

POURQUOI DES PROFESSEURS?

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RÉSUMÉ

Le texte met en lumière le rôle indispensable des professeurs dans une société en quête de solutions éducatives technologiques et standardisées. Face aux critiques et à la volonté d'automatiser l'enseignement, l'auteur affirme que l'enseignant demeure un médiateur humain essentiel. L'éducation, selon lui, ne se réduit pas à des méthodes ou des algorithmes, car elle engage des relations, des émotions et la confiance dans l'éducabilité

de chacun. En accueillant la singularité des élèves et en les guidant vers le savoir, le professeur participe à leur formation démocratique et citoyenne. Contre la logique technocratique, l'auteur plaide pour une redéfinition du métier comme acte de liberté, de création et de responsabilité collective. Être professeur, c'est croire en la puissance de la parole, de la culture et de la présence humaine pour transformer les individus et la société.

MOTS-CLÉS: démocratie, enseignement, education.

POR QUE PROFESSORES?

RESUMO

O texto reflete sobre o papel essencial e insubstituível dos professores em uma sociedade que, cada vez mais, busca soluções tecnológicas e padronizadas para a educação. Em meio às críticas, exigências contraditórias e tentativas de automação do ensino, defende-se que o professor é o elo humano fundamental na mediação do saber. Argumenta-se que a educação não pode ser reduzida a técnicas ou algoritmos, pois envolve relações, afetos, linguagem e a aposta na educabilidade de todos.

O professor, ao acolher a singularidade dos estudantes e guiá-los no contato com os saberes, contribui para a formação democrática e cidadã. Contra o avanço de uma lógica tecnocrática, o autor propõe uma reinvenção do ofício docente como prática de liberdade, criatividade e compromisso com a construção de sentido e de um futuro comum. Ser professor é, afinal, acreditar no poder transformador da palavra, da cultura e da presença humana.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: democracia, docência, educação.

1 A CONTESTED PROFESSION

At the teachers' trial, there is no shortage of prosecutors, and we have all, at one time or another, been called to the bar. Indeed, one only has to delve into our school memories for a few figures to emerge, alongside those to whom we will remain grateful for the rest of our lives, whom we once held in contempt. They were, in our eyes, too strict or too lax, boring or demagogic, confused or obsessive. At the time, we mocked them or feared them. Today, we worry about what seems to us an unbearable injustice with regard to our children's academic future.

This is because school remains a matter of unpredictable encounters with singular subjects whose behavior is often unexpected. No class is like another, and what happens there at every moment has never happened, neither there nor elsewhere, and will never happen again. This shows the extent to which the "human variable" – to use the managerial term – plays a decisive role. And nothing is more irritating for technocrats who want to subject schools to the "obligation of results" than the random nature of what happens here.

But, don't we ourselves demand that the "school machine" make our children happy and succeed at the same time? And wouldn't we collectively want the school institution to systematically fill economic and cultural inequalities, provide everyone with the keys to understanding the world, abolish the harmful influence of gurus of all stripes... and, at the same time, educate our children in the media and information as well as in politeness and the values of the Republic, in reading images and the proper use of their sexuality, that it teach them eco-friendly gestures and the Highway Code, the means to stay healthy and business law? Faced with the terrorist danger as well as the ecological crisis, to fill the "social divide" or fight against abstention, it is still and always towards school that we turn, in a derisory incantation which allows, in passing, to exonerate many adults from their responsibilities. In fact, we have never been so demanding of our school and are impatient with an organization that is prohibitively expensive, whose results remain well below our expectations.

But what are we really saying when we accuse schools of not being a sufficiently efficient mechanism to meet all our demands? Are we not implying that the "random human variable" should be ruthlessly hunted down and that the existence of teachers, with more or less endearing or annoying personalities, uncontrollable whims and always excessive demands, actually constitutes an unbearable "archaism"?

It is as if the enterprise of educating our youth were built on a fundamental ambivalence: teachers are, at once, its strength and its weakness, its essential architects and its main weaknesses. Hence the desire to strengthen their power on the condition that their behavior is strictly controlled. Hence, also, the temptation to systematically develop their function by neutralizing the individual as much as possible.

