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## BOOK REVIEW

Ryszard Maciej Łukaszewicz: *Stories of the Path: The Wrocław School of the Future and the Foundation for Free Educational Initiatives or “Everyone Can Do More, Less If Made To; Good Is Not Enough When Better Is Possible”*. Foundation for Free Educational Initiatives, Wrocław 2021, ISBN 83-9182266-7-8, 507 pp.

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*Ryszard Maciej Łukaszewicz: Opowieści Drogi: Wrocławska Szkoła Przyszłości i Fundacja Wolne Inicjatywy Edukacyjne, czyli „Każdy więcej może, mniej musi; Dobrze nie wystarcza, gdy lepsze jest możliwe”. Fundacja Wolne Inicjatywy Edukacyjne, Wrocław 2021, ISBN 83-9182266-7-8, 507 ss.*

An extensive and beautifully published book leads readers along Professor Ryszard Łukaszewicz’s almost fifty-year-long path, which is inextricably linked with the Wrocław School of the Future and the Free Educational Initiatives Foundation. It is the oldest initiative of this type in Poland respected by the European “family” of authoritative schools. Therefore, it can be said that professional life is an important part of the Professor’s personal life, as if they were equally important. In this case, professional life is understood not as compulsion, necessity, but passion, fascination, mindfulness, searching for better and different, because good is no longer enough. This is all true, contrary to the prevailing thesis that the better

is the enemy of the good. *Stories of the Path...* is non-chronological presentation of successive jobs, positions, merit lists or publications. Primarily, it is a story about how to make a “school without a school”, how to create educational opportunities as a way of pedagogical activities, instead of recreating templates of handouts that have been “current” for decades, how to make students ask questions out of curiosity and not answer out of compulsion, according to the key to pre-set questions.

The path that the Author followed/follows is unique not only because of the set goal and consistent pedagogical activities, but also because of his intellectual and artistic fascinations, generously used in personal and professional development. *Stories of the Path...*, masterfully documented, were written, like all the Professor’s books, in literary language, with characteristic images, symbols, metaphors. Sometimes irony shines through, especially when you have to fight relentlessly for your vision of a better school with ministerial, local government officials or other decision-makers. The content is complemented by a masterfully planned and executed graphic design, which abounds in many illustrations (woodcuts, badges, book title pages, photographs from a trip to Asia, workshops conducted, films shot, children’s work, etc.) which are themselves stories of the path.

The book begins classically with an introduction ambiguously titled “A shot of youth...?” Questions arise: what shot is this, when, where, from where, to where? It turns out to be towards... dreams: travel, unusual places, interesting people, school, etc. The author evokes seven metaphorical wonders, briefly described here, which are deciphered and organised in the following six chapters.

The title of chapter 1, “Daydream, or another school”, aptly describes its content. It leads through the beginnings, i.e. studies, work, a doctorate at the University of Wrocław and significant people: Professor Mirosława Chamcówna and the unsurpassed Master, Professor Bogdan Suchodolski.

The beginning of the path was the participation (at his own expense) in a scientific conference entitled “Education for the Future” in Kazimierz Dolny, which was the starting point for the establishment of another school, the Wrocław School of the Future. Another inspiration is related to a long-term research and filming expedition to South-East Asia, with the aim of seeing and learning about the educational system in Pakistan, India, and Nepal in order to understand otherness and the values associated with it. This expedition, as the Author claims, “slightly crazy and risky”, not only fulfilled the above-mentioned goals, but also became an “important source of strength for the courage” to do the impossible, i.e. the Wrocław School of the Future. Another inspiring and fruitful trip of the Author took place at the invitation of Professor Bogdan Suchodolski, to Jabłonna near Warsaw, and an opportunity to present for the first time the idea of the Wrocław School of the Future, which Professor Irena Wojnar (another significant person) defined as a new innovative structure, and not a school in the colloquial sense.

What followed was a continuation of making dreams come true in the form of workshops and seminars for educators conducted between 1978 and 1981 as part of the project “Wrocław School of the Future, in a common alliance for another, alternative...?”. Among the regular participants, Professor Zbigniew Kwieciński was present, who defended the school against the closure, as the President of the Polish Pedagogical Society. The theoretical and implementation concepts of the Wrocław School of the Future were published by the University of Wrocław Publishing House in the form of 13 compact works and 10 in other reputable publishing houses. This is an expression of the realisation, in such a spectacular way, achieved through hard work, and dreams born of imagination and narration.

*Stories of the Path...* is not only a string of inspirations, recognition, transformations, successes, but also a spoonful of tar in the form of organisational and administrative troubles caused by successive ministers and Wrocław’s educational supervisors, who were unable to give consent to the establishment of the Wrocław School of the Future. Even such real-life encounters failed to stop the Professor from realising his dreams. During another stormy seminar in Lanckorona, he made the decision, against everything and everyone hesitating, “let’s start with the children, (that is) no more talking – the beginning of action”.

