

REVIEW OF THE BOOK “THE JOY OF TEACHING” BY RUBEM ALVES

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Summary: Rubem Alves' book talks about how it is possible to teach and be happy and learn and be happy. For him, children spend a good amount of their lives at school. However, they do not enjoy being there. In fact, if they feel pleasure, it is because of their classmates and school experiences – and not because of learning, studying, understanding, etc. In the end, there is no environment and situation more demotivating for the child and student than being forced to be at school and move through a forest of information that he cannot understand, and that has no relationship to his life. Science and Pedagogy have been concerned all this time with developing techniques and methods for evaluating learning and optimizing the transmission of knowledge. But what did they do for the joy and freedom of the students? At the end of the book, in conclusion, it tells us that we need to change this reality. We need to change the way we teach to a new horizon of learning and to build a more equal society.

Keywords: Rubem Alves, joy of teaching, teaching methods, school and school relationships.

Abstract: “*The happiness of teaching*”: Rubem Alves book review

The book, written by Rubem Alves, talks about how it is possible to teach and learn and be happy. For him, children spend a lot of time of their life in school. However, they don't feel any pleasure being there. By the way, if they feel pleasure, it's because of their friends and the scholars partnerships or school experiences – and not for learning, to study or to understand the school subjects. At the end, there's no place and such a demotivating situation for children and students than being forced to stay in school, moving on an “informational forest” that they can't understand – and that seems to not have an affinity to their lives. Science and the pedagogy worry all the time in developing techniques and methods of evaluating the process of learning and optimizing the transmission of knowledge. But, what did they do by the happiness and the freedom of the students? At the end of the book, as a conclusion, the author tells us that we need to change this reality. We need to change our way of teaching for a new horizon of learning and for construction of a more equal society.

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I. Introduction

The book by Rubem Alves² talks about how it is possible to teach and be happy and learn and be happy. Right at the beginning of his work, Rubem Alves says he is afraid that children

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² Rubem Azevedo Alves (Boa Esperança, September 15, 1933 — Campinas, July 19, 2014). Psychoanalyst, educator, theologian and writer. Author of religious, educational, existential and children's books. Finally, considered one of the greatest Brazilian pedagogues of all time, one of the founders of Liberation Theology and a versatile intellectual in social debates in Brazil. He was also a professor at the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP).

call him a liar, because he constantly says that the teachers' business is to teach happiness. In fact, with the traditionalist and very rigid educational model in Brazil, it turns out that most people are unaware of children and students who agree with this statement.

As he himself says, "if children had already learned the lessons of politics, they would accuse me of being the spokesperson for the ruling class". It's comical to read and hear something like that, but it's the purest truth. Most schools have this type of asymmetrical relationship between teacher and student. So, it can be said clearly that the teacher plays the role of the ruling class – with all its resources that allow authoritarianism – at the same time in which students play the role of the dominated class³.

II. School relationships and experiences at school

Children spend a good amount of their lives at school. However, they don't feel pleasure in being there. In fact, if they feel it, it is because of their colleagues and their experiences with students – and not for learning, studying, understanding, etc. According to the author, to take this conclusion is enough to contemplate the frightened eyes of the children and their faces full of anxiety to understand that school.

It seems to me that everyone knows this. That is, everyone has the same judgment. As all Brazilian schools are structurally the same (there are only simple differences between teaching models) Brazilians, consequently, have experiences very similar. I myself did not have a productive school life in that sense. Going to school was an activity I did out of obligation – not out of passion. The only thing that made me happy at school were my classmates.

Regarding teachers, I say the same. You can count on your fingers how many good teachers⁴ appeared during my school career. Some even didn't seem to me to be companions, but rather enemies and people who hated me for some reason.

³ In the author's words "because, as everyone knows, but no one has the courage to say, every school has a dominant class and a dominated class: the first, made up of teachers and administrators, and which has a monopoly on knowledge, and the second, formed by students, who have a monopoly on ignorance, and who must submit their behavior and thoughts to their superiors, if they wish to pass the year".

⁴ Good not in the sense of competent (because I believe the majority were), but in the sense of understandable, pleasant and friendly.

Like the author of the text, I am not surprised, therefore, that he learned so much little at school. What I learned was outside of it and against it. When I was teaching high school, and wanting to go to college, leave class early to go to the library – when I didn't miss school to study what I really liked. I believe that the experience would have been different if the school had been an open and motivating environment.