However, this is exactly what the ideology of "best practices" promotes, which suggests that we have finally found the miracle recipes for a profession in which humans have been fumbling for centuries. This is also what the supporters of "Evidence Based Education" are trying to achieve today, almost everywhere in the world: by relying on research in cognitive psychology and

neuroscience, by experimenting in the laboratory with different teaching methods, by collecting and comparing data from all kinds of assessments, they claim to be able to develop protocols with universal vocation and want to prescribe to all primary school teachers the tools they must use to inevitably teach their students to read and count, but also to focus their attention, to memorize or to organize themselves.

One might think that these attempts at educational standardization only concern "fundamental teachings," which are perceived—wrongly—as simply mechanical. But this is not the case. On the contrary: are we not seeing a multitude of projects developing at high speed today to make available to everyone, through digital technology, video capsules developed by the best specialists and intended to facilitate the remote acquisition of all possible knowledge?

And, since the students themselves admit that they learn better and faster by watching video clips than by listening to a lecture, should we not definitively relieve our teachers of any transmission of knowledge and confine them to the role of tutor responsible for supporting each person, individually, in their progress?

Here we are touching on a major institutional paradox. Our school systems were built on the model of "simultaneous teaching" that François Guizot imposed in France in the 1830s, inspired by Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, and which promoted group lessons for a homogeneous and attentive class. This is because Guizot feared, more than anything, popular revolts and wanted to organize "the government of minds": in this enterprise, the school played, in his eyes, an essential role by preparing for the necessary submission to established authorities. It was thus, quite naturally, an extension of the Church and its catechetical model: the teacher, a new cleric ordained by the State, could preach the official doctrine to students who had to be made into believers and not citizens. This is how the "simultaneous model" was imposed in Europe as in our colonies, to the point of appearing to the eyes of the entire world as consubstantial with the school. "Mutual teaching," where children of different ages were brought together and the more advanced taught their classmates, was gradually banned to the point that any form of mutual assistance between students was soon and for a long time considered cheating.

In reality, everything happens as if a god of education had once dictated to a school Moses the tablets of the law decreeing that "every school, from all eternity, will be made up of classes of twenty to forty students, of the same age and the same level, listening to the same course and doing, at the same time, the same exercises under the authority of their teacher". A historical invention of the 19th century, closely linked to a political choice, has become the institutional and organizational, architectural and pedagogical matrix of our schools. Under these conditions, individual support for students was, for a long time, only a marginal task, largely devalued, associated with the image of the stubborn tutor or the improvised psychologist.

But everything has changed : classes are less and less homogeneous, and differences in students' levels and personalities, once contained – or hidden – by a relatively shared adherence to the norms of school decorum, are now seriously challenging collective frontal teaching. And many parents no longer want their child to be treated like everyone else: they want them to be treated as an exception and for them to be exempted from the common law.

The educational institution is therefore required to do the opposite of what it was designed for and thus places its various stakeholders in front of a contradictory injunction: to teach a group considered homogeneous where everyone must assimilate the same program and, simultaneously, to support the individual paths of heterogeneous students who are increasingly resistant to collective instructions and for whom parents demand particularly time-consuming individual help.

The opportunity has not escaped a whole series of startups designed to relieve wealthy families of the burden of academic support for their children. But they remain modest artisans compared to the ambitions displayed by the big digital industrialists! This is how Bill Gates, Marc Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk have multiplied, for several years now, the proposals of "individualized paths". The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) has funded, since 2017, an online course platform, Summit Learning, which allows each student, on all the questions of the curriculum, to access online programs thanks to which they can, at their own pace, with unlimited training and regular tests, make all the necessary acquisitions. For the moment, this platform is mainly used by school students, but experts are working hard on the development of "intelligent systems" thanks to which it will be possible to program and regulate learning without the help of human assistants. Ultimately, the most optimistic even envisage the widespread use of Learning Analytics, which will strictly adapt digital learning sequences to the cognitive and emotional characteristics of each individual and will intervene in "real time" on all their learning in order to exempt them from attending school. To the great satisfaction, perhaps, of students and their parents: the former, because machines, unlike teachers, never get angry or discouraged; the latter, because they will thus be guaranteed the best success rate for their offspring. All that will remain is to group learners in "conditioning centers" such as Aldous Huxley imagined in *Brave New World*, and the difficult question of childcare to allow parents to attend to their personal and professional activities will be definitively resolved.

