

# Global Citizenship Education and People on the Move

## Proposals for Latin America (Part One)

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### ***Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft: Overview of World Trends***<sup>1</sup>

The first global trend is the theoretical and narrative tension between definitions of what constitutes economic development and growth in the context of environmental protections, what is the nature of democracy and its governance, and what is the role of education in this “new” modernity of capitalism (Hartmut, 2013).

As stated in a research project: “The reality is that we are on the edge of a planetary cliff, and humanity has two options to choose from. On the one hand, it is the continued expansion of democracy, a further extension of human rights and freedoms, and concrete efforts to address the growing threats and realities of climate change. On the other hand, the dismantling of democracy to be replaced by a populist and authoritarian government, the increase in attacks against marginalized, oppressed, and exploited populations in the world, and the acceleration of the degradation of planet Earth.” (Teodoro et al., 2019).

We are living in a time of extremes. Globalization as a local and international context seems to provoke a neo-populist response and a new nationalism (Mounk, 2018),<sup>2</sup> perhaps even constituting authoritarian and neo-fascist movements. There are enormous tensions between an impulse towards a cosmopolitan democracy rooted in a multipolar world, versus the ontological

cry for a new nationalism or localism, which interrupts the dialectic of the global and the local, the architectures of global and local government, with the implication of putting our ecosystems at risk.

We seem to know what divides us, but do we know what unites us? What allows us to believe in a democratic model of peace and sustainability that is more coherent, reasonable and powerful throughout the world? What options do we have to promote a political agenda that addresses these tensions, puzzles and problems? Do we know how comparative research can help? These are fundamental questions, turned into academic imperatives, that inspire research programmes such as those suggested by UNESCO and other regional organizations.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, recent publications have suggested that in order to revitalize democracy, UNESCO must become a democratic public intellectual (Torres & Van Heertum, 2019, 2020).

The future presents a battle between the two dominant discourses, one that seeks to reclaim the heart of the imagination of the Enlightenment and the power of scientific inquiry and rationality on a path to a more prominent future for the majority of the population, the other is atavistic, of returning to the past where a small global ruling elite dominates the political worlds, economic and cultural; where propaganda, chaos, and ideology rule the public sphere and where multinational corporations and the power elite dictate policy at the local, national, and global levels.<sup>4</sup>

In this battle, the institutions in charge of knowledge production assume an increasingly essential role in challenging the new paradigm of fake news, island politics and the discourses of nationalism, intolerance, perpetual chaos and hatred. These institutions, from the media, schools and universities to research centers, think tanks and the political establishments themselves, have been under constant attack from conservative forces that seek to delegitimize them.<sup>5</sup>

In the toxic cloud of radical scepticism and cynicism that dominates the landscape of the United States and much of the world, people dedicated to democracy, social justice, and freedom are compelled to redouble their efforts to restore the hope and dedication necessary to propel the zeitgeist in a more progressive direction. This must include more progressive media, colleges and universities, the vestiges of the public sphere that continue to subsist at life-threatening risk, artists and progressive online thought leaders, public intellectuals and social movements. This task requires above all a critique of the neoliberal model as a model of hegemonic globalization, which is highly criticized throughout the world.

The second global trend is the loss of “faith” in neoliberal policies and practices, and the growing clamor of discontent with globalization. The example of social mobilizations in Chile is emblematic. Chile is the country where the implementation of neoliberalism began tout court, promoting free market policies, and competition (especially in education), and which even after the return to democracy continues to

be the economic model that governs Chile. The social discontent that the country is experiencing is related to neoliberalism and the demand for a new Constitution seeks to strengthen the rights of people and not so much of capital.

Neoliberal governments have consistently promoted free market policies, free trade, reduced public sector spending, decreased state intervention in the economy, and deregulation of markets. Neoliberal policies promote the free market and small public sectors, and against excessive state intervention and market regulation. Historically and philosophically, neoliberalism has been associated with structural adjustment programs, and in turn structural adjustment is generally described as a wide range of policies that have been recommended by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the OECD, and financial organizations.<sup>6</sup>

Likewise, the dominant neoliberal agenda for the globalization of education, from kindergarten to the last year of secondary school, includes a push towards the privatization and decentralization of public forms of education, a movement towards educational standards with a strong emphasis on testing and focused on accountability.<sup>7</sup> We emphasize because neoliberal globalization in our analysis shows that there are various forms of globalization that intersect and interact in the global system, but the dominant model has been neoliberal globalization (See Torres, 2009<sup>a</sup>, 2009<sup>b</sup>)

Neoliberalism has taken over university life, and impacted one of the regions, such as Latin America, with a long tradition of community and even radical university policies such as the Córdoba Reform (see Torres, 1998, 2011, 2013; Torres & Rhoads, 2006). Specifically, the reforms to university education, the neoliberal version of globalization suggests reforms to universities in four fundamental areas: efficiency and accountability, accreditation and universalization, international competitiveness and privatization (see Arnove & Torres, 2007; Burbules & Torres, 2000).

