

THE INCLUSIVE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE AS A RESPONSE TO THE EXCLUSION

Introduction

The first concern that arises when beginning to think in the inclusive school is over "how poverty is observed today" and the structural violence that strongly conditions children and adolescents that live in schools or even those who are in the outside. Is school a space of resistance or is it there any mechanisms of relegation of the students getting through the exclusion inside it? In turn, from the society, is the school observed as a possible place of major justice for these children and adolescents or is it an institution that lost symbolic efficiency in the processes of socialization and biographization?

Research show the fact that students marked in their vital processes by different types of exclusion processes, tend to perceive themselves as the last cause of their own failure. They are discredited as a product of discredit of which they were object (Kaplan, 1992-1997). This is due to the constitutive dimensions of the social experience: *Subjective hopes and objective possibilities*. These are not similar for everyone. On the contrary, not all the social agents have the same possibilities or potentials of material and symbolic benefit and the same provisions to invest in the social world.

This text shall deal over the question about **how is it possible to achieve an inclusive scholar experience that contrasts with so much exclusion**. Taking into account that in our Latin American countries, the exclusion and poverty are only some of many features of the childhood and youth that participate in the education system, but also prepare the specific cultural plot of the school life.

School paths as an affirmation of the self-esteem

In order to start thinking over an inclusive school, it is essential to acknowledge that the processes of social exclusion, outside the school, have consequences in the subjectivity of students and in the production of education paths. Throughout our social path, we are building a social auto esteem, an idea about ourselves. Also, in the passage through an education system, we build an image about ourselves about our supposed limits and possibilities.

And, the more vulnerable is the student that judges himself, the more he will tend to attribute himself a failure at school, even excluding himself subjectively from those that he is already excluded. Phrases like “*I do not have a head for the study*”, “*I was not born for mathematics*”, “*I am not prepared for high school*”, that are pretty common at school, tend to get deep into the students and structure a verdict, and a school destiny.

Activities

For the Conversation:

Which are the phrases that, generally, are heard at school, and that seem to indicate a destination for the student from one time and for ever? These phrases, appear to be stated by who? (teachers, parents, professionals with whom we work in schools....).

¿What is the frame of the students in these appreciations?

Please take some minutes to observe these phrases that “configure destinies”.

However, not all the institutions nor all the teachers are in the same position in the same way against the adverse conditionings of the students. While for some teachers, the poverty of the student may be transformed into an stigmatization attribute, that is to say, negative, shameful; for other teachers the material poverty of the students represents a challenge or an opportunity that the school has to change the destinies that appear to be, on the surface, as unavoidable.

That is how, not all the institutions, nor all the actors translate nor perform in the same way on the face of the bursting in of poverty in the scholar life. Sometimes, the schools represent a way of confirmation or reproduction of the external limitations that tinged the social experience of the students. In other cases, the school opens a symbolic horizon that tenses the unequal starting point on which children and youth live by the scholar system.

The following concern immediately arises: What is the meaning of that plus, that addition, that makes school for some students to represent a confirmation of their social place, and for others, on practically identical objective conditions, continue being a future promise? What makes the difference among the schools?

Then, many questions arises or many supplementary dimensions have to be considered.

How can some schools observe education as a possibility and others state and enforce the impossibility?

What are the institutional conditions under which the school is introduced as a second chance for the students?

What is the reason why some primary schools allow students to represent a different future while others, in a very subtle way, observe in advance a very narrow prospect, thus confirming that the children are denied on the basis of their unequal social bases?

Let's restate that the feeling of vulnerability of our childhoods, adolescences and youths is not only observable in the structurally poor or poverty stricken sectors, but it also affects the educated population and the non educated ones as a whole, though in different ways. Although it is true that in our modern societies, the projection into the future is difficult for practically all the society, nevertheless, in the schools, some students achieve an utopist representation of the future. In consideration of the breakage of the paths, feature of these modern times, that do not allow to think in the long term, the school is the institution that precisely has its bet in a different future, that, at the same time, has to help on the construction.

In adverse contexts, the teacher has to specially take the social responsibility of alleviating, accompany the social suffering of the students. He is transformed into a sort of social worker without having the specific knowledge to perform those tasks and without being subjectively prepared for that. In spite of this, many teachers transform these professional conditions not chosen in opportunities of democratization. The instances of reflection over the practice may precisely allow teachers to learn to know their students, in their identities and material and cultural constrictions, without pre-judging them, with no convictions in advance; and is there in better pedagogical conditions to interact with them.

The genetic understanding of the students, the understanding of the other in its socio-cultural identity, requires a process of continuous learning on behalf of the actors of the scholar daily life. To know the ways of the cultural capital of origin of the students, to get to understand them. It is a very reflexive and sustained task in time. To understand the students mean to broaden the knowledge that there exists about them; to approach them in their complexity from the specific socio-cultural contexts in which they live. Many times under the constrictions of poverty, but without establishing condemnatory lawsuits in virtue of these conditionings of entrance. A diagnosis is not a conviction.

To understand the cultural identities of the students, that means, their moods, ways of thinking, observing and talking about the world. It implies to be able to stand on someone else's shoes. There is no way of subjectively reaching to the other party with the rejection, with the negation of its specification.

The challenge of the school to know the socio-cultural conditions of the students does not lead to achieve a *condemning socio-cultural diagnosis* of the students that may lead to reproduce their initial disadvantages. Re-thinking the talks, as the ones stated in phrases like "*there is no need to teach them a lot because they will finish school or they will finish like laborers as their fathers*", is one of the main challenges faced by teachers that teach in difficult contexts. What is difficult is not impossible. The question is: How can I transform in possibility what is impossible at first sight? How can I denature the school failure? How can I operate what is apparently inevitable?

Taking into consideration the premise that the school can be transformed into a space with the capacity of changing destinies that are submitted as inevitable, we consider that it is necessary to take into account that together with the determinations that delimit the student paths, there are margin of freedoms to force these limits. In order to surpass these limits, it is necessary to observe those mechanisms that are involved in the practices and social and scholar representations of the students and teachers: The naturalization of the differences of the cultural capital, the mechanisms of stigmatization, the conceptions about the intelligence.

Activities

The popular sayings are a way of condensing the social representations. A teacher interviewed referred to the notion of the “natural ceiling” when asked about the meaning of the so well known saying. “*Lo que natura non da, Salamanca non presta*”, applied to the students. Another teacher made explicit reference to the idea of a “limit” proper to each child.

Fragment taken from Kaplan, Carina (et. al.), La escuela: una segunda oportunidad frente a la exclusión, Buenos Aires: Centro de Publicaciones Educativas y Material Didáctico, 2002.

For the Conversation:

We suggest to tell a scene of their own professional path, in which the participation of the school have transformed the way to look or the initial expectation in relation to a student.

