

CAN WE TEACH HUMAN RIGHTS? DIDACTIC CONSIDERATIONS FROM A LASALLIAN VIEWPOINT

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ABSTRACT

The theme of human rights has become more and more compelling in today's world, whether that is through the struggles to advance these rights or through their evident absence. For the Lasallian World in particular there is a body of facts from the studies of UNESCO which must powerfully call out attention and sharpen out sensitivity to the reality that surrounds us, just as De La Salle did in his day. Given this tension, the present article proposes to advance certain reflections on the why, the how and the for-what-end we should teach human rights in the formal and the informal settings. With this intention in mind, the text has two parts: in the first, I try to show the relevance of this topic in the Lasallian World; in the second, I will make some epistemological assertions in order to situate human rights as a didactic entity and suggest some pragmatic approaches to teach them.

Key words: Education for Human Rights, conflict, didactic triangle, attention.

*The guardian angels do not limit themselves to the task of enlightening
the mind of the persons confided to their care
with the wisdom they will need to know the will of God in their regard in order to be saved.
Besides this, they inspire them and furnish the means to do the works proper to them.
God not only makes use of them to free those entrusted to them from the power of darkness
and help them to progress in his knowledge
but also to live in a manner worthy of God.
In this way they will be pleasing to God and fruitful in every kind of good works;
the angels, in virtue of the commission they have received from God,
the Father of Lights and of all Good,
are filled with zeal for his kingdom and contribute,
as far as they are able,
to render their charges worthy to take part in the destiny of the Blessed.*

St. John Baptist de La Salle (MR 198,2)

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Introduction

With every passing day the topic of education for Human Rights acquires greater focus in international and national contexts. It is not a matter of the latest “in” topic but rather one of dramatic actuality. Tunnerman appears to have affirmed this toward the end of the last century when he wrote:

We see a universal ethical conscience emerging which is compatible with the majority of individual ethical codes as well as religious beliefs. It is expressed in the new paradigms proclaimed by the large international conferences which the United Nations has convoked in the present decade: sustainable human development, the respect intrinsic to human rights, equality of genders, social development as an essential factor of economic growth and the paradigm of the Culture of Peace, so dear to UNESCO (1999:8).

Although we cannot omit mentioning, as an important note of caution, that some authors, such as Dezalay and Garth (2002) point out that the revolution in Human Rights appeared as an alternative political strategy of the North American reforming politicians who have since been displaced by conservatives, and as a response to the governmental chaos and economic crisis of the 70s, that gave rise to a series of philanthropic organizations and NGOs which they do not hesitate to call “moral entrepreneurs” for what they denounce as a possible and dangerous commercialization of the discourse on Human Rights.

Given this tension, the present article proposes to offer certain reflections as to the why, the wherefore and the how of education on Human Rights in the contexts of both formal and non formal education. With that intention in mind, our text has two parts: in the first we show the relevance of this topic in the Lasallian world; in the second, some epistemological approaches are made to situate Human Rights as a teachable object and some practical methods are suggested for that teaching.

A reality that can disquiet us

Following the Lasallian logic in which we let ourselves to be challenged by reality, by listening carefully in order to see more clearly, it is important to consider some elements which strongly emphasize the necessity that the Lasallian educational mission continues to incorporate the topic of Human Rights, with all its consequences, especially as they affect boys and girls and adolescents².

To do this, I will touch on some elements presented in the 2011 Report which is a follow up on Education for All (EFA) of UNESCO entitled *A Hidden Crisis, Armed Conflict and Education*. I don't intend to make an exhaustive analysis of reality but just to touch on some points which might stimulate reflection and a more profound reading of this and other similar documents.

² Well worth remembering, among others, the immense work of Lasallian Educational Observatory for the Rights of children and youth in Latin America and the Caribbean, resulting in multiple projects and activities, among which is the training session on Human Rights, Right to Education and Human Rights Education with the significant participation of representatives from districts of RELAL and ARLEP in the city of Geneva, Switzerland, from 10 to 14 October 2011, in association with the BICE (Bureau International Catholic Child).

