

**HUMBERTO MATURANA AND HUMANITY IN TEACHER TRAINING:  
CONTRIBUTIONS TO FEELTHINK IN EDUCATION**

***HUMBERTO MATURANA E A HUMANIDADE NA FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES:  
CONTRIBUIÇÕES PARA UM SENTIPENSAR NA EDUCAÇÃO***

***HUMBERTO MATURANA Y LA HUMANIDAD EN LA FORMACIÓN DEL  
PROFESORADO: APORTES PARA UN SENTIPENSAR EN LA EDUCACIÓN***

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**ABSTRACT:** This monographic text is a tribute and thanks to Humberto Maturana for his contributions on love in human life. We discussed the ideas of the biologist in dialogue with Alexander Neill, from the Summerhill school, and the complex thinking of Edgar Morín, seeking to better understand the proposal of feelthink thought. We understand the need, urgency, and fundamental importance of all this in the practice and training of teachers.

**KEYWORDS:** Love. School. Pedagogy.

**RESUMO:** *Este texto monográfico é uma homenagem e agradecimento a Humberto Maturana por suas contribuições sobre o amor na vida humana. Discutimos as ideias do biólogo em diálogo com Alexander Neill, da escola Summerhill, e o pensamento complexo de Edgar Morin, buscando compreender melhor a proposta do sentimento. Compreendemos a necessidade, urgência e fundamental importância de tudo isso na prática e formação de professores.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Amor. Escola. Pedagogia.

**RESUMEN:** *Este texto monográfico es un homenaje y agradecimiento a Humberto Maturana por sus aportes sobre el amor en la vida humana. Discutimos las ideas del biólogo en diálogo con Alexander Neill, de la escuela Summerhill, y el pensamiento complejo de Edgar Morin, buscando comprender mejor la propuesta de sentipensar. Entendemos la necesidad, urgencia e importancia fundamental de todo esto en la práctica y formación de los docentes.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Amor. Escuela. Pedagogía.

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This monographic text aims to discuss aspects related to the field called *teacher training* in the face of an increasingly unique and global school education, measured by a standard instrument of (supposed) quality. For our discussion we bring the contributions of the Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana, who died in 2021, at the age of 92. In a way, this text is a tribute, a recognition and an attempt to return to his ideas, since they serve to make more complex the world that insists on being simplified.

Humberto Maturana's work clarifies the fundamental importance of thinking about the complexity of life. His departure is a great loss for the scientific community, since his work makes us reflect, leaving the *feelthink* that drives us to return to the world of emotions as a center of understanding, something so necessary at this time of planetary crisis, in which We look for ways to continue contributing to teaching and research. For this, it is essential to recognize the emotions and actions that originate in them, since it is not possible to objectify ourselves in such a way that our subjectivities remain outside our actions; on the contrary, as each emotion establishes a unique domain of actions, we perform different tasks under different emotions (MATURANA, 2003).

In that understanding ourselves in our emotions, we seek communication in language as the most expeditious way to understand ourselves and be understood in teaching, and in general in life, the construction of human knowledge in the actions of teaching “requires the creation of a collective and participatory knowledge based on equal cognitive and emotional exchanges, knowledge as emancipation, rather than knowledge as regulation” (SANTOS, 1998, p. 30, our translation). This knowledge as emancipation is dignified as understanding permeates with emotional empathy, full of emotion and relevance; of that emotion, the giver of emotional life, with an adequate role of understanding and in love as Humberto Maturana many times defended; In teacher training, in times of misunderstanding we combine love as the maximum emotion as complex ethics, ecosophy, as the art of inhabiting the planet that redefines the biology of the human being with the soul and spirit in a claim in the recivilization of the humanity (MORÍN, 2002).

*What is love for Humberto Maturana?* We saw in his writings (MATURANA, 2003) that love is the emotion that founds the social phenomenon, and education is it par excellence, every time one destroys love, social coexistence disappears. Well, love is something very common, very simple, at the same time very fundamental to life. This meeting in which we accept each other occurs only under the rule of the emotion of love, and if this emotion fades and we continue to meet in education, there would be hypocrisy in the disposition in which we act as if we accept each other without doing so.

Humberto Maturana (1999, p. 227, our translation) in his work on sensitivity-love expresses that love “is only the foundation of our human existence as the type of primates that we are as human beings”. That love, which in Humberto Maturana bequeathed to humanity, must be retaken on planet-earth as life and act with all its elements, and human beings united to nature, the fair treatment of the earth and resources, with the Ecosophical awareness, these excellences must be taken as urgent in human formation.