Reforms associated with international competitiveness could be described as “competency-based reforms,” characterized by efforts to create evaluable performance standards through standardized testing (the new standards and the accountability movement), the introduction of new teaching and learning methods aimed at creating better performance at a lower cost (e.g., the universalization of school textbooks), and improvements in the selection and training of teachers.

Competency-based reforms in higher education tend to adopt a vocational orientation and reflect the view that vocational training institutions and universities exist to a large extent to serve the economic well-being of society. Regarding accreditation and universalization, great efforts are being made around the world to reform academic programs through accreditation processes and various strategies that produce an increase in homogeneity across national borders.

The loss of confidence in neoliberalism is documented in a number of analyses, including a recent document by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) that

shows that after three decades of trade liberalization in Latin America following the recommendations of the Washington Consensus, expectations had not been met. The argument is preceded by a cautious note that we are living in a turbulent trading moment, with changes in rules-based multilateral trade and treaties with preferential trade that can no longer be assumed. The assessment is mixed but clear, the increases in productivity in the region did not coincide with expectations of increasing employment and reducing inequality (Moreira & Stein, 2019).

The report never mentions the term “neoliberalism”, however, the focus of the report is an assessment of trade liberalization. The policy recommendation insinuates that, given the nature of democratic regimes, neoliberalism cannot thrive because of the political nature of negotiations in democratic governments. With caution, the solution proposed by the report seems to be “to give the executive more power because it has a broader vision than the legislators” (Moreira & Stein, 2019, pp. 18). That is, an argument to justify the ‘rationality’ of having autocratic executives in their suit to become dictators, as someone like Bukele in El Salvador is today and Trump’s attempt in his first 100 days in office in 2025.

The third global trend, particularly in the United States, but also reflected in Europe, is the breakdown of hierarchies and social and cultural spaces dominated by white men. This is particularly relevant within the logic and narrative of Trump supporters. Mounk argues in 2018: “How quickly the times of change have transformed: Donald Trump is sitting in the White House. Authoritarian populists are on the rise in much of Western Europe. The rapid erosion of political freedom in Poland and Hungary shows that, even in the twenty-first century, the process of democratic consolidation remains a two-way street. Apparently, the arc of history need not lean toward democracy after all.” (Mounk, 2018, pp. 252).

The historical situation in the United States requires emphasizing that “the United States is undergoing a transition that perhaps no rich and stable democracy has ever experienced: its historically dominant group is on its way to becoming a political minority, and its minority groups are asserting their rights and interests on an equal footing.” (Appelbaum, 2019, pp. 47). It should come as no surprise that the population in the U.S. that is becoming “darker-skinned” has brought so much hatred in the current Trump administration, and that immigration is considered to be guilty of the dispossession of the white population.<sup>8</sup> This in turn speaks to the next major global trend: the demonization of immigrants.

The fourth global trend is the large presence of migrants in the life of nations and the demonization of immigrants by nativists, neo-populists, fascists, neo-fascists, conservative groups, and the right-wing and far-right movement. With a slight variation in their narrative, they claim that immigrants, by their sheer numbers, alter the political ecology of many societies. Instead of being received in the spirit of the Kantian

right of hospitality, they are stigmatized as criminals, indolent, as people who take advantage of the social welfare system, who are a threat to health, and they are considered a nuisance, a political threat and therefore their integration into the national territory should be limited -- either as undocumented immigrants, as undocumented immigrants, as they are not immigrants, or as immigrants. legal rights, or refugees. Once they are already within the territory of the Nation-State, these anti-immigrant forces seek to prevent their naturalization as citizens and thus suppress their ability to vote in national elections if they establish themselves as legal residents or citizens. In addition, specifically in the United States, the right to asylum has been trampled on and undocumented immigrants have been expelled, including many who have served in the military. Education is both a strength and a vulnerability for populations on the move (UNESCO, 2018).