An aspect to keep in mind in this regard is the right to an education, so much a part of the Lasallian spirit. We can see this in the drop in the number of boys and girls without schooling all over the world. Nevertheless, that achievement has not been sufficient if we are talking about the fulfillment of one of the objectives for 2015 which is universal primary education for all children. According to the Report 2011, in 2008, worldwide, there were still 67 million unschooled children, more than 33% of the children in the countries with the lowest income. There are three principal factors that aggravate this condition: being a girl, belonging to a poor family and living in a country affected by conflict. The gravest matter is that since 2004 we find a slowing down in the process of universal primary education which has worsened after 2008 owing to the impact of the worldwide crisis. With this in mind, we can foresee that by 2015 there may be between 72 million children without schooling, in the most optimistic hypothesis, and 108 million, using the more pessimistic hypothesis.

The UNESCO Report 2011 shows that half of the world's children deprived of schooling are to be found in only 15 countries. Of these there is a Lasallian presence in 12: Nigeria, Pakistan, India, Ethiopia, Niger, Kenya, Philippines, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Brazil, Thailand and South Africa. This means, in my interpretation, that there are two big conclusions: that the Lasallian mission is where it out to be, and that we have a great challenge for our passion (zeal) and our creativity as we face a difficult panorama in guaranteeing the right to an education for the boys and girls of these regions.

Another aspect of the Report deals with Higher education, an area remarkable for its growth in the Lasallian World in the last decades and, for that reason, has to do with the guarantee of the social and economic rights. The UNESCO Report 2011 affirms that higher education is on the rise all over the world: in 2008 the institutions of higher education had 65 million more students enrolled than in 1999. However, this is a growth which underscores the disparities in the levels of students matriculated; for example, in North America and Western Europe, the overall rate of higher education is 70% while in Sub-Saharan Africa it only reaches 6%. We see this gap emphasized when we take investment in this sector into account.

In this regard, if we pay attention to the Report 2011 and the UNESCO tradition, Higher education is affected by *three factors of great importance in the era of globalization: productivity, job creation and competition*. So then, the widening of this gap with the possibility of aspiring to a Higher education will only augment the extreme inequalities already existing between the countries of the world in terms of human development. This is precisely what the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) points out:

Latin America continues to be the most unequal region of the world. Therefore to advance toward a more equal distribution of incomes and other economic factors continues to be one of the most important unfinished tasks for the future. The marked disparity of distribution of the countries of Latin America can be noted when we compare the relation between incomes in this manner: the median income of persons of households in the wealthiest 10% is more than 17 times that of the 40% of the poorest households. This relation is highly variable from one country to another and goes from around 9 times in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and of Uruguay but up to 25 times in Colombia. For its part, the per capita income of the 20% of the richest is more than 20 times that of the poorest, with a range between ten times (Uruguay) and 33 times (Honduras) (CEPAL 2008: 19).

With these findings, the challenge for the network of Lasallian universities is enormous. Firstly, because the aim of a democratization of learning permits, whether that be through access to the institutions for the poorest, or that the benefits of learning produced by academe be at the service of the

social and productive transformation of the nations and, therefore, of equality and social justice. And, secondly, because the educational process leads to the formation of happy citizens, committed in creatively building up a development that will be quite distinct from the dynamics of destruction of neoliberal capitalism and with the necessary skills to discover or create a place in the world for the professions and the field of labor. 41

What the Report 2011 calls *deficit of competencies* is an endemic evil that attacks nations both poor and rich and which poses serious questions for the university systems, for the pedagogy of Higher education and for the formation of teachers, aspects about which Lasallian education has a great deal to say. To that point, the words of Brother Alvaro Rodríguez in the X Encounter of the International Association of Lasallian Universities in the Philippines was very apropos:

A university program that was only aimed at the promotion of a technological development, that only intended to provide the pragmatic tools of a career, or that would be satisfied with the enjoyment of classical humanism, would have little to do with the memory and the hope. But, to the contrary, a program that would not be content with the repetition of yesterday's curriculum, but rather with the research and the discovery of new knowledge, inspiring youth for the transformation of the world and society with a view toward the common good, is a program that lives in creative and fruitful tension to be the memory and the hope (Rodríguez, 2012).

