

A School from a Saner Future

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Even if you are not religious, you probably have heard of heaven, hell, and life after death. What if this story were understood as a metaphor to reconnect us to our obligation to the future generations? The conditions that you provide to the youngest in our society will influence the kind of world they create for themselves (e.g., whether they will live in heaven or hell). And a part of you will live through them in the future. You co-create the future by the stories you put into their heads. Parents' lack of integrity and unhappiness are lessons for teenagers about what they do not want. With this gift and baggage, they can take part in a cultural and emotional evolution, bringing society closer to a balance between a materialist orientation and a human connection. Educators' role is to guide them in appreciating the experience in their family and society at large in order to spark passion for improving the legacy of preceding generations. Instead of wanting your children to replicate your life—an impossible mission because they operate in a different set of conditions—you should wish them to transcend the limitations of the society you have helped to reinforce.

Instead of corrupting younger generations with the legacy of misery from the past, I want to empower them to create a new world. My concept of education for teenagers builds upon this set of ideas:

1. Education should anticipate the challenges of the future and prepare for co-creating the desired one.
 2. Humanities are indispensable in fostering inter- and intrapersonal intelligence in order to counterbalance technological dogma and the erosion of social skills.
 3. We need creativity, an interplay of various intelligences, and imagination in order to transform the system rather than to add improvements to the market offer.
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4. Young people deserve freedoms that come with being addiction-free; therefore, we need to raise them in an environment that intrinsically prevents such dysfunctions before they become victims of a vicious cycle.
5. Competition is a part of life to inquire into and to be observed rather than something to impose or forbid.
6. Human development depends on setting teenagers free to pursue offline activities and develop themselves in a group.
7. A computer cannot outperform the benefits of discussions and learning in a group.
8. Young people should be prepared for one of the crucial aspects of their lives—sexuality and love—before they fall prey to a consumerist cultural indoctrination causing trauma and harm.
9. In order to protect students, awareness of the influence of products and services on students' bodies should be an integral part of education.
10. Food and the culture of eating together need to be part of curriculum in order to develop good eating habits, a healthy lifestyle, and engagement as a citizen.
11. Experiencing collective processes and facing challenges together are more important than is putting abstract knowledge into students' heads.
12. Schooling and other spaces where young people come together should not be an application of rules within hollow structures but rather should be an ongoing process of growth and questioning, which is the actual process of education.

Educator as futurist

Educators' need to be futurists. We are not preparing young people for the world of the past or present. This is why we need to think ahead of time. Educational practice needs to be informed by the trends of the future. Envisioning a desired future provides the wherewithal to consciously shape it rather than to be driven by other people's visions.

Young people have not chosen the dysfunctional culture they have been born into. We are at least obliged to empower them to create a livable life for themselves. We have to help them build the courage to do what we have failed to undertake. Our limitations should not guide their lives.

Pursuing repetitive tasks will no longer earn a living. We do not need to adapt young people to fit the sectors of the labor market, which will be automated or outsourced to countries with lower wages.

As an educator, parent, and someone who wants to leave legacy to the younger generations, you should question potential hidden agendas inhabiting education. Mindlessly following trends, forgoing reasoning, and choosing ignorance are (un)ethical choices that we make. Notice the fallacy in thinking whether it is good to do something without considering the consequences of not doing it. You may cause more harm by non-action (remaining passive and neutral) than you would by intervening. Shying away from intervention has its consequences. Passively observing and submitting to the destruction of human skills is a choice. By forgoing an intervention, we are allowing for more centralization of power exercised through depriving young people of imagination and community-building capacities.

We need to do the opposite of what the dominant actors want us to do. Otherwise, we will raise sheep and slaves. Unfortunately, the trend is to buy so-called “progress” and implement it in education in form of “smart classes.” Some parents let their children spend all day online, thereby relegating their education to corporations. They participate in advancing corporations' interest rather than society's interests.

We need to reinforce stories of a desired future and enchant the young to co-create it. We need to help them explore their preferences and needs instead of letting their imagination be limited by ready-made solutions for short-term gratification provided by the market. As an antidote to the routine of subliminal manipulation of hand-held devices, our power can unravel through compelling narratives, human connection, and creativity.

The future will render teacher's tasks, as we know them, obsolete and irrelevant. We do not need to compete with Wikipedia and Google. Instead, educators have a different role to play. No, it is not about teaching them how to use a computer. Such an imbecile idea reflects a lack of vision. If you leave a child with a computer, they will be able to teach you how to use it.

Education's role, more than ever, is to develop a human being. We need to find ways to awaken their curiosity about moral questions and conscious choices. Then they may need Google to buttress their discernments with facts and ideas.

With available media and knowledge accessibility, we could say that we do not need teachers and schools anymore. However, education is still necessary to balance the growing isolation and polarization. I propose building a community of learners and thinkers supporting each other in collaboration and self-development skills. Even though the learning process

can be enhanced by computers, it still should be embedded in social ties and moral considerations.

The aim of education should be to question the reality and understand that there are other options. For centuries, works of literature have been implying that a different reality is possible. We need to bring into school agendas the freedom to imagine.

In the 2018 article “Why Technology Favors Tyranny Story,” in *The Atlantic*, Yuval Noah Harari described how the technology induces the transformation of humans. He compares it with the domestication of animals:

We are now creating tame humans who produce enormous amounts of data and function as efficient chips in a huge data-processing mechanism, but they hardly maximize their human potential. If we are not careful, we will end up with downgraded humans misusing upgraded computers to wreak havoc on themselves and on the world.

Tamed humans are dangerous because they follow authority uncritically. The aim of education should be to help young people preserve their life energy and their capacity to decide their future by actively shaping it.

We need to talk with educators and parents about subjects that feel uncomfortable. Discomfort suggests that the topic may be culturally taboo, and consequently the topic can cause a lot of suffering because people do not have a language to express it. Not having a space to talk about something may lead to internalization and to being oppressed by the perceived norms. Education should equip young people with the capacity to verbalize and allow feelings and their expression in order to prepare them to create a world where people do not need to

distance themselves from their boundaries and needs. When we look at the human history, we can see that speaking and raising sensibility about injustices were pivotal in inducing shifts in society. We need to recognize, name, and speak out about exploitation by corporations that are depriving us of health and well-being. By training young people in their capacity to speak up and share, we are co-creating the future that they will be enabled to shape out of their inner processes.

