ULYSSES IN THE HIGH SCHOOL. LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL BASED ON THE MYTH OF ACHILLES[1]

Ulises en el Instituto. Liderazgo y escuela a partir del mito de Aquiles

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to think about school leadership in the adolescent stage in educational centres through the analysis of a myth from classical studies: the relationship between Ulysses and Achilles. Achilles in his stage in the gynaeceum as a figure of adolescence, and Ulysses as the character necessary to remove Achilles from the aesthetic stage of his life to enter the ethics and combat of adult life. We

intend to discover in the analysis of that relationship some obligations of the educator for a specific time in human life - adolescence - and we will essentially start from the analysis that Javier Gomá makes of that myth. Gomá focuses above all on the subjective evolution of Achilles as an example of a pathway that every human must travel, while here we also intend to reflect on the role of Ulysses in that transformation from adolescent to adult. An impossible transformation without the participation exemplified in Ulysses as an archetype of school leadership. In schools, this relationship of school leadership can be seen on two different levels. The first, the close view of the relationship established between teacher and student. The second, the leadership role of the management team over the centre in general, and also, although more indirect, over the students in particular. The aspects that we will point out in the text can have a translation on both planes. We end with some conclusions summarizing those ideas that can help to improve normative leadership in the school context.

Keywords: leadership; mythology; High School; cultural transmission; adolescence.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este texto es pensar el liderazgo educativo en la etapa adolescente en los centros educativos a través de un mito clásico. A partir de la relación existente entre Ulises y Aquiles. Aquiles en su etapa en el gineceo como figura de la adolescencia, y Ulises como el personaje necesario para sacar a Aquiles del estadio estético con el fin de adentrarse en el ético y el combate de la vida adulta. Pretendemos descubrir en el análisis de esa relación algunas obligaciones del profesor, en tanto que líder, para una época concreta en la vida humana, la adolescencia, y partiremos esencialmente del análisis que Javier Gomá hace de ese mito. Gomá se centra sobre todo en la evolución subjetiva de Aquiles como ejemplificación de un camino que todo humano debe recorrer, mientras que aquí pretendemos también reflexionar sobre el papel de Ulises en esa transformación del adolescente en adulto. Una transformación imposible sin la participación ejemplificada en Ulises como arquetipo de liderazgo educativo. En los centros educativos esta relación de liderazgo educativo puede observarse en dos planos distintos. El primero, el plano cercano de la relación que se establece entre profesor y estudiante. El segundo, el papel de liderazgo del equipo directivo sobre el centro en general, y también, aunque más indirecto, sobre los estudiantes en particular. Los aspectos que señalaremos en el texto pueden tener una traducción sobre ambos planos. Finalizamos con unas conclusiones resumiendo aquellas ideas que pueden ayudar a normativizar mejor el liderazgo en el contexto escolar.

Palabras clave: liderazgo; mitología; instituto; transmisión cultural; adolescencia.

1. THE VALUE OF THE MYTH IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES

Firstly, we need to justify why mythology can be used as a base for learning, what type of knowledge we will obtain, and how it can be used. The relationship between mythology and philosophy goes back a long time. Plato does not begin one

of the founding books on political philosophy with theoretical language, rather by narrating a situation and meeting. Plato's Republic, like other Plato texts, constantly refers to stories and myths. The rationale can be found at the heart of these stories. In this context, Pieper questions if continuously recurring to stories is a didactic resource which Plato used to transmit abstract ideas or whether there is much more to it (Pieper, 1984, p. 13), something which we will ask rhetorically further on.

> Could it not also occur that the reality with true extent for man does not possess the objective content structure, rather of the event. As a consequence, it cannot be suitably understood in a thesis, rather in a *praxeos mimesis* (the imitation of action), to use the language of Aristotle, or in other words, a story? (p. 14-15).

