

QUIJOTES IN THE CONQUEST OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

QUIJOTES EN LA CONQUISTA DE LA JUSTICIA SOCIAL

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Introduction

Life, always generous, took me this time to Ireland. The reason was ENOTHE's (European Network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education) annual meeting in between 18th and 20th October 2007.

The meeting took place at the prestigious University College Cork, one of Ireland's oldest educational institutions. The University College is a research centre of excellence and offers



*University College Cork¹.
Cortesía de College of Cork*

¹ (Note to the foot of page included by the Advisory Committee of the Journal TOG). University College Cork - National University of Ireland, Cork - or more commonly, University College Cork (UCC) - is a constituent of the National University of Ireland, based in Cork. Cork is an important educational centre of Ireland. The seat Cork (University College Cork, UCC), a component of the National University of Ireland, offers a wide variety of courses in Arts, Commerce, Engineering, Law, Medicine and Science. The university was named "Irish University of the Year" in 2003-2004 and 2005-2006 by the Sunday Times. The university was founded in 1845 under the original name of Queen's College, Cork, which became the University College, Cork under a charter issued after the Universities of Ireland Act, 1908 was enacted into law. In 1997 the name was changed from the university following a resolution by the Senate of the National University of Ireland. Queen's College, Cork was founded by Queen Victoria for the "Promotion of learning in Ireland." By virtue of the powers of this act, the three colleges of Belfast, Cork and Galway were incorporated on December 30, 1845. The school opened in 1849 with 23 teachers and 181 students and a year later became part of the Queen's University of Ireland. The universities of Ireland Act (1908) established the National University of Ireland, which consists of three schools in Dublin, Cork and Galway, and the school was given the status of a college and University College, Cork. Within the university there is a structure of authority common operation in the constituent colleges. These ten faculties are: Agriculture, Arts, Celtic Studies, Commerce, Engineering and Architecture, Science and Technology, Food and Technology, Law, Medicine and Health Sciences, Philosophy & Sociology; Science and Veterinary Medicine. Current Affairs within the National university include the reform of departmental structures of the two largest constituent universities in Cork and Dublin, which have been criticized for being bureaucratic and cumbersome. This has caused a bit of controversy at the national level: university presidents constituents have promoted the idea of reform while the academic staff has resisted.

120 study programmes to 14.500 students. It is always a pleasure to walk around a British University campus; Cork's is an impressive one and I was taken by its century-old trees - regular readers know about my passion for gardening and nature - the main building, that dates from 1845, and the on-campus beautiful museum. I was also fascinated by the chance to witness a debate organised by the House of Philosophy – can you imagine a full-capacity hall filled with 200 students at 8:00 pm exchanging arguments for more than 2 hours on the role of religion in the world with an exquisite respect for the language and subtle use of irony?

ENOTHE'S congress took on the theme the European Year of Equal Opportunities. Like all meetings of its kind, it supported the coming together of European colleagues from North and South from Baltic to Mediterranean countries. It was a place for idea exchange, discussion and project focus. Having attended several of these meetings (Lubjana, Vienna, Ankara...) I have witnessed how this organization has continually grown, watching how, little by little, Occupational Therapy in Europe has developed its own identity under the leadership of Hanneke van Bruggen. It gives me cause for celebration that the next congress will take place in Spain, at the University of A Coruña.

Professor Fred Powell delivered a captivating presentation on equality from the human rights perspective. Fred Powell is a professor of Social Policy and Head of the Department of Applied Social Studies at University College Cork since 1990. Born in Dublin he lectured at the University of Ulster, as well as in the University of California, San Diego and has lectured in the United Kingdom, Italy, Portugal and France.



Fred Powell
Cortesía de College of Cork

Prolific author, he has published 14 books and

essays, 16 book chapters and 35 articles. His key works are: *The Politics of Irish Social Policy 1600-1990*; *Civil Society and Social Policy: The Voluntarism in Ireland*; *The Politics of Social Work*; *the Politics of Community Development: Reclaiming the Civil Society*; and *the Politics of Civil Society*, among others. A certain intellectual elitism could be expected from someone with such an impressive cv, the great university professor...nothing further from reality; Fred Powell acted as a very open and friendly person, who exuded wisdom through his words and his faith in our ability to create a more just world. He possesses the spirit of Quixote. It was a great privilege to leave his office not only having found a new master, but also a new friend.