Nowadays, we look at the past and wonder how the violence and discrimination were possible. Just as a medical student pledges not to harm, an educator should pledge not to contribute to a dystopia and zombification. Enabling human development is about providing the capacity to choose rather than to automatically submit to the option that fits to the emotional and cognitive deprivation imposed by economic interests.

We need narratives to envision scenarios of a desired future. Instead of socializing teenagers into being passive consumers and exploited users, they need to be empowered into setting their own agendas. The capacity to discern, describe and purvey a vision is more important than are technical skills because it is at the core of shaping a desired future rather than executing someone else's projects.

Humanities will save our humanity

Humanities may appear boring because their purpose is not obvious and clear. And it is difficult to pay the bills working in this domain, which further conditions us into thinking that they must be a luxurious waste of time. When I was learning a lot of facts, concepts, and stories in school, I was not clear about the reasons for memorizing facts and writing essays. Ironically, I developed a deeper understanding of the usefulness of humanities toward the end of my education. From my own progression, I also realized that humanities take years of practice before one can see the augmentation of capacities they boost.

Reading is a time-consuming and seemingly unproductive activity (without tangible results). Being an avid reader since my early teenage years, I had difficulty tracing any benefits from spending so many hours reading. It is like exercising muscles in your brain. You never know when they will come in handy.

Instead of fulfilling employability requirements, we need to come back to the aristocratic attitude of aimlessness by pursuing humanities for the pleasure of developing intellect and language skills. We may not be able to identify the return on investment of such pursuits, but we are enabling young people to live with more wholeness in their lives and to have richer conversations and understanding.

Without humanities, we are raising dangerous individuals. Technological skills give a privileged position and power, which need to be accompanied by moral discernment. Otherwise, it can bring disaster. Young people need to be equipped with habit of analysis to make ethical choices and

consider the consequences of their actions. Nowadays, people pursuing technological careers do not need to be part of any formal education, and their moral maturity is not a requirement for the job. In this way, lopsided people exercise power over our lives.

Harvard professor Barbara Grosz recognized that computer science education does not include a space for reflection about the societal context of the technology that will be produced by the graduates in the future. She has developed a curriculum combining philosophy and informatics in one course so that students learn to ask ethical questions in the context of their programming work instead of seeing philosophy as something detached from what they will be doing as professionals.

If the gift that wants to be lived through me were to be put into one sentence, it would be “We deserve better!” This gift requires mobilizing our capacities to make choices and to see options. Yet our society does not develop a habit of holding space for moral dilemmas in order to fully see the opposite viewpoints and make a conscious choice. Hannah Arendt described the banality of evil choices—which have not been framed as choices in the first place—by Nazi bureaucrats. They were executing orders without reflecting on their actions. The power of the hegemony is exercised mainly by depriving us of the consideration that there are any choices at all.

Literature, history, sociology, psychology, and anthropology are about understanding choices and decisions. By studying decisions and life situations of real or fictional people, we can train our mental frame to envision alternatives and possibilities. It will be more difficult to indoctrinate young people into thinking that they have no choice/alternative. We equip them to take a stance rather than to be enslaved by the people in power. The goal of the education should not be to clutter the mind with content to define what they should think;

rather, the goal should be using the content to train them in divergent thinking. Exposure to different interpretations and arguments promotes discernment. Intelligence entails the capacity to discern.

I do not insist on reading in order to learn humanities. The fact that people rely on textbooks (or other books) in order to learn mirrors the loss of the culture of conversation exploring various points of view, storytelling, and the habit of learning from others. Reading makes one meet other people's inner lives, which can help one narrate one's feelings and processes. The fact that we need reading reflects the impoverishment of our lives. The goal is to gain intrapersonal intelligence, which means understanding and knowing oneself. People aware of their inner processes can make more conscious decisions and help others understand their inner processes. We can achieve this goal in a deeper way by engaging in deep conversations and having real life experiences accompanied by introspection. Having an adult moderate sharing and discussing can enrich students' intra- and interpersonal intelligence.

Once you have known people's inner lives, you can see different options and ways of reacting. Discussing novels or other studies narrating inner processes can help in finding about one's tendencies and character. One can see blind spots reflected to them. Intrapersonal intelligence can help therapists, coaches, and artists; and it is indispensable for anyone who wants to live a life of integrity. Being able to discern and consider moral choices or make decisions that make one thrive rather than living by the default set by the outer culture is a path to happiness. Many people suffer because they do not know themselves deeply and do not give themselves a chance of designing a life that resonates with who they are.

In the article “Why Technology Favors Tyranny” (2018 in *The Atlantic*), Yuval Noah Harari warns us that the machinery of subliminal manipulation and tools offered by artificial intelligence may hijack people's decision making. Humans may lose the capacity and willingness to decide for themselves, which may make them marionettes steered by the hands of centralized powers. Reading about decisions and choices is a good reminder to consider options.

It is difficult to evidence the merits of pursuing humanities, yet society is paying a price for not spending enough time on them. Research has demonstrated that the lack of social skills and empathy among managers damages employees' health. Julia Romanowska conducted an experiment that illustrated the well-being outcomes induced by exposing managers to an art performance. She compared health measurements of (1) employees working for a boss who has participated in a conventional leadership training with (2) employees under a boss who took part in a training involving art performance and discussing about feelings evoked by it. The latter bosses improved their professional conduct.

Reading or having nuanced conversations are part of advanced language acquisition. The more ease one has in expressing oneself with words, the more one is likely to have good and smooth communication, connections with others, and boundary setting. There is also more potential for play and for using language creatively. Whatever life path one chooses, it will be a life with others; therefore, these skills are essential. People who have difficulties in expressing themselves face problems in interpersonal relationships, which can lead to loneliness. Being able to express oneself gives one tools to analyze and grasp fleeting movements and actions. Words help us stop and look at situations with a deeper comprehension. They are a glue in interpersonal relations, enabling us to see and be seen by others.

The youngest generation is confronted with the world where we experience more and more clashes and geographical proximity of different peoples. On the other hand, our online lives push us into bubbles of like-minded people and opinions. Meeting different people through reading or conversation can provide a bridge across the walls, judgments, and misunderstandings.

