

APRENDICES | T2: E2 Facundo Ponce De León

Desgrabación - Traducción al Inglés

Link: [Aprendices | T2: E2 | Facundo Ponce De León](#)

Intro

I found it hard to abandon old teaching habits. I didn't let go of practices that I knew were useful to me, that served their purpose, that really worked, that I felt I controlled better.

Thankful about the quantity of new tools that help you to find the same thing you always look for, which is that connection, touching fibres, finding common purposes.

Previa

How do you feel there?

Perfect.

Yes?

Yes.

Dear Lalo, what a joy that you're here. I've just been told that...

How are you?

How are you doing, Claudia?

How are you?

Everything alright?

Tell me. I've already seen some. I must congratulate you because they're very pretty.

It has to do with a professional matter, but also personal matter, history, testimonies...

I've been going over this. This morning I started travelling to the past...

Trying to remember.

Yes, trying to remember.

We start from how you define yourself, and you can go from the personal to the professional. It has to do with the present.

OK?

Let's go. Thank you. Good evening. OK.

Alright, let's play.

Apprentices, season 2. Facundo, take 1.

Charla

On a professional level, I define myself as a philosopher, vocationally. If I had to define myself vitally, I'd say I'm restless.

I think I'm a restless person and I didn't choose it. That's just how I was seen by others, as restless. I recognized myself in restlessness.

And today, considering myself an adult, I owned that restlessness, so to speak.

What do you value about that restlessness? You called yourself restless. How do you cope with that?

I try to project that restlessness into things that fulfill me. I think describing myself as a restless person can be either positive or negative depending on the context.

A restless person can be someone inquisitive, questioning, curious, and that can be nice, and a restless person can also be someone who can't stay put.

Not staying put can be a flaw because sometimes you have to be still, you have to sit down, breathe, be bored, in the best sense, in the most classic sense of the word.

Because in boredom and in stillness you also get a number of thoughts, ideas, creativity, and that can have a negative side, no?

Today I feel at ease with my restlessness. I look at the positive part of that restlessness, the part that gets me to explore things.

You said today twice. Today is something positive in you. How was yesterday or the day before yesterday?

Restlessness has a kind of cousin which is anxiety; that may be the more negative side to it. And I think there was a time when I fell prey to that anxiety.

Maybe yesterday was the preamble that allowed me to feel whole today with my restlessness. All the hardships of being restless, which can be behavioral issues at school and then high school, and which you may call negative, are also the ones that allow me to see that something positive came out of that negativity.

So, it's not that it was negative yesterday and today it's positive. Everything that happened led to this place.

Another way of saying that is that, and to talk about education, and the education I got both at home and at German school, where I did both primary and high school...

...and at the University of the Republic, where I did my tertiary studies, is that there's something about education that is a bit ingrate, that takes a while to be acknowledged.

Today I think about the teachers who scolded me and I infinitely appreciate it. Even though back then I didn't like to be scolded and they didn't like to be doing the scolding.

And I think that happens a lot in our bond with our parents, where you retroactively look at things that you didn't like... and sometimes it's not just negative, sometimes it's good to recognize the positive.

That time your mother told you to moderate your restlessness, or a teacher or a family member told you to keep writing, to keep reading because you were very good at reading a short story... At first you don't realize the value of those things, it's always retroactive, that's why it can be ingrate many times for us teachers, you don't even find out sometimes.

Sometimes that happens a lot later and you don't even meet that teacher again, that professor, that relative. Sometimes you do, if you're lucky in life.

For instance, I believe I've told my parents many times how thankful I am of the education I received from them. But sometimes you don't get the chance. There are high school teachers I never saw again and if I were to meet them I'd say thank you.

And I think they hated me back then. But in the good sense, in the "how dense" way. How dense. How truly dense. And well, once again, the restlessness back then and today too.

I recall you worked with Daniel Finzi Pasca and wrote a book. A bit with his ideas... There's a phrase you were saying now and it's that education comes late and about the teachers who scolded you, who maybe weren't happy to scold you.

There's an idea you bring in that book and it's about the incoherence of life, of us wanting to be big when we're kids and then missing a certain magic as adults.

A sense of lost childhood. Yes, yes, I believe more than an idea in the strict sense, there's something incoherent about life, which is okay to connect, but the moment of learning is one thing, and the recognition of that learning is another thing.