The third aspect, which is the one which most interests me for the purposes of this article, is the one that concerns the perverse effects of war on the education of boys and girls. The UNESCO Report 2011 identifies 35 countries that during the period 1999-2008 were affected by what is called armed conflict³. Of these in 19 (that is, 54%) there is the presence of a Lasallian work. Thus:

COUNTRIES IN CONFLICT IN WHICH THERE IS A LASALLIAN PRESENCE				
REGION	RELAF Lasallian African-Malgache Region	RELAL, Latin American Lasallian Region.	PARC Region, Asia and Oceania.	RELEM Region, Europe and the Mediterranean.
COUNTRY	Ivory Coast, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sudan.	Colombia (two districts)	Philippines, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand.	Palestine and Turkey.

Source: Grid provided by the information of the Institute on its webpage, www.lasalle.org

However, to this number of countries we would have to add others that do not appear in the list of the Report but which have undergone serious problems of intense violence, for example, Mexico (which has a strong Lasallian presence), during the period from 2006 to 2010, had 28,000 deaths due to the violence related to the traffic of drugs. This figure is greater than all the deaths occurring in the combat zones of Afghanistan from 1999 to 2008. We would also have to look at countries such as Guatemala and Honduras, also plagued by the drug war and the gangs. We can likewise speak of the grave

³ According to these criteria: it considers any country where there were over 1,000 deaths due to fighting during the period 1999-2008, plus any country with more than 200 dead from fighting in any year during the period between 2006 and 2008. The dead for fighting are both civilian and military (UNESCO Report 2001, p.156).

problem of the violation of human rights in China and even of the topic of immigrants in the United States and Europe⁴.

The UNESCO Report (2011) dedicates the second part (four chapters) to a serious analysis of the effects of war on the education of boys, girls and adolescents, and of the profound transformations that the nations must engage in if they truly aspire to a new and different world. Reading these chapters might, in some sections, lead to pessimism but it may serve, from the point of view of the faith, to nurture hope. In this sense it would be desirable that from focus of *Lasallian Pedagogy for the Educational Service of the Poor* in the coming International Assembly of the Lasallian Educational Mission of 2013 (II AIMEL) a official pronouncement would be made for the Lasallian World that would be a choice for an education for peace and the full enjoyment of human rights.

Within this framework, I only want to pause briefly on one of the multiple aspects that war inflicts on education and it is that, if in truth, it is not the source of the conflict nor is it the solution for the question, it does infer structural dimensions of societies, and it also is certain that without an education for peace they will never address the roots of the conflicts and that in the day to day efforts there remains much to be done. So the UNESCO Report 2011 tells us:

In order for the schools to be able to contribute to the creation of peaceful societies, they must begin by offering the children a peaceful atmosphere. The schools and the teachers can help the students to learn to resolve conflicts by means of dialogue and to regard violence as an unacceptable recourse. Unfortunately, in the schools themselves we can find high levels of violence and violent conduct is often fostered between young people when they are socializing (p. 191).

To convert the culture of the school to a culture of peace is a challenge for the Lasallian educational mission which is urged, as the Report 2011 says, to make education a force for peace and this, without a doubt, has to do with a good teaching of human rights.

Towards the Teaching of Human Rights

The purpose of this second part is to suggest the outlines of a proposal for the teaching of Human Rights. We start in this direction with some points as a sort of justification, then, we will look at the

⁴ For Colombia, Amnesty International, although accused of a disturbing neutrality (Dezalay and Garth, 2002) reported: more than 182 people were victims of forced disappearances during the 12 months prior to July 2008, compared with 119 for the same period in 2007. Significantly increase the number of new cases of forced displacement: 191,000 in the first half of 2007 to 308,000 people in 2011. The south of the country was affected especially due to continued fighting between the security forces, paramilitaries and guerrilla groups. These children recruited by force. The state security forces used minors as informants against the directive issued in 2007 by the Ministry of Defense, which prohibited the employment of children under 18 for information. The killing of dozens of young men from Soacha, near the capital, Bogotá, forced the government to finally recognize that security forces were responsible for the murders. According to reports, the killing of these young people falsely presented by the military as "guerrillas killed in combat" - was carried out in collusion with paramilitary groups or criminal gangs. In November 2008, during a visit to Colombia, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia said that extrajudicial killings were apparently systematic and widespread. Between 2006 and 2008, authorities exhumed the bodies of 1,441 graves of about 1778 people who had been victims of enforced disappearances at the hands of paramilitaries. At the end of 2008, only had been identified and returned to their families the remains of nearly 300 victims. The exhumations were seriously flawed, making it difficult to identify both the victims and those responsible for his death (Amnesty International Report 2009 and 2011).

