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IMPACTO DE LOS CAMBIOS SOCIALES EN LA EDUCACIÓN

IMPACT OF SOCIAL CHANGES ON EDUCATION

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Transcripción textual de la conferencia a cargo de: Mariano Cano Santos, Mª Pilar González Ortega y Juan José González Parrilla

Resumen

El contexto mundial de globalización y tensiones democráticas contiene, además de su propia complejidad, una serie de cambios en la vida diaria de nuestras sociedades que tienen fuerte repercusión en el planteamiento conceptual y en el desarrollo aplicado de la educación. Se intentará una reflexión orientada a asumir los retos que plantean los cambios sociales a la educación, que parece necesitar a la vez continuidades básicas y evoluciones valientes. Ante la evidente dificultad de afrontar los cambios educativos necesarios que reclama la evolución de nuestras sociedades, parece razonable y responsable analizarla y reconocerla en primer lugar y, en segundo lugar, generar una deliberación social crítica y solidaria –porque el objetivo es trascendente y todos necesitaremos de todos- para que el sistema

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educativo no sea víctima ni del catastrofismo (*"la educación no tiene remedio y ya no sirve")* ni de un ingenuo *solucionismo* (*"la educación lo resolverá todo"*).

Palabras clave: educación, inspección de educación, sociedad, política, filosofía, cambio social, tecnología, democracia, libertades, derechos.

Abstract

The global context of globalisation and democratic tensions, in addition to its own complexity, involves a series of changes in the daily life of our societies that have a strong impact on the conceptual approach and applied development of education. We will attempt to reflect on how to address the challenges that social changes pose to education, which seems to require both basic continuity and bold developments. Given the obvious difficulty of tackling the necessary educational changes demanded by the evolution of our societies, it seems reasonable and responsible to analyse and recognise it in the first place and, secondly, to generate critical and supportive social deliberation – because the objective is transcendent and we will all need each other – so that the education system does not fall victim to either catastrophism ('education is hopeless and no longer serves any purpose') or naive solutionism ('education will solve everything').

Keywords: education, education inspection, society, politics, philosophy, social change, technology, democracy, freedoms, rights.

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This article is a full transcript of the keynote speech of the same name delivered by **Dr. Joan Manuel del Pozo** on October 3, 2025. The presentation took place during the ***XXV Encuentro Internacional de la Inspección de Educación*** (“XXV International Meeting of the Educational Inspection”) held in Lleida from October 1 to 3, 2025, under the theme *Technological and Social Changes in the Educational Sphere and Their Impact on the Inspectorate Function*.

Dr. Joan Manuel del Pozo holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Barcelona. He earned degrees in Philosophy and Educational Sciences (Philosophy Section) from the University of Barcelona, and a degree in Philosophy from the Pontifical University of Comillas (Cantabria). He has served as a secondary education professor (*catedrático de instituto*), a tenured university lecturer, and is currently Professor Emeritus at the University of Girona.

Throughout his academic career, he has held several institutional and academic positions, including Vice-Director, Secretary, and Head of Studies in secondary schools; Coordinator of Philosophy Studies; Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Transfer; and University Ombudsperson at the University of Girona. He has also served as a Humanities tutor at the Open University of Catalonia.

Among other initiatives, he has promoted and participated in several projects, including co-founding and directing the *Observatory of Ethics Applied to Social, Psychoeducational and Sociosanitary Action*, participating in the *Ethics of Artificial Intelligence Observatory*, and serving as advisor and trainer for the *International Association of Educating Cities*. He is also the author of numerous books, articles, and lectures on education, philosophy, ethics, politics, and artificial intelligence.

. As for his political career, he has served as Minister of Education and Universities in the final government of Pasqual Maragall, Member of the Spanish Congress of Deputies, Member of the Parliament of Catalonia, Deputy

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Introduction

First of all, I would like to sincerely thank the organizers at Unión Sindical de Inspectores de Educación ("Union of Education Inspectors") for this invitation, which is a great honor for me. I truly hope to meet your expectations, because you represent a very important part of the educational process. If you will allow me the comparison, and etymology, as you will see, helps here, you perform an almost *episcopal* function. From an etymological perspective, your role is to look within *inspicere*[1] whereas bishops have the function of looking from above, epískopos (from the Greek *ἐπίσκοπος: epi*, "over," and *skopeo*, "to observe"). The priests and priestesses of education are teachers and professors. However, you fulfill a kind of supervisory role, a meta-professional function that is truly central to the quality of the educational system. For that reason, being granted the privilege of your attention for a few minutes, in order to share some reflections on the social impacts on education, is both a challenge and an honor that I deeply appreciate.