INTERVIEW

Fred Powell

(Salvador Simó) *We would like to know the main events in your occupational narrative (C.V.) ?*

(Fred Powell) I think since childhood the desire to be involved with the cause of social justice has been the main influence in shaping my life. When I was 14, the writer, George Orwell, became a major influence. Orwell's novel on The Spanish Civil War *Homage to Catalonia* turned me into a pacifist. His books on poverty, notably *Down and Out in London and Paris* and *The Road to Wigan Pier*, radicalised my understanding of the social world and the need for equality. After I graduated my first instinct was to go to the deprived East End of London and, like Orwell, associate with the poor and marginalised. I learnt many things from them about survival, hope and humanity. My work led me to a conviction

(that has become lifelong): poor people given educational opportunities can transform their circumstances but also other people's understanding of their own humanity. Fortunately, I was soon offered an academic position and this has been my professional life. It has given me great scope to develop an educational project based upon social inclusion.

(Salvador Simó) *We can start talking about a powerful but elusive concept, equality. Can you give us a definition of equality?*

(Fred Powell) Equality is, as you correctly suggest, an elusive concept. Martin Walzer tells us, it can be defined simply as an equalisation of class positions or in more complex terms by adding gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, etc. to the process of explanation. For me, the concept of equal citizenship is fundamental to the achievement of equality, because it confers on human beings the right to be political actors in their own narratives. Social justice is the goal of equality.

(Salvador Simó) *What means equality from a human rights approach?*

(Fred Powell) Human rights add a vital ingredient to the pursuit of equality. It takes the debate beyond the pursuit of redistributive justice to embrace the idea of RESPECT. Much of the consequences of war, famine and ecological disaster/degradation results from a lack of equality of respect for the other's rights. The French Revolution in 1798 was built upon *The Rights of Man*. Tom Paine was its intellectual author and architect and also a highly influential actor in the American Revolution in 1776. He was imprisoned in France and ostracised in America by those he had helped to liberate. Paine's experience reminds us of the fickleness of political support for the value of human rights and those brave enough to champion this cause. In the wake of the holocaust, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 was propounded to ensure that the world would never again descend into such an abyss. Yet war goes on

and many millions of people starve. The Orwellian concept of 'military humanism' is often used in the West to justify war. But like the Islamic jihad, war kills innocent people, it is wrong. Aid is held up as the antidote to world poverty. Yet for every dollar spent on aid by the West, two dollars is earned in trade. We need to start addressing the equality agenda inherent in human rights, if we are going to save the planet from extinction, not just from nuclear weapons but neglect of the human and ecological habitat. Mike Davis' recent book, *Planet of Slums*, evokes the lives of the world's billion slum dwellers in places like Cono Sur, Sadr City, and the Cape Flats, where life in Hobbes words is 'short, nasty and brutish'.

(Salvador Simó) *How we can work to achieve this goal?*

(Fred Powell) Modernity unleashed the hope of transformative change socially, culturally and politically. People stopped believing that their lives were simply preordained and unchangeable. That presented a huge change in consciousness. Democracy was the product of this new humanistic subjectivity. Postmodernists tell us that reality can no longer be understood in terms of metanarratives, such as Christianity, Islam or Marxism, but has multiple fragmented meanings and is reflexively changing on a continuous basis. But I think they are too pessimistic about the possibilities of change. There may be multiple narratives but they can have a shared subjectivity in terms of building a more socially inclusive world. This hope is shared by ordinary people all over the planet, who naturally want their children to have better lives. The 'social' in modernity envisaged transformative change through achieving human rights to education, health care, shelter, food, water and a basic income for all citizens. While most people are not ideological in their thinking, they have an instinctive moral sense that the practical pursuit of these goals is what the purpose of political life should be about. That is what is meant by social justice in reality

that a vast media industry seeks to undermine by telling us it is an unreasonable and unsustainable goal that is contrary to human nature.