objective of the teaching of Human Rights and do some reflections on the levels of the teaching and the implications of the relations of the didactic triangle in its teaching.

To teach Human Rights it is necessary to abandon any fear that comes over us (the adult world) when we address the topic of rights. On not a few occasions I have observed in the social media and particularly with teachers, the complaint that we live in a culture that puts too much emphasis on rights and too little on duties. I think we confuse rights with privileges and duties with responsibilities. For that reason we must work very hard in the teaching of the rights that engender an awareness of the very responsibilities but does not suppose that the rights, which are inalienable and are inherent to human dignity, depend on the fulfillment of the duties. This seems to me to be a position that easily ends up as a depersonalizing authoritarianism, proper to an authoritarian and vertical scholastic culture.

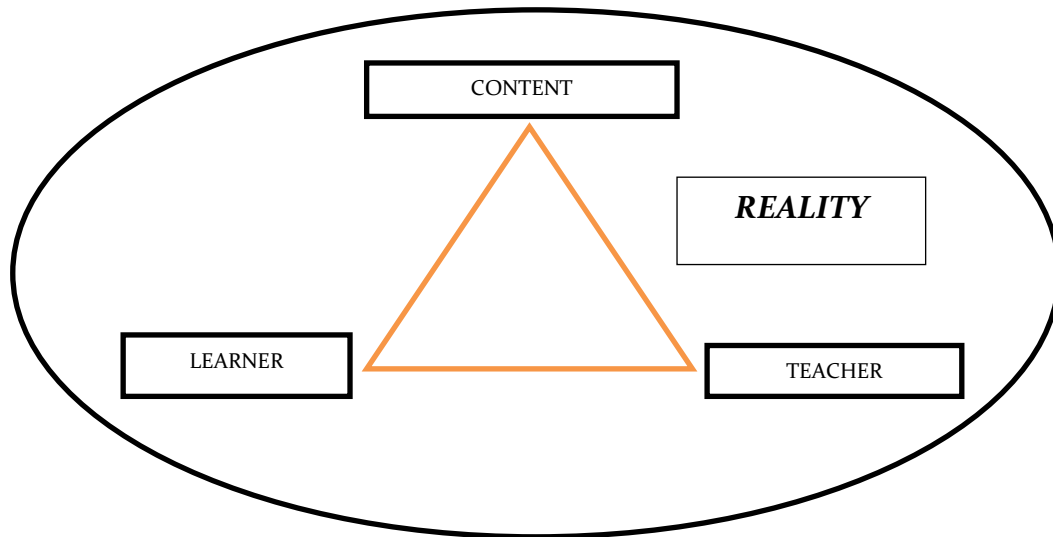
On the other hand, at the present time, Education for Human Rights (EHR) can count on sufficient juridical and national and international legal backing for its development on the educational scenarios, both formal and non-formal. Said recognition goes from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948⁵ and passes through all the declarations and conventions promulgated by the UN and its associate organisms, in such a way that the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1994 proclaimed the period comprised between 1995 to 2004 as the Decade of the United Nations for Education in the sphere of Human Rights. In this respect, that Assembly affirmed that:

(...) Education in the sphere of Human Rights should not be circumscribed by the transmission of information but that it should constitute an integral process that lasts the whole of life so that persons at every level of development and all the strata of society may learn to respect the dignity of the neighbor and what are the means and mechanisms to watch over that respect in every society (High Commission of the United Nations for Human Rights 2003:15).

