

EDUCATION AND THE RIGHT TO BE

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Through my experience I have faced situations and problems with varying degrees of complexity which have lead me to reflect and evaluate the differentiation between the difficult and the easy, the simple and the complicated, the accesible and the unreachable.

In my case at least, one of the tasks that has been most difficult to figure out, is the one that pertains to definitions. How to define the intangible, the awkwardly complex, the dynamically integrated, the constantly evolving subject that is Education. Once I attempted to define this precious concept that occupies us as professors, students, educational authorities, parents, relatives and many others who enjoy educating or being educated, and so, I said: "To educate is to profoundly anchor in the individual, a group of attitudes, behaviors and ways to react to life in a given moment, in a predetermined society."

THE FUNCTION OF EDUCATION

To educate is to give form, it is to give to the child, the youth and the adult, the "right to be", through a formative

process that shows and awakens the wish to improve and develop the responsibility to be self-driven.

Let us not forget that the education process begins at the heart of the family, it continues through school, and is continuously influenced by the socio-economical, political and cultural environments in which everyone of us will happen to live.

SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

There has always existed a divorce status between the wish to educate and the great needs of society. This is a problem for the immediate authorities or government. However, this must be studied, long term, through research by the institutions of the government and those of higher education. Our societies have tried to find educational formulas –somewhat magical- to obtain from the institutions, the active infantry, and never in a direct way, the directional structures, to be utilized as a mean to the end, the so much sought "material development" while facing resource limitations, huge problems of organization, plan-

ning and programming. The educator who knows and feels himself or herself as the thinking part of society, has refused, consciously or not, but always in a systemic way, to listen to the objectives of the government administration, keeping an idealist attitude of indifference or even of open rejection, which in latest years has led to drastic violence.

CURRENT SOCIAL TENDENCIES

The “mystique of development” and the advent of the consumer society do not enhance motivating values, not even determinant ones, since the “search for success” takes us from one conquered obstacle to another one to be conquered, ignoring how many more will have to be overcome. It is unquestionably rewarding to achieve one goal at a time, but this motivation could be used, caring with perseverance and diligence, to simultaneously increase spiritual values: Living in better material conditions but also, “be better”, “be” more creative, “be” a better motivator.

In essence and above any purpose, we shall strive for the “being” to be constantly fulfilled, in the widest sense of this word. This objective, used under the means as delineated before, could constitute our only goal.

A LOOK AT THE FUTURE

Everything seems to indicate that we are witnessing the crumbling of the educational system; in this endeavor we feel we have reached the expiring cold of winter that Spangler defines for the cultural cycles of civilizations. We foresee in a not remote future, the extinction of the university itself as a physical institution, should we fail to rectify and perhaps even more important, should we not bring new agility to its methodology, adjusting day to day to a society in constant evolution, about to enter ours to its post-industrial era- tribal, inhumane, of family disintegration and coldness among human beings.

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The educational “system” as it is conceived and managed contemporarily, does not seek the coexistence of the individual differences, but it supports itself in the massification of “unified modes” of thinking, feeling or behavior.

The system is highly discriminatory toward the “being”, applying judgment under a criteria foreign to its nature, linked to the interests of the ruling classes and tuned to archaic concepts of existence, that only seek and reward the obedient and submissive student, the useful model, the

infantries conditioned by the media, which are very much deficient despite the multiple attempts of “educational reform”, having been thought, planned and applied in a vertical line by men-products in the retro-feeding of a vicious cycle, obsolete, discriminating while highly favorable to the transitory powers that do not seek or have not wanted to see the social advantages of good individual formation and who apply methods and a criteria completely contrary to the true interests of a modern nation with a future.

With points of view and a short-sighted focus, the system provides only a fraction “instruction” -without formation- and rejects any self-thinking individual; it anchors itself in unifying modules, homogenizers of thought, feeling and conduct.

Time and human resources invested to determine the paths to follow, are never sufficient to allow –even an important number of teachers- to participate in the analysis or determinations, and even less, on the agreements for general implementation. Due to the absence of horizontal communication, for them, the “Right to be” does not exist.

THE EFFECTS ON THE STUDENT

The individual, classified as an object and not as a subject of the teaching-learning process, while being subjected to several periods of an obsolete learning environment as the receptor of concepts, does not find on these a practical application; having been converted into a passive being, can very well be the “good student” if able to adapt to the system, or could become the “rebel”, “problem” or “unadapted”, if not satisfied by the education received throughout his or her life. If the lack of formative structure did not endowed the student with the ability to integrate objective judgments, his or her frustration will turn into distraction, indifference or rebellious behavior. The paternal and conforming attitude of the official programs is one of the most direct causes of youth’s rebellion, since, perhaps, even before having rationalized their problem, react fairly in the way they know, with inconformity, because inside of them exists a person that wants, and has the “right of being”.