(Salvador Simó) *We can now talk about injustice, what are its symbolic and cultural dimensions? Can you explain its different types: Cultural domination, Non- recognition, Cultural – disrespect*

(Fred Powell) Symbolic and cultural injustice reminds us that the pursuit of social justice has both an economic and a cultural dimension. People want sustainable lives, where they can care for their children. But they also want respect. Where one culture, such as 'The West' becomes hegemonic in terms of setting the agenda for the planets tastes and customs (through the influence of icons such as Hollywood, Coca Cola, McDonalds, etc.) then there is a real problem of cultural domination. People may begin to devalue their own culture and loose touch with it. Without cultural memory, there is no social identity that marks people's distinctiveness. Soon old cultures are no longer valued as they are incorporated into a homogenised Western future. This is a process where non-Western cultures become pejoratively defined as 'ethnic' (e.g. ethnic restaurants or minority languages). That is essentially a racist process that devalues humanity because it commodifies culture.

(Salvador Simó) *How then you understand 'cultural competence', 'cultural policy'?*

(Fred Powell) Cultural policy needs to promote communicative competence in the sense employed by Jurgen Habermas, where people start from a premise of equal respect for the others traditions and customs. Active listening starts from mutual cultural respect.

(Salvador Simó) *A powerful concept, that is very present in our professional discourse is citizenship. But so many times maybe we are not very*

sure of its profound meaning. What means citizenship? What are the different dimensions of citizenship?

(Fred Powell) Citizenship has many dimensions: social citizenship (equality); independent citizenship (liberty); active citizenship (democratic participation); dutiful citizenship (respect for the law); ecological citizenship (environmental protection). Consumerism increasingly challenges citizenship as the market seeks to displace the public sphere in the struggle for cultural hegemony in our world. Some market zealots seek to present consumerism as a form of democracy, since people are making choices about what they purchase. But I regard this as an oligarchical myth.

(Salvador Simó) *What do you think about the claim of Leonardo Boff for planetary citizenship, realizing that the Earth is our mother country?*

(Fred Powell) I think Leonardo Boff's concept of planetary citizenship is vitally important for our future because it brings the 'social' and the 'ecological' together reminding us of the primordial links between the human and natural worlds. This seer's advice reminds us of the fragility of our world but holds out the optimistic possibility of making it a better and safer place to live.

(Salvador Simó) *Dewey proposed that the main role of the university is to train citizens who feel responsible of their society, and that university should be the guardian of democracy. What is the mission of the university in our contemporary world?*

(Fred Powell) The university is constantly challenged to balance reason (Athens) versus belief (Jerusalem). This is perhaps its greatest intellectual challenge. The university is part of civilization and culture, yet apart from it. Personally, I think that Athens must triumph over Jerusalem, but in a manner that recognises the

truth in the other's perspective. Life is a constant tension between reason and truth. Ultimately, each student must make their own decision as to *how* and *why* they strike that balance. That process is called education. It is the very core of our culture and makes the university a fundamental pillar of our civilisation.

(Salvador Simó) *Dewey also said that lecturers must know their contemporary world, understand it, but then they must act. Do you think we are doing this today, or it is true the idea of the lecturers as people who live inside a ivory tower?*

(Fred Powell) In my view, the role of the university in contemporary life is to be its moral compass by offering citizens' the opportunity to think about the great issues in life. Socrates observed nearly 2,500 years ago that 'an unexamined life isn't worth living'. He established his Thought Academy in Ancient Athens, providing the enduring model for the university. But right from the start he had his detractors. The conservative comic playwright Aristophanes brutally caricatured Socrates in his play 'Clouds'. The myth was that intellectuals had 'their heads in the clouds' and were thus divorced from reality. The results in Aristophanes caustic drama were to prove catastrophic and helped inform the charge 25 years later that Socrates was 'corrupting the minds of the young'. Socrates gave his life in order to defend academic freedom, which makes him the first secular martyr. The myth of the ivory tower intellectual is simply a modern day variant of Aristophanes' myth.

