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¿Hacia dónde se dirigen los valores? Coloquios del siglo XXI / Bajo la dirección de Jérôme Bindé [Where are values going? 21st century talks, edited by Jérôme Bindé]

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¿Hacia dónde se dirigen los valores? Coloquios del siglo XXI / Bajo la dirección de Jérôme Bindé [Where are values going? 21st century talks, edited by Jérôme Bindé]

[Original title: *Où vont les valeurs?* UNESCO, 2004; English title: *The future of values*, Berghahn Books, 2004]

Jérôme Bindé (Ed.), 2006

México City, Fondo de Cultura Económica

14500 Mexican pesos (pbk), 416 pp.

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This book comprises a collection of chapters compiled by Jérôme Bindé, UNESCO Director of the Office of Foresight, Secretary-General of the Council of the Future, and former UNESCO Deputy-Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, as well as other roles he has played in this international organisation. Bindé coordinated the Twenty-first Century Talks and Dialogues, between 1997 and 2001, inviting several international academics, artists and intellectuals to discuss the future of ethics, education, science and citizenship, especially after the attack on the World Trade Center towers in New York on 11 September 2001. This anthology *¿Hacia dónde se dirigen los valores?* [Where are values going?], comprises the texts of the Talks and Dialogues presented in the 10th to 20th sessions, which took place in Paris in December 2001.

The volume brings together the work and perspectives of 50 authors on many critical matters as a new world order emerges, through the use of ICT, the development of a global economy and the emergence of a worldwide ecological crisis. The book is highly relevant to the readers of the *Journal of Moral Education*, as the topics are even more urgent now than when it was first published in French in 2004. Many of the situations originally described in this book as future problems have now, unfortunately, materialised into global threats that are increasingly felt as something ‘close to home’. Thus, we require a deeper understanding of the nature of the different problems that need to be resolved collectively in our own local contexts: global warming, terrorism, drug trafficking, gender and racial discrimination, immigration, genetic modification. We also seem to share a stronger feeling that we are losing the values of civilisation and moving rapidly towards political and social disintegration. In this respect, the various chapters provide seminal ideas for innovative educational practices and other social and institutional initiatives to transform the global context.

The book includes 54 chapters, divided into four parts, with an introduction and conclusion by Bindé and a preface by Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO. The first part directly addresses the question ‘What is the future of values?’ Jean Baudrillard proposes a contrast between the concepts ‘global’ (‘mundial’ in Spanish) and ‘universal’. Globalisation corresponds to the wider use of information and communication technologies, economic markets and tourism. Conversely, ‘universalisation’ would invoke the defence of human rights, freedom, culture and democracy in all countries. According to Baudrillard, universalisation is

losing the battle against globalisation processes, which, in turn, are fragmenting cultures in order to integrate them into the new world order. In this process, singularity is being lost and the resulting homogenisation is destroying the distinctive values of specific cultures, as well as restricting the possibility of appealing to universal rights. Thus, we all endure the globalising effects with violence, as we are forced to act in the same way in order to fit into the new system. As a reaction, singularities are emerging violently in the form of fundamentalist positions, including terrorism, which is the ultimate rebellion against a world order imposed by a single economic power.

In this respect, Paul Ricoeur places his hope in the development and work of cultural centres, which might irradiate their knowledge, thus helping in the defence and construction of historical identities through the development of narratives. Historical identities represent the only possible way to live together, as they play specific roles within the same tale or narrative. Narratives construct our identities, and identities can be transformed as narratives are told differently, re-interpreting the same events for different collective projects. The different values that are appreciated in specific cultures can create a problem for mutual understanding. However, the narrative metaphor is also useful for achieving inter-subjectivity as Ricoeur envisions a world in which interchanges between cultural traditions are possible due to the existence of a common natural language and translation practices between social languages:

Translation, although it is not perfect, creates similarity where there only seemed to be plurality. To this similarity created by translation it is possible to link a 'universal project' and a 'multitude of traditions' (p. 70)

Edgar Morin starts by proposing that all humans are simultaneously exemplars of an individual, a society and a species. With this assertion, Morin questions Kant's categorical imperative, considering it has produced insularity and should evolve to reflect this triple nature of the human being. Thus, it is important to situate action in an ecology, so that intentionality may be assessed as part of the conditions of production of human action. In this analysis, it is possible not only to evaluate the goals of participants and the means to achieve these goals, but also to be aware that there is a principle of uncertainty, so that sometimes it is possible to see the best intentions transformed into the worst consequences. Morin concludes this chapter by highlighting the need to relate the domains of science, ethics and politics in order to examine the question of values in depth, including conflicts between ethical imperatives of the same strength.