The fifth global trend is the growing social mobility against populism, authoritarianism, fragile democracies and consolidated ones. We live between disenchantment with democracy and discontent with governments, with fragmented and polarized political systems, in many parts of the world. This is in addition to the growing trend of the population's revolt against the (weak) conditions of democratic systems in some places, and also in non-democratic systems elsewhere, mainly rebelling against low growth and corruption. Examples as of December 2019 are Iran, Iraq, Algeria, Hong Kong, Poland, Hungary, Turkey, Russia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela, France (yellow vests), Mexico, Zimbabwe, Ecuador, Brazil, the United States and the impeachment process approved by the US Congress in the first Trump administration.<sup>9</sup>

The sixth global trend seems to emerge with the acceptance of the collapse of the "normal" political process and the standard economic prescriptions of the dominant neoliberal economic science. This trend indicates a series of ongoing crises in the nation-state, which far surpasses the image of the nation-state's loss of power in the face of globalization. A good example of this analysis is James K. Galbraith (2014) who places the seventies as the end of economic growth with a certain level of equality, and the 80s and 90s predominates uneven economic growth with an increase in inequality.

In the new century, particularly during the 2008 crisis, Galbraith argues that stimulus and automatic stabilization set a floor for development, but they may not be able to return to high levels of growth. Four reasons are attributed to this situation. First, the increase in the cost of raw materials and resources, especially non-renewable resources; secondly, the uselessness of military power, or what one might call, echoing the work of Eric Hobsbawm (2002), the end of empires<sup>10</sup>. The third element is the consequences of the digital revolution that save work but in turn create unemployment, and the fourth is the collapse of law and ethics in the financial sector, which was

considered as the *Moral Hazard* presented as the explanation for the 2008 financial crisis. One of the issues that requires prospective research is what young people, addicted to technology, think about the possibilities of employment in the future, when so many positions are being eliminated with technological transformations in the workplace. For immigrants and people in conditions of mobility, the lack of survival and support networks in the new countries makes these circumstances more drastic, but we know little about their professional expectations for the future.

The seventh global trend is the growing East-West divergence that disrupts the previous convergence around trade and cultural exchanges. Trade tensions between China and the United States may disrupt the trade ecosystem. Interestingly, both leaders in these countries had championed a similar mantra for their followers: *Making America Great Again* and *Making China Great Again*. This trade war, according to Henry Paulson, former secretary of the Treasury during the Bush administration and former president and CEO of Goldman Sachs. He argues, "We need to consider the possibility that the integration of global innovation ecosystems is going to collapse as a result of the mutual effort of the United States and China to exclude each other." (Friedman, 2019).<sup>11</sup>

The eighth global trend is the fight against climate change and how countries should address this serious challenge for development and growth.<sup>12</sup> This theme shows the fraught factions of different cultural and class alliances that support or oppose the call for sound environmental policy within the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Beyond people who do not believe in science, nativists tend to take the position that the cost of such policies that protect the environment are far beyond the reach of most nations, and wealthier nations should not spend excess resources, which are necessary as a stabilizing factor of the economy. or as a factor in legitimizing policies that challenge international agreements at the national level, such as the Paris Agreement that establishes a global framework to avoid climate change, limiting global warming to well below 2°C and making efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. It also aims to strengthen the capacity of countries to cope with the impacts of climate change and support them in their efforts (United Nations, 2025).

Concerns about global warming and growth have allowed many academics and activists to question whether we should, rather than grow, reduce<sup>13</sup> growth to preserve resources and the environment. Although degrowth is not specifically included in the narrative of the Sustainable Development Goals, the issue of sustainable growth does not fully address the contradictions inherent in growth itself.

The ninth and last global trend that we will mention here is linked to the role of knowledge and is very well formalized in the introduction to a text by Juan Pecourt: (...) "The historian P. Burke posed a surprising paradox that characterizes contemporary societies. On the one hand, social scientists consider knowledge to be one of the