(Salvador Simó) *Karl Marx said that the mission of knowledge is to ameliorate the human condition. Do you agree with that vision?*

(Fred Powell) I agree with Marx's observation. Humanistic knowledge must be used to elevate the quality of life for everybody and ameliorate the conditions

of the socially-excluded. In the social sciences we explore the predicament of those who have been historically located in Michel Foucault's phrase, 'in the interior of the exterior'. As Marx also observed, we must not simply strive to understand their condition but to change it.

*(Salvador Simó) Nicco Hirtt, in his book **The new owners of the school affirms that under the pressure of the markets, the supranational corporations and the policies of the national governments the universities are transforming themselves into enterprises with commercial goals. How do you value this risk?***

(Fred Powell) When I think about university reform, I remember the Arab proverb: 'the dog barks and the caravan moves on'. The process of university reform worries many academics, with good reason. But there is a positive side. Primary education became universal during the nineteenth century and secondary education in the twentieth century. Now third level education is becoming the reality of the twenty-first century. Not surprisingly, government and markets are seeking to reshape the educational agenda into a utilitarian form. But the opportunity to examine one's life in the Socratic tradition does offer great opportunities to a rapidly expanding number of citizens. That has to be a good thing and a reason for optimism.

*(Salvador Simó) **And Henry Giraud affirms that in current university it is expected value judgements to be avoided and the critical thinking to be reduced in order to transmit objective knowledge, emerging the proletarianization of the lecturers...***

(Fred Powell) I think what worries me about university reform is not so much the structural changes, where managers seek to apply business principles to the university. Their efforts in my experience are relatively ineffectual, because they

usually don't understand the nature of the institution and retire defeated to the more reassuring world of corporate reality. What worries me more is efforts to present science over the humanities as the custodians of truth, by claiming their truths are 'objective' compared with the 'subjective' truths of the arts and social sciences. In 2005, the Nobel Laureate for Literature, the playwright Harold Pinter, reminded the world in his acceptance speech that 'there are many truths' adding, 'these truths challenge each other, recoil from each other, reflect from each other, teach each other'. Education is about unravelling these truths, which are the keys to human understanding.

(Salvador Simó) *Dennis Persson talks about the ethics of the machinery society, based on values as competition, physical perfection or efficiency. How this ethics of the machine affects the human health? How you understand 'health inequalities' from this perspective?*

(Fred Powell) The application of technology to medicine combined with the pharmaceutical business has transformed medicine in the West into an economic enterprise rather than a human right. Yet 80% of the world is not part of this development of modern medicine. I think the legitimacy of Western medicine has more to do with rising living standards than medical technology. Higher living standards are the key factor in prolonging life. The reality that so many Western people are turning to what is pejoratively called 'alternative' or 'complementary' medicine (another example of culturally disrespectful language) is testament to a lack of public confidence in the efficacy of Western medicine. There needs to be a refocusing of priorities onto health inequalities (which demonstrates that social class position is a critical variable in longevity rates) and well-being in terms of citizens' capacity to cope with a world where stress is an endemic part of the human condition.

(Salvador Simó) *Paradoxically in Western societies, where you can find the higher standards of comfort, the highest suicides rates are also prevalent. Why do human beings in Western societies seem to lose the meaning of their life? Can you say that human beings in Western societies have more 'freedom to choose'?*

(Fred Powell) Choice is largely determined by one's economic status. Satisfaction is not always linked to choice. In a consumerist society those excluded from participation often become deeply depressed. Youth suicide (particularly amongst young males) is a major Western social problem. It is the product of alienation and anomie that highlights the absence of purpose and meaning in modern Western life, especially felt by those on its margins. We must bring them in from the margins by broadening our educational system through social inclusion proofing.