Another problem with contemporary values is the prevalence of beauty, in contrast to truth, goodness and the sacred. Victor Massuh considers that nowadays people are seeking for a set of experiences that are novel, but in many cases without sense, 'entertainment, speed, high volume, violent sensations, extraversion, ecstatic escapes, [and] instant pleasure' (p. 111).

Julia Kristeva closes this selection of Part 1, comprising 17 chapters, by discussing how it is possible to see the emergence of a feminisation of values as part of the new

era we live in. According to Kristeva, differences between the sexes imply psychic and ideological differences. However, these differences can be complementary and can make richer the universal link between men and women. The feminisation of values is part of a history of the fight for equality started by women in the previous century. Women have been legitimising political rights, as well as ontological equality with men based on fraternity, and latterly there has been a period of feminine creativity characterised by the new experience of women in terms of sexuality and participation in social practices in politics and the arts. In particular, Kristeva argues that women's values, in contrast to those of men, are singular in three main respects: (1) women emphasise the importance of human links (or attachment); (2) women think of themselves as living with the body, senses and sexuality; and (3) women understand time as the possibility of giving birth to new individuals, so that time is life.

The second part dedicated to the analysis of globalisation ('mundialización' in Spanish), new technologies and culture, comprises 11 chapters. In one of these, Jeremy Rifkin writes about what he calls 'the era of access'. Rifkin proposes that the world economy is changing from capitalism, based on the interchange of goods and markets, to commercial relations based on access to the Internet and other networks. This new economy is as fast as the speed of electricity supplied to our computers; there are no producers and buyers, but just providers, users, servers and clients:

In networks still there is property, which is in the hands of the provider. Clients access property in segments of time according to various modalities: association, subscription, leasing, and licence agreement. There is no payment for the goods, but for the flow of the experience for a given time. (p. 166)

In networks, what is valuable is the time of people and value is established according to the scarcity of time; this is called 'lifetime value'. The cost of production tends to be zero as networks work with the speed of light, and the markets cannot continue existing with no profit, so that the new model imposes time access as the new source of income. Companies already migrating to this model include Ford and the leasing scheme for cars; Carrier as a provider of air conditioning charging monthly for the service, but not for the equipment; and Lego, selling game experiences as activities linked to toys as platforms for web-based entertainment. Risks include agricultural schemes of dependency on monopolies, such as Monsanto and Novartis in terms of genetically modified seeds. Also, there is a danger of losing cultural diversity as culture might be sold as content for experiences. However, as Rifkin argues, commerce does not create culture; therefore, the source of revenue might quickly be lost, leaving us without a lasting cultural capital for society. Finally, the space left by government participation might be filled with the informal economy, black markets and organised crime.

Alain Tourraine states that western civilisation is characterised by rupture with religion and opposition of extremes, such as reason and madness, man and woman, capital and labour force, coloniser and colonised, etc. The rupture we are living through now has to do with society: that is, according to Tourraine, there is no

society any more, but an unlimited fragmentation of experiences with no cultural content apart from a set of needs that are to be met. Can we create a new individualism not based on consumerism but on memory, reflection and sexuality? This is the main challenge identified by Tourraine.

According to Salikoko Mufwene, Europe has colonised the rest of the world in three different ways: (1) populating territories, such as the Americas, Australia and New Zealand; (2) exploiting natural resources, as in Africa and Asia; and (3) exploiting people by slavery, as in Africa. This has led to the extinction of indigenous languages all over the world, for different even contrasting reasons. Mufwene documents the development of pidgin forms as part of the hybridisation of European and indigenous languages; especially in Africa the strengthening of a few indigenous languages, such as Lingala and Swahili; and finally, the extinction of indigenous languages by choosing a dominant European language for economic and political reasons, such as Spanish in Latin America.

The third part, comprising 13 chapters, is about the social, natural, cultural and ethical contracts required for the new world order. In relation to a new social contract, Jacques Delors proposes an arrangement for making possible lifelong learning through the use of personal credits to be used throughout the life span in order to complete formal basic education and to return to learning and training as much as required by the needs of the labour market and the decisions taken by a person making changes to his/her career. Education should also aim to develop learning to know, to do, to live together and to be. Learning to know involves the development of interest and pleasure in learning; learning to do is more than the apprenticeship in a skill or craft as it should include the use of new ICT tools; learning to live together is essential to understand the other in increasingly multicultural societies and to actively participate in the social life of communities; finally, learning to be implies access to lifelong learning.