most representative elements of today's world. There is insistent talk of the existence of a "knowledge society": a place where the production of objects and commodities has lost weight in favour of the creation and manipulation of various forms of information and knowledge. On the other hand, on the other hand, the epistemological bases of knowledge are increasingly questioned from the different branches of thought. Terms such as "truth" and "objectivity" are accepted with great difficulty; instead of "discovery" it is preferred to use the expression "construction of knowledge" (Burke, 2000, pp. 1). In short, the "heroic" knowledge of the Enlightenment, a worldview determined by the ancient ideas of progress and the constant improvement of humanity, has been replaced by a more modest and utilitarian conception, in which knowledge (often referred to as "symbolic production") is used pragmatically to solve the technical problems that arise in the world. the processes of production and social organization." (Pecourt, 2007, pp. 24). Pecourt, following Burke, captures one of the great tensions in contemporary knowledge and science, the tension between the model of knowledge as commodification versus the knowledge of the Enlightenment. This is only part of the paradox, if you will, of knowledge in our modernity. The other part, just as important, or perhaps more so, is to focus the discussion of knowledge and science confronted by alternative epistemologies, especially the epistemology of the Global South. (Santos, 2018). In our perspective, the Global South is not a geographical concept but a metaphor illuminating the human suffering caused by colonialism, slavery, patriarchy, and capitalism at the global level, affecting marginalized populations into a 'culture of silence'. Logically, there is a Global South in the Global North.

These broader socio-political trends contribute to the stagnation of social governance and the threat of the liberal international order. Following this outline of a general framework of relevant global trends, the following sections will discuss global citizenship education and the issue of people on the move.

## Global Citizenship Education

As is well known, the issue of global or world citizenship has been present in Western philosophy since at least the Greeks, but it has been installed in the discussion of the TWENTY-FIRST century by the launch of the Global Education First Initiative, or GEFI, known in Spanish as "Education First", by the then UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon:

**September 26, 2012** - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the "Education First" initiative, which seeks to boost progress towards meeting the education-related Millennium Development Goals.

At a special high-level event on the side-lines of the 67th General Assembly, Ban Ki-moon noted that the initiative has three priorities: first, that all children should be

able to go to school; the second, the improvement of the quality of learning, and the third, the promotion of global citizenship (Naciones Unidas, 2012).

What are the central conceptual dimensions of global citizenship education?

In the **cognitive field**, it aims to help people acquire knowledge, understanding and critical thinking about the global, regional, national and local, and understand the interconnections as well as the interdependence of different countries and populations (Naciones Unidas, 2012).<sup>14</sup>

In the **socio-emotional field**, it seeks to develop a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities such as empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity.

In the **behavioral field**, it seeks to act effectively and responsibly at the local, national and global levels to achieve a more peaceful and sustainable world.

Very laudable objectives, but which confront various contradictions, such as the tensions between the global and the local in all human domains; the problem of focusing on individuals instead of addressing the social and political context; the relevance of global citizenship education in high-risk environments, for example individuals and communities facing levels of extreme poverty, and, of course, the tensions between the aspirations and difficulties of implementing these concepts, and the rejection of different social movements and groups that contradict the principles of global citizenship, especially religious fundamentalism and neo-populism.

Let us add to this the resurgence of nationalist, populist, ethno-nationalist, nativist or, simply, fascist positions that confront all the possible models of cosmopolitan democracies that could animate the universe of implementation of global citizenship. With the perceived excesses of globalization, the idea of *illiberal democracy* is gaining traction. It is a model in which, although there are formal elections, citizens are deprived of full participation and knowledge, and of mechanisms of control and balance of those who dominate the political system. The proposal for an illiberal democracy acquires a new moment with the strands of xenophobic and ethno-centric nationalism and neo-populism.

This is not the place to explain and analyze in detail the growing interest in the global system and the United Nations for the concept of *global citizenship*<sup>15</sup> embodied as a centrepiece of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially target 4.7.<sup>16</sup> However, it is worth remembering how recent UNESCO (n.d) documents define global citizenship education.

UNESCO tells us that: “Despite differences in interpretation, there is a common understanding that world citizenship does not imply legal status. It refers more to the feeling of belonging to a broad community and a common humanity, promoting a “global gaze” that unites the local with the global and the national with the international. It is also a way of understanding, acting and relating to others and to the

environment in space and time, based on universal values, through respect for diversity and pluralism. In this context, each individual life has consequences in everyday decisions that connect the local and the global, and vice versa.” (UNESCO, 2013, 2014).

Building a global citizenship presupposes a level and a degree of linkage between the political, the economic, the social and the cultural, with interdependence and interconnections at multiple levels, between the local and the global, between the national and the global. Is it possible in this context to speak of a global ethic for world citizenship? This question requires a detailed discussion of the tensions between neoliberalism, the ideological and political model that permeates the dominant version of globalization, and neo-populism, which has emerged not only as a confrontation with neoliberalism, but also as a confrontation with social welfare state models, with confrontation with elites in nation states. and in addition, confrontation with cosmopolitan models of global citizenship, and even international organizations such as the United Nations.<sup>17</sup>

## Citizenship and values

It should come as no surprise that the model of global citizenship presumes a certain universality of human action and thus defends an indispensable set of cosmopolitan values that could underpin a global ethic.