(Salvador Simó) *Then, how he can define 'spirituality'?*

(Fred Powell) We need a holistic concept of life if we are to find a spiritual dimension to our existence in a materialist world. Holistic thinking challenges the dominant paradigm of Western thought, which is based upon the linear principles of human rationality, often called science. Holism requires us to think in a more inclusive way, where every event or phenomenon is regarded as part of a larger cosmic purpose. This cosmological perspective invites us to move beyond anthropocentric views of existence that puts human beings at its centre to a more ecocentric perspective inclusive of the natural world. African animism, as opposed to religions emanating from the Near East (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) achieves this synthesis between the human and natural worlds, though we are trying to persuade them of the error of their ways. Cultural pride! In Ireland, we have recently celebrated the Celtic festival of Samain, where giant bonfires (bone fires) are lit to warm dead spirits as winter closes in and

darkness descends. In this macabre world of witches, broomsticks, hobgoblins and dark shadows, the light of the fire symbolically represents the eternal flame of life and celebrates the spirits of the dead as cosmically present in human memory. The natural and spiritual worlds become intertwined. And, the human spirit and the spirits of nature in the wind, water and trees remind us that we live in a shared ecosystem with polyvalent meanings and needs. It spiritually means having a mental and emotional communion with the planet that is driven by a desire to conserve all forms of life from war, famine and climate change – then it is a form of subjectivity upon which the future of our planet rests.

(Salvador Simó) *Rachel Thibeault pointed that our students go through their education without a global understanding of their world. They know who were the last people expelled from Big Brother, without understanding the irony that they will be the next to be expelled. Do you think that we are preparing our students for the challenges that they must confront? If not, what should be the answers?*

(Fred Powell) The world of reality TV shows, such as *Big Brother*, are a metaphor for the shallowness of our existence. Their celebrations of cruelty as an object of human entertainment has a direct lineage to the Coliseum in Ancient Rome. How do you warn people of the perils of mistaking *Big Brother* for reality? I don't know. Perhaps they symbolically mark the decline of modern democracy like the tabloid press, with its lurid stories of sex, violence and crime. The best thing one can do is to point out to students that reality TV is a distraction from human reality that mocks life.

(Salvador Simó) *Tell us about World poverty, after being the Irish State Delegate to China at Shanghai Conference on World Poverty and Charity Aid.*

(Fred Powell) World poverty is, alongside climate change, the great issue of our times. While some feel, like Al Gore, that if we change our consumption patterns life will remain sustainable on the planet. Whose life and for what! Without social justice being achieved through Leonardo Boff's concept of planetary citizenship, many people will die of hunger and famine. War will be its counterpart. Terror will continue to haunt the West. Global security depends on planetary justice.

(Salvador Simó) *The climate change or the globalisation are two big contemporary issues. What are the consequences for the human being?*

(Fred Powell) Planetary in the sense we have become a small world with a big set of problems.

(Salvador Simó) *Being ecologically (including cultural, ethical, etc dimensions) literate- is human right or responsibility? (close to question about L.Boff)*

(Fred Powell) People need to become aware of the ecological challenges facing our planet. Scientists have thus far failed to explain. Perhaps humanists can?

(Salvador Simó) *How do you envision our society in ten years?*

(Fred Powell) I hope that the conservative restoration inherent in the neoliberal project will have been effectively challenged in the interests of democracy – which is ultimately about political choices. Naomi Klein's latest book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, is a wake-up call highlighting the need for more robust political debate. The rejection of neoliberalism in Latin America, since 2000, points to a significant fracture in the global ideological consensus that we call 'globalisation'. Unregulated development is presented by

the advocates of neoliberalism as 'good change'. But for many in the slums of the mega-cities of the 21st century, global development is not good change.

(Salvador Simó) *What are the current research areas of the applied social studies?*

(Fred Powell) The research in my department is very diverse. But there are humanistic linkages. Research questions include: civil society; health and well-being; housing and urban development; gender and ethnicity; governance; the social professions and many more contemporary concerns.

(Salvador Simó) *How do you understand the concept politics? Some of my colleagues affirm that you can be occupational therapist without being at all involved in politics. Is that possible? Could you be 'professional' without being 'political'?*

(Fred Powell) In 2001, I wrote a book called *The Politics of Social Work* (Sage, London and New Delhi) which argues that it is not possible to depoliticise professional practice. As C. Wright Mills pointed out, many years ago, private troubles are public issues. Therapy is not a cure for poverty.