What was the attitude or strategy adopted by the school? What were the conditions that have been generated and that allowed this transformation?

School changing destinies

In its article “Escuela y Subjetividad”, Álvarez Uría takes some aspects of the biography of Albert Camus to think about the role of school in the

construction of possible alternatives before destinies that seem to be inevitable.

The education path of Albert Camus that we introduce shall allow to establish that, under certain institutional strategies and with high expectations of the teacher, the school is an space that opens new vital horizons. Let's remember that Albert Camus came to become a very famous writer. He comes from a very poor home, of an illiterate family, practically fatherless since very young. In spite of these specifying objectives, he was able to open his path in the world of letters and words. The question that we ask is: How this very poor boy was able to exceed his own material conditionings and turned them into an opportunity? The answer, at least the most part of it, has to be searched in the symbolic role that the school had, and in particular, in the hope of a future that a teacher had in their students of the primary level to which Camus himself attended.

We need to leave the explanations that may mean that an exceptional intelligence of the nature of Camus was the one that took him to exceed in his social path, what was denied due to his vital conditionings of socio-familiar origin. It is not an exceptional intelligence, but an incredible big effort what explains that Camus challenged his destiny of failure, but also in this case, a committed school, represented in the figure of a known education teacher with the companion of the family of the student, which generates the conditions for an alternative path to be developed.

When the school gets democratic, the teacher teaches more to the ones that have less, he trusts in the ones that have the least self-consciousness as a consequence of the social discredit to which they are object to. Precisely, it is the school experience that some schools activate, which better explains how, in not all the cases of education paths, they are re-statements of the starting points.

To think the school as the constructor of subjectivities, and the potential place of the teachers in that, means to identify some sort of possibility of improving the conditions in which the students are developing their paths. The objective aims to confirm one of the most negative consequences of our times: the exclusion and the

impossibility generated thereby. Acknowledging the other as the transmission of the voice, offering a mirror through which you can look and from which each one can be active in the search of new horizons, being recognized as a subject holder of expectations, feelings, with security in the middle of so much uncertainty: That there is no nature in the differences and in the social and education exclusion.

The truth is that for some children of middle classes, there is a continuity between family and school. For the students of common sectors, the school is a different space than the daily life, a place that opens the door to the unknown, to a new world that has been ignored up to that moment, by them as well as by their families. For Camus, school represents a different world than the familiar one, a world of letters and words.

The autobiographic writing of Albert Camus in *El primer hombre* shows how the school, under certain institutional circumstances and strategies of subjectivity on behalf of the teachers, can become a creative space. To this respect, writes Camus over his school: Not only the avoidance of the family life featured by poverty was offered but also the fact that in the class of Mr. Bernard, his teacher with capital letters, the school imposed in them a more essential hunger, for the child than for the man, that is the hunger for search. In the class of this teacher (Mr. Bernard) they felt for the first time that they existed and that they were object of the highest consideration: They were judged to be liable to discover the world. In front of an apparently insignificant life, the students gained importance at school. The teacher named them, gave them voice.

The difference between a teacher and a professional officer of education cannot be better defined than in the words of Camus. The professional transmits knowledge, involved and in series, while the teacher communicates everything about an implication in the search of the truth. Camus very well states, that the class with Mr. Bernard was always interesting for the only reason that the students recognized that he passionately loved his work. A poor school, located in a poor town, and to which the children of the poor attended. It had a teacher capable of encouraging the hunger to discover. Camus was perfectly aware that, after his time at school, nothing was going to be the same. The

teacher threw him to the world, when he made all the efforts for his family to send him to the Liceo, undertaking at the same time the responsibility of being away from home to even make more important discoveries. For the children like Albert Camus, the Liceo was something denied, since it was expected that after the school, they have to directly come to begin working, to the tasks related to the family support.

This teacher, in spite of this family self-exclusion against the continuity of the studies, insisted with the grandmother, and at the same time, devoted many hours and days out of the normal school schedule, to prepare these children for the Liceo.

Albert Camus cannot be more specific over the place that represented the school and this teacher that encouraged him, before the material misery that he had in his life: At school, the children of popular sectors found «[...] what they did not find at home, where poverty and ignorance turned life tougher, more isolated, more closed in itself, misery is a place of strength with no elevated bridge.»

If there was something transmitted by this teacher to the students, was the idea that they were worthy of discovering the world, this other world, different than the one of their daily life.

There was no magical form to pass on the passion for knowledge. Each teacher builds his own formulae in the interpersonal gathering that is produced in the classroom. Between the famous and well known “El primer hombre” by Albert Camus and the little Albert that comes to school, there is with no doubt a long distance, but in the passage between the famous intelligence and the fascinated child by the snow he finds at school and with that, his teacher and friend.

Thus, Camus writes in November of 1957 to Mr. Bernard, after receiving the Nobel: *«I have received a very big honor, that I have not searched for nor asked for. However, when I heard the news, I thought first in my mother and then in you. Without you, without your kind help to the poor boy I was, without your teaching and example, nothing of this would have happened. It is not that he gives too much importance to an honor of this type. But at least it offers the opportunity to tell you that what you have been and continue being for me, and to confirm your efforts, your work and the*

generous heart that you devoted to, continue with life and always alive in one of your little scholars, that, in spite of the years, has not ceased to be your thankful student. »

The biographical narration of Camus acquires a specially emotive vibration when he reaches the abandonment of school. It reads over the visit of the teacher to the family of the young Camus to convince the grandmother of the child that he should take the selection exam that was the entrance to the Liceo. Again, we found the teacher in the morning of the exam before the door of the Liceo, closed yet, surrounded by his four little scared students. Together with the previous recommendations to the exam, Mr. Bernard stated: *«Please do not be nervous —repeated the teacher—. Read very carefully the statement of the problem and the subject of the writing. Read it many times. You have time»*. In this stage of transition, the teacher was also playing a role of his own destiny as a guide of followers.

However, the entrance to the Liceo meant the farewell to the town and the school, the farewell of the teacher and the friend, the fact of being far away from the protective world of the family: *«[...] with this success, he has just been removed from the innocent and warm world of the poor, a world closed in itself like an island in the society, but in which misery is the family and the solidarity, to be ready to be thrown to a non known world that it wasn't his, in which he could not believe that the teachers were wiser than his teacher of his own heart that knew it all, and from that moment onwards he was going to learn, understand with no help, become a man without the help of the only man that helped him, he had to grow and study alone, to the highest price.»* In fact, the scholar success meant a point of no return.

Activities

For the debate:

Work over some paragraphs of CAMUS, Albert (1998): *El primer hombre*, Barcelona, TusQuets. See appendixes: “La escuela” and “El Liceo”.

In the Appendix there are some fragments of this paragraph. To locate those marks or hints in the narration that denote the school path of Jacques. These things lead us to think in individual attributes or bonds?