It is also worth mentioning that, as has been shown in the first part, that we live in difficult times for the practice of human rights and that the institutions of education do not always favor structures that make possible the growth of a culture of respect and self-esteem, but it is clear that there has been much accumulated experience of governmental and non-governmental organisms that can be utilized as a species of “pedagogical capital” on the part of concerned, creative and non-conformist teachers and administrators who are convinced that rights are teachable and who feel, as Maestro Pablo Freire believed, that if it is true that education does not change the world, it does change the persons who are going to change the world.

After these considerations I put forward as justification, I state a working hypothesis: human rights are teachable and therefore are the object of didactic reflection as to how this can be taught. I am going to situate this reflection on the possibilities of what has been called the didactic triangle present to us, something that the French specialists in this area made famous in the 20th century. The figure suggests a basic model to plan this teaching in a dialogue between the relations of each one of the three vertices with one another.

⁵ Its text says: “The General Assembly proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble, 1948).

The didactic triangle in the teaching of Human Rights

Source. Author 2012.

The content makes reference to that which can be taught or developed (skills, abilities, knowledge, hypotheses, theories). The relation between the subject who learns and the teacher with regard to that which can be learned is called *pedagogic relation*. The relation between the subject who learns and what is to be learned (content), through the mediation of the teacher is called *apprenticeship*. And the relation between the teacher and that which should be learned (content) is called *teaching*. Besides this, as the triangle shows, all of this takes place in a real, historical and cultural situation. It clearly has to do with some analytical distinctions, for the process is a complex whole, irreducible to fragmentations. But the intellectual exercise of the model permits us to explore valuable didactic considerations.

The upper vertex, that has been called content, has to do with the teach ability of human rights. The question is: **What is it that is taught?** The answer would be: the formation of the subject of rights through certain objectives that deal with:

- The knowledge of the basic legal bodies. This refers to the fundamental rights of persons, to their historical origins and to the struggles that made their present enunciation possible. It also refers to their application and defense before the State. To know the institutions, the structure of the State and the mechanisms allied to the protection of rights is not just an academic matter but an ability that can generate possible actions and therefore greater power to participate in the promotion and the defense of one's own rights as well as those of others (Magendzo, 2005).
- The development of language abilities. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are not just skills for scholastic success, but rather abilities useful for the rest of life in the great world. With these the subjects will be able to read the world like a textbook and, by means of dialog with that world, unravel its meanings and mores. Also it addresses the possibility of building,

reforming, maintaining, imagining and coming up with answers that resolve problems. And, most importantly, it provides the possibility of coordinating actions that may affect reality in an inter-subjective manner. Magendzo affirms this (2005):

(...) The subject/person of rights is someone who does not orient his actions with the purpose of pleasing others and that these others are the ones who have the power to determine if his life has meaning or not. The ability to forge one's future, of self affirmation and self esteem, of 'standing on one's own two feet', of taking one's place in society, committed to the common good, with 'the public' (Magendzo, 2005, p.39).

- The development of autonomy: as the ability which ought to develop in a dynamic which is more relational than individualistic and cognitive. That is to say, like that of a person conscious of his liberty in relation with the limits that the other person, an individual distinct from himself, pure otherness, has in his regard. So then, moving beyond a sterile and vague respect, this relation is reciprocity built on recognition.
- Learning to take care for oneself, for others and for the world. Here we see the actualization of the Lasallian principle of vigilance, which supposes a high degree of accompaniment and of maintenance. I only learn to take care if I have been cared for by others. We are not speaking here of a negative and paralyzing paternalism but of creating the possibilities of a well-being and a quality of life for all that permits the happy and productive achievement of life projects. So, Magendzo states (2005):

The topic of the rights of a person who is vigilant for other: (...) His job to be vigilant is not one of control nor of censure but is one of welcoming, of making the learning of the historical memory an existential, ethical happening, an act of openness to the story that "others" have to tell, of their pains and sufferings. It means disposing oneself to the transcendent and real maturing of the "others", of their ups and downs (Magendzo, 2004, p.41).