(Salvador Simó) *Is it true that we are moving from the "bios politicos" to the "animal laborans"?*

(Fred Powell) More recently in 2007, I published a book called, *The Politics of Civil Society* (Policy Press, Bristol, UK), which sets out to demonstrate that civil society, as the basis of democracy and human rights, is under threat from a revitalised oligarchy in the form of a conservative restoration. I use Nazi Germany as an example of a modern society, where civil society has been undermined by a brutal state apparatus driven by a nihilistic vision. The Velvet

Revolutions against tyranny that started in the 1970s in Spain and Portugal, spread to eastern Europe during the 1980s and 1990s and continues to emerge in the forms of the Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003) and the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine (2005) reminds us that the struggle for democracy in an on-going theme in political civilisation.

(Salvador Simó) *Is there still space for utopias in our world?*

(Fred Powell) Yes. I think it is an ideal that seeks to build a better world. We strive for it. Sometimes the ideal goes horribly wrong and ends up in a totalitarian society.

(Salvador Simó) *A special moment to be remembered from your professional experience...*

(Fred Powell) The most special moments for me in academic life are when students overcome major social disadvantages and succeed in their goals. I can think of many examples. One is of a woman with four young children, who travelled a 200 km round trip each day to attend the university and gained top honours in her degree. I asked her about the hardship of her travels, necessitated by the care of her children. She told me the bus was a perfect space for reflection!

(Salvador Simó) *Tell us a dream that can be explained.*

(Fred Powell) Prophetic dreams have shaped the course of history. Martin Luther King had such a dream. My life has been sustained by the dream that I will wake up one day and find the world has become a better place in the manner that Dr. King believed it would. My personal dream of professional achievement

has been to educate as many people, who would normally be denied a university education, as possible.

(Salvador Simó) *What is credo of your life?*

(Fred Powell) The credo of my life is not easy to explain, since it perhaps belongs to the realms of a dream. Cervantes' *Don Quixote* seems to me to embody the nobility of the human spirit seeking to pursue justice in the face of an inhospitable reality. I like his simplicity, humanity and, most of all, sense of hope. The older I become the greater the affinity I feel with Don Quixote. It is perhaps a fool's errand to believe in the possibility of a better world but I passionately believe it is possible. That is the daily reality of my dreaming. This means enduring being knocked off one's horse regularly, the mocking certainty at one's philosophical naivety and jousting with those who claim to be 'grounded in reality'. Humanitarians are more likely to be mocked and ridiculed than respected. But that may be a testament to their determination to dream on.

(Salvador Simó) *What have been your main lessons and your main masters?*

(Fred Powell) My main lessons from life are to persevere in what you believe in on the basis that good will win out, however great the odds against it. The master that shaped my personal beliefs was my Quixotic father, who practiced medicine with poor people for over 50 years and died a contented and serene man. He quietly and bravely believed in people. I share his belief and thank him for his wisdom. My intellectual master is George Orwell, as already discussed. His novels *1984* and *Animal Farm* have shaped my belief in truth and democracy as the only means to human freedom and dignity.

(Salvador Simó) *What should be your message to the occupational therapist?*

(Fred Powell) People who work in the caring professions are involved in a noble activity. They will often be scorned, spurned and patronised. That is their Quixotic reality. But each small act of their professional engagement with life is of great importance. Helping people defines the world in positive way. Transformations happen in small and un-dramatic ways beyond the grand narratives of history. For those who seek to dedicate their lives to the service of caring for others, there can be no higher vocation in life: they must nurture this belief, as its idealism is deeply subversive of materialist reality.

CONCLUSIONS

An Occupational Therapy interpretation

The World Health Organization (WHO) has extended the definition of health much more beyond the usual “an absence of illness” to “experience of well-being”. Anne Wilcock (1998), defined health from the occupational point of view as: the absence of illness, but not necessarily disability, that permits an equilibrium in-between physical, mental and social well-being, obtained through meaningful occupations, valued socially and individually; the possibility to develop the personal potential, which is related to the social inclusion, support, justice, and everything as a part in equilibrium with the ecology. Along with this definition occurs the necessity, that the occupational therapists should incorporate to our common *credo* basic terms as citizenship, equality, or justice; at this point, it, inevitably, will allow us to see beyond anthropocentric view, returning our vision to re-connect to the nature again, to *Physis*, in manner, how the ancient Greeks were keeping awareness on it.