Teenagers need to study anthropology. Getting insight into other cultures and seeing one's own culture through the eyes of others enhances self-understanding. It also debunks myths about things having to be a certain way. It can liberate young people to create their own cultures and can teach young people to trust that there are many ways of meeting basic needs. They may gain courage to experiment and find out for themselves. Adolescence is the best time for this work because adolescents are not yet set in their ways and still have the flexibility to create their own personal culture.

Young people may find themselves in a Facebook bubble, where they are bombarded with a homogeneous vision of the world and world norms. This can lead to self-censorship and not considering other identities. If young people cannot express who they are, there is a lot of tension and inner conflict. Instead, we need to create settings for young people where the tolerance for difference is honed to allow self-expression and inquiry into one's inner voice. It is important to give space to uncover how cultures are being constructed and deconstructed. Literature, anthropology, and sociology provide historical and ethnographic examples.

Through entering into different life realities, we have a chance to learn about what is and isn't natural and necessary. Humanities help young people in making more reflected discernments about what they need and what they want to strive for.

The *Kama Sutra* (an ancient Indian Sanskrit text), mentions different forms of *kama* (pleasures to be pursued). These include playing with words and intellectual gymnastics. In the times of instant gratification, studying humanities helps us develop deeper capacities of mental flexibility and wit for enjoying intellectual pleasures. Our everyday routines can become richer and more enjoyable this way.

Creativity and imagination in organizing life

If we inquired into the core of the reason parents want their children educated, a primary motivation would likely be the hope of protecting them from poverty and scarcity. We think that meeting the requirements of the labor market is an insurance against deprivation. Such an individualist approach maintains scarcity. The focus is on how to get a bigger chunk of a meal rather than making a bigger or more satisfying one through collective intelligence and creativity.

The idea that one can teach anything in school is flawed. So many hours are spent on pretending to bring learning results. Instead, we should consider the role of teacher as a role model to accompany young people and to show them what they may want out of life beyond just consuming. It is easy to reproduce textbooks. Seeing teachers as carriers of aspiration would require a completely different model of recruiting them.

Thanks to my experience, I have realized that a teaching position comes with a huge responsibility because students often do not have anyone to talk to about big issues of life. The easiest answer would be to turn the question around and provide the information on how to get a job. However, this is not the question that students are posing. They want to know how to be happy and to be fulfilled with their contribution. They want to find purpose in their lives and explore how to find happiness in this system. If I stayed in college, the only answer I could give would be to stay in the system. When I was about to graduate, I was advised by two professors to stay in academia and pursue a PhD. Such advice reflects the professors' preference. This simply may be the only choice they know.

An associate professor in philosophy at the University of Oxford, Will MacAskill, calculated the number of hours a person works in a lifetime. (This calculation comes from the summary of an interview in 2016 book by Tim Ferriss, *Tools of Titans*, p. 448.) He argued that if we spent five percent on making the decision on how we want to spend the rest of our working lives, it would take two years of full time work of self-exploration (4,000 out of 80,000 hours). Instead of seeing high school as a place to put knowledge into students' heads, we should define it as a laboratory for self-knowledge and figuring out how one wants to contribute to society. Building expertise will ensue naturally.

James Surowiecki argued in his 2004 book *The Wisdom of Crowds* that a large group of diverse people can come to better results and solutions than can an expert. Experiments have confirmed this. The book *Under a Tree* describes how Indian children used to learn in villages and illustrates the power of the groups wisdom and peer learning. A school can be a place to discover the power of sharing, exchanging, and collaborating instead of blindly relying on experts and authorities to make the right decisions.

I want to create occasions for involving other people in buying decisions to support students in seeing through the manipulations and conditionings related to consumption. I believe that the only way of effective teaching is modeling. I mean putting myself in this vulnerable situation and asking for help in self-inquiry. By narrating and analyzing choices, we can grow into a place of greater self-awareness and freedom. Rather than exercising control or giving permissions, the circles around buying decisions may help us make our choices more transparent by verbalizing our reasoning behind our choices. This is one of the ways of understanding our needs better, which is a step toward creating a feeling of abundance.

Building on this creative thinking, we could experiment with abundant solutions in the school and its surroundings. Before the “impossibilism” kicks in, they may experience the implementation of crazy dreams and develop a habit of testing all the assumptions. It may help them develop their own personal culture before the dominant cultural oppression wraps its tentacles around them.

Adolescence the best time for experimentation because adolescents are ahead of the moment when preferences and habits are fully shaped. One can be first equipped to make decisions about one's future when one is aware of the consequences of choices and one knows alternatives. Education should provide conditions for trying out different behaviors, different ways of being together, and different ways of meeting basic needs. This should be accompanied by storytelling of life trajectories of other people and holding space for self-inquiry. Freedom is about reflected choice, not an automatic one made because there is no other option in view.

Bhutan is known for its policy of pursuing national happiness as a measurement of progress, in contrast to the economic indicators applied by other countries. Guess who had such an idea: Jigme Singye Wangchuck (King of Bhutan); he was seventeen years old when he came to power.

Young people are naturally creative and open to innovation. Before putting ideas into their heads about how to create abundance in their lives, we should give them a chance to explore how to generate abundance in general. Why not seriously engage with ideas for change and with a new system by experimenting? Hopefully, they will not grow out of this mindset of questioning and thinking outside of the box. For example, the considerations about needs and ways of organizing lives can bring solutions for reducing the

consumption of natural resources and the need for work. The freedom of exploration at this stage of their lives is an opportunity to discover their needs through testing different options before they become invested in comforts and old patterns ruling our society. We should give them a chance of making use of the fresh insight at this stage of their lives to be capable of bringing original ideas into determining their own future before their natural creativity is killed by the system.

Howard Gardener's theory of *multiple intelligences* gives us an opportunity to look at the capabilities that education can develop. Everyone should have an opportunity to pursue varied activities and find one's talents and strengths. Everyone should have an opportunity to contribute to a group with their unique set of talents and be recognized and appreciated for this. Through the exploration of inner resources, we can create more abundance. To ensure that multiple intelligences are given opportunities to unfold, we need to ask whether sufficient space is being given to exercising linguistic, mathematic, musical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist capacities in everyday life.

