

Keeping the Future in Mind

“The old key just won’t work...” Salvador Espriu

So many things would change if we would only keep the future in mind when taking decisions, forming opinions, and managing our lives! If our behavior took less account of what is happening today, around us, what happened in the past, and who are watching us now. If we would only remember that we cannot change yesterday or today, and that our only commitment is to tomorrow, we could change many present tendencies. Keeping the future in mind and the upcoming generations is truly our greatest challenge.

It is necessary to urgently adopt a new perspective in which we see much of our youth, our children and those who have yet to be born, and little of ourselves. A few statistics can help us courageously keep the doors and windows of our surroundings and our minds wide open: each day the world’s estimated population of 6,300 million increases by 180,000 people, despite the noticeable decline achieved in the last few years thanks, above all, to education; 50,000 die each day from hunger and diseases for which there are now adequate diagnostics and treatment.; 1,600 million human beings live in extremely precarious conditions (on less than two dollars a day, while daily expenditures for weapons amount to 2,680 million dollars and agricultural subsidies in the United States and the European Union are 1,000 million dollars a day); increased trafficking of drugs and people...

Economic and social disparities continue to increase on a global stage in which the most powerful and prosperous countries have relinquished their democratic principles (justice, freedom, equality, solidarity) in favor of the laws of the marketplace, and have left a large portion of their responsibilities in the hands of multinational corporations, while failing to fulfill their promises to aid the poorest or most impoverished countries (whose natural resources they exploit), and progressively weakening the United Nations system, that irreplaceable ethical and legal framework for ensuring, as the US President Roosevelt dreamed, that our descendents may live in peace.

Those same irresponsible leaders who supported the commercialization of so many aspects of our lives and abandoned the values, for which many young people (and on occasion, some of them) had fought, now ask themselves why their children behave as they do. Both would do well to visit the marginal neighborhoods of their own cities.

Several years ago I wrote a book entitled “Memory of the Future” in which I underscored the urgent necessity of directing the greatest part of our energy and efforts to what we can still change. The past has already been written. The future depends on us. If we constantly dwell on the past, our horizons shrink and become darkened, while inertia, our greatest enemy, takes over. Evolution is halted and the climate is set for and disruptions, conflict and revolution. For thinking often of ourselves and very seldom of others, for thinking too much about what has happened and not enough about what should have been, we have lost track of essential matters, and we have allowed ourselves to be swept away by the winds of the immediate and superfluous. In the mirrors of the past, we see much of ourselves and little of others.

Memory of the past: of those who suffered the most, of all sorts of victims, those who were the most visible, and those who remain anonymous. Memory of the present so that from this day forward we can walk the roads of the future, keeping them in mind with each step we take. Only when the future counts more than the past, only when the present of our young people counts more than our own will it be possible to achieve conciliation, peace, and the word instead of force.

If we keep the future in mind, we (and especially intellectuals and men of science) will not remain silent at the local or global level, while our leaders take measures that can affect human dignity, environmental conditions, cultural diversity and universal values. When terribly disturbing information and images are being broadcast during children's prime time or published in publications that are easily within their reach. When there is discrimination, exclusion, humiliation...

If we keep the future in mind, we will participate in all of the issues that affect us (especially now that communications technology makes this possible, commencing with SMSs), and we will cease to be passive spectators by strengthening pluralism and preventing the partisan abuses and absolutism of parliamentary majorities.

If we keep the future in mind we will listen to the advice of the most reputable multidisciplinary specialists concerning issues that have the greatest impact on security and on our quality of life (energy, water, nutrition, health....) and we will support them in their role as guideposts for the future. So many mistakes are made by civil, military and religious institutions by not listening to those who, by virtue of their training and experience, could provide the best formulas for meeting the most urgent challenges!

If we keep the future in mind, we will not allow the immense power of the media to suppress the imagination of our children and grandchildren, standardizing them and making them docile and indifferent, when we need them to be free and supportive, for that other world to which we aspire for them. We will find time to meet with their professors, and to attend to their needs, which is our first duty, so that we will always be close by whenever they need us...

If we keep the future in mind, we will not allow moments or opportunities to escape, which perhaps will not arise again for a very long time. Although we may have taken a stand and were subsequently somewhat disappointed, we must learn to forget our “wounded present” and work together for the progress that it nevertheless represents. Serenity is an essential component of wisdom, which in moments of crisis knows how to distinguish between what was possible and what is possible. We should never forget the saying from the China of Confucius, “When a finger points at the moon, only the shortsighted look at the finger.” Let’s look at the moon. We must look at the moon, and not be shortsighted.

If we keep the future in mind we will all participate –for the sake of our children and the children of our opponents, who all share the same destiny- in the establishment of international institutions endowed with authority, prestige and the necessary human and financial resources for efficient multilateral government instead of this tremendously dangerous hegemony and plutocracy whose plans presently give rise, with great suffering and confusion, to a humanity dismayed by the “cold peace” which, dashing so many hopes, has been installed at the end of the cold war ...Once again force, instead of dialogue and conciliation. Muscle instead of justice. And just a few instead of “the people”, instead of the many...

If we keep the future in mind we will know that it is time to bring this to a halt, in order to facilitate a coming together, dialogue and alliance.

Keep the future in mind! Only then will the present generations, who have witnessed profound transformations that have taken place so quickly (with respect to demography, globalization, interdependence, participative citizenship...) be able to gracefully pass the torch to their children (who have no last names or faults), whispering in their ears: “We are commencing a new era. The era of the people, of a voice for all. The secret lies in sharing and in looking to the future”.

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