Chapter 2 is entitled “Wrocław as if for troubadours of alternatives”. The writers of alternative “poetry”, passionate people, professors and other academics, students (volunteers), together with Professor Łukaszewicz, undertook nine key attempts at implementation, innovation, and experimentation. They were both short term and long term, and lasted many months or even many years. They wanted to experience a change in the approach to education, as well as gain theoretical and practical experience, also on an international scale. Reflexivity and professionalism resonate “in the pursuit of dreams” associated with the alternative school. We already know that this has proved a hit, as the narrative path of education was discovered, i.e. the narrative formula for creating the layout and selection of educational content. It is enough to watch the film based on the Professor’s project entitled: *How to Build Bridges with Fairy Tales*, directed by Wojciech Iwański, to know that it was not only the Professor’s dream, but also the dreams of children and teachers who were waiting for such a school. This desire never goes away!

After 17 years of ideas and efforts, on September 1, 1989, an alternative kindergarten was inaugurated as a facility of the Wrocław School of the Future on Skwierzyńska street in Wrocław, and together with it new journeys – beautiful with children, but difficult with officials. It is included in chapter 3 “Stop and go and Skwierzyńska – birth and birthday”. There was a birth, but right after that, in April 1990, a decision was made to liquidate it. And here again the indomitable character and “fighting spirit” of Professor Łukaszewicz, who, having wings and feet at his disposal (imagination and responsibility combined with commitment), di-

rected them to... Kalisz and, together with Professor Krystyna Leksicka (extremely significant person, long-time co-worker), launched the Early School Education Workshop, which was the first practical implementation of the Wrocław School of the Future, in a full teaching cycle. This was a three-year stop, as the next start of kindergarten and Wrocław School of the Future, took place in 1993 and lasted until 2016. There were also short stops, in Assisi (the International Children's Spring Festival "Peace with Nature") and long-term ones, in Świeradów, where NATURAmy, i.e. ecological education workshops, were held for 14 years (1990–2004). Again, work, preparations, open-mindedness, dreaming, improvisation, diversity of themes, threads, contexts, richness and diverse forms of joint activities. Well, it is difficult to translate all of this into the dry relationship language! In addition, an ecological education station in the Jizera Mountains – a place enchanted by nature. The international exchange of ideas and their exemplification in the "rediscovery of ideas and values across Europe" took place there. The NATURAmy salons for environmental education "received high and very high marks for their creative and unconventional combination of the great ideas of the two masters, Hieronymus Bosch and Peter Bruegel, the mockers of the »world in reverse«, with the civilisational challenges and threats of our contemporary world, (...) and above all, they captivated the children with these unconventional activity workshops".

There were also other activities of the Professor in the form of hundreds of workshops, seminars, meetings, plans and trips to Kalisz. There, as usual, something extraordinary was happening. The Wrocław School of the Future was invited to participate in an international educational project, TEACHERS OF THE WORLD, initiated by the Japanese, in a sequence of documentary films. This was a great honour and proof of recognition because Japan had also invited Australia, Canada, Finland, South Korea and the USA to join the project along with Poland. An outstanding educational film was produced, in cooperation with Polish Television, titled inspiringly *Does a Man Have a Third Hand?* directed by Wojciech Iwański with Professor Ryszard Maciej Łukaszewicz in the role of a Teacher. This third hand represents the imagination. As a proof of great appreciation for the film's qualities, the artistic director Nakajuki Tori decided that the Polish film would give rise to the series TEACHERS OF THE WORLD. The work of this fascinating Teacher and this interesting school was known to the whole world, but well, the officials have their own stories!

The "secrets" of the School of the Future are included in the aforementioned chapter. One of the biggest is the method of designing learning opportunities, based on the triad: starting conditions – open and/or closed tasks – choices. Open-ended tasks, in the Professor's opinion, are incredibly powerful, as they are characterised by a multitude of ways of solving the task, creative invention, unconventional

forms of activity, the ability to independently evaluate and interpret the world. One cannot fail to mention the worthy benefits of success in education. These are: to dream, to provoke, to inspire. Again, hundreds, thousands of workshops (e.g. global education, the phenomena of art), ideas detailed, diverse, open to learning, to innovation and, above all, embellished with poetic metaphors of the man with a pole. The question he posed to himself: "What is the Europe of alternatives in education doing here?" the Professor answered in the form of a calendar, written on four pages of a typescript, in which he included his activities in the European arena, going beyond the existing horizons, as always!