One might have imagined, for a moment, that the ardor of these "all-digital" advocates would be curbed by the results of the attempts at "home schooling" and "educational continuity" during the various lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, all the studies carried out on this occasion showed that distance learning not only did not promote better personal monitoring of students, but that it considerably increased inequalities – see, in particular, Delès, Pirone e Rayou (2021).

This was without taking into account the formidable resilience of the digital industries and their political backers. Thus, according to a report submitted to the European Commission in 2021, "we must urgently and massively invest in educational technologies" precisely to be able to face future crises. Technological reverie has an extraordinary characteristic: in the name of its faith in the progress of science supposed to solve all problems, it always attributes its failures to its insufficient development. This is why, like most dogmas, scientism, in a false modesty that hides an immense pretension, always draws the same conclusion from its failures: it is because we have not listened to it enough that we have not yet completely succeeded! All the objections made to it thus strengthen and fuel its determination and nothing can stop its technological headlong rush. To the point that one wonders if replacing teachers with processors might not ultimately represent the future of our school systems for it.

2 TECHNOCRATS IN CHARGE

We could reassure ourselves by pointing out that the aims of GAFAM and educational technologies (EdTech) combined are more science fiction than foresight. To the point that, frankly, no one today seriously considers that schools can do without teachers.

But, on the other hand, the entire institution is now experiencing a gradual shift towards a service-based approach. However, if the quality of a service is measured by the satisfaction of its users, that of an institution is tested by its ability to embody values. Who would, in fact, consider evaluating the quality of the judicial system based on the satisfaction of litigants? Yet, the education system is being piloted with its eyes fixed on the satisfaction index of parent-users. The common good of education—which would mobilize citizen-parents attentive to long-term developments—is disappearing from our horizon.

While the Enlightenment charged the teacher with teaching everyone to “think for themselves,” while in France Ferdinand Buisson placed the requirement for rigor, precision, and truth at the heart of all education, while Jean Zay wanted to make school an exemplary place in matters of justice, and while the Langevin-Wallon plan proposed to finally put an end to the early separation of “manuals” and “intellectuals,” academic consumerism makes individual success “on the cheap”—the least possible effort for the best possible results—the keystone of the entire school organization. Autonomy is preached, resourcefulness is promoted. Values of solidarity are displayed, and an educational refinery is operated where the ability to stand out from the crowd trumps everything else.

However, to activate distillation, nothing beats competition through the systematic use of assessments and rankings of all kinds. And it was the PISA (*Program for International Student Assessment*) survey that, in this area, opened fire, followed since by several others ¹. Every three years, since the 2000s, OECD experts have used representative samples to measure the performance of 15-year-old adolescents from several countries around the world in areas such as written expression, mathematics or scientific culture. The result is a ranking of the effectiveness of different school systems, widely publicized and commented on. But, contrary to what some imagine, the OECD is neither an NGO campaigning for access to education for all, nor an international institution determined to defend childhood and promote culture, like UNICEF or UNESCO. The OECD is a consortium of developed countries created in 1948 to manage the Marshall Plan and which today makes no secret of defending economic liberalization through free trade and competition to promote innovation and productivity gains.

And this is precisely what PISA aims to achieve: to stimulate competition between education systems by comparing their effectiveness based on common standards. With two assumptions: 1) Competition and the obligation of results are better tools for achieving quality education than public service and the obligation of means. 2) The quality of education is measured through standardized tests that produce quantifiable and comparable results.

¹ TIMMS (*Trends in Mathematics and Science Study*) and PIRLS (*Progress in International Reading Literacy*) assess the mathematics, science and reading skills of fourth-grade students. ICILS (*International Computer and Literacy Study*) assesses the digital skills of eighth-grade students.

However, these assumptions are eminently questionable: competition creates a hierarchy between establishments, favors the concentration of resources in the service of the most privileged, encourages school zapping, authorizes pressures of all kinds on individuals and institutions, widens inequalities and makes us forget the conditions for building the common good: social diversity, the discovery of otherness and the implementation of a pedagogy of solidarity... All this, moreover, fits perfectly into the questioning of public services, attacked for years, both financially and symbolically. Because, in reality, any authentic public service should give "more and better to those who have less", according to the formula used by Alain Savary at the time of the creation of priority education in 1981: this is the very condition of its democratization.