In fact, the stories include subtleties in human events, transmitting them through hearsay which express truths through actions imbued with meaning. Therefore, they can continue to be interpreted in the light of current culture as they reflect something essential which would be hard to express in any other way. When, as we shall later see, Javier Gomá uses the myth of *Aquiles en el gineceo (Achilles in the gynaeceum)* to describe some essential traits of adolescence, the myth does not function purely from the philosopher's imagination. Instead, it is the philosopher, through reflection, who sees a universal anthropological perspective in the mythical story, and readers can discover this truth because it is one which is particularly recognisable in their own life story, although thousands of years later. As a result, that character in the story, received through hearsay and not created ex novo, becomes relevant. Myths are not like any other story – they are not simple exercises in creativity. Their value lies in how they remain relevant throughout time. In some way, this continuity is a guarantee of the truth they transmit. If we can "hear" essentially the same as Plato, it is because the myths refer to matters of substance, generally related to the ultimate meaning of human life or its practice, which cannot be resolved any other way. They do not share a material truth, but can convey other types of truths impossible to define outside of a narrative, or be told without the need for persuasive force (Simmons, 2019).

Nor is it outside the scope of organisations to use literary fiction as a way of sharing knowledge (Navarro & Rodríguez, 2012). In this regard, the story we propose as a way of considering the relationship between school and leadership may serve to create a coherent model from which the dimensions of a leadership may be considered. This leadership, dues to its educational nature, is sought to be integral, even if it derives from a partial transfer. Certainly every educator, whether they are dedicated to the transfer of a part of human culture, mathematics, literature, science or whatever else, has that educational goal which goes beyond their subject even though it has its origins in it. Fiction works here as an archetype, which also forces us to present this knowledge in action enabling us to define the relationships and conflicts which occur in reality between the different dimensions of the model. The use of these stories, whether they be fictional or collected from true life stories in

the field of leadership in an educational context, is not a new topic and has already demonstrated its value (Armstrong, & McCain, 2021). This value is closely linked to aspects such as the generation of a narrative which gives meaning to the work of the leader. A meaning which helps to understand the experiences themselves. The experience of frustration or success, which are typical in leadership, always help to confront these situations, surely even more so if they are reflected as archetypes in well-known stories. When they are also promoted as part of the leadership training process, these narrative texts can teach us the educational value of vulnerability, enhance self-reflection, and encourage empathy and the ability to listen (Armstrong, & McCain, 2021)

2.   THE LITERATURE ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND ITS CURRENT LIMITATIONS

Before we begin to analyse the particular myth, which is the subject of this paper, we need to describe the state of research in this field, and explain why this literature has so many problems in enhancing normative knowledge. During the latter part of the 60s, the US government published the famous Coleman report (Coleman *et al.*, 1966). This report constitutes the first serious attempt to perform a systematic review of schools in North America (Carabaña, 2016), and among its objectives, it aimed to discover the key factors behind running a good school. The most interesting aspect of the study was the discovery, or rather the empirical finding, that it is the family background and the individual ability which are guiding factors to good educational performance, which Julio Carabaña sees more as a correlation than causality (Carabaña, 2016). Excluding this variable, the role of the teacher is clearly the most significant, above other variables such as the number of students per classroom or equipment available. This importance of the teacher has been widely analysed by the most up-to-date empirical literature and in all environments (Rivkin *et al.*, 2005; Fauth *et al.*, 2019; Liu & Loeb, 2021) as well as the effect not having good teachers has, which is an inverse way of proving the same (Lai *et al.*, 2020).

The most complicated issue in this type of literature is understanding what makes a teacher a good teacher (Goldhaber, 2002). Is it what this teacher has studied about education? This does not appear to be the case, or it is at least clearly up for debate (Boyd *et al.*, 2006). Perhaps it has more to do with experience – time teaching? This also seems to be debatable and evidence is unclear (Rivkin *et al.*, 2005). Sometimes teachers can become worse over the passage of time (Graham *et al.*, 2020). If good teaching is based on other factors which are not training or time in the profession, maybe good teaching is associated with matters which are more closely linked to the nurturing of intangible qualities which are not easily perceived in empirical literature. In this case, those which tie themselves to leadership ability. This would be the first level of leadership discourse – leadership in the classroom (Gil Cantero *et al.*, 2013).

However, we must ask what leadership is. A recent meta-analysis (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020) analyses the empirical literature and reaches some interesting conclusions. Firstly, there is a lack of a precise definition in the empirical research of what leadership actually is. This lack of precision is not surprising when we are talking about a dimension which encompasses aspects of human relationships which are poorly defined (Choi y Gil, 2017). A leader influences much more than gives orders. Influence is much more significant than the concept of formal authority. Formal authority permits the clear establishment of the power one person has over another, while the concept of influence is much more difficult to define. The outcome is that leadership cannot be easily considered as just one element linked to a hierarchical position, rather it is a dimension which is diffusely manifest in multiple aspects of life in an educational centre. Leadership affects performance, but also how teachers see themselves. A good leader also influences in the activity of other teachers who improve thanks to the influence of colleagues who act as leaders.