It would be presumptuous to try to synthesize in a few paragraphs the preconditions for the constitution of citizenship in the models of liberal democracy, with their ethical implications; if this in itself is a challenge in the context of the construction of citizenship *per se* (be it local, national, community, regional, etc.), the challenges are magnified when confronting the construction of global or world citizenship.<sup>18</sup>

Suffice it to point out two aspects or preconditions that reflect a certain consensus among numerous scholars. On the one hand, there can be no citizenship if there are no civic minimums, as defined by T. H. Marshall (1950) in his celebrated essay on citizenship and social class. That is, for citizenship to exist, as defined in practice in social welfare states, there must be access to work, education, health, transportation, housing, training for work throughout life, unemployment insurance, etc., as civil minimums for a dignified existence. From the Marshallian perspective, the notion of democracy as a political and social right cannot be excluded from notions of democracy as a socio-economic right (Torres, 2017).

On the other hand, many of us who have studied the preconditions for citizenship<sup>19</sup> have emphasized the importance of civic virtues, such as cultivating *general virtues* (courage, obedience to the law, loyalty), *social virtues* (autonomy, tolerance),

*economic virtues* (work ethic, ability to delay self-gratification), and *political virtues* (ability to analyze, ability to criticize) (Gutmann, 1987).

The emergence of post-national citizenships calls into question the principles and values as well as the rights and responsibilities on which citizenships in nation states are founded. Does this new reality reflect the crisis of classical liberalism and, especially, its *neoliberal decline* taking advantage of globalization (or the new phase of globalization characterized as *slowbalization*) and the challenges of cultural diversity or otherness? As we have discussed elsewhere, multiculturalism, as one of the answers to the dilemmas of citizenship and diversity, also shows signs of crisis (Tarozzi & Torres, 2016).<sup>20</sup>

In this context, concepts such as cosmopolitan democracies and global citizenship education have been invoked as possible solutions to the exhaustion of the regulatory power of nation states and the failure of the construction of citizenship in different places. The implementation of the Education First Initiative (GEFI) by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was followed by the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) model. On this platform, global citizenship education is preached as a resource for improving world peace, the sustainability of the planet, and—as I will argue in the next section—the global commons. Hence, then, the need to also sustain a global or world ethic based on human rights.

## **The Meta-Theory and Movement of the Global Commons**

After reviewing a set of typologies and empirical analyses and considering the criticisms of the concepts of global citizenship and sustainability, it is possible to conclude that many scholars believe that a theory of global citizenship is not desirable or possible considering the multitude of crises that confront both concepts and the possibilities of using them for practical intervention in civil society.

What can we do? We propose that it is necessary to develop a metatheory of the global commons. But what is a metatheory? In its broadest sense, a *metatheory* is concerned with understanding what the presuppositions of a theory are as a substantive or concrete analysis of some aspect of social reality.

As a theory about theory, metatheory works on the issues associated with a philosophy of the social sciences (including epistemology, ontology, and ethics) as well as a methodology, which constitute strategies to provide sufficient evidence for theoretical propositions. In short, from my perspective, metatheory includes a set of assumptions about the nature of things (the social world, the nature of science), including the possibility of knowing them, as well as the normative assumptions required to evaluate the different forms of reality (as a social construction) and thought (the rational construction of reality, experience and the history of thought). Therefore, metatheory

takes as a necessary and legitimate activity the construction of a metalanguage distinct from substantive theoretical discourses, or empirical analyses, whether explanatory or interpretive.<sup>21</sup>

From this perspective, we have argued in our work that global citizenship must add value to national citizenship, and hence, then, the importance of the global commons.

The global commons are defined by three basic propositions that, in turn, offer an epistemological and ontological framework for the construction of a global ethics:

The first of these global commons is our planet, which is our only home. It is indispensable to protect the only home we have, by implementing a culture of global citizenship and education for sustainability, protecting it from predatory cultures. Not only to protect the planet as a declaration of interests to control climate change, but as a practical and operational model for the defence of the biomasses of our ecosystems. That is, we need a planetary citizenship that promotes social justice for the planet, and for this we need to promote an eco-pedagogy, the missing chapter in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Misiaszek & Torres, 2019).