As for the possibility of measuring the quality of education using only quantifiable indicators, it can only be worrying: the ability to marvel at works of culture, the capacity for initiative and creativity, empathy for others and a sense of responsibility, awareness of the values at stake in what one does, are in no way quantifiable "skills"... Does this mean that they should not be the subject of training? Our colleagues in North America, who have been subjected to a policy of permanent quantitative evaluations for longer than we have, vigorously denounce it because, not only does it cause essential dimensions of education to be forgotten, but it also seriously marginalizes all disciplines that are not considered "fundamental," such as artistic and physical education, history and the social sciences, philosophy or biology, when it is not literature. This is a worrying "head reduction": our students are considered as more or less docile executors of standardized instructions, expected to master only technical knowledge that is easily identifiable and reproducible.

Thus, as much as it is legitimate to maintain national final assessments to finalize schooling and guarantee national equity among all students, it is equally dangerous to develop throughout schooling a "culture of assessment" which is, in reality, a "culture of suspicion". Because, in a school that wants to be authentically democratic, the true assessment is not that which allows us to know if we are better or worse than others, but rather that which gives each person the means to become better than themselves. A thousand miles from the control techniques which open the way, at the same time, to the standardization of practices and to the competition between individuals and schools. Because the two are closely interdependent: it is by homogenizing the control tools as much as possible that we succeed in comparing results as precisely as possible and, therefore, in ranking people and teams.

However, nothing is more worrying for teachers than their competition. In addition to undermining professional solidarity, it actually places students and their parents in a position to compare or supplement what they offer them with private service offerings that speculate on anxiety about the future and take advantage of gaps in the public service.

First, of course, there are the private institutions that we hear everywhere that they achieve better results, but without specifying that they freely choose their students from among those who can pay for their tuition. There are also the academic support agencies that claim to be capable of helping those whom school has not managed to mobilize succeed: there, no classes or teachers but tutors and, on the horizon, the ideal of the individual tutor. There is also, of course, the multitude of proposals offered by digital platforms and distance learning, with the metaverse project where nothing would now be out of reach. Finally, there is the endless fragmentation of

the role of the teacher into a multitude of specialists supposed to solve all problems: paramedical professions, coaches of all kinds, experts in cognitive remediation or personal development...

It is therefore imperative today to give the teaching profession a real project, to inscribe it in the history of humans for their emancipation and to emancipate it from the technocrats who claim to control it. Because the activity of the teacher has nothing "scientific" about it; it falls under what Michel de Certeau called the "arts of doing" and in which he sees precisely the expression of a "busy freedom" against "technical reason" (de Certeau, 1990).

"Young teacher," Rousseau already said, "I preach to you a difficult art, which is to govern without precepts and to do everything by doing nothing" (Rousseau, 1966, p. 149). This principle is the opposite of any machine-like aspiration: the machine is made to do; it produces what it is commanded; its results must be standardized and marketable. Nothing of the sort for the teacher: he creates situations, invents devices and offers resources to subjects whose consciousness and behavior he can never completely control. He has only one solution: to propose and propose again. This is his job: never stop proposing. Never respond to a refusal by giving up.

Is this why Freud described education—along with politics and psychoanalysis—as an "impossible profession" in 1937 ²? He no doubt wanted to emphasize that governing, educating, and analyzing are enterprises doomed to incompleteness, the results of which are always necessarily unsatisfactory. But perhaps, more profoundly, he was pointing to a particular characteristic of these human activities: the fact that they are exercised on other humans but can only succeed if the latter themselves freely contribute to them? "I can teach you," said the teacher... "but only you can learn."

3 THE FOUNDING BET

More than thirty years after the signing of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, educational systems often, unfortunately, prefer the comfort of adults to the "best interests" of children. We see this in the very organization of our schools, too exclusively governed by the management of flows and the obsession with dividing them into lesson times. We see it everywhere on our screens, where addictive stupor has definitively rendered all educational content obsolete. In reality, we would like to have knowledgeable and well-educated children, but we are reluctant to pay the price!