Citizenship is key to the feeling of participation and social cohesion. But often times we employ this term without being conscious of its profound meaning, and of the dimensions it takes. Thus, as occupational therapists we should promote:

- **Social citizenship**, as equality, defended as State of Welfare, so criticized in our days.
- **Citizenship as independence**, as freedom, which Benjamin Constant (cited by Adela Cortina in 2005) defined as the freedom of the modernity, freedom of creed, of expression...
- **Active citizenship, citizenship as democratic participation**, understood by Benjamin Constant (cited by Adela Cortina in 2005) as the freedom of the ancient, common in Pericles' Athens, according to which, the free person is he who participates in the matters of the *polis*. If a person does not participate in the management of common goods he has lost not only his freedom, but also his human condition.
- **Citizenship as a right**, as respect for the law.
- **Ecological citizenship**, an ethic of responsibility to protect the environment. This last dimension is imperative for us, citizens of *Gaia* or of *Physis*, in the situation of climatic change, which we are experiencing actually, since our own survival depends on it. We can and even should include debates on **a planetary citizenship** (Boff, 2000), which connects *social* and *ecological* dimensions, reminding us of the vital links between the human world and the natural one.

Equality is characterized by comparison of class positions or, in more complex terms, taking into consideration gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and so on. As therapists our interest lies in those special considerations, which so often are connected with the occupational dysfunction. Equality in citizenship is fundamental to achieve equality, since it confers the right to human beings to

be political actors within their own life narratives. We are recovering the figure of the Human Being as *bios politicos*. Therefore as occupational therapists we should play an emancipatory/liberating role for the people or communities with whom we work, faithfully following the principle of empowerment and the client-centred practice (CAOT, 1997). The social justice is the objective of equality, and, therefore, as occupational therapists we should be social activists.

To make sense of justice, we need to understand injustice, and Fred Powell highlights cultural and symbolic injustice, underlining that the social justice has at the same time a cultural and an economic dimension.

First, let's reflect on the cultural dimension, a reflection that focuses on the vital importance of culture in occupational therapy. Isabel Dyck (1998) defines culture as a system of shared meanings, which implies ideas, concepts and thinking, and which includes beliefs, values and norms that shape the standards and rules for people daily life behaviour. From another point of view, Michael Iwama (2003, P. 582) affirms that "in its actual form and along with its fundamental ideologies, Occupational Therapy can be counter-productive; and can even turn out to be oppressive for the people, who perceive, construct and live their realities according to beliefs, system of values and conceptions of different worlds". And he adds: "If we want Occupational Therapy to become a universal service, from which everyone in the world can benefit, epistemological systems, theories and methods of practice that have major cultural relevance are required " (P. 582). Western Occupational Therapy professionals should be more aware of the fact that, in the development of their professional practice, putting cultural meaning into context is a fundamental concept if we want to avoid colonialist approaches, as they were exposed by Vandana Shiva (1994),

According to Marshall (1989), the cultural relativism affirms that the fundamental notions on what is considered true, or morally correct, or how knowledge or the same reality is constituted, are social constructions and they vary from one culture to another.

The cultural relativism can serve as aid, but, Galheigo (2006) suggests it should be complemented with an approach based on human rights. In the reflection on “the Other” of Lévinas (cited by Bofia, 2000) there is a basic point of reference to the multicultural reality of contemporary society. We should develop a cross-cultural Occupational Therapy philosophy that not only does it recognize the beauty and the value of all the cultures, but it also introduces culturally meaningful occupations in the interventions (Simó Algado 1997, 2000, 2006). In reference to the economic and social vision, Liz Townsend (1993) and Anne Wilcock (1998) speak about justice from the occupational point of view: occupational justice, understood as the promotion of an economic and social change to raise individual, community and political consciousness, resources, and equality of opportunities for the development of occupations, which would allow people to develop their maximum potential and to experience well-being.

Adding these concepts to our terminology would permit us to confront the risk and/or the occupational dysfunction that affects people since so often these are related to social aspects. How does one rehabilitate the vocational aspects of a person with mental illness, when there is no social policy that supports their integration in the labour market, or when they clash with society’s prejudice? How to work on aspects of functional independence with a person in the hospital context, if this person will return a home, full of architectural barriers, that they are unable to overcome due to financial difficulties?