I have absolutely no intention of delivering a lecture. That is neither what has been requested of me nor something I would have wished to do. In truth, I am not in a position to give one, especially given the complexity of the subject. Rather than presenting a lecture, I believe the intention is for me to share a reflection with you. It is unfortunate that this exchange must be somewhat asymmetrical: I will be speaking while, due to the format of the event, you will not be able to interrupt me for the moment.

Nevertheless, I invite you to join me mentally in a kind of Socratic or Platonic dialogue, one without slides or images, guided by the shared intention of clarifying concepts from which we can better understand the

[1] *Inspicio, inspicere, inspexi, inspectus* (Latin verb): To consider, to look within, to observe, to examine, to inspect.

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world. After all, our understanding of the world ultimately depends on language and on conceptual precision.

I will try to summarize my presentation —being fully aware of the time constraints— around the following points. First, an initial perspective: understanding what a globalized society and democratic complexity are. Second, a brief description of the main social changes. Third, the impact of these social changes on education. And finally, a very open question: what continuities and what changes do we need in education? When speaking about education, I am not referring to it in the immediate and practical sense of everyday educational reality, such as we have just heard in the excellent previous presentation. Rather, I will try to take a broader view and reflect on education in its most general sense: the educable humanity of the planet and the need for a process of personal improvement through our educational systems, despite the major difficulties we all perceive and experience.

1. Initial perspective: globalized society and complex democracy

I believe it is important to acknowledge something that has always been true in every historical period: every age experiences a great degree of civilization, cultural, or historical complexity. This has always been the case. The problem is that our own complexity always appears greater to us than that of the twentieth century, the nineteenth century, the fifteenth century, or even the fifth century BCE. But every society has its own complexity.

Someone once said: "Older people in every age have always said, 'I don't know where the world is heading.' The difference is that now we are right." Such is the human condition. It is worth keeping this in mind in order to relativize many of the things I will say, because they must necessarily be presented in a very condensed way.

As for me, attempting to address the impact of social change on education is, as I mentioned earlier, extremely difficult. Yet our literary culture offers us a precedent. On one occasion, Don Quixote entrusts Sancho with a rather difficult task, and Sancho protests: "Sir, what you ask of me is very

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difficult." Don Quixote replies: "In difficulty lies the nobility of the endeavor, my friend Sancho[2]."

Thus, the difficulty of what I am about to present reflects the shared effort —yours and mine— to refine, as we said earlier, the concepts we use. I believe complexity is inherent to the human condition. Human beings are natural beings who, through the course of evolutionary circumstances, have become largely indeterminate. Out of this indeterminacy, after thousands and hundreds of thousands of years, we have created something we value enormously: freedom. The ability to create our own life project, not directed by instinct and yet without an instruction manual to follow. And that is where the ethical and educational effort begins, which is one and the same, as I will try to explain in due course.

Furthermore, human societies such as ours —now at a very advanced stage of development— progress thanks to complexity. Within complexity, interaction occurs; friction occurs; and from that interaction and friction come energy and progress. A society that is overly simple would become stagnant. A very simple society would not be able to move forward. Therefore, complexity is not something negative; rather, it is something from which we must learn to draw benefit.

Democracy, precisely, is a political system of natural complexity, and it is good that democracy is complex, because it was created in order to engage with the complexity inherent in any society. Education, too, is complex. As we know, education is complex because the subject who is being educated can

[2] This is not a direct quote or a specific passage from *Don Quixote*, but rather a paraphrase, a modern reinterpretation, that conveys the idea Cervantes repeatedly expresses throughout the text in various places through Don Quixote's dialogues with Sancho Panza on chivalry, honor and virtue tested by adversity, the value of effort over comfort, as well as the greatness of undertaking arduous endeavors. https://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/clasicos/quijote/default.htm
Various authors have referred to this Quixotic ideal of the greatness of the endeavor in the face of hardship, not of success or ease. Thus, as Julián Marías points out in the preface to the 1984 Cátedra edition of José Ortega y Gasset's Meditaciones del Quijote (Madrid: *Revista de Occidente,* 1914), the tragic heroism of man does not consist in the absence of difficulties, but rather in facing them.

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be educated in many different ways, and it is not always clear which of these dimensions should be given priority.

I will very briefly address the complexity of democracy because everything I am about to reflect on with you must be understood within a democratic context. Outside of a democratic framework, it loses its meaning. To appreciate the complexity and significance of democracy, I refer to the work of Professor Ferran Requejo[3]. Unlike what ChatGPT might do, I believe it is essential to cite sources; from Professor Requejo[4], in an article from some time ago, I have drawn the following ideas.