The second of these global commons is to promote the idea that peace is an intangible asset of humanity, a good with intangible value. The culture of global peace is a treasure of humanity. An editorial in the *Financial Times* (a financial newspaper with a very suggestive mantra: “Without fear and without favour”) offers a similar perspective from the business world: “Global peace and order are shared public goods”.<sup>22</sup>

The third of these global commons is predicated on the need to find ways for people who should be considered equal to learn to live together and democratically, in an increasingly diverse world, seeking to achieve their individual and cultural interests, and to defend their inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

It is not foreseeable that these three basic propositions can be consummated without the human rights regime. Human rights are constituted in a post-war framework, as a utopia of coexistence, to ensure that what were considered fundamental human rights are respected across borders. While this was timidly advocated at first, then slowly, as internationalist utopias (based on a state model as the central actor) begin to collapse, the model of what I have called the human rights regime, as one of the faces (perhaps the most human face) of globalization, was strengthened.

#### ***2.4. Education in values for global citizenship***

Defining what the minimum global values are, a global ethic that is the result of a global citizenship that we must postulate to defend the global commons, is the subject of many debates, both in politics and in social sciences, ecology or education.

This implies, from a political sociology perspective, focusing on the great problems that confront humanity and the planet today. I am referring to the serious crisis

of climate change that invites us to defend ecological sustainability as a value. Along with this, we find the degradation, oppression, repression and lack of respect for human rights that take genocide to its extreme; Human rights are thus a fundamental value for the defence of freedom and, consequently, the defence of people in a situation of mobility. The third problem of magnitude with which we are confronted at the moment is the duality of neoliberalism and neo-populism (in its various variants of the latter, such as the alt-right, ethnocentrism or localism, reaching at its extremes the politics of hatred and extremism well defined by resurgence, in the absence of another term, of a “cosmopolitan Nazism”, although it may sound paradoxical, which undermines the foundations of the functioning of democracy. The defence of democracy must be a moral value.

We live in an era, as noted above, in which state authoritarianism and many demagogues such as former intelligence agent Vladimir Putin, now president of Russia, postulate the vision of an “illiberal democracy.” The defence of liberal democracy (as a minimum model of government) not only in its rational formal aspects, but also in its ethical-substantive aspects, is a value that cannot be lost at the risk of a major global disorganization.

Perhaps it is a truism, but I cannot fail to remember that, since the end of the fifties, the growth of social, economic and political inequality has been constant in most countries on the planet. Inequality affects a key value in the construction of humanity: a dignified life with civilian minimums.

In summary, it is possible to postulate that a dignified life must have values such as tolerance, one of the greatest contributions of liberal philosophy that was born as a confrontation with the authoritarianism of kings and governments. Tolerance becomes a true *sine qua non* for a culture of world peace. But tolerance requires an epistemology of self-vigilance and self-awareness, reviewing the constitution of our own consciousness, its axiological density, and what are known as *partialities* or *prejudices*. But it also requires a permanent dialogue, which must be a precondition for a dialogic and deliberative democracy (Nino, 1996; see also a *post mortem* at Nino, 1999). A permanent dialogue to confront racism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, both individual and institutional, that is, institutional practices, rituals and routines that are much subtler and more widespread than individual actions. That is why systematic legal, judicial and political surveillance is required by individuals, social movements, communities and governments.<sup>23</sup>

Tolerance requires knowledge and discipline, therefore, in order for it to be a central value or virtue for the construction of a dialogic democracy, it must also have as a substrate, with what Paulo Freire, Paul Ricoeur and many other phenomenologists defined it as an epistemology of suspicion.<sup>24</sup> The suspicion that every social and cultural relationship involves a moment of domination.

Another indispensable value is the need to avoid symmetrically perverse positions of cynicism and nihilism, defending without restraint an active principle of hope. Both cynicism and nihilism are anti-utopian existential philosophies, and, as we have argued with Raymond Morrow, comparatively analysing the thought of Habermas and Freire, justifying that both authors base their positions on a utopia (Morrow & Torres, 2002).

Finally, without dialogue and a spirituality of struggle and love, it is impossible to build communities based on compassion and empathy. Precisely, both Freire and Habermas make dialogue one of the basic principles in the construction of an ideal conversation and communicative rationality, which surpasses an instrumental rationality epistemologically and also axiologically. It is not in vain that the hypotheses of Good Living or Sumak Kawsay are based on community dialogue.