It is urgent in this detachment of the inhuman, of the insufficiency in our civilization to question ourselves:

What use have great advances made to human beings that take us further away from being happy, from peace and living in full contamination, scarcity, hoarding, while on the other hand, the belts of misery are unbearable, war seeks victory far from peace, selfishness for our fellow human beings wins over love? (RODRÍGUEZ; MIRABAL, 2020, p. 296, our translation).

It is recommended that in education, regardless of the discipline or level, the problems of humanity that are addressed when answering this question are of interest and are approached from different *feelthinks* and emotions.

Therefore, recognizing ourselves in teacher training as humans is essential. How much do we think about it in teacher training? We know that the beliefs are many, because the teacher is permeated with a technique of how to teach, instead of how to understand us; and we isolate innovations and creativity techniques from emotions to implement them in the classroom and in the orientation of research and other knowledge creation projects. It is already known, at least from the writings of Célestin Freinet, that we need an education focused on human integrity, instead of the one we still have, focused on curricular, cognitive, memorized components, but almost always disconnected from life itself (FORTUNATO, 2016).

In teacher training, the management of emotions is essential, not all of them are good and should be expressed in the best way. It is a duty of a human being who looks at the consequences of his actions in the other, what are emotions? Humberto Maturana (2002) answers: the emotion that makes possible the systemic look in which wisdom is given in reflection and action, is love. Humberto Maturana returns to remind us of the exaltedness of the greatest emotion: love.

Note the convergence in the categories of Humberto Maturana, Paulo Freire, Edgar Morín in many of his works cry out for a recivilization of humanity; all human beings are experts in the biology of love, and in education, “the biology of love consists precisely in the

teacher accepting the legitimacy of their students as valid beings in the present, correcting only their doing and not their be” (MATURANA; NISIS, 2002, p. 25, our translation).

*But are teachers, including us, prepared to accept the biology of love as part of their training?* We have already managed to start a debate on affectivity in teaching training and practice (MONTEIRO; FORTUNATO, 2020). Although it is also essential, working on training so that affections are identified and understood is not precisely developing ways of promoting love, for life, for others, for the homeland we inhabit. Loving goes beyond discovering the things that affect us in the teaching and learning movement. If we are not trained in the excellence of love, a human condition among others, we are unable to teach with such urgent conditions to understand ourselves in practice.

*What is being educated and to educate from love?*

Here an essential category emerges: the *feelthink*. This is a category hosted by Alexander Sutherland Neill, English educational theorist; founder of the school called Summerhill in 1921, which constitutes one of the most innovative pedagogical experiments in the world, being the oldest democratic school still in operation; “Most of the school work adolescents do is simply a waste of time, of energy, of patience. It robs youth of its right to play and play and play, it puts old heads on young shoulders” (NEILL, 1963, p. 27).

Alexander Neill is an inspiration, as she was not disappointed by unfavorable circumstances for the establishment of a freer school, focused on humanity and not on the content of the curriculum. She faced educational authorities and even families who did not agree that their children should be educated without being punished with the use of a belt, if they could not memorize the poems or the capitals of the countries. But, Neill (1978, p. 52-70) maintained her ideals, such as: “in my school we have faith in the inner personality”; or “the freedom to study is not a prejudice in life, but that study is a matter of less importance: life itself is the criterion, not exams or intelligence tests”.

In addition, Neill (1972, p. 32) took into account that school planning should not focus on the development of schedules, exams and make-up dates, and even less on the official curriculum; it should focus on a single fundamental question: “What can we do to make people happier and more efficient in their work, more balanced in character, more satisfied in their emotional lives?” It is no coincidence that we have already recognized the similarities between Summerhill's educational proposal, aimed at the triad of freedom-happiness-self-government, and Edgar Morin's maxim from the work *well-made head* (FORTUNATO, 2018): both authors understand the importance of the intervention of *feelthink* for a more loving and fuller life.

That excellence of *feelthink* is undoubtedly urgent in teacher training to understand and train increasingly convulsed minds in an inhuman world, in which there is a cry for the recivilization of humanity (MORÍN, 2001). It is to consider that *feelthink* is studied and taken up again with ideas according to the new needs and as this it can be explained that “reason and science are not exclusive properties to build the world but that emotion and the senses have a full immersion in this, this has been one of the errors in the creation of knowledge” (RODRÍGUEZ, 2021a, p. 8, our translation).