- Developing the capacity to know oneself. This objective has to do with what has been called interpersonal skills or even spiritual intelligence, in the sense of circumspection, an ability to reflect on oneself, which helps to discover, represent and symbolize one's own feelings and emotions, one's moods, one's strengths and limitations. These skills ought to be that which will permit the building up of interiority by oneself as well as the interior transformation itself. Conversion supposes an exercise, an ascesis that John Baptist de La Salle describes in recollection, silence and fruitful solitude. This work on oneself can be seen in the self formative exercises which cause the individual to be responsible for his own destiny; capable of giving meaning to the experiences he is living (Molano and Torres, 2012).

Based on this object and the objectives of teaching Human Rights, the question in relation to the learning and teaching brings us to an epistemological level and it is: **What sort of knowledge is that which has to do with Human Rights?**⁶

⁶ The reflections on hermeneutics, didactic and narrative retake the discussion in the text: *Aportes para promover la sensibilidad hacia los Derechos humanos en la educación religiosa escolar* [Contributions to promote sensitivity to human rights in school religious education] (Milton Molano, José Siciliani, and Daniel Castaneda Djebrail Turriago) Chapter of the book *Educación en Derechos Humanos* [Human Rights Education], Marieta Quintero and Milton Molano (Unisalle, 2010).

The answer to this question can be understood in a more exact way if we look at it from a hermeneutical, epistemological perspective. We might consider it as a way “in which understanding of social reality is assumed under the metaphor of a text which is capable of being interpreted.” (Sandoval, 1996: 67). In addition, continuing with Sandoval who quotes Odman (1998), “the purpose of the hermeneutics is to expand understanding in order to see other cultures, groups, individuals, conditions and life styles with the double perspective of the present and the past” (Sandoval, 1996: 67). Or, in the words of Ricœur himself:

...the task of hermeneutics is to show that only existence accedes to the word, the sense and the reflection that comes from an exegesis of all the meanings that take place in the world of culture; existence –human and adult- does not come about on its own. What it does do is appropriate that meaning which first resides “outside”, in works, institutions and monuments of culture, where the life of the spirit has become concrete objects (Ricœur, 2003, p. 26).

That is, a hermeneutical perspective in didactic terms for human rights permits a subject to configure his identity in relations with others on understanding how subjects in time are constituted as the authors and the interpreters of their own existence. Man interprets his own life and action, in such a way that only he understands, articulates and re-creates it on encountering the world of the text, causing meaning to arise.

Thus an epistemological perspective suggests the need for pedagogical and didactical practices in the most profound sense of action and discourse which break down and then build up reality in a tension between the horizon of meaning and the daily happening of life. And so we come to the methodological question: **How do we teach human rights?** These practices materialize in coherent activities with the hermeneutical proposal, some of which can be seen in the following graph:

Practices for teaching human rights

Types	Description	Activities
Practices of reflection	Knowledge and care for oneself. Circumspection in order to reach some relevant question. Subjectivity as the topic in question. Expressing what one finds about one's self. Practices are carried out designed for that purpose or in spaces of small activities of reflection.	Works with body images. Analysis of physical and attitudinal changes. Biographical writing. Exercises of self evaluation. Personal interviews. Adopting the proper sentiments and points of view regarding situations of conflict. Exercises of self regulation.
Practices of deliberation	Questions about the best way to live can be clarified by using rational arguments. Reality is enunciated and understood. It begins with a question about a controversial topic. Moral judgment, dialog, comprehension. Its subject is “a group”. Debate and change of opinions and attitudes.	Class assemblies. Resolution of conflicts and school mediation. Debate sessions. Considerations of vital and curriculum matters. Discussion of dilemmas Role playing exercises. Exercises in critical thinking.

Types	Description	Activities	
Practices of virtue	They characterize what is human. Habits of agreeing with criteria and values which are adapted to particular situations. They look for models of excellence. Virtuous conduct. They practice solidarity. They list values but some predominate. They depend on the ethical and moral tradition.	Methods of cooperative learning. Using and revision classroom responsibilities. Feasts and celebrations. Carrying out projects. Formation of work groups.	
Normative practices	Setting up rules through planning, deliberation and use. Rules and regulations are learned especially through use: "learning how to do". They have a general character but their application is singular.	Learn to use the Rules	Rules that outrank the other practices of value.
	The command of rules depends on their use. They are learned through immersion. They are events which are punctual, disperse and ubiquitous. They are produced abundantly. They are transversal practices. They come about with little previous planning and scarce awareness. They lead to speaking and deliberating on the norms set up and to proposing modifications through deliberation and reflection.	Deliberation And reflection on the rules	Activities for: working the concept of "rules". Approximating the rules of civic conduct, of circulation or other codes. Review of the rules of class. For analyzing some rules for school. For explaining the rules for some non habitual spaces or places (outings, excursions, etc.) Anticipating the transgressions of the rules (carnivals)