The classroom and the teacher undoubtedly make up the first level of leadership we can address, but there are more. On a second level, we find the centre and its management, about which there is also a significant amount of research. This level is also a very difficult concept to define (Galindo-Domínguez *et al.*, 2022). It is not easy to know what a management team does to make the school a good one. Although we can also currently find a lot of literature which studies the type of relationship between different types of school organisation and academic performance, these studies are somewhat inaccurate and on many occasions, contradictory. Thus, for Marzano and others (Marzano *et al.*, 2005) an effective school - an organisation which aspires to enhance learning and the education of young people - can manage to triple its expectations for students passing a school year and the leadership in the organisation is key to that success (Marzano *et al.*, 2005, pp. 4-6). Although as with good teaching, good management is difficult to define beyond phrases which appear to be mere common sense. The reasoning must be sought in the particularly practical and contextual character of all good leadership. The analysis of this literature allows us to at least glean some conclusions of interest.

In the first instance, a leadership study can also become a study about the school objectives. In effect, as leadership is a neutral term which requires orientation, leadership theories end up guiding the direction this influence should have. For instance, the abundant literature regarding leadership for social justice (Tintoré, 2018; Navarro-Granados, 2017) addresses the need for school management to face the problems of inclusion, cultural difference and inequality. In short, leadership attempts to offer a certain moral guidance in the educational field.

Secondly, leadership studies become dependent on deeper anthropological theories. It is no coincidence that when the bureaucracy born out of the modern age was still the mainstream, leadership studies were tied to effectiveness and hierarchical and formal management leadership. However, post-modern reality, weak

and apparently remote from bureaucratic rigidity and regulations, has given rise to approaches which defend distributed leadership (Bush, 2019a; Moral *et al.*, 2016; Murillo, 2006) and has become blurred to a certain extent, eschewing charismatic or heroic figures (Tintoré, 2019). Thus, although leadership may originate from one person's vision, it is always preferable for many people to quickly become involved in its defence and development (Bush, 2019b). Along similar lines, recognised as post-modern and more emotional than rational, are the theories behind transformational leadership. Human beings must be emotionally persuaded rather than rationally convinced, and the role of leadership is to influence the climate and culture through the correct handling of emotions. It is not with reasoning, orders or information that we can manage to involve others, rather with persuasion, as what is involved is changing beliefs, motivations and attitudes to align them with the goals of the institution itself (Anderson, 2017). So what appears to be the best we can do is to define the four basic functions in all leadership (Slater, 2011). Firstly, develop people and improve professional development itself. Secondly, contribute to establishing a vision. Thirdly, restructure the organisation to meet this vision; and finally, enable teaching practice within that organisation. To sum up, move away from worrying about management to worrying about teaching and pedagogical leadership (Connolly *et al.*, 2019).

So what can the myth offer us against this literature? Essentially, the opportunity to discover some normative principles based on a reflection of human nature, the associations and dependencies of our condition itself, and highlight the need we all have at some time to be pushed by others. All starting from the analysis of an archetypal teaching story which offers us a somewhat generalised context.

3. THE MYTH

Achilles is taken by his mother Thetis to the island of Skyros where he will remain hidden from the eyes of Ulysses. In the gynaeceum, among women and dressed as one, he lives remote from the war of Troy which nevertheless, he is destined to join. Troy exemplifies the epic Greek saga and the paradigm of duty to the community. The myth is read by Gomá (2007) in terms of the model for human development with a transition from the aesthetic stage to the ethical phase. The former is typical of childhood and adolescence, with a focus on the "self" free from obligations and full of possibilities, open and yet undefined (in this sense immortal). The latter refers to the phase which characterises adult life which considers mortality, decision making, and the obligations involved after making the decision. The myth is undoubtedly valuable in an educational context due to how much it requires thinking about aims in life, and therefore education, as well as the pathway required to achieve them. A pathway which cannot be taken without the necessary leadership of Ulysses. An archetypal role model for the school. We consider some characteristics of this pathway the myth offers. We will structure these reflections

around three Gordian knots taught in schools. The first we will call the 'anthropological knot'. Human beings are essentially relational beings, marked by relationships originating from affiliation and dependency on others in the maturing process. The second knot revolves around educational purposes. This will be known as the 'theological knot'. Why do we teach? The third Gordian knot involves the methods and strategies necessary for achieving the school objective. This will be called the 'strategical knot'. However, before we analyse each of these knots, we must first reflect on the heroic nature of Ulysses to help us address this topic.