"The resistance has to be cushioned by persistence and having people of good will behind you". This is a paraphrase of the title of chapter 4 and an evocation of fabulous people, i.e. the Master of the Great School and the Master of the Author, the aforementioned Bogdan Suchodolski and Irena Wojnar. Professor Suchodolski did not cease in his efforts to strengthen, with his position and authority, the admirable efforts to realise the pedagogical initiative of the Wrocław School of the Future. For the Author, Professor Wojnar's work became a source of multiple inspirations for "forging ahead with the idea and practice of the Wrocław School of the Future". Among the fabulous partners there were also people of various interests and professions: Dad Jerzy Danielak – architect, carpenter; Alina Obidniak – actress, director and artistic manager of theatres in Kalisz and Jelenia Góra; Jerzy Kwiatkowski – forestry officer; Wojciech Iwański – man of film, television, director; Iza Świerad – visual artist; Zbigniew Bać – professor, architect; Marta Maczkowska – artist and social activist of Kotlina Jeleniogórska; Maciej Szłapka – book publisher; Robert Kutkowski, Rafał Łukaszewicz, Jacek Heliasz – a successful trio of youngsters. The above-mentioned people formed a strong group under the name of Wrocław School of the Future and they made, invented and guessed as to how things should be, so that it was as good as possible, surpassing themselves. To the fabulous people we should add all those authors who wrote texts about the Wrocław School of the Future. It is difficult to count them all!

Not only did the professor experience kindness from people of goodwill, with whom he even collaborated for several decades, but he also found intellectual inspiration in important books. Here "he brings to light" 21 books with which he is extremely familiar. His "book allies" are, for example, *The Learning Revolution*, *The Power of the Mind*, *Revolutionary Wealth*, *The Art of Possibility* and *A Brief History of Everything*. As he claims, their richness and variety are seductive.

Chapter 5 is entitled "Practising dreams and images – symbols-metaphors". The premise is clear, it is worth seeking out the "source" and drawing from it hand-fuls, but how! According to the Author, through the practical implementation of "education with imagination", for example, with the help of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* in order to search for one's own examples from everyday

life, to confirm the theses that adults are funny, adults are extraordinary, adults are strange. The participating children wonderfully let their imagination run wild and invented amazing situations that showed that adults are strange and ridiculous, for example, in the matter of not deciding to open an alternative school.

For the Professor, the school with its idea organizes/builds a place, defines its identity. A different school is not only a different idea, but also a different infrastructure conducive to its realisation. This was difficult, but as usual, the Professor's visionary thinking overcame various barriers (mental, material) and admitted that the state of closeness, intimacy with life, with the place of being/becoming, which is school, its familiarity depends – to a decisive extent – on us, on the magic of hands and artistic soul, on imagination and the will to change, even if only for the comfort of children, and alternative education. Its difference is marked by a different rhythm, interior arrangements, microclimates/microstories of days, weeks, months, ordinary and festive daily life, harmonious coexistence with the idea of designing educational occasions, different times of children's stay at school, including night-time adventures. It flirts with the ability to weave the magic of tastes, smells, sounds, movement, images, old objects into school life. This was fostered by the spaces: open, workshop, intimate, imaginative, and populating them with arrangement stories, i.e. "Melancholy Suitcase", or "Old Polish Traditions", etc.

"Barrels of salt, barrels of honey with spoonfuls of tar and the eyes of others" is the title of final chapter 6. It is constructed by the sweet and sour reflections of the Professor and the sweet reflections of those who participated in the workshops he organised, as well as consultations and advice in other fields education. They were held at the request of interested people, and there were thousands of them each year. Here is one of such letters to the Professor: "I kindly request you to conduct a workshop for the consultants and advisors of the Centre for Consultation and Improvement of Teachers and the teachers of the Szczecin province, to be held on December 2 and 3, 1995 at the Teacher's House. (Environmental Education Consultant, Szczecin)". As befits a Great Humanist, the Professor made a statistical analysis and prepared detailed maps of consultations and advice. One of them shows that in 1995 alone, the Professor and his Team held a total of 231 such meetings, in 21 cities or towns throughout the country. This was the case in the past and in subsequent years. Thanks to such activities, not only did a different kind of ecological education begin to develop throughout Poland, participating in the phenomena of art, but also applying, with more or less understanding, the method of designing an educational opportunity characteristic of the Wrocław School of the Future. This is evidenced by the following entry: "The school is wonderful. Participating in the seminar inspired me to introduce changes in »my« school, both in terms of organisation and the way classes are conducted".

More than 30 pages are occupied with the “eyes of others” added by the Professor, children and adults filling more barrels with honey. Two examples:

Sandra – “A joyful child walking to school with a smile. This school is the Wrocław School of the Future, and the child is me at the age of 7, 8 and 9 (at that time I was attending Wrocław School of the Future)”.

The Mayor of Świeradów-Zdrój – “the Free Educational Initiatives Foundation for 5 years has allowed us to positively assess the methods of operation, as well as the competence of the professional organisers of the Świeradów meetings. Changing the ecological awareness of the local community is one of the important tasks of the Municipality. Therefore, we believe that launching of the ecological education station as an international centre is also in the clear interest of Świeradów-Zdrój and its development plans”.

I want to add my thanks, both as a participant in the workshop meetings, putting my feet on the stones, attentive to the possibilities and trials of a different school, and as a reviewer of *Stories of the Path...*, 1972–1989/1990–2020. Following this path has been a fascinating intellectual and artistic adventure for me. It cannot be different because the wings and feet of the remarkable Professor, growing from significant educational orientations, have created a different, alternative school, drawing from the SOURCE OF DREAMS. It is unusual because, as the Author claims, it is “also a story about you – about us!”