Source: Drawn from Puig Rovira (2003)⁷

The use of narrative has an especially strong power as a method. For example, with regard to the loss of rights, Arendt says, narrative as method can be used to relate what has happened to those who do not have voice and to come to understand the political phenomena that brought about disastrous situations. Thus, three narrative structures are used as interpretive background for the story of the victims. These are: metaphor by means of which the social reality is conceptualized in poetic form; the story, as the singular exposition of memory and also biography is found as a narrative structure to link together identity and narrative and enunciates the political circumstances of daily life (Quintero and Ramirez, 2009).

⁷ Table adapted from text: *Reflexiones pedagógicas en torno a la educación para los Derechos humanos: El profesor como artesano* [Pedagogical reflections about the human rights education: The teacher and craftsman] (Milton Diego Molano and Barragan). Chapter of the book *Educación en Derechos Humanos* [Human Rights Education], Marieta Quintero and Milton Molano (Unisalle, 2010).

Another consideration taken from Arendt is the political dimension of the narrative; “this memory guarantees that the political actors and their actions are lasting so that they not only share but remain as a common political history” (Quintero and Ramirez, 2009; 42). The narratives of sufferings are not just fragments that evoke the past but “the memory that saves us from the insupportable reality of those sufferings” (Quintero and Ramirez, 2009, 43).

What must be taken into account is that arriving at other stories, whatever they may be, is more meaningful if they are based on one’s own experience. Gadamer (2005) believes that experience produces, in the one who lives it, a species of “knowledge about one’s self” that lets one recognize oneself in what is strange in the other, in what was not foreseen, in what was not expected, in what does not usually happen in the day-to-day. For that reason, according to Gadamer, an experienced person not only is one who has grown through experiences but also is one who is open to new experiences.

It is important to understand that one’s own story needs the story of the “other”. Ricœur (2004) affirms that one’s own abilities need an interlocutor who can initiate a dialog. So, for example: naming someone who is able to respond. The action necessarily is with other actors. A life biography (one’s own story) is made up of a multitude of stories. The lack of responsibility becomes my responsibility before others and, finally, the promise requires a witness who receives it and marks it down.

In this way, it is understood that the other person’s story shapes and constitutes my own story. On reading the history of other personages, other nations, mutuality is built up that completes the initial story, the story of the proper “I”. Here it is that biblical stories, exemplary lives, the lives of heroes, or the lives of persons today, family histories, the lives of companions, the Midrash, the stories of Sufis, Buddhist parables, chronicles, ancestral accounts, all become relevant. And, in the particular case of human rights, the testimonies of the victims take on a special relevance.

Finally, one’s self and the other person arrive at the construction of a new story. Witherell, (2005) relating the experience of two professors who use narrative in their classrooms, states:

Both Hoan and John found the necessary instruments in story to construct two worlds, to transcend the barriers that are built up between generations, cultures and visions of the world. They shared their stories in such a way that it brought about a broad intercultural understanding of the human condition, furthering our sense of the fragility of human kindness and the scope of moral imagination. Through these and other narratives we became, even though for just a brief moment, a community: ‘a shared project of concern for what is human’ (Witherell, 2005. p. 84).

It is in that new story that brings us to the consolidation of a new sense of humanity. Here we find all positive dimension, all the possibilities the imaginative variations provide in order to think of a different world and in a different way.

It is worthwhile noting that these fine narratives will require of the teacher a special *posture* that us much more than verbal fluency, inflections in the tone of the voice and a great imagination nourished by many hours of literary study. What is more important is the conviction that human beings exist, move and have their being in the story, and that the narration, in addition to being a methodological pathway, has to do with a manner of constructing knowledge and subjectivities. In Gussin’s words:

Nor can we live without stories. In the absence of a narrative voice, we feel disconnected and alone; we are unable to convince, to entertain, to fascinate, to explain, to impress, to rationalize, to theorize, to sympathize with someone or create bonds. If we do not present ourselves playing a certain role, we cannot capture the attention of anyone, nor manage to be remembered by anyone (Gusssin, V. 2005, p.143).