Jérôme Bindé describes a list of 11 seminal ideas proposed by Michel Serres to define the characteristics of a new cultural contract: (a) we need to *choose* to live in peace with the world in order to live in peace; (b) the natural contract cannot be established only between individuals but is also necessary between collectives; (c) nature and humans are interconnected in complex ways; (d) it is important to take into account the increasingly important role of science in human history; (e) we need to limit our mastery and control over nature as resources are not unlimited; (f) it is essential to end the metaphor of humans as parasites on nature and to incorporate the rights of nature into the universal declaration of human rights; (g) the new contract should be based on reciprocity and respect, ending our war against nature; (h) nature must acquire the legal status of having rights in relation to mankind; (i) politicians should move towards new forms of government based on respect for nature; (j) the strength of a natural contract should be based on a mutual and tacit obligation for sustainable development; and (k) a new natural contract is irreducibly linked to the development of ethics in the future.

In terms of the new cultural contract that is required, Alain Tourraine highlights the need for a cultural democracy along the lines of political and social democracy.

This is only possible if we recognise that we need singular solutions to the right of being equal to and at the same time different from the other, acknowledging the complexity and changing nature of our identities and societies. Finally, in order to develop a new ethical contract, Edgar Morin argues in favour of developing the conditions to make possible lasting world peace. These conditions are only possible if we live our lives as citizens of a new Earth-Nation, thus re-conceptualising our political rights and duties recognising independent nations but also common planetary challenges if we want to survive together.

The fourth and final part of the book is dedicated to the implications of scientific knowledge for the future. Jacques Testart warns against the possible development of a molecular police. He sees this risk particularly in relation to the possibility of making genetic changes to human eggs and selecting embryos; first, in order to eliminate possible diseases, and secondly, as a way of making social selection in favour of appearance and other physical and intellectual traits. This would bring about the emergence of a new racism based on genetics, as well as the emergence of social cloning due to the loss of variability in the human genetic pool and the reduced cultural variability of the new world order. In a similar fashion, Pierre Sané and Jérôme Bindé warn against the possible development of a new social apartheid based on the conditions of globalisation, such as increasing differences between rich and poor. These differences are already having an impact in urbanisation, education and access to social welfare. In turn, this apartheid can lead to a new world order similar to what Aldous Huxley described in *Brave new world*, that is, a world divided into superhumans and subhumans (i.e. a post-humanity characterised by deterioration and exclusion from genetic improvement). To prevent this, it is fundamental to look at education, bioethics and citizenship as tools for actively transforming this future.

Two chapters looking at science from opposite perspectives should also be mentioned. First, Julia Kristeva analyses what she claims are the new maladies of the soul. From her point of view, we are only alive if we recognise that we have a soul and an active psychic life. People's actual problems depend on the difficulty of representing and signifying problems due to the development of false identities and modern lifestyles where mothers have become less available, fathers have less authority and, as a result, there is a weaker structure for the development of subjectivity in children. The lack of psychic representation leads to psychosomatic symptoms, drug addiction, vandalism and crime. To transform this, Kristeva suggests using psychoanalytic tools, so that in treatment, helped by the therapist, people can reinterpret their problems, as well as identify and accept real desires, finding new shared ways to suffer and to enjoy life. Consequently, patients can create new links and attachment figures and act more creatively with their own resources.

In contrast, André Brahic looks at the development of astronomy, highlighting the academic virtues of doubt, rigour, honesty and critical spirit. It is important to realise that progress is only possible through permanent questioning and that truth is achievable in successive approximations by the creation of models and collection of new data. According to Brahic, astronomy is relevant for three main reasons: (a) knowing about the universe is as important in cultural terms as knowing about

history, geography, music and painting; (b) the universe comprises a huge number of alternative physical conditions that are not present on Earth, so that it is possible to create experiments and collect new data by studying the universe; and (c) activities related to the exploration of space actually represent a leading role in economic and political development for the world, and in particular in the United States, Europe and Japan.

As a conclusion to the anthology Bindé suggests making a contract with the citizens of the future, as well as with those in the present living in the third or fourth world. A necessary condition of overcoming contemporary difficulties and creating a better future will depend on the reinterpretation of our problems and time in a longer perspective. We need to solve what is urgent in the present but at the same time plan for medium- and long-term circumstances. Bindé ends this chapter highlighting the need to reduce the speed of our lives and societies in favour of moderation.

This volume and the *21st century talks* certainly advance discussion about the future of values. However, this achievement could have been enhanced with a better balance of women and academics from non-dominant regions of the world, in particular, from Latin America. Of the 50 authors only five are women, and from Latin America the authors comprise only three Brazilian men, one Argentinian man, and one Peruvian man. Victor Massuh and Francisco Sagasti are the only Spanish-speaking contributors to the anthology. In contrast, the French intellectual tradition is over-represented, with more than 25 French-speaking contributors who have lived or studied in France. Whilst this may be partly explained by the fact that UNESCO headquarters are based in Paris, a more balanced representation of scholars is needed if we are concerned about culturally diverse approaches and perspectives for a possible future for all. This book is nonetheless a major reference for thinking about and discussing values, post-modernity, ethics, peace and education for the next century.

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