The school as a possibility: widening the expectations

To begin observing the school as a democratization possibility, it is necessary to state that we need to begin with the theoretical conviction that there is nothing natural in the social and education failures that are distributed in an unequal way in our societies and in our schools.

Together with this theoretical conviction, we also need to share another, and it is the one that in stages of high selectivity and exclusion, of violence and discrimination, even with its problems, the school reaches a sole and undisputable value. In it, there are the vestiges of the promise of social inclusion. Mainly in these times, even with all its unfortunate cases, the school doubles its bet in its capacity to produce a powerful land for the cultural resistance and symbolic revolution. The school is one of the few social spaces that has the force to give name to unprotected children and young adults, and returned them the silenced voices after their socio-economic condition of origin, after its particular cultural identity, its sexual belonging, its ethnic origins or its differential qualities for the learning.

Activities

A Director of a night school of the area of Barracas in the City of Buenos Aires, says: “When the children in the Villa experience a problem, they come here (...) the other day one appeared, one that had been in a riot, he was all hurt (...) they know that here we are going to do something”.

For the Conversation:

Some teachers tell that their students many times addressed the school because “it is the only place they have” or “the only place in which they are heard” or “they know that here we are going to take care”.

Why do you think that school can mean a protection for the children? What is it that school has to offer? Which are the *features* that the school offers?

One of the main challenges is to contribute to strengthen the school as a particular space of social integration and filiations, to allow those who go through it, challenge the destinies that seem to be unavoidable and for that, **leave the person of that feeling of being guilty of their own failure.**

We trust that many schools may open their doors more and more to people involved in the daily miseries, inviting the thought for other symbolic horizons, thus granting something like “a second opportunity”. In fact, many institutions offset the “negative destinies” of those students through those conditionings of poverty, by contributing to positively reassure their self-esteem and their expectations to the future.

The school, by itself, cannot transform the structural and material determinations of life that highly determine at the very beginning the paths of the students, however, it does have socio-pedagogical tools to subjectively instrument same, as regards their own social and scholar value.

The objective limits and the subjective hopes are tensed in the democratic schools. And this tension of the particular teacher and the collective one has its major potential of transformation. The inevitable becomes, then, probable. That is to say, the possibility of another destiny to be produced is opened. In this way, other paths and destinies are possible.

The democratic school can generate conditions for the individualization and the biographization and here, the role of the teacher has no boundaries. It is not less true that, to make some conditions effective, it is essential to uncover the fact that these are utopist horizons, since in many cases, the social experience of the children is tinged with the mechanisms of the domination. Most of the teachers state their strong willingness to “help students to move forward”. For this reason, they are themselves needed to exceed some social prejudices in regard to some groups and children that carry out negative expectations. The teachers, as well as some other social agents, participate in an unconscious way of many social prejudices and can reinforce them precisely for the fact of being social subjects that live in selective and discriminatory societies.

It is necessary that the education agents face our pre-notions, prejudices and abstract notions and not historic ones regarding the child and the young adult, knowing and understanding *who* are the children being educated, in socio-cultural terms, getting to a deep understanding of the childhoods and the youths in its heterogeneity of conditionings and of identities.

The construction of the identity of the student as such at school is a process that is performed without the teachers being aware of it, many times, of its mechanisms and implications. Even more, perhaps the teacher may need to have more present the fact that his figure and his word, and sometimes his silences and his looks, has very powerful effects in the formation of the self-esteem of the student. In our social life, all of us are pending to the look of the others. As the teacher is an authorized and institutionally legitimized authority, in particular his look over the students has a symbolic not comparable force.

The teacher has to be conscious and sensitive before this symbolic power that has the configuration of the special identity of the *being student*. At schools, the children and the young adults have an identity that is the one of *being student* and that is gathered in the daily experience of the scholar institutions. Although there are some common features to this *being student*, many of them as part of the social and scholar memory, each meeting, face to face of each teacher with each student, has its own peculiarities.

Let's think then over the scholar institution in general and the teacher in particular, as central figures in the auto-images that students manufacture and in the daily senses that they are acquiring by their being at school. These "others" returned to the child and to the young adult an image in a mirror, in which to be looked at (and acknowledging or rejecting) shall with no doubt influence in the path that he may perform in the school system. Acknowledging and recognizing its symbolic power in the processes of subjectivization of the students, the teacher recovers one of the most relevant democratization roles at school, that is the one to be equitable (much more in spite of the difference of the starting point or precisely by that).

Now, the teachers may reproduce the negative looks that the society has over certain features of the students, or else, generate the conditions to offset them. In this point, it is worthy to stop and consider how is the process through which some *attributes* of children and groups in specific cultural contexts, can act as negative marks, not wanted and rejected. I make reference to the processes of stigmatization.

In its book *Estigma. La identidad deteriorada*, the sociologist Goffman (1989) observes how throughout history, the societies establish different mechanisms through which the people are categorized, establishing those attributes that are perceived as normal and natural for each one of them; and how these attributes are transformed into normative expectations. As from the consolidation of these features, when we meet with some strange person and from certain features, we can locate it in certain categories and look forward for her to behave accordingly. An attribute is translated into an *stigma* when it produces in the others a wide discredit. That is why he is the depositary of a stigma that would look for some way of hiding it, for considering and consider it shameful, in some occasions to make it more visible (precisely for this big effort to hide it).

In this way, in all societies, there is a process of stigmatization through which, some features are not desired, thus producing in most of the cases, discrimination situations and social differentiation. It builds, as stated by Goffman, a “rational” theory of the stigma through which the superiority-inferiority are explained. *“In our daily discourse we use as source of metaphors and images, terms specifically referred to the stigma, such as invalid, silly, without remember, in general, its real meaning”*.

The stigmas are transformed in a lack of natural identity of the students, a sort of quality mark that the common social sense calls as "from factory", product made of "the fabric" or the "seal of the cradle". And what is specially significant is that many trials of social stigmatization are successful as long as, in general, the one who is stigmatized undertakes as their own the attributes with which it was classified, explaining the destiny as part of its supposed own nature. The

category of “poor” can become a stigma when, under the supposed intention of describing the social condition of the other, what is hidden is the implicit practice of condemning or rejecting him.

The processes of stigmatization-labeling also take place at school. The expectations employed by the teachers are transformed, for the own students, in acts of naming that gets through them in the construction of its self-esteem and identity, thus making an impact in its social and scholar path. By means of the judgments, the classifications and the verdicts that the school institution performs, the child comes to know the limits and his possibilities, establishing what Bourdieu (1988) calls in the sense of the limits, that is: *“the practical anticipation of the objective limits, acquired by the experience of the objective limits that makes the person and the groups to exclude themselves from those that are already excluded. This is so, as long as the own sense of the limits is to imply to forget about the limits”*. In this way we listen to explanations of the own children and/or families prepare against the scholar failure, of the kind of: “he was not born for the high school”, “the problem is that he is not up to that”.