How do we understand democracy? We understand it in many different ways, and it is interesting to see how each of us approaches the interpretation of democracy according to our ideological interests, which often reflect class, social position, economic capacity, and also a certain ethical ideal. A little bit of everything, as you will see.

Professor Requejo writes: the first conception of democracy is what we might call the liberal conception, a classical liberal view that emphasizes individual rights and the limitation of power. In other words, living in a democracy means that I am able to live my life freely and that power has its limits, it cannot interfere in my life.

A second conception, the democratic conception, emphasizes equality among citizens and the capacity to participate. It prioritizes the principle of equality, which differs from the first, but is also important.

Or the social perspective: democracy is primarily a system of socioeconomic justice, a framework of solidarity in the distribution of wealth. Or a national/nationalist interpretation: democracy is what allows the maximum self-governance of a community with a distinct identity. Here the emphasis is on the community, which, having a clear identity, seeks self-

[3] Requejo Coll, Ferran (1990): *Las democracias: Democracia antigua, democracia liberal y Estado de Bienestar*. (Barcelona, Ed.Ariel)
[4] https://www.ferranrequejo.cat/Publicacions/Articlesacad%C3%A8mics/tabid/689/language/es-ES/Default.aspx

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government. Or the conservative perspective: democracy is primarily about order and security, because those who adopt this view believe that only through order is it possible to achieve equality or pursue one's own life project. Without order and security, it would not be possible. Another legitimate perspective, therefore, is the conservative one.

The functional perspective sees democracy as primarily stability, efficiency, and effectiveness —making it possible for the community to function. Simply functional, this is, ideologically speaking, the coldest perspective.

Another version, the cultural perspective, holds that democracy resides in multiculturalism and tolerance. In increasingly diverse societies, what matters is that many different people can coexist. This multiculturalism is now further enriched by the idea of interculturalism, that is, a multiculturalism that is constantly exchanging and interacting.

Or the federal perspective: the articulation of powers and union in freedom. Federal means "based on a pact" (from *foedus*, meaning *pact*). Just as various powers operate in society, the best democracy is one that achieves this articulation and balance of powers while preserving freedom.

And finally, adds Requejo, there is the post-materialist version, which introduces feminism, ecology, and pacifism as modern forms of democracy, without them, we would no longer truly be in a democracy, but rather in more outdated regimes.

So, what is democracy, after all? It is a bit of all of these perspectives, and the positive thing is that everyone, coming from their own standpoint, can meet in the *agora*, in the forum of democracy, and engage in reflections like the ones you are having at this congress —congratulations on that— on the improvement of education.

2. Description of the main social changes

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Let us move on to the second point: a description of the main social changes. Each of these could probably guarantee a full lecture but I won't threaten you with that. I will present them almost as headlines.

The first major social change of our time: globalization. We all know what we mean by globalization, but there is a lesser-known definition by Josep Ramoneda[5] that I find very insightful because it gets to the essence. Globalization is a strong contraction of space and an intense acceleration of time[6]. You might think, well, this touches on the two Kantian forms of sensibility that are essential for life, because everything in us unfolds spatially and temporally. And it is through space and time that the mind then applies its categories to make sense of it all.

Globalization has profoundly altered both space and time. It is imposing a way of life in which we are not always sure how to develop. Indeed, there is now talk of the victims of globalization, its winners and losers, and so forth.

The second important social change —unfortunately intensifying today, though it has deeper roots— is the institutional crisis. The concept of the State as we knew it is being reshaped, and we are, unfortunately, either creating or settling for low-intensity democracies. In other words, democratic health is at risk. One only needs to read the newspapers to see what is happening in so many countries where democratic leaders are literally undermining the foundations of democracy, in all the ways we mentioned earlier.

Thirdly, alongside the institutional crisis —and equally serious— is the social crisis: the devaluation of work, the growth of inequality, and social fragmentation. You may recall that a few years ago, Richard Sennett, the great American sociologist, wrote a book that became very influential at the time, and is still cited today, including by myself, because it is excellent: *La Corrosión*

[5] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josep_Ramoneda
[6] *La globalización es un proceso de aceleración del tiempo y de contracción del espacio."* Josep Ramoneda (Las Crisis de Europa. Círculo de Economia, 2012. https://admin.cercledeconomia.com/content/uploads/2014/12/las_crisis_europa-cast_2012.pdf)

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del Carácter[7] (*The Corrosion of Character).* Much has been said about "corrosion," not always with these words but with synonymous ones, the corrosion of teachers' character.