Said author Fals Borda (2015, p. 10, our translation) speaks of a *feelthink* sociology for Latin America, “the *feelthink* man who combines reason and love, the body and the heart, to get rid of all the (bad) formations that dismember that harmony and being able to tell the truth”. All these subjectivities are rescued by Humberto Maturana in his intentionality in each of his works with categories such as: emotions, pedagogy of sensitivity, love, language, among others.

To educate in *feelthink* is to educate the other in justice and in solidarity, we must be formed of these excellences, we must form in uniqueness; is to educate in the biology of love, recognizing that emotion is the basis of reason (MATURANA, 1999) and that love is the therapy of the universe, the first medicine in the face of any disease or hopelessness, regardless of age, region or country.

Thus, in education in schools and universities, there is an urgent need to review the way to structure itself as a formal, bureaucratic institution, focused on concrete results. This structure can be reviewed in the light of these categories that emerge with Humberto Maturana as love and *feelthink*, seeking to reverse the objective purposes of the educational institution by making it a human structure. In this way, we must configure a responsible action, under the awareness of evaluating our praxis and its consequences that establishes our commitment to the consequences of what we do “because it makes us aware that we do what we do because we want the consequences of what we do” (MATURANA, 2002, p. 116, our translation).

This wonderful pragmatics of love in life is expressed by the biologist, even more than conceiving the *Humana Conditio* as a planetary emergency demands a new way of thinking, it requires a complex thought suitable to think metamorphosis, ethics and politics of humanity in the era planetária, already so well delineated by Morín (2011).

For this reason, with Humberto Maturana we return to the need for high-level metacognitive development in education to permeate that need to think and lead ourselves to truly human actions, and promote such excellence in education. The education that

encourages one to be imbued beyond rationality, towards emotional processes, “it is well known that the brain learns best when it is excited and is not constrained by the restrictions of the imagination; in the tetra: body-mind-soul-spirit in full complexity in teaching” (RODRÍGUEZ, 2020, p. 5, our translation).

Now from love we promote with Humberto Maturana the pedagogy of sensitivity that should not be confused with a lack of demand, with a decrease in a dialectical dialogue of a high metacognitive level; no; which says that this pedagogy must be given from the highest level of language and communication of human beings: love. And for this, we must renew the definition of conscientization provides learning together with the perspectives of meaning (FREIRE, 1974), these perspectives of meaning create and contribute to the formation of a liberating personality, activator of its own disconnection and in constant re-link to always go to fundamental and redemptive contributions of the human being (RODRÍGUEZ, 2021b).

To make this possible, we set up with Humberto Maturana a distinction between praxis, reflection, illusion and the highest expression: love. And they do it under the belief that human biology can lead to magnificent expressions of love. But we must recognize that an old custom, that imposed patterns, that the externalized ways of behaving, that the lack of love with the system can lead us to restrict ourselves and blur us from our true sense of existence on earth: service to the other.

The works of Humberto Maturana incite us to examine our foundation of reasoning in emotions and language to make our reason lodged in the mind-spirit more complex. This autopoietic of being leads us to subvert reason as the reasoning of the mind only, and think of it in the rector of the human being: his spirit, as energy that does not die. In this, ecosophy as an expression of love has the possibility of realization in a utopia in praxis, recalling the Freirian legacy. And it is that the three ecologies: social, environmental and spiritual become more complex in the complex biology of being for maximum expressions of realization and action before the planet earth.

We are careful from the feeling that we have been completely free to redeem ourselves with the contributions of the works of Humberto Maturana as ecosophies in complex interventions, which reconcile us in a teacher training of a high cognitive level. In this we must be aware of a liberation of the human being in its best essences and sensibilities that welcome us and examine us as sincerely human and that we must permeate and open up said excellence in teacher training. Let us not forget that educators confirm and reaffirm the world in which we educate ourselves when we educate; For this reason, we must detach ourselves from the inhuman conceptions that paradoxically demystify the human being in the process of

education. The benefit in the pedagogy of sensitivity is a decision to know ourselves as unfinished teachers, lacking in love in which we demystify that feeling, thinking most of the time placing them as weaknesses, and on the contrary it is a potential to educate highly: love.

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