This type of analysis does not intend to be more against the teachers, who, the same as the students state some points of resistance and failure against the discourses and the stigmatization practices. However, it is important that today, more than ever, it is necessary to be alert against those practices and discourses that, daily and in many unconscious cases, have place in the scholar institution and that can act as a reinforcement of the education inequality.

Some judgments can be transformed into stigmatization and be based on social prejudices more than in supposed features of the students. The ways used to make reference to the students, to their features and characteristics, have more sense than the one to seem to have, to comply with roles that go beyond the explicit intention to describe them. To finish in this way advancing and prescribing the scholar performance and behavior of the students.

The scholar classifications, the discourse about the good and bad students, the poor and not poor students, and of their intelligence works, in spite of their apparent neutrality, as legitimization and reinforcement of the social classifications.

The principles of social division that lie beneath some judgments regarding the students of different sectors and groups, are hidden to the daily social conscience when unknown the symbolic efficacy. On the contrary, to be conscious of these implicit judgments permit to advance the more democratic practices and interactions.

The research performed by Bourdieu y Saint Martín (1998), “Las categorías del juicio profesoral”, analyzed the way in which the classifications and the scholar judgments are daily get through by the social representations of the teachers about the intelligence and by the expectations of the students of the different social classes or fractions of society. These representations are reflected in the ways of assessing and name them. In these studies made in our context (Kaplan, 1997) we have reached similar results:

- that the expectations of the teachers about the performance of the students is centered many times in its values over the intelligence;
- that these assessments have a particular meaning in the scholar context;
- that the teachers participate in an assessment specifically scholar of the intelligence;
- that the main differences surrounding the appreciations of the intelligence of the students are unconsciously structured as from the socio-economic and cultural level of the children;
- that the poor children are considered less intelligent or else, that their scholar failure is in direct line with its supposed capacities associated with intelligence.

These type of conclusions lead us to state that the genes nor the individual qualities are not the ones that best explain why the students of less protected sectors are the ones who fail at school. This statement removes all the arguments that support that the poor have no capacity to learn or that they are not sufficiently intelligent to achieve scholar learning that compromise intellectual capacities of superior order.

However, if we review the history, we observe that the intelligence, as an attribute considered to be natural and independent from the social conditionings, that is to say, essential from some individuals and groups, has been one of the privileged instruments with which the societies have legitimized the social inequality. As from this, there were many tries to submit a report of the low school performance of some vulnerable groups (poor, women, Indians, immigrants). The intelligence has formed into a supposed objective and universal measure that distinguishes people or human natures, thus justifying the successes and the failures at a social and education levels.

The importance of analyzing the debates over the intelligence, that have been faced over the debate between the primacy of nature and the environment is mainly based in, namely:

- to acknowledge its symbolic power, since they impact in the identity on those that are classified and in its social and school experience;
- the intention of denouncing aspects that work as part of this “fabulous machine” that is the neoliberalism, since most of the time protected by the science and the objectivity they do not more than reinforcing and legitimizing through the naturalization of the social in an unfair and unequal order, that justifies the exclusions, either social and education ones.

Following the statements of the debates of the biological determinism (that considers the intelligence as an inborn capacity or natural talent) and the environmentalist determinism (that considers the family and the environment in which the student participates are very good limits, impossible to get through, for its education); from the inside and the outside of the scientific field, the failures and successes to inherited distinctions, born or that result from the work performed in the core of the family, hiding and legitimizing a social and education structure characterized by inequality.

The intelligence, as an absolute measure, can be submitted to the pedagogical subjects as a justification of their success or school failure, and, in turn, they transformed into a limit that predicts its destinies. For the case of the education failures, the

differences in the conditions to learn that are invisible and transformed into a sort of luck of social alchemy, in deficit of intelligence, that is undertaken as own. The impact of these discourses is so strong over the social and school experience, that the ones that are already excluded from certain stages, due to social injustice, by the differences of cultural capital, are self-excluded, undertaking as own the reasons by which it is left outside.

Finally, the idea that is reached by certain segments of the school pyramid reached by the most capable ones, is adopted, the most intelligent ones, the most talented or the most powerful ones. At this stage, it is important to highlight that, if it were necessary, all these suppositions come from a doubtful scientific base, although very hegemonic in the social thinking or in the common social sense.

According to Bourdieu (1999), a kind of social Neo-Darwinism is installed: “(…) *the best and the most brilliant*” are the ones that succeed. There are the losers and the winners, there is State nobility, that is to say, the people have all the attributes of nobility in the medieval sense of the term and owe their authority to the education, that is to say, according to them, to the intelligence, conceived as a divine talent, when we know in reality that it is distributed by all the society and the differences of intelligence are social differences.

Facing the practices and debates that attribute the exclusion and the inequality to matters referred to the intelligence as essence, there are those placed in democratic positions that insist on unveiling them and de-naturalizing them, as long as expressions of discrimination and racism. The democratic school acknowledges the different conditions of starting point of the students, not as deficiencies but as points of arrival, not as dimensions that the institution shall have to know and consider for the construction of strategies that do not weaken ones and re-enforced others.

The symbolic power of the teacher

Thus, the place played by the teacher and the school in the construction of new symbolic horizons is evident.

Different investigations have proposed to describe how the school daily manufactures judgments and hierarchies that have a high impact on the school performance of the students. The studies of the power of the expectations of the teacher over the school performance of the student have the most important background in an investigation that made a big impact in the subsequent studies published under the title of: “Pygmalión en la escuela” (Pygmalion at school). The study consisted of a classic experiment as from the researchers verified as main hypothesis the one that: “In a given class, the children from which the teacher expects a major and better performance, shall truly show that development”.

Through the investigation they stated the strong impact of the beliefs that the teacher has regarding the intellectual capacity of the students in its school performance. In this way, as self-fulfilling prophecies, the expectations of the performance of the teachers are translated into certain school results of the students. These conclusions can be summed up in a sort of equivalences that would result in this way: High expectations= high performances and low expectations = low performances.

So, let’s state again the question about how to achieve that the children and the youth can reach the stages of the school system, shall get deeper in other ways of cultural capital, and at the same time, do not feel ashamed of its social origin. The response to this question is on the school when it finds mechanisms of operation, debates, practices and teachers subjects ready not to stigmatize the students in virtue of their social origin, and thus, leave the vicious circle of the reproduction of poverty.

School did not only offer an avoidance from family life to Albert Camus. At least in the class of Mr. Bernard, this primary teacher, to whom Camus devoted some words when receiving the Nobel Award of Literature, the school encouraged the hunger to discover a symbolic world, impossible to be reached for some families and people due to its social origin.