However, the success of the school depends on the student. The results of all the efforts of the teacher and the institution combined depend on the sharp end of their attention and involvement. As revolting as it may seem to "serious people," Prévert's dunce, distracted by the bird he sees behind the window, defeats the entire hierarchy, the minister and all his inspectors, the instructions and all the circulars. This is why attempts at school reform, which, despite their preliminary statements, ignore what the student experiences on a daily basis, the way in which he

² Freud (1939, p. 33) writes: "It seems that analysis is the third of these "impossible" professions in which one can be sure of failure in advance, the other two, known for much longer, being the art of educating [human] men and the art of governing."

inhabits the school institution and receives the knowledge transmitted to him, are doomed to failure.

So let's get back to the real basics: why do we send our children to school and entrust them to teachers? So that they can go and see how things are done elsewhere. Because, the child must leave the family that welcomed him into the world to discover the rest of the world. This is why entering the classroom is in no way an ordinary journey. It is a symbolic act with fabulous scope: a teacher is there, a tutelary figure whose presence and skills attest that another world exists, with other languages, other universes and other cultures. He stubbornly widens the circle: the neighborhood beyond the family, the country beyond the city or village, the planet beyond the continent... but also yesterday and tomorrow beyond the emergencies of the moment, and the entire history of humankind, rich in infinite treasures, beyond the tyranny of the present.

Because, at school, the teacher welcomes all students in their individuality so that they can discover the same works together. It is up to him to attest that everyone is welcome here—with their own history and specificities—and that no one is excluded a priori from accessing the highest forms of culture. For this is the crux: where everything is at stake. In a pedagogical transaction between humans that no machine could approach. In the bet, both senseless and necessary, on the educability of each and every one. In absolute confidence in the equality of intelligence and the refusal to exclude anyone a priori from entering into knowledge.

Thus, we can pile up all possible technological discoveries, multiply all diagnoses and compile all protocols, nothing will ever be able to replace the presence of a teacher who testifies daily that it is possible to overcome one's anxiety in the face of the unknown, one's fear of not succeeding, one's anxiety of being definitively locked in one's failures or prisoner of a hypothetical nature. A matter of attentive observation and benevolent questioning, so true is it, as Alain said, that "there is a way of questioning that kills the answer" (Alain, 1938, p. 220). A matter of constructive evaluation that does not simply "pay" for a bad assignment with a bad grade, according to the lazy principle of banking pedagogy denounced by Paulo Freire (2021), but which provides the advice and assistance thanks to which one is able to put one's work back on track and surpass oneself. A matter of tiny and stubborn inventiveness which never resigns itself to incomprehension and strives tirelessly and serenely, as Georges Gusdorf proposed (1964, p. 79), to "constantly open a path towards the truth".

For what a teacher transmits, and what the most sophisticated machines will never be able to do, is not only knowledge, it is a relationship to knowledge. And the two are linked in his speech. "What do I do when I teach?" asks Paul Ricœur. "I speak. I have no other livelihood and I have no other dignity; I have no other way of transforming the world and I have no other influence on men. Speech is my work. Speech is my kingdom" (Ricœur, 1955, p. 192). And he explains that each subject gives rise to "a way of speaking" that carries within it its intrinsic requirement: "If I teach mathematics, I become the word that is exhausted in the exact denomination, the constructive discourse of proof, in short, the word sealed by necessity. If I teach poetry, I approach, with the resources of my prose, a language that creates and recreates the substance of presences and correspondences through the carnal union of meaning and voice." In other words, the matter of knowledge is not an inert object that circulates from one mind to another like a witness that passes from hand to hand; it is an internal setting to work of the teacher on which the students engage

their own setting to work. For they are not called to “receive” what is said to them but to adopt the approach of the one who speaks to them.

And this is what, for the students, often makes all the difference. Thus, in their indictment of a school that excludes the poorest, the children of Barbiana explain that “between an indifferent teacher and a manic teacher, [they] prefer the manic one” (Les Enfants de Barbiana, 2022, p. 106). They most often remain strangers, they specify, to the perfection of a perfectly “smooth” presentation. On the other hand, they feel involved when the teacher revisits his own knowledge with them, strives to find the right word and the right example, hesitates and corrects himself, bounces back from a misunderstanding, worries about a misunderstanding, before suddenly rejoicing to have found the right formulation. They are invited, then, to share the founding adventure of a thought in search of truth... a thousand miles from the statistical and anonymous certainties of ChatGPT.