I believe that school should be the opposite of what is being done now in a conventional school. Students are obliged to learn subjects; then they are left to their own devices. Instead, we should focus on helping them develop their character, morality, and capacity to develop friendships. They can learn the rest on their own. Whereas it is relatively easy to learn subjects, it is more difficult to learn how to make conscious choices in the context of a consumerist culture. It is important to provide a space for experiential learning to help young people find their own resources for fulfillment rather than having their inner capacities and time be subsumed by economic interests.

Fukuoka reminds us about a different approach to life and consumption:

Other animals make their livings by living, but people work like crazy, thinking that they have to in order to stay alive. The bigger the job, the greater the challenge, the more wonderful they think it is. It would be good to give up that way of thinking and live an easy, comfortable life with plenty of free time. I think that the way animals live in the tropics, stepping outside in the morning and evening to see if there is something to eat, and taking a long nap in the afternoon, must be a wonderful life. For human beings, a life of such simplicity would be possible if one worked to produce directly his daily necessities. In such a life, work is not work as people generally think of it, but simply doing what needs to be done. (Masanobu Fukuoka, *The One-Straw Revolution*)

Isn't it the truest of happiness to just live in full integrity and enjoyment of oneself?

Offering real choice: equipping children for an addiction-free life

I distinguish between two types of dreams to pursue: creative dreams and well-adjusted dreams. The latter reflect the way the mainstream society defines success. It is easy to see that one is on the path and to measure whether one is effective or not.

Another type of dream is difficult to see. It is a quiet spark, flickering from time to time. It waits for the right moment—for turmoil or silence. It is afraid of bothering anyone. It is a silent but stubborn being. This is the beginning of a creative dream. The dream starts to take a clearer shape the more it recognizes that the standard dreams do not fit. One develops taste for a bespoke dream with more experience.

Someone who has learned to be a consumer may need time to grow out of automatic choices and helplessness. Education should be about giving space for different perspectives and seeing options for becoming creative in life choices and projects. Otherwise, education is a form of indoctrination into an ideology and value system. Bringing counterpoints into the discussions allows students to learn to see their freedom in forming their own path. It starts with being able to delineate options.

I conceive education as a garden, in which synergies and various forms of growth will unfold with time. I believe that diversity plays an important role in this goal. I want to create a space where we can confront, process, and welcome differences. Nature teaches us that diversity generates fertility and abundance. In order for this to happen, people

representing a variety of backgrounds needs to meet each other.

In order to tailor a creative dream, one needs to flex the courage muscle by processing failures; resolving conflicts; and trying again, despite defeat and disappointment. These things are best done in a group.

Whether students follow a well-adjusted dream or a creative dream, we must prevent them from becoming prisoners of their fears – too afraid to listen to the spark.

Flexing collaboration muscles will prepare them to listen to a big dream, which can be pursued only with others. By segmenting young people into homogeneous groups or isolating them with screens, we deprive them of their capacities to connect and collaborate. We imprison them in the limitations of the dominant culture.

If *academic excellence* is defined as a bulimic accumulation of facts, to be regurgitated during an exam, it may not appeal to young people who are equipped with critical thinking skills. If individuals want to pursue a career that requires passing exams, they can still achieve it if they are determined to do so. However, they should also have space and conditions to actually make such a decision inquiring into themselves rather than pursuing stereotypes.

Should not it be a human right to define and pursue dreams? Aren't we entitled to carve our model of happiness rather than resign ourselves to predefined models? If we let the system disable young people's capacity to respond to their spark or even to dare to dream, we deprive them of a life of passion.

One can be free to do the most of one's life if one is free of addictions. Many addictions keep us in the status quo and deprive us of the energy to pursue our goals. Such addictions

conspire against making decisions by helping us numb our feelings and frustration. These are addictions that make us cling to the old no matter how we are depriving ourselves of better options. I want to give the young people the courage to face their emotions and welcome them rather than escaping from feeling by frenzied busyness or by using drugs.

In my vision, a transformative boarding school should follow an absolute prohibition of all psychoactive substances, including chocolate, coffee, caffeine, fried food (e.g., chips), sugar, and drugs. This may seem like a radical act, but ask yourself what makes you judge it this way?

Entering such a setting can be challenging, especially for teenagers used to the American diet. However, we will be together in this, and we can support each other. Teenagers need a space for self-inquiry about what functions these substances play in their emotional processes. We may reflect on other ways of coping or decide that there is no need to cope, one can simply allow what wants to be felt.

Once there is no numbing strategy at hand, one can go deeper into one's inner processes and learn to accept them. There is no need to panic in face of pain. Instead, we can help each other to understand this pain and to feel safe about feeling it. And this process of holding space for each other's pain is an essential tool for a fulfilling life of rich relationships. Once you have the courage to be present to pain, you can have more connection with people. Connection prevents us from falling prey to addictions. So it is a virtuous spiral bringing society toward its best potential.

By being present to the pain in the group, young people can go through a rite of passage. There is strength to be gained and lessons to be learned from suffering and developing coping strategies that will set them free for a life of initiative and

creation. We are offering them a future than many emotionally crippled adults could not have imagined because they kept numbing their emotions.

Competition and comparison—against taboos and dogmas

A rich inner life and mental capacities promote resilience, which may be essential when the consumerist world collapses due to environmental overcharge. Intentionally or not, we are preparing young people for a world different than ours. They may need the capacities to enjoy themselves outside of buying and consuming.

However, resilience and adaptability as a goal of education should not imply negating one dogma to pursue another one. I see it more as a capacity to discern and narrate one's choices rather than acting on autopilot. In their 2018 article “How to Change the Course of Human History,” Graeber and Wengrow described how a tribe in North America changed based on the goals they pursued. They modified their organization and culture based on the seasons. During hunting period, it made more sense to have hierarchy than it did during other periods. Similarly, we can think of culture and ways of being. My vision of schooling is to uncover the psychological dynamics imposed by the dominant culture but not mechanically forbid those dynamics. In order to make real choices, students should be able to function in different ways and to explore which way is theirs.

I have encountered schooling projects that try to spare children from competition. For example, they would not have grades, or competition would be erased from sports and performances. In my project, giving grades may be simply not practical, but I want neither to save students from competition nor to impose it on them. For example, experiencing competition and being compared with one's peers is congruent with the dominant culture. I believe that it may be even advantageous to participate in such situations in order to understand cultural

influences and to be empowered to make a decision after knowing different options. It is like traveling to a different country and experiencing oneself in its culture in order to see oneself more through the contrast and similarity.