In other words, critical educators must live between agony and hope in the construction of an anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic and anti-class philosophy of values to point out some of the most notorious practices of exclusion, discrimination, oppression and domination; a philosophy of values based on tolerance, on an epistemology of suspicion, but also on curiosity (a basic principle of science), rejecting cynical and nihilistic positions, and reaffirming the principle of active hope, living in a spirituality of love, and the ability to connect intersubjectively through dialogue as a method, but also as a cognitive process, with the other. Otherness is the clearest mark of humanity's DNA,<sup>25</sup> and we must understand, respect and honour it in an enveloping culture of peace, solidarity and justice.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> One of the founders of sociology, Ferdinand Tönnies created the opposition between two types of groups *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) as a conceptual tool to capture the process of modernization and how modern forms of social life differ from pre-modern ones. In traditional forms, life was more communal (i.e., based on tradition and unquestioned forms of bonding that produced greater control of the whole over individual persons), while modern forms are more societal (i.e., based on contracts, freely made agreements, with an emphasis on the individual and not so much on the community as a whole).
- <sup>2</sup> Mounk (2018), changing his previous positions that nationalism was obsolete in the 21st century, proposes an inclusive nationalism to confront the threat of aggressive nationalism. His argument synchronizes with the spirit of Jürgen Habermas' argument with his proposal of a constitutional patriotism as a plausible form of collective identification for a post-national Germany and for the European Union. See "Constitutional Patriotism," a conference held by Princeton University's Program in Law and Public Affairs (<https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/mom039>, April 8–9, 2006). For additional references, see Jan-Werner Müller (2006). For additional sources of analysis see Jürgen Habermas (1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1998).
- <sup>3</sup> Right to education for people in mobility contexts: UNESCO Forum calls on countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to provide responses that go beyond emergency measures. See the Regional Response Strategy of UNESCO to the situation of people in mobility contexts in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2019–2021. OREALC/UNESCO, Santiago de Chile, UNESCO, 2019.

- <sup>4</sup> This is what happens mainly in Latin America, where power and wealth are accumulated among the richest percentage of the population. The Gini index in Latin America is 41% according to the World Bank, compared to 31.8% in the rest of the OECD countries (2018)
- <sup>5</sup> A text that describes the camp of the New Right very well is the book edited by Mark Sedgwick. (2019) *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right. Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- <sup>6</sup> One of the tenets of neoliberalism has been to promote possessive individualism, well described and criticized in C.B. MacPherson's *Theory of Participatory Democracy*. This has had differential impacts in different regions exposed to the advance of Western models, such as the Middle East. "How the rise of individualism is upending the Middle East"; John Alterman, (*Washington Post*, December 22, 2019) and China with the 'new individualism'. See Jia Jiang (2019).
- <sup>7</sup> The love of standardized tests, and the preparation given to students to perform better in those tests, that is, to have higher scores, forget deep down what it is to measure knowledge.
- <sup>8</sup> One line of research attributes to this process of transformation of the status quo of white men in advanced democracies, a second element: the crisis of male hegemony that for many is the result of the empowerment of women. But there is not enough consistent empirical evidence to analyze the reasons for this crisis, if such a crisis really exists in the terms that are proclaimed in current journalism, whether it is linked to the achievements of women's movements or feminist movements or linked to labor crises with the transformations of workplaces, especially affecting low-skilled workers who have not finished university education.
- <sup>9</sup> In Chile, a constitutional accusation was filed against the president and the prime minister. The president's was rejected on December 12 by the Chamber of Deputies. The minister's was approved and the former interior minister cannot hold public office for the next 5 years. Both accusations were for human rights violations.
- <sup>10</sup> China, supported by the technological and economic developments of the country in the last fifteen years, and postulating an ideological model that calls for a return to China 'great again' in curious counterpoint to Trump's neo-populist model and his slogan of returning to America 'great again.'
- <sup>11</sup> Similar articles were published by Friedman (2025).
- <sup>12</sup> A recent example is the unfortunate loss of the Amazon in 2019 due to fires. Or the destruction of glaciers to the south by mining companies, favoring economic development over the care of the environment necessary for the survival of planet earth.
- <sup>13</sup> Degrowth (French: *décroissance*) is a political, economic, and social movement based on ecological economics, anti-consumerist and anti-capitalist ideas. It is also considered an essential economic strategy responding to the limits-to-growth dilemma (see *The Path to Degrowth in Overdeveloped Countries and post-growth*). Degrowth thinkers and activists advocate for the downscaling of production and consumption— the contraction of economies— arguing that over-consumption lies at the root of long-term environmental issues and social inequalities. Key to the concept of degrowth is that reducing consumption does not require individual martyring or a decrease in well-being. Rather, "degrowthers" aim to maximize happiness and well-being through non-consumptive means—sharing work, consuming less, while devoting more time to art, music, family, nature, culture and community (Wikipedia, 2025).
- <sup>14</sup> As the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, said: "Education gives us a profound understanding that we are tied together as citizens of the global community, and that our challenges are interconnected" (United Nations, 2015).
- <sup>15</sup> In English, global citizenship is generally used.
- <sup>16</sup> For a theoretical analysis of the importance of the United Nations Global Education First Initiative see United Nations Secretary-General (2012), launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. See also our books: Tarozzi & Torres (2016), Torres (2017).
- <sup>17</sup> The complexity of this discussion prevents a detailed treatment. I must then refer the reader to my works in Torres (2009). A detailed analysis of the connections between neoliberalism and neo-populism can be found in Van Heertum (2021).
- <sup>18</sup> We have discussed these issues in detail in our book: Torres (1998). We understand liberal democracy as a combination of pluralism with republicanism, based on liberal principles, such as values of autonomy, inviolability and dignity of the person, which in turn has mechanisms of political