4. Ulysses is a hero

Ulysses is a hero to the Greeks. Someone who reflects some virtues which are highly significant to the community. The hero is a person situated at a certain crossroads which, through their decisions and action, overcomes the difficulties they have to face in search of what is right. It is an archetype we can aim to be within the leadership dimension. Using the figure of Ulysses, a hero, to speak about school leadership presupposes the recognition of a certain necessary hierarchy in educational work, and understands the weight of exemplariness.

The principal axis which provides the backbone to the debate on leadership Ulysses proposes effectively encompasses some of the relevant conflicts we find in current discourse on leadership. Currently, we do not trust bureaucracy. Leaders who limit themselves to giving orders from above to address day-to-day needs and cling to the manual would not make a good leader. They would lack flexibility, and the ability to get more people involved in achieving goals. Aspects which are far from being bureaucratic. On the other extreme, we find distributed leadership, which sees leadership as a continuous interactive process which encompasses the entire organisation. Individual leadership here ideally tends to disappear. Evidently, between the order/obey, horizontal/vertical relationships, our current era favours a more horizontal and collegial approach over command or hierarchy. The role of Ulysses, as a hero, is exemplary in highlighting aspects such as what is excellent, differential and ultimately, personal. In contrast to discourse which favours distributed leadership, daily practice distorts this trend, or at least questions it. It is difficult to consider the function of leadership without referring to individual abilities and therefore, the necessary distinguishing judgement about the type of people who should take decisions at key moments. These abilities will be differential, and therefore virtuous and in line with heroism. However, it is unfashionable to talk about heroism. Nowadays, heroism is a negative concept because it leads us to frustration or encourages arrogance (Schweiger *et al.*, 2020).

This rejection of heroism contains an erroneous understanding of ontological equality which is present in many discourses about inclusion as opposed to excellence (Pozo-Armentia, Gil & Reyero, 2020). In the face of these, the concept of hero is fundamental because it is associated with exemplariness, authority, and

normative judgement in considering there are more desirable lives, with a more fulfilling meaning and accomplishment. Without this, there is no education.

Leading is standing out, establishing differences and making decisions. In 2015, the newspaper *El Pais* published an interesting article reflecting on this matter. The newspaper echoed the blog by Brandon Stanton. This blogger took photos of people he met in the streets of New York and asked a few questions about their background to subsequently publish in short stories on the Internet. In January 2015, he published the story of Vidal Chastanet, A 13-year-old boy who lived in Brownsville, a deprived area of Brooklyn. When he asked him the typical question about the most important influence on their life, Vidal cited the head of his school, Nadia López. When asked why, this was his reply:

> When we get into trouble, she never suspends us or throws us out. She calls us into her office and explains the society which surrounds us. And she tells us that every time somebody behaves in this way at school, a new cell is built. And one time, she made us all stand up together and she told us one by one why we were important.

Stanton wanted to visit her and he found her collecting funds to take her pupils to Harvard so that they could see that it was an achievable objective (Marcos, 2015).

We do not know much more about her management style – whether it is horizontal or distributed. We know that she founded a school in a poor neighbourhood, with a clear objective, together with determination, strategy, and a pretty large dose of heroism. She is Ulysses entering the gynaeceum on Skyros.

5.   ULYSSES AND THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL KNOT

The first thing we can highlight in the myth is that it accurately reflects some risks deriving from character and content of human affiliation. The role of Thetis, the mother of Achilles, stands out in this regard. She comes across as an interesting archetype of the parent-child relationships marked by love. These relationships in her story show some limitations which may serve as an example of the structural limits of the family relationship in education and the need for additional influences, such as from the school, to assist in raising the child. This does not mean the family does not play an important educational role – of course it does (Fontana *et al.*, 2013). However, we wish to expose its own particular characteristics and show how these are consequential in how the subject is educated. Firstly, due to the original sentimental status inherent in the relationship which, to a certain degree, brings about more difficulties in dealing with the suffering of children. In fact, Thetis wants to ensure that no matter what, Achilles will not die in the battle of Troy and fulfil the oracle she herself is aware of. Achilles' mother tries to prevent this key moment in her son's life by hiding him in the gynaeceum and dressing him up as a woman so Ulysses will never find him. Thetis exemplifies two things with this attitude. Firstly, that learning mortality leads to suffering, pain and frustration, and is often

done without input from family because parents cannot easily go down this path without help[2]. Secondly, that there will always be a conflictive relationship between Ulysses and Thetis as it is Ulysses, the example of living for the community, who is the person responsible for removing Achilles from that family life to enter the community and meet the demands of the polis.