The school, under certain conditions, gives voice to the unprotected. The impossible turns into possible, opening vital horizons.

To continue thinking:

We recommend you to watch three movies that show the challenge of very different teachers.

Sometimes, what seems to be in the middle between teachers or professors, and students are the prejudices (including those that could be thought to be positive: “he is the one that delivers the homework first”, “she is always willing to work”). In the bonds that show the movies, what is between teachers and students?

El maestro de música

Original Title: **Le Maître de Musique**

Year: 1988

Origin: Belgium, France.

Genre: Drama

Direction: Gérard Corbiau

Plot Summary: A very good opera singer, Joachim Dallayrac (José van Dam) in the summit of his vocal powers and in the middle of his success, he went to his castle to devote to the teaching of two young students.

Escuela de Rock

Original Title: **The School of Rock**

Year: 2003

Origin: United States, Germany

Genre: Comedy - Musical

Direction: Richard Linklater

Plot Summary: A rock musician that was a failure and without work, finds, thanks to a confusion, some employment as professor in a school. The typical history of the teacher that alters the college with his arrival.

Los coristas

Original Title: **Les Choristes**

Year: 2004

Origin: Suiza, Alemania, Francia

Genre: Romance - Musical – Drama

Direction: Christophe Barratier

Plot Summary: A professor lover of music revolutionates the customs of a stiff school of the middle of the XX in the center of France.

The Author

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APPENDIX:

Fragments of the parts “La escuela” and “El Liceo”, extracted from: CAMUS, Albert (1998). *El primer hombre*, Barcelona, TusQuets.

La escuela

He has not known his father, but he used to talk about him in a kind of mythological way, and always, in certain moment, he learnt to substitute him. That is why Jacques never forgot him, as if, not having really experienced the absence of a father to whom he had not known, should have unconsciously recognized, first as a child, and then throughout his life, the only father-like gesture, at the same time meditated and conclusive, that was present in his life as a child. Because, Mr. Bernard, his teacher of the last primary class, had placed all his weight of a man, in a given moment, to modify the destiny of that child, that depended on him, and in fact, he had modified it.

At that moment, Mr. Bernard was there, ahead of Jacques, in his little apartment of the vueltas de Rovigo, almost at the bottom of the Alcazaba, a town that dominated the city and the sea, inhabited by little traders of all the races and all the religions, whose homes smelt of species and of poverty. There it was, old, with less hair, stains due to the years behind the already vitrified texture of the cheeks and the hands, moving more slowly than before, and visibly happy when he was able to sit again in a sofa, close to the window in front of the commercial street and in which a bird sang, also amortized by the age and showing its emotion, that would not have occurred before, but still standing and with the voice firm and strong, as in the times in which, standing in front of the students, he said: «In lines of two. In lines of two! Not five!». And the noise ceased, the students that at the same time were afraid and adored Mr. Bernard, were aligned throughout the external border of the classroom, in the gallery of the first floor, until, in the first lines at least regular and not movable, in silence, a «Inside, band of little frogs» released them, giving the sign of movement and of an animation more discrete than Mr. Bernard, solid, handsomely dressed and with his strong regular face, with little straight hairs, smelling to perfume, watched with good humor and severity.

The school was in a part relatively new to this old town, among houses of one or two floors built a little later to the war of the 70s and one more recent store that had been terminated to link the main street of the town, the one of Jacques, with the rear part of the port of Argel, in which there were the boundaries of coal. Jacques was going, twice a day, to that school that began to attend at four years old, in the maternal section, period from which he has no recall at all, except for the washing of a dark stone that occupied all the back of the covered yard into which one day he landed with his head, to stand up full of blood, the superscalar arcade opened, among the worried teachers, and it was in this way how he fixed knowledge with the points that he has just been removed, to tell the truth, when it was necessary to put them in the other arcade, because at home his brother decided to place an old *bombin* to the eyes, and covered him in an old coat that made the pace difficult, in such a way that he hit one of the places (*morrillos*) untapped of the floor, and newly in blood. But he was already in the maternal, with Pierre, almost a year older than him, that lived in a nearby road with his mother, widower of war, employee of Correos, and two of his uncles that worked in the railway. Their corresponding families were vaguely friends, or as it happens in the towns, that is to say, that they are estimated with almost no visits at all and were decided to help among themselves without any time having occasion to do it. Only the children made real friends after that first day in which the two of them, Jacques, still with an apron and trusted in Pierre, conscious of his trousers and of his duty of older brother, began the maternal school. After that they have visited together the succession of classrooms until the last one

primary, to which Jacques began at nine years old. During five years they made the same project four times, one blonde, the other brown one, one calm, the other one unrestful, but brothers by origin and destiny, the two good students and at the same time unrestful players.

Jacques was the most brilliant in some subjects, but his behavior and his unrestfulness, as well as his wish to show off, encouraged him to make one thousand silly things, he gave advantage to Pierre, more reflexive and secret. They took turns, then, at the head of the class, without thinking in taking proud of that, on the contrary of their families. Their pleasures were different. In the mornings, Jacques waited Pierre at his house. They left before the dustmen appeared, or more precisely, the cart led by a wounded horse in the knee that conducted an old Arab. The pavement was still wet by the humidity of the night, the air that reached the sea had the flavor of the salt. The street of Pierre, that lead to the market, was surrounded by dustbins of waste that Arabians, or starving Mors, sometimes a Spanish vagabond old man, took out at dawn, finding something still in the things that the poor and economic families threw away and removed. The dustbins were in general opened and at that time in the mornings, the vigorous cats and the thin ones of the town occupied the place of the poor. What the two boys tried to do was to reach in silence behind the dustbins to abruptly place the cover with the cat inside. The challenge was not easy, because the cats, born and grown-up, in a poor town had the surveillance and the fastness of the animals accustomed to defend their right to live. However, sometimes, hypnotized by a good finding and difficult to extract from the amount of waste, one of them tended to get surprised. The cover felt with noise, the cat threw a shout of horror, making convulsive force with the body and the nails and achieved to lift the roof of his jail of zinc, emerge with the hair of horror and went out running as if a group of dogs were following him, in the middle of laughs of the others not very conscious of their cruelty.