And those two things rarely go together. Certainly not in childhood, or in your teenage years. Then you can learn about capitals and syntax and how to use a device... now, the reflection of that learning and what changed might never happen or might take place much later.

And in that hiatus there's an incoherence. And something similar happens with our growth as human beings. I think many people go like "Oh, if I could go back", sitting in that same bench, but with the thoughts I now have.

That's the incoherence we inhabit as human beings. It's not about being Uruguayan or being a boy or being a woman or being a kid or being an adult.

It's as if life goes on forever and the reflection on life always comes a little later. This hiatus is what produces, for me, the engine of the humanities, it is the engine of artistic creation, it is the engine of poetry, it is the engine of a number of things that are very stimulating for humanity, but that really have to do with that hiatus.

And that retroactive memory which is always projecting. And that incoherence as well. And the matter of defining myself as a restless person undoubtedly connects with childhood, which is something I also talked about a lot in that book.

Because it talks a lot about play, clowns and clowning in relation to childhood, the yearning childhood, the lost childhood. And well, that whole book was a reflection on childhood as something we lose, as a way of saying "I'm no longer a kid".

But I can maintain a restlessness, a wonder, an open outlook that can be very important. As long as I don't forget I'm also an adult.

And sometimes you hear it's fashionable to be the kid we are inside, who never dies, to take him back, and deep down it's to be a fool. There's a whole discussion there, whether it's irresponsible or... It's a discussion that I think is interesting. And it features a lot in that book.

You defined yourself as a philosopher and a restless person. Now you talk about an open outlook, or trying to look at things trying to identify the mystery behind them. I believe there's something personal in that. There's a lot about telling in your work, but there's also a need to know, to know what happens to other people.

When did you get clues that it was interesting to tell something about someone? Because you were a kind of pioneer there too.

I'd tell you that I first think about my family's composition. A house with my parents, my maternal grandparents, my paternal grandmother, my two sisters, my three brothers and the many aunts and uncles around. It was a house about things of the past.

My greatgrandfather was a doctor, who was also a poet, and the president of Nacional, who made many changes to football, but who also won the contest of the "To our father Artigas" hymn.

So you'd hear a lot about that. And I also had a father who talked to me a lot about the Old Town. He grew up near the place where we're shooting this.

So, at home you would breathe history matters due to the family links. And then, talking about more formal education, I started to discover that Philosophy and History were subjects where I was more attentive. Where there were things.

For example, one remembers little about curricular things, but I remember the day when I was first explained Plato's theory of ideas and that things that happened here have to do with another world, which is the world of ideas.

So this lamp, this very lamp that is here, corresponds to the idea of Lamp that is not here, but that is. I remember that. I recall the moment the Monsignor talked about a horse, his example was with a horse.

So to me this was a clue that some of the things you say and think don't belong to you, they have a history and that history always goes back.

I believe that this phenomenon, which was later heightened when I studied Philosophy and also when I studied Communication and I looked at where certain discussions and certain ideas came from, I put myself in contact with the threads of history that go long before I was born, way, way, way back, because they have been going on since there were telephones and cars.

I believe that link plus my family history unleashed that restlessness, that wanting to understand.

I studied a philosopher a lot, Hanna Arendt, who upon her return to Germany was asked: "And what do you want?" "I want to understand, I want to understand what it's all about".

To approach a mystery, but not just a mystery in a transcendental way. The mystery of why transit works is also a mystery.

It's full of things with plenty of answers that are not mysterious. It works because there are traffic lights connected to the municipality.

But then you open it up and there's a mystery in those holes. And that has to do with learning and discipline, which was also hard to learn.

I learned it at 18 years old, if not before, but at 18, I feel that when I started university I learned the discipline of study, which is important. And then it's about what transcends any discipline, any study plan, anything. It's that intangible thing that happens in study, in learning, which is when something is vocational, it binds you, it touches you in a different way.

It connects you to a purpose.

It connects you to a purpose, exactly. Which in my case is this: understanding, philosophy, the meaning that things can have.

Good. I was also thinking about the purpose of giving value to that family history too. First to understand it. You said Hanna Arendt had a similar purpose herself, among others.

But to understand why what happened happened and why the world is a certain way.

And let me add something there, Darío, because it connects to what we have been talking about. Which also has a lot to do with the philosophical engine, which is a childish engine and one often close to madness in some things, it has a lot to do with the obvious, with going back to the obvious questions.