Without recognising this source of conflict, it is difficult for school institutions to have a suitable relationship and establish their own space where parents cannot and should not fully enter. In the life of Achilles, both characters and both spaces are necessary but at the same time insufficient. Discourse which does not take this key anthropological problem into account will not be adequately able to respond to the difficulties the family-school relationship throws up in real life. There is no doubt that current educational discourse highlights the fundamental participative role of the family in school life (Bolívar, 2006; Calvo *et al.*, 2016). However, it is also common for schools to complain about the difficulty parents have in participating in an effective way. "Recently, teachers complain, justifiably so, about how in certain situations of conflict, the most common attitude of parents is to support their children rather than collaborate" (Bolívar, 2006, p. 133). Turning parents into clients and consumers exacerbates a relationship of criticism between both worlds and favours growing distrust between parents and teachers (Calvo *et al.*, 2016). This distrust cannot boil over undermining the objectives of the school or the family, rather it should highlight some differences which are complementary. No space can offer integral education by itself and both must respect their inherent differences and spaces and times. However, the danger of a leadership which aims to be educational lies in not recognising the limits and opportunities this particular position offers. To continue the metaphor, Ulysses is not Thetis and he has different objectives and roles to her. Aspiring to the complete development of a person requires certain humility in recognising that the subject does not only develop in educational institutions, but also in other spaces.

Understanding the myth of Achilles and reflecting on the relationship between Thetis and Ulysses, we can consider the leadership of Ulysses' in conflict with that of the home. Suffice to say that Ulysses leads the entry to the space of the community and public, and this is a space with particular purposes. The school is not another family.

But the anthropological knot goes beyond the family-school relationship. It also has much to do with the process of being an adolescent framed by what they are yet to be.

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2. We cannot read this statement in a totalising way. Evidently, there are parents who manifest what can even be considered a heroic attitude on their journey as they strengthen their children against adversity (see the example of George Steiner in the relationship with his mother -Steiner, 2016, p. 12), but the relationship between emotional connection and the fear of suffering cannot be denied, especially in those we love the most.

Gomá (2007), when analysing the myth of the adolescent Achilles in the gynae-ceum, starts by describing essential traits of adolescence. This description is not far removed from the work Ulysses must perform. School leadership is therefore adapted to the subject whom we must educate, adjusting to the human dynamic which is not the same at any given time in life.

But why do we focus on adolescents? Adolescence is a Gordian knot in the evolution of human life – a key moment. Without doubt childhood is important. We would say it is even more fundamental. However, just as interventions in infant education require a structural policy which enhances early schooling, particularly in certain population groups, in the case of the adolescent, this is not the problem. Our adolescents our already practically 100% schooled. The problem we are facing is what to do with them once they have entered school and find themselves in such a complicated time of their life.

There are some important characteristics we should highlight for school lead-ership of human life in such a turbulent period which falls between two much more stable ages.

> During childhood, the child lives in harmony with the Cosmos feeling naturally safe and protected. At the age of maturity, the subject has already become integrated in social ethnicity, where they established their home and develop their productive capabilities (Gomá, 2007, p. 83)

The myth shows us an adolescent who envisions the demands of an adult life to which he does not yet want to go because he does not want to die. Adult life consists, to a certain extent, in learning to die. The adolescent senses in adult life, such as the life of their parents, boredom and a future of routine (Gomá, 2007, p. 121). Therefore, adolescent life, the period of absolute self, is distanced from the demands of the community, even though it also finds itself in conflict with it. This is because the human being is born in the polis and owes its life to it, and must make a living there while at the same time losing it.