4 ANCHORING DEMOCRACY

Many of our contemporary societies have seen the collapse, during the 20th century, of the religious and moral verticalities that, for better or for worse, established the social bond. With a double consequence. On the one hand, we have won the right to make our own choices in all areas and, although many inequalities remain in this area, we will not turn back. But, on the other hand, we are struggling to rebuild a collective and are seeking on what “common” we could build our future together. We have torn down the walls of the theocratic fortress and, since then, we have been wandering in a universe with undefined landmarks, constantly hesitating between belligerent individualism and fusional communitarianism.

Schools are clearly not able to meet the challenge of building a democratic society alone today. But they cannot, for all that, shirk their responsibilities. We should therefore be pleased that the crucial question of social diversity in schools, which has been raised for a long time, is finally clearly emerging in the public debate. School mapping measures and a proactive revival of urban policy are more necessary than ever to combat the intolerable segregation experienced by our youth today. But this will not be enough, and it is no longer possible to dodge the eminently political question of building, in our schools, genuine, supportive collectives where learning can take place, not about “living together”—we can “live together” under the guidance of a charismatic guru or in mutual indifference, each in front of their screen—but about “building society together.”

This is obviously a responsibility that falls to all citizens and requires that politicians, intellectuals, journalists, but also all those who exercise social responsibilities, take stock of the magnitude of the task, bear witness, and act accordingly. They cannot perpetually deviate from the principles they ask each teacher to transmit. But the latter nevertheless plays a decisive role. Because they embody the project of sharing knowledge without exclusion or exclusivity, and because, to achieve this, they constantly strive to ensure that exchanges, with them and around them, are driven by the demand for rigor and truth. Being a teacher means bringing out in their classrooms, on a daily basis, the principles that underpin the very possibility of democracy: calm dialogue rather than physical violence or aggressive injunctions, reasoning rather than control, explanation rather than manipulation. Because, at school, the one who is right is never the one

who shouts the loudest, but always the one who demonstrates best... and it is precisely because he is the guarantor of this founding law that the teacher is the repository, in his class, of a legitimate authority. And this law is not up for discussion, because it is precisely thanks to it that it is possible to discuss everything else. Nor is it miraculously "applied" under a rule that would be its very negation: it is "at work", permanently, thanks to the vigilance and demanding interlocution of the teacher. And, for this, he proceeds to the construction and implementation of the rules and rituals necessary to "institute" the class, in the etymological sense of the term: to make it stand.

Because, if every collective needs norms to exist and perpetuate itself, children and adolescents need to discover their necessity and understand their legitimacy. This is why norms must not be experienced as arbitrary obligations dictated by an all-powerful adult, but rather as the conditions for carrying out a project assumed by all. This is the requirement of an education in freedom: instilled without being internalized, norms do not survive the disappearance of the threat of sanction. Discovered in activities that allow us to measure their fruitfulness, they become a formidable tool for training the citizen.

Suffice it to say that the question of discipline, which legitimately concerns young teachers, should not be treated independently of the question – the primary one in all respects – of work organization. But the teaching profession cannot be reduced, however, to "leading" or "managing" the class. The former, in fact, evokes playful situations where the satisfaction of the participants outweighs the importance of learning; the latter suggests that students constitute a "stock" of individuals to be "managed" in order to obtain their support and control their behavior.

However, the teacher does something completely different. He transmits what "liberates and unites humans," according to Olivier Reboul's beautiful phrase (1980, p. 112). And the knowledge he transmits to his students, developed by humans throughout their history, contributes to their collective emancipation. Because we do not learn to read and write to satisfy fluency tests or succeed in dictations, but to communicate with other humans, abolish distances, travel through time, enter into works of art and construct our thoughts. Because geographical maps were not designed to train our memory and reproduce them identically, but to symbolically survey the world. Because history cannot be reduced to events or dates, but allows us to understand the choices our predecessors faced and sheds light on the decisions we will have to make. Because mathematical theorems or physical laws are not only used to succeed in the exercises in the textbook, but also help to solve a multitude of problems outside the school environment, to marvel at the universe and to play endlessly with numbers. Because physical education and sports at school are not designed to select participants in the Olympic Games, but to teach how to proportion one's efforts to one's project, to inhabit each gesture with an intention, to discover that a human is his body and that a human body is not meat. And because it is only in this way that everyone will be able to access "the flavor of knowledge" (Astolfi, 2008, p. 5) .