THE HUMAN MATERIAL

All we have addressed is intended to clarify and define certain concepts regarding the values that we can work on; this by no means implies a negative attitude or defeat, but yes... I consider it to be indispensable to be taken into account for the elaboration of plans and programs akin

to this way of thinking, and of course, they would have to be adequate to our reality to avoid failure and disappointments when we separate our feet from the ground that supports us and over which we must remain, standing solidly and efficiently. When the human element arrives to the levels of superior education, it is a product of heterogeneous families that did not provide the initial base due to lack of training, time or willingness, he or she arrives with immaturity after having attended school for nine or ten years, depending on the individual having completed the middle basic cycle -junior high school- or the superior one -high school. Regrettably, our youth between 15 and 18 years old, in a non-quantified but enormous proportion, have received instruction, not education during their schooling years. Throughout their acting existence they acquired cultural laziness and incompetence; they became devoid of awareness, vocation and self direction; their lucidity has been diminished in their capacity for discipline, learning and communication. Their acquired knowledge and inventiveness are easily and rapidly eroded.

The particular biological, psychological and temperamental qualities, capabilities, expectations and thoughts are not adequate to assume initiative and originality to successfully apply on higher education and working programs, and even less if it is intended to incorporate in any revolutionary system attempting to overcome the training (human-educational) they never receive at home or in the educational and environmental systems.

POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

I am convinced that all I have previously mentioned represents damage, but as this damage leaves, it is fortunately reversible. To assume that the lack of originality generated by the mentioned deficiencies could cause all interest in the human adventure to disappear, would mean to surrender before the battle begins. We must try, by all possible means, to make life worth living; doing the opposite would mean acceptance that the conditions we criticize do not have a solution. The answers always approach us when we assume conscience of the facts, when we acknowledge a position from which we can initiate a point of action. This would have to begin from the base: professors and students in an uninterrupted dialogue, from a common point of departure and walking together along the length of the route. If our considerations are real, without a doubt we will find the way to correct the situation, by applying a praxeology as modifiable and rectifiable as we find it necessary and by using an honest capability to accept constant constructive criticism.

ACTION POLICIES

Our central concern must be to achieve that the individual not only knows him or herself, but that as he “discovers” its own person. And as this process advances, to be able to discern the changes to be effected, and possessed by intense emotion, to overcome any inferior ways of thinking and feeling; achieving cognitive reasoning, feeling and behaving better by developing superior capabilities and qualities, self improving as a consequence of its own efforts and determination.

By applying the methods and criteria previously described, we will have to find the formats for integrated education: simultaneously in the workshop, in the laboratory and in the classroom to avoid the divorce between reflection and action, theory and practice, between intimate conscience and the real world, and in such a manner that we identify the dialectic of thought with the educative praxis. Only this way, will the being achieve the realization of its own society; this addition, more geometrically will bring as an unavoidable result, the social conscience and action, pointing towards new objectives. This is not, by any means, an easy task, nor is it an onirism, we should just remember that this form of human integral development, has not been witnessed in the history of culture since the great generations of the greek world, despite the fact that many centuries have passed with philosophies, policies or simple wishes animated by diverse and peculiar historic and cultural circumstances.

PROS AND CONS

Let us take into consideration, that undertaking these procedures in education -giving to each individual the “right to be”-, would be contrary to the non-declared principle of “domestication” of the masses, already almost achieved by the governments which have not understood their historical and ethical responsibilities, in front of the social future of the country and which have been applied for several generations. Today, conscience molding processes are followed in all countries -in an insensitive manner towards themselves-, repressing the essential principles of freedom and the innate human right to think and achieve intellectual maturity: as difficult and demoralizing as it is to mention it, the educational authorities of our time in every part of the world, continue to be, the clan’s chief, the patriarch, the feudal lord and the clergy in the same way as in the past.

POSSIBLE ROUTES

Are we dreaming?... I do not believe so. Let us remem-

ber than in our own lifetimes we have encountered people –although few- that have helped us “to be”. If we can find the way for our youth to encounter more prepared individuals, that take into account the innate individual in each one of the apprentices, if we grant flexibility to the educational praexology, if we generate spiritual satisfaction along with those of a material nature, we will create the means and we will trace a road to true human development, with coexistence and respect for the “being” in its formative process. We could take into account the natural qualities of the young, stimulating their creative capability, channeling their wishes for independence, their hunger for identity, knowledge and adventure, on each one of them to develop their very own character, and not, the

one we, or the system, would like it to be. We would take care of their health and development through athletic, psychological and physical activities. Working, besides being a way to earn a living, should become a part of the formative process, by using its value as a psychomotive activity.

In conclusion, the workshop, the classroom, the library and the laboratory could be infused with the same principles of liberty, respect to individuality, self-determination and personal development of the students.

In this new possible formative policy, the only teachers should be those who want to learn by teaching, and teach while learning.