On coming out of this period of "subsidised idleness" (Gomá, 2007, p. 87) the adolescent love affair plays an important role in maturity[3]. Gomá comments that, if the Greeks had arrived before Achilles met Deidamia, it is safe to say he would not have been prepared to hear the sound of the arms as Ulysses entered the gynaeceum. The gynaeceum contained the seed of the Achilles' evolution because "by falling in love with the King's daughter, Achilles was entering in the sphere of time, in which one is born and corrupted, which served him as a fore-taste or propaedeutic of his own subsequent option for finitude" (Gomá, 2007, pp.

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3.   The myth of Ulysses reminds us of the profound relationships between affectivity and human development and its presence in the adolescent age. What is affective and emotional is not a marginal aspect and even less during the period of confusion regarding sexual identity and where pornography is already a significant problem (Reyero, 2021).

58-59). Faced with adolescent immortality, absorbed in his unfulfilled possibilities, it is through these first love affairs that he learns first hand the consequences of choice. It is first of all, by choosing Deidamia and later, in committing to his destiny in Troy where Achilles achieves mortality and his exemplary individuality given that, as Gomá says, "being a citizen of the polis is being mortal, because to enter in the community, we must renounce self-divinisation itself. However, paradoxically, when we do it, we find in the finite world our true individuality" (Gomá, 2007, p. 67). We form ourselves in the commitment with the duties imposed by the polis and adolescents must be guided towards them; something which will not be easy.

6. ULYSSES AND THE THEOLOGICAL KNOT

In the story of Achilles, Ulysses is a key character. Achilles would not be the greatest of the Achaeans had it not been for the call from Ulysses whose action we read here as the prototype of school leadership. The first thing to characterise Ulysses as a leader is that he has an objective. This is not a goal Ulysses simply invents. Ulysses receives a request from the community. He has to get Achilles involved in the war. He knows what he wants and organises his actions to fulfil this ultimate objective. Ulysses wants to take Achilles to a war and not just any war at that. This is the war of Troy, a founding moment in Greek history. He has to remove him from his adolescent comfort zone in the gynaeceum where he entertains himself among maidens and children's games. We have seen it many times. Aspiring to something great is an indispensable educational driver. In the film *Pay It Forward*, the teacher surprises his pupils with the following homework: "think about something which changes the world and put it into practice". While not all the students in his small class take up the challenge, the ones who do will not be the same again. The pedagogy of demand addressed by George Steiner and Cécile Ladjali becomes crucial. It is important not to give up on the best. Aspiring to the best does not necessarily imply starting with the most difficult, but it does mean setting oneself important objectives. When Anne Sullivan met Hellen Keller, she did not see what everyone else did. Everybody else saw a deaf, blind and dumb child who could only inspire compassion. However, she went further than pure sentimentalism and saw possibilities which others, including her parents, could not see even though they undoubtedly wanted to. So there is no formative adventure. There is no need to remove adolescents from anywhere unless you are taking them to a better place. Thinking about education from the myth we are dealing with is thinking about the aims of the school institution and above all, its public objectives. School leadership specific to the school is directed towards developing the self so it can enter the public sphere. The school understands its role in the dimension of education for the community. A quote by Meirieu along these lines is:

The school is an institution in which interpersonal relationships, all the daily management and the whole material environment conspire together. From an etymological perspective they "breathe as one," in order to create a particular form of human activity, based on specific values: recognition of otherness, the need for precision, rigour and truth, the joint learning for the construction of the common good and the ability to think for oneself (Meirieu, 2006, p. 95).

It is not just the community which has its place in the school and gives it significance. Transcendental visions, even though they might be in the public school, should have the chance to be accommodated. Because as Meirieu correctly states, the school demands truth and reason. However, it should be a reason aware of its limits and different levels. A reason which does not self-mutilate, like enlightened rationalists do who exclude questions because of the meaning of the field of the valuable questions. It should instead be reason which faces up to the knowledge of what is most important without being concerned or prejudicing the weapons necessary to deal with it. In an essay by Chesterton titled "The religious aim of education" (Chesterton, 1997, pp. 17-21) the author posits:

The deepest of all desires for knowledge is the desire to know what the world is for and what we are for. Those who believe they can answer that question must at least be allowed to answer it as the first question and not as the last. A man who cannot answer it has a right to refuse to answer it; though perhaps he is rather too prone to comfort himself with the very dogmatic dogma that nobody else can answer it if he can't. But no man has a right to answer it, or even to arrange for it being answered, as if it were a sort of peculiar and pedantic additional question, which only a peculiar and pedantic sort of pupil would be likely to ask (p. 18).