Well, the corrosion of character of all workers on the planet, as Sennett said, is extremely serious because work —at one point, we had said— was supposed to make us free. And no, I am not referring to misused slogans, but to the slogans properly understood. Even in the case of feminism, there was a time, not so much anymore, when it was said that women wanted to work to liberate themselves. I remember a friend, excuse the anecdote, who was once asked by another friend, "Hey, where is Ana?" and he replied, "Liberated, working." Because through work, freedom was sought and truly experienced.

But all of this has corroded, because today work is treated in a terrible way, and this pains everyone greatly. In work, notice, we did not just find freedom; we also, especially women, found self-fulfillment. That is, each of our concrete realities is shaped in part by our professional and labor contributions to society—just as important as love, friendship, or cultural relationships.

So, we face a social crisis: the devaluation of work, the growth of inequality. The widely cited figures on wage gaps between workers and executives in companies in countries like ours are shocking. It is incomprehensible. And, as you know, the trend is worsening: we are living in an age of mega-rich and ultra-rich individuals, while, on the other hand, extreme childhood poverty, poverty of all kinds, and homelessness are increasing. This is very serious.

The ecological crisis, I believe there is no need to go into detail. The severe climate change we are experiencing speaks for itself.

Mobility and migration: migrations have always existed, but now they occur as much or more than ever, and under, in our terms, far harsher conditions than in previous eras. Today, the barriers imposed by developed

[7] *La Corrosión del Carácter. Las consecuencias personales del trabajo en el nuevo capitalismo.* Richard Sennett. Anagrama, Barcelona 2000. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Sennett

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countries are much stronger than those that existed before. On one hand, we need migration; on the other, we mistreat migrants severely.

Another significant social change is the general commodification of life. Everything comes to have a monetary value, a cost, and is measured solely in terms of money. Here, one must recall the great and venerable Antonio Machado, in his *Juan de Mairena*[8], when he said, "Only a fool confuses value with price."[9] And indeed, for more and more of us, things have a price but no longer have value. We are gravely altering the way we live.

Finally, an ethical characteristic of our time: the fierce individualism into which we have fallen, a trap first laid in 1980 by Mrs. Thatcher[10], when she said that, looking out from her balcony, she did not see society, she saw only individuals[11].

According to this view, society does not exist; there are only individuals at war with one another. And she and Mr. Reagan[12] succeeded in the United States, an ideology has taken hold that has not only failed to wane but has actually grown stronger. One need only look at the social and political landscape of the world's leading nation, the United States, and what is happening there with its hyper-individualistic approach in every sphere.

The communication we are immersed in today is extreme, it's at its peak, a communication that is joyful in one sense, because today we can communicate with extraordinary ease; yet, paradoxically, we have never been worse off in terms of human exchange. Through easy communication and the effortless access to information, we have arrived at what has been called *infoxication*[13]. We are no longer merely informed, overinformed or

[8] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_de_Mairena
[9] Antonio Machado, in *Proverbios y Cantares. Nuevas Canciones.* LXVIII "Every fool confuses value with Price". (https://www.poetasandaluces.com/poema/225/).
[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Thatcher
[11] "[...] who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first." Margaret Tatcher, 1987 https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document%2F106689
[12] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_Reagan
[13] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_overload

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misinformed, we are *infoxicated* (overloaded with toxic information). Clearly, if the information is toxic, our entire mental system becomes toxic, because it feeds on the information we receive. If we are consuming spoiled "food," all subsequent mental processes are affected by that corruption. This is truly serious.

Forgetfulness, the fact of being unaware of the past, is extremely serious. As we know, history is the teacher of life, yet history has lost its significance. We have declared the past expired, as if it were yogurt. But the past is not yogurt. The past is lived life, the only foundation from which we can construct the present and the future. There is no present or future possible other than that which arises from the past. The past is immensely important, yet it seems we have declared it obsolete.

Inattention. You know that today the greatest good pursued by industries that profit from communication products is people's attention. The struggle for attention has resulted in an infinite supply of movies, series, and all kinds of audiovisual products across a wide variety of platforms often containing false information, as you know, which ultimately generates distrust. One of the major social changes in our time, compared to earlier periods, is precisely that we have all become very distrustful of everyone else. And in this distrust, we are also corroding our character, because life is lived much better trusting than distrusting. They say it is "just in case someone cheats you," but if you live trustingly, even if one person betrays you, you will gain a thousand satisfactions from having trusted people.

The latest book by the most important ethical thinker in Catalonia, and one of the most important in Spain, Victoria Camps[14], is titled *La Sociedad de la Desconfianza*[15] (*The Society of Distrust)*. And I believe that one of the major issues, speaking now about the impact on education, is that one of the most

[14] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Camps
[15] CAMPS, VICTORIA (Arpa Editores. 2025): *La Sociedad de la Desconfianza. Cómo recuperar la confianza en un mundo sin dimensión moral de la Política y la vida cotidiana*.