This is how we will articulate the actual definition of health, and fulfill the principle of participation, leaving behind (or better still, as part of a larger vision) the obsolete mechanistic paradigm that encapsulates our perception in terms of sub-systems, this doesn’t allow us to see the complete image of reality. Our objective is to create inclusive communities, where each person, despite of any kind of occupational dysfunction, would feel himself/herself as citizen with full rights, could direct his/her own life, with own capabilities and own rights. Citizen with the right to participate, to contribute their own potential and to enjoy the society’s goods, of a material kind as well as cultural or spiritual.

Fred Powell tells us about the importance of developing a holistic vision, if we want to discover the spiritual dimension of our existence in this materialistic world. This vision is in alignment with models like the Canadian Model of Occupational Performance, (CAOT, 1997), which undoubtedly places spirituality at the core, as being the essence of the person. This holistic way of thinking challenges the dominating paradigm of western thought, which is based on the lineal principles of human rationality, often called science. This cosmological perspective invites us to go beyond anthropocentric points of view, which place the existence of human beings in the core, to develop a more inclusive, eco-centric perspective, of the natural world.

Mounier has already indicated the power of the spirit before the situation of eschatology of personality (Belohradsky, 1980), Television programmes like “Big Brother” could be seen as the most extreme example of this concept. It is necessary to vindicate the figure of the “personalist” woman and man of Mounier (cited by Strikebreaker, 2001), in order to overcome this situation of vital escapism, of life in a world of gossip; woman and man, who can’t be erased and who can confront reality through an occupation, which permits to develop their innate forces, like Fromm indicated (1994). Again, meaningful occupation takes central role in well-being and development of the human being, thus not only is Occupational Therapy about doing, but it is also about becoming (Wilcock, 1997).

Facing this situation, as university professor, I feel must respond when he states that University is called up to be society’s moral compass. Therefore, we should raise our voice against injustice, and give our voices to those, who are silenced. Aristotle already said that to be a human Being means to have the gift of speech. We should bring Dewey’s vision back to life (1969); the purpose of University is to educate citizens, committed to their reality. Education should be an education for living, in the sense Kant proposed We should instruct our students within the best possible world, in values like solidarity, justice, tolerance, active respect, and equality. We should educate women and men who are committed.

Women and men who stand up when confronted with issues like climatic change or poverty, who don't fall into boredom (Fromm, 1994), or emptiness (Frankl, 1964) or anomie (Dürkheim, cited by Giddens 2001). And, again, as therapists, we should reflect and then act, supporting the movement of systole and diastole described by Mounier, what could be our contribution in regards to the situation of global change that we are experiencing, of which climatic change, poverty and the disappearance of cultures are the most prominent features? This activity requires our proactivity in the political arena; and for this reason, the decisions made at the political level are affecting the occupational health of people and communities with whom we work. It is not possible to remove politics from professional practice.

And we should undertake this fight in order to build a better world, maintaining hope and the conviction that the final victory is of Good. Camus said, the battle, that we fight, possesses the certainty of victory, because we have the determination of Springs (*esto es un poco difícil de traducir, tu veras*). This is why I am suggesting that we make Martin Luther King's dream ours. Us Occupational Therapists also have a dream, and we all can make our small, but great contribution to make it come true, because, as Mounier states, the greatness of a life receives contributions from the boldness of the small acts. Therefore, let's all be called Quijotes.

Quijotes, conscious of the greatness of our work, from our caring ethics. Helping the Human Being, being aware of everything that we can learn, able to reach our "becoming" through our relationship with people and communities. Indeed, like Buber (1994) said, all is stake in the relationship with the Other. Lévinas (cited by Bofia, 2000) reminds us in that Other lives the Social Other, the whole of Humanity. We face pressure from a health and social system based on the market forces, displaying short-sightedness to all but financial gain, we should be conscious of the greatness of our task and feed our souls in order to maintain our idealism and creative capacity. Because, like Benedetti taught us, of all the barriers that separate man, the deepest one is that which separates those destroying wonders from those creating them.

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