7. ULYSSES AND THE STRATEGICAL KNOT

Dragging Achilles to Troy is not easy. Besides his clear adolescent immaturity, the surroundings also counted against Ulysses. Hidden and dressed up as a woman, he could not be recognised. King Lycomedes was not helping. He denied he was there and gave permission to the Achaeans to search for him without success. It is then when Ulysses comes up with a strategy and travels to Skyros dressed as a trader. All great educational reforms have designed strategies. However, before considering the direction of education, they focused on educational practice itself. From Pestalozzi to Montesori, Lancaster to Dewey, all have come up with or adapted some educational model. Educational problems are not easily solved. They require models and study, but also strategy.

Strategy is born out of a contextualised reflection which includes aims and means, not limited on a single focus. It also depends on the knowledge of the person who is the object of the strategy. Ulysses understands the effect the weapons shown will have on Achilles. Dressing as a trader, Ulysses does not cease to be a

warrior, but his warrior self takes on an unforeseen persona which is not included among his most formal skills. Ulysses disguises himself as part of his mission and his objective as a Greek soldier. He has to lead Achilles to the battle and he will do whatever it takes. There is also strategy in the school, and there are also disguises we can take without ceasing to be teacher or director. The purpose obliges us to take different roles.

But what strategies should we follow? How do we recognise one among so many? How do we draw attention to it to recognise it or deal with it once recognised? Remember that Ulysses arrives in disguise on Skyros and appears in front of the gynaeceum with gifts for women. Among these gifts, he has hidden a shield and a spear. He orders for the trumpet of war to sound and Achilles, believing the enemy has arrived and seeing the weapons, finally discovers himself. This interesting episode invites us to consider some characteristics of school leadership. Firstly, it requires a method of approximation which does not come ready-made, together with some instruments to enable this approximation. In the case of schools, these weapons are the subjects to be taught. Teachers are educators through the subject. This is what educating in schools is about. School leadership which does not focus its objective, or draw from academic matters, will be considering schools in a distorted way. The main function of the school is cultural transfer and it is clear this transfer, associated with cognitive matters (reflected for example in results) but also with the affective dimension in various ways, improves self-awareness and the family relationships themselves (Giofrè *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, pleasure, motivation, enhancing virtue, or defining the significance one wishes to give life, arise and grow with intellectual work and study. Our own conscience of what we are and we notice improvement thanks to contributions from culture. Therefore, renouncing the weapon of demanding cultural transfer is eschewing improving the other, cheating them with decoys which demand less and despite being more comfortable, provide much less When they realise and complain, the teacher will be too far away to hear their gripes. Disinherited, with no culture, their knowledge of themselves will be poor. Bellamy accurately reflected on this with an example.

> When loving, valuing, appreciating, admiring, are invariably replaced by pleasing, the problem is not just that the expression loses its accuracy, rather that above all, the emotion loses its richness. It is not communication; the hearts and gaze are made incapable of feeling the subtleties and perceiving the singularity; they narrow, repeat themselves and finally end up crushed under the weight of uniformity (Bellamy, 2018, p. 111).

Integral leadership on the centre management team level will always involve improving the performance of the teachers in their main task, by linking it with the objectives of the centre giving importance to their teaching work and not necessarily overloading this work with other apparently important matters but which are deep down, superfluous. This is what is now known as pedagogical leadership or leadership for learning (Moral, 2018), which creates the conditions for what is important –

cultural transfer. The weapons of the teacher are the subjects and their ability to connect with the students (Pennac, Meirieu). But this is not the whole story. Any reflection on school leadership in this content dimension will have to take a stance against some problems inherent in our age. The first has to do with the connection between content and skills. When skills and knowledge are opposed, they do not realise that there is no skill without profound specific knowledge of things and this means many things.

> Whether we like it or not, to be able to think, we need to know facts. And not just because we need something to think about, rather because the skills that orthodoxy appreciates the most – critical thinking, autonomy and creativity – are intimately associated with factual knowledge accumulated in the memory in the long term (Luri, 2020, p. 36).