Obvious in the sense that they are there. Why do we have a national hero? Why is Artigas a hero? What is a hero? What does it mean that we're Uruguayans? When was this invented? And is there a history behind it?

Maybe we've all been supposing that June 19th is Artigas' birth and that we have an identity card, but well, going back to the obvious is an exercise to me, not just personally. I think it's a civic exercise of some importance.

Another time of your life was when you decided to take other risks and go and work in a different country, go to learn. How was that travel experience, of being in another country, another culture? Leaving the neighborhood, the known?

It was extraordinary because it was a matrimonial experience. I went with my wife. It was a vital personal experience. I dreamed of going to Spain and do my doctorate there.

I dreamed of working at the circus, in Switzerland, that idea that I linked to Chaplin's circus. To go on different stages with the artists.

And it was also a working experience, a professional experience. So, it was immensely enriching on three levels.

And the teaching is: diversity knows no limits. You think you know or that you respect it, but diversity is diverse.

So there you were with people of 13 nationalities and four more came up. And then you went to Moscow and you were like "I know the Russian reality", but then you went to another stage 200 kilometers away and you realized it had nothing to do with Moscow.

In the same way you think you know Uruguay because you know your city and three other departments, and then you go to the whole 19 of them and think you know them, but you only know one locality and not the interior.

So, to me, the vital experience was where you got to know how that diversity is. And how diversity is there and must be celebrated.

I think you celebrate that through encounters, through talking to someone who doesn't talk your language, who doesn't know it.

And, also, being Uruguayan you get to explain your country many times. An Argentine, a Brazilian, a Canadian doesn't explain his country. But you do and it was a nice experience too.

What went through your head when you took those kind of big decisions? Which are extremely interesting when you look at them today. What you learned, the experience you had, the people you met.

But how do you prepare yourself for those types of situations?

I returned home to the house where I grew up, to the bond of my family. My mother, who raised six children and worked and worked. She's an English teacher, she is a primary school teacher, and she set up an institute between her pregnancies.

I think I'm going to say this here with you now, I think that inadvertently she transmitted something of a lightness of baggage in life in general, which is what makes it possible for one to make those kinds of decisions, with life more or less settled.

What if we leave? What if we take this risk? She never left the country or anything, but she was capable of taking three kids and say "let's do this".

She never brought that weight of saying "Stop", "How", "What does this mean?" Some people have that and they're very sensible, but when it came time to leave we couldn't afford such things.

But my mother believed that if you really wanted to do something, you do it, we're just passing through, though she never made it explicit.

I don't have the memory of talking about this, but I think about it and you ask me "Why did you leave?" Well, why not? What does it mean to leave?

If I tell you right now there's something for you in the Antarctic, in Slovakia, wherever. What? Will you go "I don't have this and that"?

Yes, that might all be true, but you can leave all the same. So, I look at it from today's perspective and it turned out alright.

But even if it had gone wrong, the genesis of the decision is in taking that stand, being able to live with the possibility that all there is might not be, it's not so rigid either and there can be shifts in the tide.

It's true that as you grow up the shifts in the tide get more complicated if you're alone... At 18 the tide can take you whichever way you want, if you have the chance.

Now it would be different. But the tide can change. That's the message. The tide can rise. It will take longer to change direction but that's the same with everything deep down.

I'm left thinking about what you say about baggage. Which is very hard for us sometimes and I'm thinking about it in terms of education, where the baggage is super heavy sometimes and we even feel guilty when we throw some of it away.

Exactly, and what I told you about leaving the country, if I connect that to the teaching environment, it was very hard for me to leave old teaching practices behind.

I did my whole career in those lectures and I believe in them. They say letting go is easy, but the fears are there. And now that you bring this up, Dário, it's just as you say.

And the pandemic completely transformed my links with certain technological tools that I'd been avoiding somewhat so far.

Yes, I'm going virtual. Yes, I understood that such a resource can be used better and that it is full of... Then I went training, because I did not let go of practices that I knew were useful to me, that worked, that I felt I controlled better.

And today, I'm back, right? Thankful about the quantity of new tools that help you to find the same thing you always look for, which is that connection, touching fibres, finding common purposes which is two people getting together, or an adult with an infant, telling them what the world is about and all that.

That opens up another fairly large discussion but I don't think this is the right time.