The problem with many projects is that they have this engineering attitude imprinted in their design, such as creating rules and taboos to limit competition. Such an approach deprives teenagers of the opportunity to explore how competition shapes their choices and emotions, as well as the other effects that competition has on them. I view competition, winning, and losing as fruitful occasions to take a stance on one's priorities in life. These experiences can help one develop intrapersonal intelligence – the capacity to know oneself, which is as valuable as having collaborative skills.

Another unhealed issue that adults may want to save the young from is money and wealth disparities. Actually, they may do it subconsciously because of their own discomfort. We need to admit our uneasiness around these topics in order to move forward. No matter how much we deny it, it will be there.

Financial transparency is an indispensable element of a community and trusting relationships. If we want to support young people's capacity to cooperate and pursue projects together, we need to train them in dealing with money-related issues, which will enhance their relationships with other persons and their relationships with groups and communities.

The outside world is competitive. Instead of creating an island in opposition to the outside world, let us encourage young people to confront the dominant culture head-on. Parents' and teachers' unhealed wounds may bring them to try consciously prevent (or not prevent) pain for their children and students. This may translate to rules and dogmas. Young people should

not be victims of adults' lack of resilience. They may have not had conditions conducive to processing wounds related to competition, which does not mean that competition is to be avoided. I want to give young people a chance to find out for themselves. What education should focus on is a space to narrate and understand feelings and impulses related to comparison and competition.

Let us look at the common fears related to depriving children of competitive learning context. These fears keep us in the current system and make our ideas about education limited. Both competition as a tool of preparing the young for life and avoiding hurting children with competition are rigid ways of preventing hurt. If we feel helpless and lack imagination about how to communicate, we tend to recur to restrictions and rules.

One may hope that exposing the young to the competition will motivate them to learn. What if we asked instead whether there are other ways of inculcating curiosity? Another motivation may be to help them survive in the market economy. They may not be able to create a different type of economy if we socialize them only into individualist strategies. Another fear is that they may not be able to relate to the outside world because they did not have the same childhood. Again, if there are many more people who have followed education underpinned by different values, they can either (1) find a group for themselves or (2) be contagious with their way of being.

Organizing education with the help of stress and fear is depriving young people of cognitive capacities and creativity. These are indispensable to imagining a different world, better adapted to society's needs and challenges. Competition should be skillfully accompanied in order to make it a source of force rather than damage.

The luxury of offline mode

Schooling is about human rights and collective responsibility. The psychological and emotional system is shaped until the age of 25. Accordingly, educational intervention or lack thereof influences people's lives and the shape of society at large. Preferences are shaped by conditioning and perception of what is available. They may reflect the deprivation of individuals.

Anecdotal evidence shows that some of the wealthiest parents tend to protect their children from social media by sending them to tech-free private schools. Research shows that working-class children are more likely to spend time engaged in online communication. Nellie Bowles, in an article in *The New York Times* (October 26, 2018), cited studies showing that lower-income teenagers spent more than two hours more using screens than did their higher-income counterparts. Offline mode has become a luxury. Certainly, developing interpersonal skills and the capacity to communicate will be an advantage for the young in all spheres of life. School must facilitate young people's developing these aptitudes rather than creating inequalities between rich and poor.

Google makes Chromebooks (low-cost laptops) available to students and has created free apps for schools. Natasha Singer wrote in *The New York Times* (May 13, 2017) about "Googlification of the classroom." This is not just a gift but also another example how digital multinationals directly exercise executive power, which should be preceded by democratic debate and legislation. With the mechanism of sponsoring, grants, and other forms of funding, corporations increasingly govern society and the future, which are shaped

by education. Big business, by implanting itself into schools, can harvest results corresponding to its interests.

Concerns have been voiced about the data provided by minors to Google's services, which happen to be increasingly promoted by schools. Mark Zuckerberg supports a universal basic income, probably because it is absolutely aligned with his economic interest; the cost of having people addicted in front of screens is distributed among taxpayers, and the gains are concentrated in the hands of the owners of the platforms. This is most likely the economic model that screen-based education is heading toward.

Official discourse tries to convince us that hooking up children on screens improves their employability. This is improbable for developed countries. Simple computer-based tasks are outsourced to India and similar countries anyway. Due to wage dumping, corporations do not need employable computer skills coming from Global North countries. The most advanced tasks and technological advancement are driven by elite brains from all over the world. Corporations can free ride on education investment from other countries for this purpose. They are still interested in introducing screens as early as possible because they need users. Instead of employing the workforce, they need data producers and processors addicted to their “free” services. Rather than growing the pool of advanced technology specialists, screen exposure at school inculcates the youngest generation to live their lives online.

The availability of information provided by the Internet opens learning to new possibilities. Rather than imposing restrictions on Internet use, I propose guiding and channeling its use as the goal of education. For example, discussions may lead to questions and searching for information to make decisions and deliberate. Small spontaneous study projects can be an

exercise in evaluating information and sources, arguing, summarizing, and collaborating. Interactions and community can structure online time. We need to find a “sweet spot,” a synergy between offline and online mode. How can social life be made so interesting that students would prefer spending time on conversations? How can these conversations be enriched by online research?

Evidence demonstrates that screens compromise child development. Gaya Dowling has examined patterns in brain development in children who spend a lot of time on screens. Premature thinning of the cortex (which is responsible for information processing) has been observed in nine- and ten-year-olds. Research also demonstrates a negative impact on scores in thinking and language tests. Introducing typing so early in school's activities may also influence brain and personality development. Handwriting stimulates different parts of the brain. In preliterate children, it can facilitate development of reading skills and can help dyslexia.

By putting children in front of screens, we are raising lonely people. Jean Twenge studied the evolution of teenagers' free-time activities in the 1970s and today. A remarkable decline in spending time together with friends began in 2010. In her article in *The Conversation*, she explained that 52 percent of 12th graders got together with their friends almost every day in 1970s, whereas by 2017, only 28 percent did. An experiment found that spending time device-free for five days improves empathy cues. The market shapes the perception of needs and perceptions of ways to fulfill them, which may create an illusion of fulfilling needs. And the underlying void leads to addiction and self-harm. Online addiction may be a symptom.