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significant consequences of social changes in education is the very high level of distrust present in our schools, high schools, and universities.

Distrust of everyone in the system, distrust of teachers toward families, distrust of families toward teachers, distrust of both toward students, and of students toward both. In short, general distrust. And within this atmosphere of distrust, the transmission of values, the very essence of education —earlier I spoke here about the transmission between souls, and souls are transmitted above all through values— suffers a real breakdown.

3. Impact of social changes on education

Now, moving more directly into the impacts of these social changes on education: I believe that the increase in early childhood education is an important change. I recall my time as a member of the Spanish Congress, I was elected in 1982, and one of the first laws we approved with great satisfaction was that of Minister Maravall[16], the LODE, Organic Law on the Right to Education[17]. Well, at that time, I recall that one piece of data the minister shared when presenting the law was that there were still 100,000 children in Spain without access to a school placement. Quite striking, isn't it?

Fortunately, today our country is up to date. Every child now has access to a school placement, and every child coming from Africa, America, Asia, etc., also has access. This is a badge of honor for our education system and especially for the teachers who are on the front lines every day, having to deal with situations without really knowing how; reception classrooms must be set up, often with a different language, which further increases the complexity of the process.

However, even so, due in part to migration changes, there is still a very serious level of segregation in our education system. In other words, we have not succeeded in making the system as balanced as possible, with minimal

[16] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jos%C3%A9_Mar%C3%ADa_Maravall
[17] *Ley Orgánica 8/1985, de 3 de julio, reguladora del Derecho a la Educación.* https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/1985/07/03/8/con

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differences between schools even within the same city. I think, for example, of Barcelona, which I know better because I live there. The truth is there are good schools, and everyone has access to a placement, but what a difference there is between schools within the same city. School segregation is a negative effect of one of the most significant social changes.

Moreover, this is a society that has become highly technologized, as we mentioned earlier, through communications, information, digitalization (let's use the word now), and the information society. This is fantastic and has changed the roles of teachers and students in education, but there is a strong tension regarding the use, implementation, and effective application of digitalization.

As a simple user at home, trying to book a plane ticket or do other tasks, I often get frustrated with digitalization! Of course, and I understand the reasoning behind it, because I now have the privilege of collaborating, as has been mentioned, for several years on artificial intelligence projects with a colleague from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia[18], Ulises Cortés[19], who is a professor of artificial intelligence and is based in *Barcelona Supercomputing Center*[20] and he comforts me because I say to him, "Ulises, but you guys are really bad at digitizing!" and he says, "I know, it happens to me at home, too!" I thought, well, if this happens to a professor of artificial intelligence, I can feel reassured, I'm not so strange after all.

It is done very poorly. There are basic logical errors on many websites and in countless processes that are essential for good public administration—not to mention for education. Well, that, combined with the tension created by families over the famous issue of mobile phones in the hands of children… as

[18] https://www.upc.edu/ca
[19] https://www.bsc.es/cortes-ulises
[20] https://www.bsc.es/es

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you know, in Catalonia a regulation[21] has been adopted, prohibiting the use of cell phones in both primary and secondary schools[22].

Let me share a small personal anecdote. At the same time that the Education Minister (who had appointed me President of the Education Council) was presenting the regulation prohibiting mobile phones, I was being approached by a good friend —a great psychologist specializing in adolescents you may know— Jaume Funes, who works with "difficult" teenagers. He was publishing a book and asked me to present it. The book was titled *No sin mi móvil*[23] ("Not Without My Mobile") and I faced a dilemma of conscience. What should I do?

Of course, I owed a certain loyalty to the Minister, who had shown me trust, so I would have had to say, "No, no, I support the mobile phone ban." But it was my friend. I had presented other books for him before, we had collaborated in multiple seminars, and so on. I said: "Jaume, I accept, but you have to accept that I'm going to present your book in an unusual way, not the usual way."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, instead of presenting it the way people usually do, this is a fantastic book, go buy it, read it, it's very well written,' and so on, I'm going to take a Socratic approach."

What did Socrates do? As mentioned earlier, Socrates was known, and he himself described it this way, as "the gadfly of the Athenians." He would walk through the streets asking, "Hey, what do you do for a living? Oh, this and that..." and then he would start asking questions that revealed they knew nothing at

[21] https://govern.cat/salapremsa/notes-premsa/717102/departament-deducacio-fp-elimina-lus-del-mobil-tota-letapa-obligatoria
[22] https://documents.espai.educacio.gencat.cat/IPCNormativa/DOIGC/ORG_Us_Mobils.pdf
[23] FUNES, JAUME (2025): *No sense el meu mòbil. Una guia per gestionar l'educació en l'univers de les pantalles.* (Ed.Columna).

