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Instead of Afterword:
Earth's Pedagogy

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One of the last writings of Paulo Freire was on ecology. A little essay published posthumously in the book *Pedagogy of Indignation*. He said that his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* missed a chapter on the Earth, a living organism in evolution that is also oppressed. It missed an *Earth's Pedagogy*.

In this little essay I will try to answer Paulo Freire's concern, exemplifying what would this pedagogy be and what its presuppositions are.

We live in the *anthropocene*, a new era of the planet's evolution that started around 1750, with the so-called "industrial revolution". The human influence strongly influences the behavior of the environment. Humanity's walk through the Earth is leaving too many trails and tracks behind, jeopardizing our own species. We've moved from the production mode to the destruction mode. From now on we'll have to live in confrontation with the permanent challenge of rebuilding the planet. To do that, we'll need a *new paradigm* that has the Earth as principle, understanding the Earth not only as an astronomical phenomenon but also as a historical phenomenon. The Earth is also a living being that has a history. We need *Earth's Paradigm*.

On the other side, we live in an age of exponential growth of new information technologies and communication. The amazing development of information, in regard to the sources or the potential of its diffusion, generates a true revolution, not only affecting production and work, but mainly education and information formation.

Consider the scenario: *globalization* triggered by the advance of technological revolution, characterized by the internationalization of production and the expansion of cash flow; *regionalization* characterized by the formation of economical blocs; *fragmentation* that splits globalizers and globalized, center and suburbs, the ones that die of starvation and the ones that die because of excessive consumption, regional rivalry, political confrontation, ethnic and confessional, terrorism.

In this context, we should think of the future's education and start interrogating ourselves about the *categories* that can explain it. The classical Marxist categories – *determination, contradiction, necessity* and *possibility*, which structure the book *Capital* – are still valid. That's why they are still an obligatory reference to understand educational phenomena nowadays. However, the complexity of contemporaneous reality demands of the other pedagogical categories such as *planetarity, sustainability, virtuality, communicability*.

The concept *sustainability* may not be very appropriate to define this new pedagogy unless we redefine it. Sustainability is, for us, the *dream of well living*. Sustainability is the dynamic balance with oneself, with the others and with the

environment; it's the harmony between different people. We can say that sustainability represents a big hope. It opposes everything that's unsustainable. Unsustainability is the greed, the misery, the violence, the war, and illiteracy that pervade the present. That's why there seems to be an incompatibility of principles between *sustainability* and *capitalism*.

Nowadays, when speaking of *sustainability*, our mind pictures green forests, unspoiled rivers, beautiful landscapes, young people tracking, peace and serenity. *Common sense* is not deceiving us when these images are triggered, because these images are connected to moral principles, values and cultures, but sustainability is more than this all the same. It's about a *central category* of a new cosmovision and is one of the bedrocks of the new civilizational paradigm, which seeks the harmonization of the human being, with moral progress and the Earth itself. Sustainability represents a *concrete answer* to the damage humankind is inflicting to itself and the planet, more to itself than to the planet, because the Earth has a much better potential of regeneration. What's jeopardized is the living community of the planet.

Sustainability is about an economy that respects the boundaries of each ecosystem. It's about the social and individual responsibility of protecting and healing the Earth. It's about a change in humanity's lifestyle, one by one. It's about a new pattern of human relationship with nature and about a certain way of being in the world with others.

It's not only about changing our lifestyle. We need to change – parallel and simultaneously – the *system* that produces and reproduces it. Changes of individual behavior must be associated with *structural changes* in the mode of production.

Education is essential to achieve sustainability, to create a new and more sustainable future. Sustainable schools can add to the creation of more sustainable societies. Every subject and every teacher can add to education and sustainability: mathematics can deal with the data referring to environmental pollution and the growth of poverty and social injustice; linguistics can analyze the roles of the news, media and advertising in the formation of consumption habits; history and the social sciences can debate ethnocentrism, racism and gender harms.

The more we live in a sustainable way, the more we get the chance to build sustainable societies. When talking about *sustainable living*, it's understood as a lifestyle of well-living for everybody: a fair, productive and sustainable lifestyle. Let's widen our point of view from an *anthropocentric view* to a *planetary consciousness*, to the practice of a planetary citizenship, to a new social and ethical reference: the *planetary civilization*, which considers the Earth as a single and manifold community.

Sustainability is a powerful concept, a tool, an opportunity for education to freshen its old ways, built over competitive and predatory principles and values. To introduce sustainability and peace culture into schools – not only – is essential to make them more cooperative.

To educate for a sustainable life is to educate towards *voluntary simplicity* and *stillness*. Our lives must be guided by *new values*: simplicity, austerity, stillness, peace, serenity, listening, cohabitation, sharing, learning and doing together. We need, on the one hand, to take a more responsible stand in the face of the dominant culture, that is a war culture, and on the other hand, to take personal and social responsibility, practicing sustainability in our daily lives with our families, at work, at school and on the streets.

Education can play an important role in this context, questioning the consumerist lifestyle imposed by the dominant economical model. Schools have a great mobilizationist approach that's not being fully utilized. They can educate to help students understand the *risk consciousness* that we live with today. This way, they'll be educating for "another possible world", as supports the World Social Forum. Education for sustainability is to educate for another possible world, to educate for the emergence of what's not yet, the not-yet, the utopian. It's also educating to *rupture*, for *defiance*, for *refusal*, for saying "no", to yelling, to dreaming of possible worlds, to facing that with *human diversity* there cannot be only one fair, productive and sustainable way of living.

The world cannot be transformed without transforming people: changing the world and changing people are interconnected processes. Changing the world depends on us all: everyone must become aware and organize themselves. Educating for other possible worlds is education to overpower the merciless logic

of capital, grounded on individualism and profit, and to educate so as to radically change the current political and economic model in order to achieve social and ecological justice.

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Pedagogy is now treated as a science with the understanding that its ultimate objective, as in the other cases, is not so much to describe or explain but instead to guide the process of teaching and learning. That is, it's a field of science that just might teach us how to teach. Thus, the history of pedagogy is the history of pedagogues or, as Jean Houssaye put it, of the practitioners and theorists of the instructional process. At issue are the men and women engaged in the actual educational process, using both theoretical concepts and practical skills combined in such a way as to obscure the extent to which the practical skills employed in the educational process are more important than theoretical concepts, and vice versa.