To tell the truth, these men were also non-consequent, since they followed with their feelings, the chaser of dogs, nicknamed by the children of the town Gallofa¹ (that in Spanish ...). This municipal officer acted approximately at the same time, but, according to the needs, made its turns also in the afternoon. It was an Arabian dressed in the European way, located in general at the bottom of a vehicle moved by two horses and conducted by an old impassible man, also Arabic. The body of the vehicle consisted in a kind of cubicle of wood, throughout which, in each side, there was a double line of jails with solid bars. As a whole, there were sixteen jails, each of them could contain a dog, surrounded thus the bars and the back. In his little part of the back part of the vehicle, with the noise at the height of the roof of the jails, the chaser was able to watch its territory of chase. The vehicle slowly drove through the wet streets that began to be populated by children in their way to the school, housewives searching for the bread or the milk, with their dresses stamped with violent flowers, and Arabian traders that were going to the market with their little bags on the shoulder and in the hand a big bag that had the merchandise. And, all of a sudden a sign of the chaser, the old Arabian that threw the strings and the vehicle was stopped. The chaser saw one of the miserable things avidly grabbing in a dustbin, throwing from time to time some fury looks towards the back or fastly running along the wall with that quick air and unrestful of the dogs badly fed. Gallofa then had at the top of a vehicle a verge ended in a chain of iron that went through a wing or throughout the sleeve. He moved forward towards the animal with a

¹The origin of this name came from the first person that had accepted this task and who was really called Gallofa.

flexible, quick and silenced step of the tramper. He reached and he was not able to take a collar hat is the trade of the sons of a good family, he ran towards him with a sudden and violent speed and he passed by the collar with his arm, that operated then as a string of iron and leather. The animal, suddenly strangulated, discussed like a crazy one throwing inarticulate complaints. But the man [him] was quickly moving him towards the vehicle, opened one of the doors with bars and raising the dog that was strangulated once again, was thrown to the jail with precaution of making the sleeve of the string pass throughout the bars. Once the animal was captured, the chain of iron was released and released its collar. That is how at least it occurred when the dog did not receive the protection of the children of the town. Because all of them were colligated against Gallofa. They knew that the captured dogs were going to end at the municipal dog place, in which they were saved for three days. After that time, if nobody claims them, the animals were sacrificed. And even though, they do not know it, the pitiful show of the road of the death and the return of a fruitful round, charged with the poor animals of every type of hair and size, scared behind the bars and leaving a sign of shouts and cries of death, would have been enough to have them infuriated. That is why, as soon as they appeared in the town, the cellular vehicle, the children transmitted the alert one to the others. They were dispersed by all the streets of the town, to threaten the dogs, but with the aim of expulsating them to other sectors of the city, far away from the terrible boundary. If, in spite of these precautions, as many times happened to Pierre and to Jacques, the chaser learnt that there was a dog in their presence, the idea was always the same. Jacques and Pierre, before the chaser was able to get closer to his prey, he began to shout: «Gallofa, Gallofa», with such an acute and terrible tone that even the dog escaped very fast and in a few minutes he was saved. At that moment, the two children had also to show their aptitudes for the race, since the poor Gallofa that received the premium for captured dog, crazy one, chased them. The old people generally helped them to escape, by posing obstacles to Gallofa, or stopping with no more surroundings and begging to take charge of the dogs. The workers of the town, chasers all of them, in general loved the dogs and did not feel any esteem for this strange occupation. As uncle Ernest stated: «¡Ese gandul!». To cap all this agitation, the old Arabian lead the horses to manage, impassible, or, if the debates get longer, he calmly began to smoke a cigarette. And, either captivating cats or liberating dogs, the children ran, slaves of the wind in winter and making some noises with their shoes (called *mevas*) in summer, towards the school and the work. A look at the escape of fruits when crossing the market, according to the station, mountings of nispers, oranges and tangerines, peaches, tangerines,² melons, watermelons, passed in front of them, that were not going to be tried, or that in limited quantities, the least expensive would be eaten; two or three passes, without releasing the bag, in horcades in the great estuary varnished of the placer and ran throughout the deposits of Boulevard Thiers, receiving in full face, the odor of oranges that went out of the factory in which they were prepared to manufacture liquors with the skin, took the street of gardens and villas to end at least in the Rue Aumerat, in which an infantile multitude, between the conversations of ones and others, they waited for the doors to open.

After that, the class came. With Mr. Bernard it was always interesting for the simple reason that he passionately loved his work. Outside the sun was able to shout in the walls while the heat shouted even inside the room, in spite of being in the shadows of some sectors of thick white and yellow lines. The rain could also fall, as it sometimes happen in Argelia, in untended flows,

². Sic.

turning the street into a dark and wet well. The class was barely distracted. Only the mosquitoes, when there was storm, interfered sometimes with the attention of the children. Captured, they landed in the ink, in which they horribly began to die, drowned in the violet mud that filled the little recipients of China of conic trunk placed into the holes of the desk. But the method of Mr. Bernard, that consisted in not loosening as regards the conduct and on the contrary, in giving its learning in a vivid and funny tone, was successful even over the mosquitoes. He always knew to take out of the closet, at the appropriate time, the treasures of the collection of minerals, the herbarium, the butterflies, and the dissected insects, the maps or ...the ones that raised the shallow interests of the students. He was the only of the school that was able to reach a magic linter, and twice a month he made projections over natural history subjects or of geography. In arithmetic he has placed a contest of mental calculation that obliged the student to exercise its intellectual fastness. It launched to the class, in which all of them were with crossed arms, the terms of a division, a multiplication or, sometimes, a little complex addition. «How much is $1,267 + 691$?» The first one to give the fair result won a point that was credited in the monthly classification. For the rest, it used the manuals with competence and accurateness... The manuals were always the same that were employed in the metropolis. And those children that only knew the sirocco, the powder and the prodigious and summed chaparrones, the sand of the beaches and the sea in fire under the sun, read with application, stating the points and the commas, one readings for them mythical ones in which the children with cap and scarf of wood, with shoes of *zuecos*, returned home with a glacial cold moving parts of wood, by roads of snow until the snowy place of the house was seen and the smoke of the chimney made them know that the soap of beans was being cooked in the fire. For Jacques, those readings were the incarnation of the exotism. He dreamed with them, he filled writing exercises with the descriptions of a world that he had never seen, and endlessly questioned his grandmother about a snow that had fallen during an hour, twenty years ago, in the region of Argel. For him, these descriptions were the part of a powerful poetry of the school, he also fed the odor of the varnish of the rules and the pens, by the delicious flavor of the string of the bag that was endlessly bitten, applying himself with his duties with appropriate effort, by the sour smell and tough smell of the violet ink, mainly when he had his turn to fill the inks with a big and dark bottle, in which cover a tube of glass was inserted and Jacques smelt with happiness the hole of the tube, by the soft contact of the plain and lustrous pages of some books that also threw a good smell of the printing and the end, and finally, the days of rain, for this smell of wet wood by the *chaquetones* at the back of the room and it was like a prefiguration of this endemic universe in which the children with shoes like *zuecos* and a wooden cap ran by the snow towards the heated house.

Only the school provided that kind of joy to Jacques and to Pierre. And, with no doubt, what they very passionately loved at school was what they did not find at home, where poverty and ignorance turned life tougher, more isolated, more closed in itself, misery is a place of strength with no elevated bridge.»