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all. This ultimately led to his famous phrase, "I know that I know nothing,"[24] as a general principle of wisdom.

Well, I told Jaume that I was going to take on a Socratic role—pointing out every possible flaw in the book he had written and asking him to defend it. That is, I would present it from a skeptical position, not fully accepting what he advocated. But I would not reveal my personal position; as a friend, he asked me to present it, and as a friend, I said: I will not position myself so blatantly on your side that it seems like I am confronting the Ministry. Well, things like that happen with age, one invents these little strategies after many years of experience.

Moving on, there is another impact on the topic of values, which are key elements of education: today we have greater awareness of positive social progress in gender equality, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and the integration of democratic values into the curriculum. Yet the individualistic, hyper-consumerist, woke[25] and narcissistic climate acts as an anesthetic to these values. We may have these values, but individualism works against them, hyper-consumerism undermines them, and so does certain forms of "woke" activism. As you know, "woke" is a relatively new concept, referring to a radical defense of social equality that can generate reactions against the very values it promotes. Woke activism is, for example, an exaggerated push for gender equality that, as you know, can provoke a new form of machismo among young people who feel that women have "forced" society into an abusive form of feminism. That is the drama of woke culture.

So, between woke activism, narcissism, and individualism, the educational transmission of values —gender equality, democratic principles, tolerance, and so on— becomes more difficult.

Continuing with these impacts, I believe that personal development and civic co-responsibility are increasingly threatened. These are crucial goals of

[24] *scio me nihil scire* o *scio me* https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solo_s%C3%A9_que_no_s%C3%A9_nada
[25] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woke

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education, particularly in light of the weakness of the democratic system. We have already discussed the crisis of democracy and the rise of liquid culture[26]. It hasn't been published, but you know it's one of the definitions that Zygmunt Bauman came up with a few years ago[27]: Everything has become fluid, unstable, changeable, etc.; this is also due, as mentioned, to low social cohesion.

Communication technologies, which are necessary, which are beneficial, foster distraction, hyperactivity, inattention, and difficulty with abstract thinking. All of this seriously hinders education. In other words, we face the strange and difficult situation where information technologies are very beneficial to us, but they also entail quite serious difficulties in personal development and social relationships.

For their part, many people live on social media, further complicating matters with their infamous fake news[28], in the post-truth era[29], the simplification of messages. The phenomenon of post-truth is also very serious. We are living in the post-truth era. When I was teaching a course on Communication Ethics at my faculty, some colleagues would tell me, "That's an oxymoron. communication, in our time, cannot be ethical."

Well, I did what I could. In any case, in 2016, while I was teaching, I read that Oxford University gives an annual award for the word of the year, the word with global impact: *post-truth*. So, I asked my forty-something students, "Well, what do you think about post-truth?" There was a deafening silence. No one had an opinion. I shared mine. The argument is very simple: "If post-truth is truth, why call it post? And if it isn't truth, why call it truth?" Post-truth can be nothing other than a sophistic trap designed to feed you a lie.

Like "alternative facts." During Trump's previous term, and in this one, we've seen even worse, there was a day when one of the thousands of lies he

[26] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernidad_tard%C3%ADa
[27] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zygmunt_Bauman
[28] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fake_news
[29] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Posverdad

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told was that there had been an Islamist attack in a Scandinavian country, killing some people[30]. The next day, the government of that country responded: "That is not true. That is not a fact!" And then a woman, I remember her name was Conway[31], a communications advisor for Trump, invented a concept for which I believe she deserved a nonexistent award, the Nobel Prize in Philosophy. She coined the term "alternative fact"[32]. She said, "It is not a fact that there was an Islamist attack, but it is an alternative fact"[33] Brilliant.

Marià, if I may speak freely because of our friendship: if I say to you, "Look, Marià, I'm so glad you brought me here that here's €10,000," and you say, "I don't see the €10,000," and I reply, "They're €10,000 alternative, okay?", well, of course, you'd say, "But I can't do anything with that!" And then I would get upset with you because you don't believe me. Brilliant.

Well, this is the world we are creating. And how does that relate to education? Education, one would hope, should have respect for the truth. Therefore, we should be cultivating what we call critical thinking.

.4. What continuity and what changes do we need in education?