By abstaining from any specific measures, life energy and the fabric of interpersonal sphere are delivered to corporations.

Giant social media companies like Facebook offer “free” use that turns out to be a profitable time steal for the platform. We need to inquire deeply into the functions it fulfills and the way it generates a shortcut that costs us more in the long run. We need to reconquer aliveness in thinking and living.

We need to ask again what schools are for. Sharing educational challenges is an opportunity to be part of a community and to interact with others. Why not make it the center of education? Our society overestimates individual achievements. In contrast, being able to create a community opens possibility to achieve something beyond individual limitations. Being part of community can help with being more creative and help in pooling resources. It can help to overcome fear and undertake riskier ventures. A group can define new rules for the world that the next generation will live in. Deep community-building processes can happen only away from screens. The use of technology, which we consider to be a sign of progress, may actually inhibit progress.

Adolescence may be the last chance to be part of a community whose members are randomly selected. Later in life, relationships start to be built increasingly based on affinity or goals. Adolescence is this beautiful time when one can enjoy the last moments of purposelessness and not having to be strategic. Let’s not lose it by creating bubbles.

Educating better than computers

The Internet and other media provide opportunities for expanding knowledge, with which no teacher can compete. A movie or other digital form of presenting information has the power to captivate; only exceptional individuals can compare with this. Moreover, digital media are addictive. Michael Sever has created a platform where the best online courses can be accessed for free. We also have massive open online courses (MOOCs) and a vast selection of teaching on YouTube. Trying to outperform this offer seems like a waste of time. This advancement in information accessibility can free the time to focus on other aspects of schooling.

In this information landscape, an educator has an important role to play. With the natural curiosity, addictive media features, and access to knowledge, children and adolescents will learn anyway. They still need someone to encourage them to embed their knowledge through facilitating conversations, challenge them to consider others' views, and expose them to counterviews. These are preconditions for empowering young people to be part of a real community rather than an online "community." An educator needs to counterbalance the tendencies of the digital landscape. Online media are oriented toward keeping people's attention for as long as possible, not toward raising conscious and empowering individuals. An educator needs to bring students back to offline space and human relations. We should not shy away from competing with algorithms and exposing teenagers to information and reflection outside of their online bubble.

Maybe we are following these consumerist dreams, because we do not imagine what we could achieve through cooperation. Do we want to limit our children's dreams

because of our lack of imagination? Do we want for our children to inherit our incapacity to cooperate and to be left with imagination that reflects this handicap? If you learn how to use a hammer, you can dream only of finding nails. What dreams do our emotional system suppress to protect itself from the pain that accompanies growth? What dreams are our lopsided education system depriving our children of?

I have been concerned with education since early in my life. I used to dream of being an academic teacher, but I realized that I would rather work against empowering critical citizens because of the constraints imposed by higher education. My vision of education was deepening democracy. After a long reflection and having studied egalitarian communities and other forms of self-organizing, it became clear to me that a school should have a form of a community at a small scale. In such a setting, I can pursue educational goals in line with my integrity and ideals.

A group would have an adult facilitator to either structure the discussion or intervene to enhance understanding of interpersonal processes. Holding space for tensions between participants and for problems in school and family life would be a form of experiential learning.

You might think of traditional cultures as being full of superstitions. But we often do not see how we are manipulated by advertising into wanting things that do not make us happy and into searching to express oneself through unhealthy or obsolete consumption choices. This is also culture, though it is imposed in a subliminal way. It is disguised with the promise of freedom.

If we were living in a less compartmentalized society, I would be entirely against schools. If people had the opportunity to explore their choices because there were an ongoing tradition

of meeting and discussing things, young people could simply join such conversations and observe the adults. If our lives were rich intellectually, relationally, and culturally, we would just integrate young people into daily conversations instead of keeping them in schools. However, most adults do not understand themselves, so they cannot naturally transmit the habit of self-inquiry to the young. I see education as giving students an opportunity to be in presence of adults whose teaching happens by merely living in integrity and sharing their inner struggles with the students so that they can better understand the conditioning of their surroundings.

Being present to personal communication develops a different set of skills, both for professional life and for leading a fulfilled life. We cannot help developing a deeper connection and understanding other people through putting children in front of screens. Internet communication shows a lot of violence and insensitivity. We need to expose teenagers to “the other” at the end of a comment, to make them see how it affects the other person, to be able to talk it through, and to see how what one says may land with the other.

Technological advancement promises a different way of acquiring and dealing with knowledge. Caution needs to be used with this rapid change. Screens can sway us into using technology to numb unresolved feelings by burying them in constant distraction. Technology and drugs can be used to disconnect from emotions and pain. Society pays a high price for conditioning people into choosing this way of dealing with their wounds rather than making spaces for processing suffering in a community setting. An educator's role may be to point to a path outside of short-cut and remind that the easiest way is not the best. Technology may liberate us, but it can hardly fulfill us; there is more to life than convenience.

Robert E. Roberts (in his book *My Soul Said to Me*) describes the philosophy behind an initiation for a boy in indigenous cultures of Africa. Their wisdom recognizes that unhealed childhood wounds may be dangerous for society. Accordingly, they undergo rituals of acknowledging their pain before being introduced to weapons. Shouldn't we think about technology in a similar way?

Grieving is an important part of initiation. The power of a group generates healing energy. Recognizing, acknowledging, and witnessing suffering by a community helps heal wounds. It is done in ceremonial way.

I don't think the young can get it on Facebook or Snapchat. We should not assume that these processes will come naturally without a culture and wisdom steering them. We end up sending young wounded people into the world, where they inflict further harm as the only way they can find to deal with their pain. Being that these healing measures are not ingrained in our culture, educators need to create a new culture to make group processes happen.

Letting screens determine children's education socializes them into passivity. Émile Durkheim observed that religions and social movements have thrived thanks to regular meetings and rituals. It is like a natural law of community and commitment building. A group stimulates thinking, provides energy and enthusiasm, and motivates people to act. Screens condition people into passive clicking and helplessness, and eventually to depression and addiction. This is the most effective way to cultivate passive consumers and submissive citizens.