And these discoveries do not come from individual exercises, but from collective activities in which the students, together and thanks to the teacher, give meaning to schoolwork. This can be writing a journal or organizing a debate, developing a presentation or writing a short story, setting up a scientific experiment or a field survey, documentary research or artistic creation, the collective construction of a model or that of a concept. This can take the form of the cooperative pedagogy proposed by Élise and Célestin Freinet and in which the activities are designed so that

the contribution of each is necessary for the success of all and so that the success of all contributes to the progress of each or even, more simply but very effectively, situations of mutual assistance or reciprocal explanations that punctuate the course of a lesson.

The essential thing is that, each time, it is an opportunity to discover and implement some of the democratic virtues that give substance to the too often abstract injunction of “training for citizenship”: the effort to make oneself understood by others, but also to put oneself in their place; the capacity to doubt oneself and to integrate what comes from others; the will to disentangle, as much as possible, what is “knowledge” from what is “belief”; the stubborn search for proof in the domain of facts and common perspectives that allow no one to be humiliated in the register of opinion. Far from any form of training and even from a paternalistic conception of emancipation as an authoritarian tearing away from any form of tutelage, education here becomes a demanding accompaniment to the emergence of free thought. Thanks to it, everyone can arm themselves against all attempts at control and confinement in order to try, as Pestalozzi said, “to make themselves a work of art”.

And this is how the school, by freeing itself from its Bonapartist verticality and its inclinations toward military normalization, can become a true institution of training in democracy. Not only through elections and the training of student delegates. Not only through their presence and the gathering of their opinions in the various councils. Not only by giving them a voice and recognizing them as valid interlocutors to debate with the adults who supervise them what arouses their desire to learn and best helps them work. But on a daily basis in the classroom, when the teacher, in the very act of transmitting, reveals the founding principles of democracy.

5 A JOB FOR TOMORROW

How can we attract younger generations to the teaching profession? Salaries obviously need to be increased. But the most attractive working conditions will not exempt us from reconsidering what Cornelius Castoriadis called “the mythological home” of a profession, which alone is capable of restoring its image and giving it back the place it should never have lost in our society. Because, what mobilizes our energies beyond the satisfactions of our primary body, what pushes us to commit ourselves to causes greater than ourselves, often makes neither sense nor rhyme for technicians, administrators, managers, and executives of all kinds. And this is what Jean Jaurès already said in his speech “For the Secular,” before the Chamber of Deputies on January 21, 1910, when he explained, in a superb formula, that every teacher must ensure that “the student always discovers something to explain beneath the thing explained... Like the wave beneath the wave in a bottomless sea.” This is undoubtedly what leads us to the essential. Toward an education that makes all knowledge an enigma so that from this enigma new knowledge emerges. Toward student-researchers who are systematically placed in situations of inquiry so that they always go further in the understanding of things and the world. Toward a conception of learning as an endless process, which stops neither at the sentences of an evaluation, nor at the sole pragmatic effectiveness of the knowledge acquired. Towards a search for truth that constantly overcomes representations and prejudices and stubbornly progresses from established knowledge to destitute knowledge, from destitute knowledge to established knowledge.

For nothing is more essential than this today. “It is important,” as Fernand Oury said, “that ‘modern’ children rediscover what they have ‘lost’: lack” (Oury, 1995). But – as you will have understood – this is obviously not about praising poverty: too many children still do not have the essential material conditions to approach their schooling with peace of mind, and it is important to fight tirelessly against this injustice. Fernand Oury is, in fact, evoking another lack, which also affects those who have everything: a founding lack, a hollow in the conscience from which emanates an aspiration towards the unknown, a breach in the certainties where the desire to learn and understand originates, and where, in the face of the curse of deadly dogmatisms, the very possibility of lucid citizenship is founded.

Indeed, when populisms of all kinds constantly designate scapegoats for public condemnation, when conspiracy theories convey fallacious visions of the world that leave no other outcome than confrontation, when the commercial machinery organizes, with advertising slogans massively relayed by the digital industries, the globalized whim, it seems more fundamental than ever to give teachers the mission to instruct without confining, to transmit without closing, to engage each and every one in a research process that no obscurantist credo can ever put an end to. The success of our School depends on it. And the possibility, for our children, to give a future to their future.

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