I think there are some issues regarding the need for change and continuity that need to be addressed. And I'll move right into the last part because I feel like I'm running out of time. Allow me to do so by quoting one of my favorite classics, Aristotle, no less, from his book *Politics*[34], in the eighth book, it says the following (if we update the terminology, it could still be read and remain relevant today:

> One must ask what education is and how to put it into practice, for there is no agreement on the facts, nor do all understand which subjects should be taught to achieve virtue and the most perfect[35] life. It is not known with

[30] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-39020962
[31] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kellyanne_Conway
[32] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_facts
[33] https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/22/donald-trump-kellyanne-conway-inauguration-alternative-facts
[34] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pol%C3%ADtica_(Arist%C3%B3teles)
[35] Today we would say well-being and happiness.

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> certainty whether one should cultivate intelligence or prioritize moral qualities. The current education system[36] makes this analysis even more difficult. It is not sufficiently clear whether one should primarily teach the practical arts for everyday life [37], the precepts of virtue [38] or the sciences of pure ornamentation[39]. Each of these views has its respective supporters, and regarding virtue, there is nothing —nothing well established. Even the definitions of its essence vary. And if there is no unanimity about what is essential, it is natural that opinions differ regarding the methods of application.[40]

We are in the same situation. As we said earlier about complexities, the complexity of Aristotle's time and our complexity today, separated by 2,500 years, are remarkably similar. Even now, debates continue: vocational training, how much, and how? More or less integrated into the general system? University degrees, master's degrees, professional or non-professional master's, are they all the same? And civic education, democratic education, how? When? Inside school, outside school? And so on.

I believe there are some elements of continuity in education that Aristotle already endorsed, and that we should continue to endorse, even if not in exactly the same words.

First, the education of personal autonomy through certain values. The key word here is autonomy. Did you know that autonomy is central to all applied ethics, including the first one, bioethics, from which the others drew inspiration? The first principle always discussed is autonomy.

We could say that we greatly value our freedom. For these purposes, autonomy and freedom are essentially synonymous. We must understand that a fundamental goal of education for every child is to become as

[36] Current as of 2,500 years ago.
[37] Today we would call it vocational training (VET).
[38] Ethical education according to our current terminology.
[39] The pure sciences, today we would say everything intellectual: the sciences, philosophy, and theories in general.
[40] Aristotle's (S.IV aC). *Politics*. Book V (Chapter One. Conditions of Education).

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autonomous as possible, as early as possible, and to have a life project that they can direct themselves. But autonomy through what?

Well, forgive the cliché, a classic philosophy professor cliché, but through critical thinking. Critical thinking, which is made of judgment, procedural character, contextual awareness, and self-correction.

I'll pause for a moment on the topic of context. With the colleague I mentioned earlier, with whom I have worked on artificial intelligence, we maintain that a key element distinguishing artificial intelligence from natural intelligence in its applications is that artificial intelligence, even the most sophisticated and effective, has one major limitation: its inability to contextualize. Human beings live profoundly contextualized lives, and no artificial intelligence can even approach our capacity to understand context, or even to feel it emotionally. In this regard, we win the battle. There are other aspects as well, but this is fundamental.

Therefore, let us practice critical thinking, whose principal element is contextualization. This is fundamental in education.

Responsibility. We live in an era in which, due to the overuse of technologies of all kinds, we have fallen into what some call a techno-solutionist mindset. That is, many people are convinced there is a technical solution for everything. It is true that there are technical solutions for many things. I am the first to use them at home if needed, but we are all gravely mistaken if we believe there is a technical solution for every issue. It is not true. For the most important aspects of life, there is no technical solution, only an ethical one, a human ethical solution. And that has a name: responsibility.

In fact, within the distrust we discussed earlier in the system, there is a constant tendency to transfer responsibility. Teachers shift responsibility to the system. The system shifts it back to teachers. Teachers shift it to families. Families shift it to students. Students shift it to everyone else. Responsibility is always someone else's

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So, creativity, and self-esteem. Creativity is another key distinction from artificial intelligence, although AI is now achieving extraordinary successes in so-called creativity; yet this is purely imitative creativity, that is, it doesn't actually create, but rather imitates human creations and blatantly copies them (in a violation of copyright that, as you know, is even the subject of international lawsuits).

And self-esteem, what can be said about that? The need for recognition that we all have. One of the penultimate books by the great American philosopher Martha Nussbaum is terribly titled, *La Monarquía del Miedo* ("The Monarchy of Fear")[41]. And the basic thesis is, as Freud's disciple Adler also said [42] To his teacher, he said, "Teacher, you have been very good on the structure of personality, the superego, the ego, and the unconscious. That tremendous play of ego squeezed and pressured between the two is very well done. But you have made one mistake: the primary drive of life is not the sexual drive; it is the drive for security." From the moment we are babies until we are elderly, even close to death, we always need security. Even when we seem very confident as adults, we always need it. Self-esteem, self-esteem is the foundation of the feeling of security.

