

# EDUCATION, NATURE AND PARADIGMS OF THE SACRED

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## **Abstract:**

This article proposes definitions of education, nature, and the sacred. Then it attempts to relate the three at the same time by linking them through Eastern thought. It differentiates between schooling and education, and offers a critique of contemporary schooling. It differentiates church and religion, criticizes the institutionalized churches in their form of bureaucratic priestly organizations, and highlights the concept of *ligare* as a relationship among human beings which should not exclude nature.

**Keywords:** education, nature, sacred, paradigm, Eastern thought.

## **Resumen:**

En este artículo se propone una definición de los conceptos educación, naturaleza y sacralidad, y se intenta relacionar los tres vinculándolos a la vez con el pensamiento oriental. Se diferencia escolarización y educación y se hace una crítica de la escuela contemporánea. Se diferencia iglesia y religión, se critica a las iglesias institucionalizadas en su forma de organizaciones burocráticas sacerdotales, y se destaca el concepto *ligare*, como una relación entre los seres humanos que no debe excluir a la naturaleza.

**Palabras claves:** educación, naturaleza, sagrado, paradigma, pensamiento oriental.

## INTRODUCTION

Education, nature and the sacred: Three terms that demand reflection impelled by the times in which we live. As everything has changed, everything must change, if we are to take into account the recent lessons of the world in which we are now living.

### 1. EDUCATION

To begin with, we have to distinguish school from education. Education is much more than schooling. It not only encompasses a broader subject matter, which is not limited to the curricula marked by modern countries but also a deeper one, referring to how each human being evolves or is deemed to evolve in each society. In contemporary world practice, while school prepares for work and competition as dictated by each political and economic regime, education prepares for life (e.g. in Peru, the predominant regimental values are: individual success, employability, and competitiveness). While school prepares for material well-being and employment, as measured in the quantitative terms of salary and status; education prepares for wellness, which cannot be measured, as it belongs to the qualitative dimension of each human being. While schooling is the responsibility of teachers who have graduated and are licensed for that purpose by each country; education should be the responsibility of families and society. For one reason or another, even in the seventies of the last century, Ivan Illich dared to say that the worst enemy of education is the school. In his book, *The Deschooling of Society*, he referred to a system of industrialization of knowledge and domestication of human beings to adapt them to regimes that are usually unjust; to vertical, massive and authoritarian methods; a system in which one can differentiate the role of teachers, who are those who know and transmit to thousands of students what the states want; and the listeners, who are those who are ignorant and must be instructed. A kind of domestication or adaptation of molding living beings to what each dominant regime wants. The teachers speak and the students remain silent and listen. The teachers examine and the students are passed or failed by periodic examinations in which they must answer the questions that the teachers ask. They progressively are certified on an ascending scale, which is mandatory, so that society and the state accept them as suitable for work, not necessarily for coexistence.

The school has been instituted as that place where students form in lines in patios or sit in classrooms, in folders arranged in military-inspired rows. The military order is essential for this serial formation of individuals.

This type of school is in crisis in all parts of the world. In the rich states funding is dropped for poor people's schools and money and time are spent only on training ruling castes in luxury establishments. You have to go through Cambridge or Oxford to rule England. You have to go through Harvard or the Ivy League universities to rule the United States, while the schools in the slums have to put up detectors' for weapons to protect teachers. In poor countries where governments have no capacity, strength, or will to collect the necessary taxes, schools are run by armies of teachers in squalid economic environments with little knowledge, always undervalued and badly paid. This organizational scheme is economically unfeasible and intellectually inconvenient, but it serves the interests of those who prefer an obedient and ignorant population.

In schools of the higher classes, power relationships are achieved, those relationships allow them to maintain their status. On the other hand, low classes do not learn anything at all. Nor do you learn to live or work, not even to coexist. The school does not teach one how to love, to be a father or mother, to cook or clean, to take care of one's health and the health of others, to govern yourself and to be governed. In countries like Peru, which are countries of earthquakes, floods, and disasters, the school does not teach first-aid assistance. It does not teach to follow commands, to lead, to perform management, to cultivate. It does not teach democracy, due to the fact that the school structure is dictatorial in itself.

Often, it ignores sex in over-eroticized societies by means and the agglomeration of houses, where unwanted pre-teen pregnancy is the common drama of girls. It does not teach how to trade in countries saturated with small merchants. It does not teach to be or do.

When we talk about education, then we are not necessarily talking about school, because contemporary schooling is in crisis in almost every country in the world today. It has been surpassed by the real, the everyday life of violence and competition. When the school is in crisis, education to deal with reality does not exist.

## **2. NATURE**

On the other hand, the school almost always comes from urbanized civilizations and progresses to consolidate them. It is an urbanizer, not a peasant. It is an artificialist, not naturalistic. Nothing is further from nature than contemporary inhuman cities and megacities, their destruction of nature, and human beings themselves.

So talking about education and the sacred goes beyond the challenges of schooling and, conversely, it is a way of returning to the ancient educators who, like Rousseau or Simón Rodríguez, tried to link nature with education, treating human beings as a natural product. The problem is that, for both Rousseau and Rodríguez, education was a personal and lasting relationship between teacher and disciple, while school is a relationship temporary and often impersonal, between an official/teacher and hundreds of passive students.

Reconciling education and nature supposes the formation of a natural human being. It is the reconciliation of the human being, who is now transformed by the artificiality of contemporary life, with its natural origins. Is this possible? Can we still go back to nature? Does nature still exist? Or. Is it already irreversibly damaged by human action?

### 3. THE SACRED

Just as we differentiate school and education, we propose to do the same between the sacred and institutionalized religions, that is to say, converted into churches. Most of the churches have limited the sacred to their ends. We are children of religious wars. The classics of philosophy and sociology opposed the sacred with the profane. They make the sacred into an extension of the divinity, the gods ending up in various ways in the material world of mortals, expressed in holy objects and characters to be revered, and the profane would be all that is outside the temple, more present than the sacred. Thus, in this field, the sacred is an extension of the respective god; both in Islam as well as in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Is it possible to get out of the tradition of considering the sacred in this way, which comes from San Agustín to Emile Durkheim<sup>1</sup>.

To get out of that polarity that compels belief in God and necessarily leads to churches, it can be considered that the sacred corresponds to the realm of the spiritual, the intangible, that which links humans amongst themselves, but also with the rest of the living beings of the universe, that is, a real religion, a *religare* of the humans between themselves and nature as well as with the universe. Therein lies the sacred, seen in a different way from what the institutionalized churches have tried to organize, bureaucratize, freeze, reducing the sacred to their own vision, with the aim of survival for their hundreds or thousands of pastors or priests.

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<sup>1</sup> Emile Durkheim. *The elemental forms of religious life*. French sociologist of the 19th century who went back to the peoples he called primitive, seeking in their forms of religion that which could unite the French society of her time.

Considered in its true spiritual and transcendent meaning, the sacred escapes the dominion of ecclesial bureaucracies.

The sacred would be that which is respectable in itself, valid in itself, which transcends, that links us to the universe beyond just the present time.

On the contrary, the mission of the churches is to preserve the rite, the priesthood, the consecrated book, the bureaucracy that manages our ignorance, or fear of what we suppose the universe might be beyond earthly life.

The circumstances that we live in the world nowadays obliges a reconsideration of these concepts. At the terminal point of its career, economic development has met with natural frontiers, such as consumerism. Then the return to nature and the sacred is no longer a question of will but of survival. However, the question of today is whether that is still possible, whether we can let go of what is not necessary, or if we must resign ourselves to a personal, secret, ignored cultivation of the sacred.

