, ‘Rigel’, ‘Betelgeuse’?
Of whose is the wisdom that from the stars and their names gods and legends, heroes were made
From the destiny and paths over the seas on the journeys to other lands?
In the name of who? Of what? Men divided then the knowledge in knowledges
And gave, to each one a path and a destiny. Giving to some the secret of a power
Diverse from what there was before, among ones different, turned now unequals?
How were the proper names of things in life separated by walls
And given to some the power to say it, and to others not, and in silence,
Becoming servants where there were lords, and colonized where there were colonizers?
And those that do not know now where the lords of the knowledge exist
And the owners of the work and of the crafts of those who know and teach?

V
Did we forget…

By any chance, teachers, did we forget these lessons of history?
Could they have been a bad moment of the past or are they surrounding us, now, here?
Looking at us and around us we clearly see their despoilments.
Or did we turn them into myths or into fairy tales of our lessons?
Because then everything was like an easy song – one of those old songs
One day emerging in the town square without knowing from whom or when
And the people, together, knew to chant with sweet voices and wooden flutes
And dancing memories chanted the stories of their own history –
Would be put, hidden and guarded in temples and palaces
Where only seven beginners dressed in white linen,
Where before there were seventy shepherds with flutes in the hills and clothes of skin,
And those few, separated, knew how to play it on golden flutes
And sing it in a lower voice to seven gentlemen, between seven hundred thousand others,
Left on the outside, separated by walls and silences of stone.
Seven gentlemen of Thebes – and how many were there! And how many are there! – that feast
And that pay the musicians after having separated the wheat from the straw
And the knowledge of power from the knowledge of work
And the hymns of the kings from the chants of the slaves
And the instruments of gold from those of wood and leather
And those that wear white clothes and exempt themselves from the plough
From those that tear on the iron plough their ragged clothing
After having in the trail of time laid down far away from the crowd of many
Of the good secret of the lyrics that remained difficult
Without ever having been wise, and out of formulae turned to sciences
Of those that could from then on go on learning the names
That named the secrets of the world and the heart of life.

VI
unequal, divided, she persists

Education is as big as everything that is human.

And also so common, so strange and so terrible.
After so many years she is alive, like men, the history and the cultures
And she does not only exist in school and in the system, but also in life.
And after so much, all the theories about her, and the methods and the techniques
Did not turn her and her small infinite intrigue of exchange between people
Very different than multiple, diverse, she has been all her life
Between teachers and students, but in the same way, between grandparents and grandchildren.
Nothing in her exists of eternal or absolute and everything changes and remains
And nothing in her was the creation of the gods that created the flowers and the birds.
We, creatures and creators of Prometheus, we lit one day his fire,
As everything that man needed to learn to be and to create
Education is the daughter of work and she is, herself, a work of men.
A work that is only somewhat more difficult than another,
Because it is done between sounds and senses about the matter of its own spirit
And it ploughs, sows, cares and harvests, in the land of its own body.
She exists only where women and men reunite and share:
Free and equal, around the fire, or separated between walls.
That is why, by its means people transform
The rules of trade of work and the laws of distribution of the profits,
In the same form education changes its names and changes its garments
And varies from one system to another the proper work from which it is made of.

Only those that intended to shelter the educator
To be less human than the grandparents of a time before, and not being,
As all, between all, he told, doors locked, lights on
That they are not of fire, that his work is a trade separate from the others
And he, being a priest in white clothing, cannot be a prophet.
Because those who say that his trade teaches what is known
Forgetting to teach what we create with the other and what we learn from him

They forgot to tell that the same light that brightens dark rooms
Is a living fire that, sometimes, burns in the middle of the night the heart and the world.
Thus, between teaching and learning the exchanged words generate ideas.
Exchanged ideas do not change the world. Ideas change people

And people change the world. People change the world!

Emissary of the word, searcher of the dialogue, creator of new worlds,
The educator is not a craftsman stopped in time.
Because of one or seven dreams that he has everyday
– and how is it possible to be a teacher without dreaming about it?
He cannot forget his everyday tasks of his time
And nothing that is human, in him, everyday, is indifferent to him…
It may seem that we are fewer today than we were yesterday,
Unjust salary tells us that and there are so many machines around…so many.
But they know and we who are today more indispensable than ever
Because more than before it is about saving man from himself
And that is why we are like bridges, messengers of what was recalled, the educators.
If we are not masters of our own speech
And we do not learn once more to invert with life the lessons of the classroom
We know that it is possible to recreate with the other the lost words
Of those that lost their voice, but not the memory of speech…
Between all and not only between the chosen ones
The work of the educator is used so that man can meet with his origin
And not only for the duty of craft it is urgent not to forget
That if we do not seize with them the helm of the ship of the education.
Others will do it for us and against us, and against the horizon
From the dawn of times that will come, because, together, we will make it happen.
Thinking the routine and the mystery of our work as a craft among many.
To always dare to recreate it and change it with others all its spheres:
Of the classroom, the school, the system, and the place of the system.
To imagine that education exists less and more than the school
And that, educators, we are all that still have their eyes turned to the infinite,
Towards the distant horizon and of possible fraternal world of free man
Where all may be, disarmed, fraternized, students, and wise men.
Between the people of the world, the men of the people
Of whom, teachers, we are more and less than masters,
And much more than mere mediators of some supreme power
Situated out of it and of ourselves.
Next to those that did not forget to be carriers of the future
Their brothers and companions of the same long journey…

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