Next, the education of social integration, fundamental for interpersonal respect and for the value of kindness, a value that has become somewhat outdated. The great poet and storyteller Gloria Fuertes has some beautiful lines. She writes: "First, kindness. Second, talent. And that's the end of the story."[43] She used to write short stories. Thank you, Gloria, thank you.

Well, I'll wrap things up now so we can finish. Look, here's a quote from Tedesco [44] who, perhaps you know him, is a great educator. He served as Argentina's Minister of Education in times less turbulent than today. I listened

[41] NUSSBAUM, MARTHA C. (2019): *La Monarquía del Miedo. Una mirada filosòfica a la crisis política actual.* (Ed. PAIDÓS).
[42] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Adler
[43] Included in "Practical Poems Rather Than Theoretical Ones" (2011). https://www.cervantes.es/bibliotecas_documentacion_espanol/creadores/fuertes_gloria_1.htm
[44] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Carlos_Tedesco

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to him as a faithful and attentive audience member at one of his lectures, and he said something surprising. He said, "School is countercultural." "Countercultural?" I thought, already imagining teachers with green mohawks, chains, and boots. But he clarified: "It is countercultural because the values of civilization as a whole are precisely what we aim to challenge in school. For example, in school we strive to be egalitarian, yet the world is anti-egalitarian. In school we strive to be peaceful, yet the world is violent." And so on, therefore, school is countercultural.

How can we manage to do something good in a world with social changes that make education so difficult?" Tedesco asked. His answer: by achieving good literacies. And he proposed four, understanding literacy not merely as the basic ability to read and write, but the ability to do so very well, literacy of comprehension, not just mechanical reading. These are: linguistic or literary literacy, scientific literacy, digital literacy, and aesthetic literacy. I completely agree with him.

These literacies, especially the first and the last, linguistic or literary and aesthetic, can only be transmitted, inspired, and nurtured by a human being. Only a human being can convey the richness of language, and in the richness of language, almost everything is at stake. We are linguistic beings. Aristotle established that we are a *zoon logon echon*[45], the animal that has the capacity for speech. It is through language that we dominate the world. Wittgenstein[46], the great twentieth-century philosopher, has many profound statements, but one is particularly basic and fundamental: "The limits of my language are the limits of my world," understanding "my world"[47], as "my reality". That is, my placement in the real world, if I may allow the pleonasm, my placement in the real existence of reality depends on my linguistic richness, understanding richness in the highest sense, not quantitatively, but especially qualitatively.

[45] For a philosophical discussion of the Aristotelian concept of human rational nature as a political animal (zoon politikon), see https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/human-nature/ .
[46] https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wittgenstein/
[47] "Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt" (Proposición 5.6 Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 1921) Ludwing Wittgenstein

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And language should not be understood as mere grammar. Grammar is important, yes, but language is much more than grammar.

There's a lot at stake here. Then there's the scientific and digital aspects, which don't require justification, and the aesthetic. We are sentient beings. "We are sentient beings," said the great Pessoa[48], *we're always emotionally invested*[49]. We could also say "always emotionally engaged." At every moment, we experience one emotion or another, even if it is the calm satisfaction of being able to listen to something that interests us. But there is always a mood, and often it fluctuates —up, down, positive, negative. This is fundamental. Without emotional connection, there is no educational transmission.

Now, as a conclusion, I will finish with just one reflection, which I believe follows from everything I have said. But first, something that is not a joke, although it may sound like one. I am not sure whether what I have said should be read as optimism or pessimism. They once asked a modest Catalan philosopher of the nineteenth century, little known, to summarize his philosophical position. He replied, "I am moderately skeptical within pessimism."

I have redefined myself, borrowing and adapting his expression: I am moderately skeptical within optimism. What I want to convey is this: the difficulties are great, but so are the possibilities. And we must become aware of one thing that also lightens our load, just as Maite mentioned earlier, when someone said, "[…] it won't be a good editor for another four years."

I have the sincere impression, after reflecting on these questions and sharing them publicly with you, that the great problems of education do not have educational solutions, they only have socio-political and cultural solutions. The greatest problem of education lies outside the school; it comes to us from the outside. And yet we are asked to do so much to overcome it. It

[48] https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fernando_Pessoa
[49] "The Argonauts said that sailing is necessary. We, the Argonauts of morbid sensibility, shall say that feeling is necessary, but that living is not." Fernando Pessoa (*The Book of Disquiet*), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Book_of_Disquiet)

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is neither easy nor fair to expect the teacher alone to change the world, because they cannot. Change it, then, those with various and significant powers, so that the teacher can develop their work with calm and positivity.

Thank you very much, truly, for inviting me and for the exquisite attention I have perceived. Thank you.

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