Looking for the skill directly above the transfer of content is confusing the significance of the school with its benefits and is similar to the error which Bellamy comments with the example of the architect and happiness (Bellamy, 2018, p. 153). In effect, we know that a good home provides happiness to the people who live there, but the aim of the architect will still be in drawing up good plans and choosing good materials. In the same way, the aim of the teacher remains linked to love and transfer of a specific content so that the student makes it their own to the greatest extent possible. The skill, as with happiness, is a distillation of that ownership or that type of life.

8. CONCLUSION

Current literature on leadership indirectly addresses some considerations about human nature which habitually circulate in what we could call a dominant culture. Studying literature on leadership, particularly that on a normative level, thus becomes an excellent field from which we can learn about anthropology. This occurs in all soft social sciences, including pedagogy. In the evolution of the predominant models in each time period, we can observe the features of the dominant anthropology of the time. Currently, in a post-modern society which is liquid and emotional, the dominant leadership is also liquid, distributed, and soft, at least in the realm of the discourse. In practice, things change because the difficulties and problems organisations are faced with, particularly educational organisations, need hierarchy, courage and decision making to deal with the serious problems we face.

In this regard, regarding leadership through the resources narrative models offer can give more options and offer the possibility of more profound analysis. This is what we have observed here by reading the mythical episode of Achilles in the gynaeceum and starting from the observations Javier Gomá takes from it (Gomá, 2007). A myth is a story that has stood the test of time and offers us a character model of a leader in action. And what can we learn?

1. Leadership is exercising a way of relating to the rest of the members of a team or group in pursuit of an objective which arises from the community. It obliges us to develop specific abilities not everybody possess, which distinguish and found hierarchies and which tend towards perfection and therefore can be seen with a certain element of heroism. Beyond being able to distribute obligations and tasks among many, the existence of specific functions cannot be excluded and with greater weight of responsibility on the people responsible for managing companies or organisations, which in this case are educational.

2. Ulysses' mission to rescue Achilles from the adolescent gynaeceum and take him to the battle of Troy marks the objective but does not show the pathway. It is Ulysses, clever in his use of resources, who through his ingenuity and by studying the context and situation, designs a strategy to take Achilles to fulfil his destiny. Although the aim does not mark the pathway or define it completely, it is not indifferent. It serves as motivation for Ulysses and guides him, forcing him to get what he wants using the means - the weapons - which will connect Achilles' destiny to his life situation which he is already ready for after life in the gynaeceum. It is important in education to accurately define the objective so strategies can be defined.

3. The school has a clear aim, the transfer of those cultural aspects we consider stand the test of time. If we divert the goals of the school to others, which may be legitimate but do not connect with the education that the teachers have received nor with the background of the institution, we run the risk of not achieving any of them. The school is not the only educational institution – there may be others. However, the school cannot be understood without contact with the culture and the slow and gradual learning of culture. Culture is the means by which the school helps youngsters to become aware of themselves, learn about the world they will inherit and how to face up to moral and technical challenges this world offers. The school can confuse the objective when we oblige it to think of moral challenges that the young people will have in the future and we design tasks as if they already had sufficient education to deal with them. We cannot understand these challenges, nor should we even try to. The aim of the school is to transmit that knowledge history in the different disciplines has considered as best or worthy of enduring. We trust this knowledge will help them with challenges we cannot fully comprehend.

4. The myth of Achilles tells us about a young boy who is brought into the gynaeceum by his mother Thetis and taken out by Ulysses. The school has to depend on the family. The families of those who take their children to school, but the objectives of the family and the school may not always coincide. Their visions for the children are different and sometimes can come into conflict. Ulysses does not complain about Thetis and her desire to protect her son. He simply bears it in mind when he searches for Achilles, knowing that he will respond to something greater than what his own family may think is best for him.

5. Education is a public matter. By public, we are not referring to the ownership, rather to it being part of the community. An issue which responds to the questions

that the community itself, formally or informally, may legitimately ask. There are no forbidden topics for educational institutions because there are no topics which are beyond the cultural framework in which we live. Even less those which are the most conflicted and which most controversy generate – the nation, our body, or religion, for example. Just as it was an absurd attempt destined to failure to detach Achilles from the epic Greek saga of the time by removing him from the community Ulysses ultimately returned him to, it is wrong for educational institutions to try to hide what culture has generated on these matters. Culture is not only intellectual education. It is also awareness, controlling one's body, belonging, or religious transcendence - all these also have a place given they have an immense cultural legacy and explain many of the social problems we currently face.

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