In the end, there is no environment or situation more demotivating for the child and the student than being forced to move through a forest of information that he cannot understand, and that it seems to have no relationship with your life. Science and Pedagogy have been concerned all this time with developing techniques and methods for evaluating learning and optimize the transmission of knowledge. But what did they do for joy and freedom of students? There is nothing done or produced for this.

At a certain point, the author, Rubem Alves, reports in his book that he is returning from vacation and decided to “clean up the paperwork that accumulated last year”. He ended up taking his time and paying attention to a newspaper clipping. It was one of those Charlie Brown comic strips. He is explaining to his little friend the importance of schools. “Do you know why we have to get good grades at school? To get past primary for the gym. If we get good grades in high school, we go to college and We get good grades at school, we go on to university, and if we get good grades there grades, we get a good job and we can get married and have children to send them to school, where they will study a lot of things to get good grades and...”.

For Rubem Alves, the “charge” says, in one breath, what educational philosophers they rarely notice. And if they realize it, they don't have the courage to say it. And, if they say so, the they do it in a complicated and long way.

Several intellectuals did not have good experiences at school⁵ :

- Jorge Luís Borges declared that he studied his entire life, except in the years when he was at school. It was, indeed, difficult to love the disciplines represented by faces and voices that didn't want to be loved.
- Hermann Hesse, who said that among the problems of modern culture, school He was the only one who took it seriously and thought in a similar way. It said that the School had killed many things in him.

⁵ All topics mentioned were taken verbatim from the book.

- Nietzsche, who saw his mission as that of an educator, was also horrified compared to what schools did with youth: “What they accomplish”, he said, “and brutal training, with the purpose of preparing vast numbers of young people, in the shortest possible space and time, to become usable and abuseable, in the service of the government.” If he lived today he would certainly make a small modification to your last statement. Instead of “usable at the service of the government”, he would say “usable and abuseable at the service of the economy”.

To “make the situation worse”, the author in a few moments (in fact, to be honest, no moment) laments the lack of economic resources for education. I mean, he believes that if we had more resources we would have even more technical schools and “Fordists”, who would further encourage technical and rigid education. Students would be treated like disciplined, hard-working ants.

The problem, then, is not the resources – but what is done with them. The utopia of having a technical society, like an anthill, is desirable. As he himself says, “no There is no evidence that ant-men, notable for their ability to produce, be happier”⁶ .

At another point, the author compares this need to produce “ants workers” with the entrance exam. In my opinion, for example, there is no suffering greater than having your intellectual capacity assessed by a simple multiple test choice. In fact, this was one of my biggest difficulties during my school trajectory. It took me four years, after finishing high school, to join at a public university. Today, I think about how much energy and time people equal to I lose by complying with such bureaucratic demands. Time that could be dedicated to do other more socially constructive activities.

To clarify his point of view in relation to the entrance exam, the author presents a good way to test its validity: subject university professors to the same

⁶ Quoting the most emblematic and striking excerpt from the text, in my opinion: “It seems that the objective of producing more and more, suited to the interests of economic growth, is not enough to give meaning to human life. It is significant that Japan is now one of the countries with the highest suicide rate in the world, including child suicide. The misery of schools is precisely where they are classified as excellent. I do not criticize the educational machine for its inefficiency. I criticize the educational machine for what it intends to produce, for what it wants to transform our young people into. It is precisely when the machine is more efficient that the deformation it produces appears in a more finished form.”

entrance exam because teenagers have to pass it. For him, a significant number of academics would not pass.

What is important to say is that the factor of not passing the entrance exam, not having good grades, etc., does not intellectually and humanly disqualify those who fail. Only reveals the absurdity of our educational system.

III. Conclusion

In short, what happens in schools is not teaching and education. It's just repetition.

And that doesn't mean that children don't learn. On the contrary, children are taught. They learn well. According to the author, they learn so well that they become unable to think different things. They become echoes of the recipes taught and learned. They become incapable of saying different. If there is a right way to think things through and do things, why bother getting involved?

unexplored paths? Just repeat what tradition has established and what school taught. Sedimented knowledge saves us from the risks of the adventure of thinking.

The author, finally, says that we need to change this reality. We need to change the way we teaching for a new horizon of learning – and for the construction of a society more equal.

REFERENCES

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