representation based on elections, mechanisms of control and balance, and distinction of powers (Executive, Legislative and Judicial). It is a model generally based on a constitution that guarantees rights and freedoms of citizens. I am aware that the model of liberal democracy is incomplete and that it can be easily colonized by capitalism. However, many of these premises can contribute to a model of democracy that is solidary, based on a radical model of social liberalism. I think that illiberal democracy as a model of government is simply a ruse taking advantage of the difficulties of democracy for the benefit of demagogues and dictators.

<sup>19</sup> Without access to civic minimums, people in a situation of high risk for their survival and/or those of their families do not have the minimum conditions to be able to exercise their potential nominal citizenship and autonomy without a minimum dignified material sustenance.

<sup>20</sup> In this book we made an important distinction between normative multiculturalism, or “hard” multiculturalism, which is in crisis and deeply confronted by various political lines, especially neoconservatism and neo-populism, and constructive multiculturalism, based on a mobile conception of culture, since cultures are neither static nor deterministic (pp. 46-48).

<sup>21</sup> One of the most striking features of debates within paradigms, and between different paradigms or perspectives, is that empirical evidence is rarely sufficient as a basis for choosing between different theoretical perspectives for analysis. The reason for this is what philosophers call the theory-laden or theoretical load in defining the character of data; that is, in their selection, examination, and analysis, they are exposed to the presuppositions or predilections of the researcher, and these concepts, terms, or narrative only make sense as part of the theory itself. Data isn't just exposed, naked, in front of us. These have to be constructed by different theoretical perspectives, providing some rationality about their significance, or the potential existence of certain data as evidence. One consequence is that theories are rarely chosen exclusively or primarily on the basis of their superiority in relation to the data (although this allows the most outlandish theories to be discarded) but are chosen on the basis of a set of criteria that only a metatheory can reveal and inspect for critical evaluation.

<sup>22</sup> Financial Times, Saturday, December 8, 2018, page 8. “Pompeo's threadbare defense of US Leadership. The lesson from Trump from the Presidency of George H. W. Bush”.

<sup>23</sup> In a personal communication, José Beltrán Llavador, from the University of Valencia, pointed out that Pierre Bourdieu also speaks of “epistemological vigilance” referring to the need to have an attitude of constant criticism and self-criticism, an attitude of suspicion towards the “constructs” of common sense that end up becoming naturalized. I accept the suggestion, because in French philosophy there is a line of continuity on epistemological rupture and self-reflexivity that goes through Gaston Bachelard and Louis Althusser, and reaches Pierre Bourdieu.

<sup>24</sup> Ricoeur also used the term hermeneutic of suspicion, which has important connotations because it can be self-referential, and not just a critique of the state of the world or human relations. In their expectation, one can move from suspicion to recovery: “The hermeneutic of recovery [(retrieval, i.e., important for memory)] is Ricoeur's attempt to answer the question of how we can be wiser and more compassionate as a result of guilt, loss, and disappointment, and this counterbalances suspicion.” (Scott-Baumann, 2009, pp. 153).

<sup>25</sup> If otherness were not the DNA of humanity, how can we understand that phrase of Jorge Luis Borges, in an interview with Lilian Fernández Hall, when he said: “I am not Borges, I am the other”. The interview was in the autumn of 1985, a year before he died, and was reproduced on November 23, 2014.

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