But that was not it alone, because Jacques felt the miserable of the children during holidays, when to avoid that restless child, the grandmother sent him with other fifty children and a set of teachers, to a holiday school in the mountains of the Zaccar, in Miliana, where they had a school provided of bedrooms, ate and slept comfortably, played and spent the whole day being watched out by kind nurses and with all these, when the night arrived, when the shadow lifted at high speed the pending of the mountains and from the neighbour cartel, in the

big silence of the small city lost in the mountains, at one hundred kilometers from any place really concurred, began to throw the melancholic notes of the *toque de queda* the child felt that he was invaded a desperation with no limits and cried in silence for the poor house, without anything, of its childhood.

No, the school did not offer an avoidance of the family life. In the class of Mr. Bernard at least, the school fed in them, a more essential hunger yet, for the child than for the man, that is the hunger of discovering. In the other classes he was taught, with no doubt, many things, but like the ordinary things are done. A food was introduced, already prepared, begging to ask them to swallow. In the class of Mr. Germain,³ they felt for the first time that they existed and that they were object of the highest consideration: they were judged to be liable to discover the world. Even more, the teacher did not devote only to teach them what he was paid to be taught only. they were received with simplicity in its personal life, it was lived with them telling about his childhood and the history of other children he had met and he was exposed to their own points of view, not his ideas, because, being, for example anticlerical, as many of their colleagues, he never said a word in class against religion nor against anything that could be object of an election or a conviction, and, on the other hand, condemned with the greatest energy what was not admitted in debate: robbery, delation, the indelicacy, dirtiness.

But, above all, he talked about the war, very closed yet, and what he has done during four years, of the sufferings of the soldiers, the courage, patience and of the happiness of the armistice. At the end of each quarter, before saying goodbye for the vacations and from time to time, if the calendar allowed it, he had the custom of reading them long passages of *Les Croix de bois*, by Dorgelès. These readings opened the doors of exotism even more to Jacques, but of an exotism in which the fear, disgrace were present, although there was never a parallel, except a teoric one, with the father to whom they have never known. They only listened with the heart a story that his teacher read with his soul and that talked to them once again about the snow and its lovely winver, but also of great men, dressed in heavy clothes made of mud, that talked a strange language and lived in holes under a roof of obuses, rockets and munitions. He and Pierre waited for the reading each time with more impatience. This war over which everybody talked (and Jacques listened in silence, but without losing a word, to Daniel, when he talked about with his own words about the battle of Marne, in which he has participated and from which he still did not know how he returned, when they, the *zuavos*, had put them as chasers and after that, prepared with all the things, slowed down a mount and had nobody ahead, and advanced, and all of a sudden, the soldiers with all the guns, when they were in the middle of the road, one fell, ones fell over the others, and the bottom of the mount full of blood, and the ones that shouted Mother, it was terrible), that the ones who survived could not forget and whose shadow flew above what was said around them, and over the projects that were made for the history to be more amazing and more extraordinary than all the other tales that were read in other classes, that they listened to with deception, and bored if Mr. Bernard should have decided to change the program. But he continued, the funny parts alternated with the terrible descriptions, and little by little the African children tried relation with .. x y z, that came to form part of the world, talked among them as if they were old friends, present and so alive that, Jacques at least, did not imagine not even for a second, that although they have lived in war, they could have run the risk of being their victims. And the day, at the end of the year, in which, having reached the end of the book, Mr. Bernard read with a voice more deaf the

³ Here, the author gives the teacher his real name.

death of D., when he closed the book in silence, facing his emotion and his recalls, to raise his eyes to the class, involved in the stupor and the silence, he saw Jacques in the first line, that was looking at him with a fixed look, his face full of tears, crying non ending cries that seemed not to end at all.

-Come on, come on little children –said Mr. Bernard with a barely perceptive voice, and he stood up to save the book in the closet, his back to the class.

Liceo

On the first of October of that year, when Jacques Cormery, insecure in his new big shoes, in a rigid shirt because of the apron, with a bag that smelt like *hule and leather* saw the watt man, on his side it was Pierre and on the front of the vehicle, that put the car in the first velocity and the heavy vehicle moved from the stop of Belcourt, and returned to try to distinguish from some meters of distance his mother and his grandmother, still close to the window to accompany a little more that first departure to the mysteriously Liceo, but he was not able to see them because his neighbour was reading the interior pages of *La Dépêche Algérienne*. Then, he looked ahead, of the steel bars that the train swallowed regularly, and over them, the electric wires vibrating in the fresh morning, with the back and the soul confiscated, the house, the old town from which he had never been far away, except for very rare occasions, (he said «he was going to Argel» when he went downtown) moving at a highest speed each time and in spite of the fraternal shoulder of Pierre, close to him, with feelings of uncertain solitude, inspired in an unknown world, in which you did not know how you will have to behave.

To tell the truth, nobody could advise them. He and Pierre quickly learnt that they were alone. The same Mr. Bernard, to whom he did not dare to bother, could not tell them anything about that Liceo he did not know. At their own home, ignorance was even greater. For the family of Jacques, the Latin, for example, was a word that had no strict sense at all. What would have been (apart from the times of the beast, that on the contrary, they were capable of imagining) a time in which nobody speak French, that many civilizations have followed (and the word itself did not mean anything to them) whose customs and language were so different that, there were truths that have not reached them. Nor the image, nor the written thing, nor the oral information, nor the superficial culture that is born from the trivial conversation, had reached them. In that house, in which no newspapers were known, nor books, until Jacques took them, nor radio, in which only some objects of immediate use were found, where only the family was received and that was rarely left, except to visit members of the same ignorant family, what Jacques was taking with him was not admitted and the silence grew between him and his family. In the same Liceo he was not able to speak with his family, from which singularity he was conscious of, without being able to express it, though he has succeeded over the unbearable shame that closed the mouth in reference to this subject.

It was not even the difference of the classes what isolated them. In that country of immigrants, of fast enrichments and of fabulous ruins, the frontiers among the classes were less marked than among the races. If they had been Arabian children, their feeling would have been more painful and sour. On the other hand, though in the communal school they had Arabian colleagues, in the Liceo those were an exception and they were always the sons of powerful wealthy men. No, what separated them, and even more to Jacques than to Pierre, because this particular feature was more marked at home than in the family of his friend, it was the impossibility of linking them to values or traditional motives. At the beginning of the year, when asked about, he was able to answer naturally that his father died at war, which was, briefly, a social situation and that he was a orphan of war. This was understood by everybody. However, the difficulties began later. In the printings that they received, he did not know what to write in the item «father's profession». First he wrote «housewife», while Pierre wrote «employee of Correos». But Pierre explained that housewife was not a profession, but named a woman who stayed at home and took care of the house and the domestic chores.

– No -said Jacques-, she took care of the houses of others, mainly of the one of the market in front of us.