Empowering healthy sex life

From the perspective of a person who has had beautiful sexual experiences and has experienced the empowering force of sexuality, I see no reason not to allow young people to find sexual fulfillment. Sexuality promotes health and vitality. Young people should be given a chance for a balanced life and independence of products and services. Healthy sexuality is a step in this direction.

Sexuality accompanied by respect toward oneself and the other is also a source of connection. For love to thrive, we need a norm of radical consent. We can still prevent harm later in life if we enable teens to set their boundaries and listen to the boundaries of others.

Talking about sexuality is about developing communication skills. The problems happening in sexual relations reflect the culture we are embedded in. Through learning sensitivity and awareness in sexual encounters, we equip youth to develop a deeper capacity for relatedness. Sexuality can be another venue where oppression is perpetuated. We need to collectively teach ways of undoing oppression in our relationships. Being that sexuality fascinates teenagers, it is a great laboratory in which to develop empathy and skills for relationships of all kinds.

We need to give young people tools to liberate themselves from unhealthy culture. By engaging in a deeper work, we can help stop violence in this generation. The youngest generation does not need to be confined to the legacy of mistreatment and the pornography industry. Accordingly, education should be an opportunity to analyze subliminal images and dogmas around

sexuality. It is crucial to understand deeply what can shape automatic assumptions and behaviors in our unconscious.

If we shy away from talking about sexuality beyond contraception, we allow the dysfunctional models promoted by porn industry to define sexual practices. Pornography normalizes particular ways of treating female bodies. Because these norms compromise female well-being and sexual satisfaction, non-intervention is against women's interests. Schooling should uncover the dangers of conditioning promoted by the images.

Talking about the cultural context of sexuality does not put the idea of premature sex into teens' heads. I see it rather as an encouragement to strive for better quality, which may imply postponing the initiation. Verbalizing issues related to sexuality empowers young people to develop skills for communicating and the courage to communicate about sex before engaging in it. Especially young women, being influenced by the oppressive culture of expected submissiveness and pleasing, may need support in asserting and verbalizing their needs. It is important to engage in a deconstruction of femininity and sexiness in order to give young people real choice in the realm of pleasure, body integrity, and relationships.

Talking about sexuality implies becoming vulnerable and entering a risky territory. Educators consciously or unconsciously feel these hesitations. They may create distance or suppress certain topics. Sexuality is an important part of transitioning into adulthood. It should not be taboo.

Understanding oneself necessitates understanding one's body

Education should equip students with instruction for the use of their bodies. It should focus on understanding how our bodies work and how they are influenced by the products of everyday consumption. Without awareness of the consequences of what is sold to us, we expose young people to exploitation.

In puberty, hormonal changes bring about sensations and reactions that are difficult to make sense of. The lack of spaces for narrating these processes causes them to revert to unhealthy coping strategies. Students attend biology classes, but the material taught does not help them navigate their bodies. Candace Pert (2007, *Everything You Need to Know to Feel Good*. Hay House) wrote about the psychosomatic network, focusing on the physiological effects of drugs. People need to learn about these effects in order to be aware of what they are actually doing and aware of the drugs' long-term effects. Before finishing school, everyone should have a clear picture of the interactions between drugs and cell receptors. This is biology class that really makes a difference.

Being an adolescent is difficult because the outer culture does not provide an explanatory framework for what is happening. Indigenous societies had rituals and had people accompany youth in their transitions between different stages of their lives, which help them navigating through the confusion. In our scientifically oriented society, we need to incorporate the knowledge of neuroscience to narrate the confusions of puberty. For example, Sarah-Jayne Blakemore gives an interpretation of adolescence backed by neuroscience research.

As part of learning about their bodies, teens need to explore their inner chemistry through activities such as dancing and eating nutritious food to observe how they interact with their moods and well-being. Iceland has implemented a preventive program to reduce adolescent drinking. This program is now studied in several countries because it showed remarkable results. Local authorities and associations provide a rich offer of extracurricular activities for the young. They also coach parents about spending time with their teenage offspring.

It all starts with food

You cannot expect intellectual performance from someone to whom you refuse to give fuel for mental health. Iron deficiency contributes to attention disorders. Nutrients play a role in mood and concentration. Sugar and other poisons undermine the learning process. Sugar also causes cavities and interferes with skeletal development.

My prayer is a healthy and nutritious meal as part of the religion of self-love. Part of experiential learning should be developing a habit of celebrating eating together and culinary skills. If we make it into a personal culture, we equip young people for life in their capacity to take care of themselves, their children, and their relationships. We can learn so much more by doing/living than we can from studying. And such small transgressions of the dominant culture are windows toward academic learning. Take the example of tradition of a birthday cake. In 19th-century Europe, sugar was hardly consumed; the tradition of sugar consumption came with the interests of sugar industry. We can imagine many ways of celebrating than with a cake. Culture can be an enrichment and a prison limiting our imagination.

Why not give students opportunities to fail and learn from their errors? Experimenting is a good way to foster resilience. We can learn about life by observing nature. This process is as powerful as studying philosophy, meditation, or other personal development measures. By observing the natural process of nature, we can connect to our own capacities for resilience.

My dream school would have a connection with farmland so that students could visit the same place over the years of their schooling. I hope that we can get access to at least one square

meter of land per student and allocate it for three years. The land would serve for experimentation and contemplation of the natural cycle. We would visit the land each season to see the progress and take care of different stages of plant growth. This will provide an opportunity to learn about epigenetics. How can one better learn biology than by observing nature.

Eating what we want may distance us from feeling what we need. Frustration with not getting addictive food (that students are used to) provides a great opportunity for digging into the emotional aspects of eating. We may inquire into sensations we want to numb with snacking.

Being in an isolated place without access to junk food is challenging. Children may suffer psychologically and physically. Community support helps them exit the vicious cycle. Getting off sugar may be an American rite of passage—a process of overcoming challenge to become a freer person. We have a chance to save someone's quality of life.

The process is the best educator

Humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers wrote that one cannot *teach* another person anything. If we understand teaching as putting knowledge and skills into someone's head, indeed we cannot do it. However, I see a different role for *education*: creating situations of experiencing and observing challenges. It is more like a muscle training than a knowledge transfer. The focus on academic excellence without taking into consideration emotional development is counterproductive. We cannot expect good academic results from children who are suffering emotionally. Some may find the capacity to switch off and not feel, but this also has consequences. By providing space for emotional processing, we liberate them to be able to pursue academic subjects.