Finally, according to my way of thinking, the most important thing is the question: **What should be the pedagogical relationship in the teaching of human rights?** The answer, in Lasallian thinking, is conclusive; it has to do with a relationship of accompaniment.

The Lasallian schools are privileged spaces of a culture of accompaniment in which all the members care for, and learn to care for one another. This is not the place to enter deeply into the links that might be made between Lasallian tradition and the ethics of care along the lines now being written, among others, by the North American philosopher Nel Noddings, but it is, without any doubt, a rich vein for those of us interested in the application of Lasallian investigation. In this article I only want to refer to what is important in the conversation about the learner-teacher relationship with the teaching of Human Rights.

Noddings (2009) establishes three types of conversation that would conduct us, in my opinion, to education in human rights. The first type is what is called *formal conversation* that in Habermas (1994) constitutes the central axis of his proposal of ethical discourse. Beyond Noddings' criticisms of the supposition of an ideal speaker which is the basis of this theory, because of the artificiality of the conversation, it is important to bring out the importance that the students manage to identify true and false arguments and also learn to detect the weak and the strong points of their own points of view. The attitude of openness in the debate to both convince or be convinced by the force of the arguments is of great usefulness in formation, because all the work with moral dilemmas is, doubtless, of great benefit in the processes of the development of the moral judgement of the subjects as they confront, for example, the understanding of the codes of law as the result of the many, many struggles of human beings for their dignity.

The second type of conversation is what Noddings (2009) calls *immortal conversation* and it refers to the links between religious traditions and the secular moral traditions proper to Western Humanism which are the basis or inspire certain types of values, attitudes and behaviors. Also beyond the criticisms on a certain elitism or sectarianism, which might come about from this type of conversation, it is important to underscore the important use of literature and narratives that I have already referred to, but above all to the possibility of asking *immortal* questions that spring from the conversation. Noddings states: "All the scholastic course matter can be related in some manner with the questions of immortality; without that relation, they are simple conglomerations of superficial capacities and concepts" (2009: 224). The immortal questions are like these: What is life? How did human life begin? Who am I? What is my place in the Cosmos? What is the meaning of life? Does God exist? Such questions will be the sparks that ignite the search and the research that describe the understanding of the world and of one's self and without a doubt will develop into a greater appreciation of human rights and a pathway that will rise above the barriers often imposed by school curricula.

Noddings (2009) calls the third type *day-to-day conversation*. It refers to those regular conversations, not monologues, in which the interlocutor is more important than the topic. The majority of adult communication with children, young people or students centers on precepts, commands or academic content, in which what matters, is the verification of information or the question of who is right or

wrong and not existence itself with its joys and sorrows, with its accomplishments and tragedies. When this is applied to conflicts, the possibility of their transformation is re-dimensioned, because what is more important is mutual respect, getting to know one another and the fulfilled promise of not harming one another, rather than some arrangement or the triumph of an argument. 50

The Lasallian School should be the place when the persons matter, where there are proper names and faces that have their story. It should be the place where easy going, day-to-day conversations have their space, where one's dignity is not an abstract concept but is manifest in a concern for one another that teaches us how to care and be cared for. I am convinced that these oases of humanity will transform the world.

We, as parents and teachers, have to live with our children, speak with them, listen to them, enjoy their company and teach them, by what we do and say, that it is possible to live in a respectful manner, or at least, not with violence, in dealing with others. At the end of the day, nothing guarantees that a person who was good for forty or seventy years will end his life being a good person. Tragedy can provoke strange and terrible things in us. Even though we back up our ordinary conversation with a good religious instruction, and efficient and sensible intellectual training or employ parenting techniques dictated by common sense, we cannot guarantee success. We can only keep trying and maintain relationships of love and trust with our children. We have to have faith in the results (Noddings, 2009: 231).

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