– Well – said Pierre doubting-, I believe we should write «*criada*».

Jacques never thought of that idea for the simple reason that that word was too weird, it was never heard at home, also due the fact that none of them had the impression that he was working for the others: she worked above all, for her children- Jacques began to write the word and all of sudden stopped. He knew the shame and the shame of having felt shame.

The child is nobody by himself, his fathers are the ones who represent him. For them, they defined, for them they are defined to the eyes of the world. Through them they are really judged, that is to say, judged without being able to appeal and this judge of the world is what Jacques had just discovered, and with it, his own judgment over the evilness of his own heart. He could not tell what has less merit, when being a man, not having known those bad feelings. Because one is judged, well or bad, for what one is and not more for one's family, since sometimes the family can be judged in turn, by the child when he is a man. But Jacques should have needed a heart of an heroic and exceptional purity for not suffering for the discovery that he had just made, as well as he would have needed an impossible humbleness for not being angry and shameful for what his character was uncovering. He had nothing of all that, but a stiff and bad pride, that helped him at least in that circumstance, and made him write with at stiff hand the word «*criada*» in the paper, that took with his look closed to the intern that did not even recall this. In spite of everything, Jacques did not want to change his state nor his family, and his mother, as she was, shall continue being the one he loved the most in the world, even though he loved her with desperation. For the other things, how was it possible to understand that a poor child can sometimes feel shameful, without having nothing ever to envy?

In another occasion, when asked about his religion, he answered «*catholic*». He was asked if it was necessary to register him in the courses of religious instruction and remembering the fears of his grandmother, he answered not.

– In a word –said the intern, joking but with no smiles -, you are catholic but not practicing.

Jacques could not say anything of what was going on at home, nor explain in which particular way his family practiced the religion. He answered, well, firmly «*yes*», which provoked laughter and earned his fame as being very sure of himself, at the moment he felt lost.

Another day, the teacher of Language, that had distributed a printed paper among the students, in reference to the internal organization issue, asked to have it signed and returned by the parents. The paper enumerated all the things that the students were not allowed to take to the Liceo, from guns to illustrated magazines, sets of cards, etc. It was written in such a form that Jacques had to summed it up in simple terms for his mother and grandmother. His mother was the only one capable of signing at the bottom of the printing paper. As from the death of his husband, she need to collect each quarter her pension of war widower and the Administration, in this case the Treasury – Catherine Cormery simply said she was going to the Treasury, that was a name in itself, with no sense and that the children on the contrary, called for a mythical place of endless resources that his mother had the right to receive, from time to time, small amounts of money-, each time a signature was requested, after one of the first difficulties, a neighbour (?) taught him to copy a model of the signature of Vda. Camus,⁴ that wrote worse than better, but that was accepted. However, in the following morning

⁴ *Sic.*

Jacques noted that his mother had gone much earlier than him, to clean a store that opened early, and she forgot to sign the paper. His grandmother did not know to sign, he made some accounts applying a system of circles, that, depending if they were crossed once or twice, represented the unit, the dozen or the hundredth. Jacques had to take the paper with no signature, said that his mother had forgotten, he was asked if no one else at home was able to sign, and he said no, and discovered, for the air or surprise of the teacher, that the case was less frequent than he had thought at that time.

He was even more lost with the metropolitan youth to whom the challenges of the father's career sent them to Argelia. What gave him more thought to, was Georges Didier, with whom the common choice for the French classes and the reading approached Jacques until reaching a luck of very fond friendship of which Pierre, on the other hand, was a little jealous. Didier was son of a very practicing Catholic officer. His mother was fond of music, his sister (to whom Jacques was never able to meet, but with whom he kindly dreamed of) to the sewing, and Didier was destined, according to his thoughts, to a priest. Of a great intelligence, he was tough in matters of faith and moral, in which the certainties were rigid. He was never heard to pronounce a *soez* word, or make reference, as the other children, with a restless complacency, to the natural roles or to the ones of reproduction, that in their heads, were not as clear as they wanted the others to believe. The first thing he tried to achieve from Jacques was, when his friendship showed, that he had to quit to his bad words. For Jacques this was not difficult when he was with him. But with the rest, he easily returned to the bad words of the conversation. (His multi shaped nature was drawn that would ease many things and would make him capable of learning other languages, adapt to other environments and perform other roles, except for...). With Didier he understood what was a French family of middle class. His friend had in France his family house, to which he returned in holidays and of which he talked or wrote incessantly to Jacques, a house with a room full of old trunks in which the letters of the family, photographs and recalls were kept. He also knew the history of his grandparents and grand-grandparents, also of a family member who was marine in Trafalgar, and this long story, alive in his imagination, gave him the examples and guidelines for the behavior of all the days. «My grandfather said that... daddy wants to ... » and thus justified his stiffness, his high purity. When he talked about France, he said «our homeland» and accepted in advance the sacrifices this homeland may have asked him («Your father died for the homeland» , he told Jacques...); on the other hand, this notion of homeland has no sense to Jacques, who knew what was French, that it involved a certain number of duties, for whom France was an absent to which one called and sometimes called or not, in a way as done by that God, of which he had heard at home and that, apparently, was the supreme provider of the good and the bad things, in which there was no possibility of influencing but instead, it could do anything in the destiny of the men. And this was also his feeling, as even more, of the women who lived with him.

-Mother, what is the homeland? -asked one day.

His mother seemed to feel scared, as ever time that she did not understand.

-I do not know –she said-, I do not know.

-It is France.

-Ah, yes! -and seemed relieved.

On the other hand, Didier knew what it was, the family, through its generations, had for him a strong presence, and in the same way, the country in which he was born, through history. He called Juana de Arco by his first name, and for him the good and the evil were well defined as his current and future destiny. Jacques and Pierre also, to a lesser degree, felt in a different way, with no past and with no family history,

nor a room packed with letters and pictures, theoretical citizens of an imprecise nation in which snow covered the roofs while they grew under a fixed and wild sun, with one of the most elemental morale that prescribed the robbery, that suggested to defend the mother and the woman, but remained silent as regards matters related to women, relation with superior officers, ... (etc.), ignorant children and ignored by God, unable to conceive the future life, up to a point that the present time seemed to be non ending under the protection of indifferent divinities of the sun, the sea or the misery. And, in fact, Jacques was so tied to Didier, was due to the hear of this child, complete passionate for the absolute, truthful in his faithful passions (the first time that Jacques heard the word faithfulness, that had read hundred times, was in the mouth of Didier) and capable of a lovely affection, but also a strange aspect, to his eyes, to his charm, that was for Jacques equally exotic and attracted him so much as when, when becoming an adult, he was going to be irresistibly attracted to foreign women. The son of the family, of the tradition, and of the religion, exerted on Jacques the same seduction of the adventurers that returned from the Tropics, keeping a strange and non understandable secret.

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