Similarly, trying to put knowledge into someone's head creates situations and experiences requires intentionality. Though we cannot plan how the process will unfold, we need to plan to step into the process. Accompanying young people in personal and professional growth requires regular meetings. By building relationship through interacting outside of problematic situations, we can prevent many difficulties. By creating many occasions of sharing in circles, a school can send a message that adults are approachable and available. Bringing in structure can help in regulating educator's tendencies to favor certain students and interact more with them.

Notice what may be behind the fear of intervening. This is probably an image inherited from the past. If something is compulsory, we may think that it restricts our freedom. What if the freedom to choose unhealthy activities were interpreted as a violation of our freedom?

Waiting for perfection will take forever. Anticipating defeat is a better prospect than is never putting oneself out there for a challenge. Perhaps the most we can teach young people is to encourage them to take risks and accept failing.

Tensions, differences, and misunderstandings are great opportunities for learning about ourselves and about what we want to create as a culture. They will help us uncover what shaped us and evaluate whether it is something that serves our well-being and fulfillment. We can learn so much more from a messy practice than from an ideal theory.

Malidoma Somé (an African shaman cited in Robert E. Roberts's book *My Soul Said to Me*) told Roberts that initiation rituals for the young in his tradition are about remembering who a person is, what gift each person brings, and what each person has come here to do. We can learn these things through undertaking projects and facing challenges together. Having such experiences and discussing them about them are the best ways to learn.

Undertaking challenges and narrating them together (and supporting each other through them) is a formative experience. These are the moments to remember whenever another challenge appears. Having successful experiences promotes “courage muscles” and liberates us, allowing us to see various opportunities. I would not have taken so many risks or engaged in long-term projects if I had not had experiences of going through discomfort before achieving something. For some, academic knowledge can constitute such a challenge, but this is only one possible form. Why not experiment with other activities such as building a cob house, organizing events, or growing food.

I talked with someone who has lived in the United States and in India. She observed that American culture lacks a sense of

unconditional belonging. She would like to create an unconditional community in the United States. Her experience in India was that there she just belonged; she did not need to earn her belongingness. Building community is a process. How about schools inculcating a culture of unconditional community? We should harness it like any other skill.

Initial pretending and suppressing is something to observe and get intimate with. Judgments and negative feelings are part of the process of building a community. Accordingly, skillful facilitation is an important factor. We cannot reach our goal just with setting rules. We need to do deep processing.

I am against having detailed rules regarding all aspects of living together. It is tempting to replace conversations, negotiations, and attempts to find solutions that help a group thrive with rigid rules. This is counterproductive to true learning about being in a community. Instead, it inculcates rule-obeying individuals and disengagement. We should not learn how to avoid discomfort at all cost but rather learn how to be present to the discomfort, define one's boundaries, and communicate with others to find win-win outcomes.

We usually talk about inclusion and integration in the context of the poor, dropouts, and migrants. However, the superrich are also disconnected from society and need to be integrated back into it. Their children may pay the costs of not being able to be part of a group and to take initiative. In this way, they will be imprisoned in the status and role their parents prepared them for. However, circumstances may change, or they may not feel the affinity to the culture and materialist values of their parents. Education as a form of integration into society needs to facilitate constructing bridges between these different worlds.

Keeping the project alive

“To create a new structure I must be the architect, the builder as well as the workmen.”

“It is only a static society and a deteriorating society that talks of duty and rights.”

- Jiddu Krishnamurti

An organization may gain stability in its operation. We finally may get into a routine and develop a sense of certainty. At this point, the project will be put to test, and the real work will begin--the work of remembering that an organization is a process, not an accomplishment. If we manage to develop community maintenance measures and identify the crisis as an opportunity, this will be the most crucial learning this setting can offer.

The beginnings are exciting and energizing. The possibilities seem unlimited. How to continue the spark once things are settled? Young people need to learn the discipline to ask regularly in order to hone leadership skills. Our culture feeds us with images of how to get to the “happily ever after” but does not equip us with skills of keeping up with this promise.

It is difficult to see cynicism and its subtle consequences because it is usually hidden behind pretense. We can equip young people with the capacity to lead a creative and rich life by being intentional about processing cynicism, individualist dreams, and other signs of withdrawal. Being attentive to insidious symptoms of crisis promotes the ability to turn them into opportunities to renew and celebrate community.

Accompanied experience and going through the ups and downs together is the most precious learning that educators can offer. Students should be involved in all aspects of an organization's life in order to deeply understand collective processes. They should get used to listening to cynicism and other subtle turns in attitude. They should have a possibility to participate in full cycles and transformations in order to build their resilience. We can help them transcend the life of a passive consumer and perfunctory performance encouraged by the system. Education must hold space for students to develop the capacity to be fully alive and to be in relation with others.

Giving someone a freedom that they are not ready to handle is a responsibility. I do not promote a system without rules. In such a system, you are excluding those who cannot thrive in such an environment and you give a lot of power to disruptive behaviors. However, it is important to talk about rules and to give a space to understand the reasoning behind underlying the rules. Having a day structure with fixed times for silence and meals provides freedom to learn and to have a balanced environment for growth.

Problematic behavior may result from a compulsive reenactment of core trauma. Candace Pert (in *Everything You Need to Know to Feel Good*) writes that the psychosomatic system tends to return to “the place of our most intense core emotional traumas over and over again, replaying them in current settings as we try to find solutions. Unconsciously, we re-create old emotional scenes, searching for a new answer obsessively and automatically” (p. 17f). Seen from this perspective, the misbehavior can be a message sent to the world that something needs attention and healing. By creating opportunities to talk with the attitude of acceptance, we can foster such an ability as educators.

It is important to give space and create habits for doing inner work. Parents who are not at peace with their childhood wounds may try to protect their children from what made them suffer. Certainly, we need to protect them from violence. But there are other challenges that may become their gifts if faced directly. Once you recognize that wounds can be transformed and make us more whole and more empathic, you can free yourself from an obsessive protection and a need to “be realistic,” which usually means to conforming to other people’s vision of “reality,” and to submit to the perception of helplessness in shaping a new reality. By equipping young people with the capacity to process their wounds and fears, we teach them how to be empowered in defining their reality.

