

Diving into the unknown beauty of the future

To navigate into the turbulent waters of a crazy world, full of unknown experiences, it is necessary to navigate inside ourselves in order to be equipped to lead the next generation. In the extended essay "A Room Of One's Own", the English novelist Virginia Woolf wrote: "Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind." To see the future clearly, it is necessary to delve into the past. The human mind fascinates with its ability to create and easily adapt, showing that there truly are no barriers to what our minds can create, if only freedom is guaranteed. When Clarice Lispector said: "I do not know much. But there are certain advantages in not knowing. Like virgin territory, the mind is free of preconceptions. Everything I do not know forms the greater part of me: This is my largesse. And with this I understand everything. The things I do not know constitute my truth.", the anxiety of not knowing the future began to fade away, opening up for the beauty of not knowing, therefore it is discovery. To live is to face humanity's constant desire of trying to find the meaning of everything, therefore it is the beauty of curiosity.

When dying becomes a technology for living

Sometimes, in the middle of a bath, I ask myself: *What will I think when I die?* As if we can even think about something when death arrives. I haven't died yet, so I can't verify any facts. Assuming the day comes and we could think of something, I remember the Helena Bonham Carter interview at the 21st Annual Hamptons International Film Festival, when she said: "At the end of the day, when you're dying, you're not gonna go like... 'Oh, thank God, I was thin'. You're gonna go like: 'Oh, I loved eating those, whatever you loved eating'".

The pressure to be seen alive often takes us away from the real depths of what it means to exist, so when the frightening idea that we're going to die one day appears out of the sudden, it becomes a mechanism to get back to living... which doesn't last long, because soon the pressure to be seen to be doing well in life comes back to haunt us. Some leaders like to claim that all it takes is not to be afraid. They just forgot to teach us how not to be afraid.

Fear is necessary, because it is inherent to humans

Strike a power pose. Tell your mirror three times that you are brave. Spread your arms wide before leaving the house. But what about... hug your children every night before bed. Tell them you're afraid of the dark too. Assume you don't know, but you'll find out. Be human and not a machine. Don't worry, machines already exist and are occupying many places in society. You're not a machine, so fear is necessary, because it's fully human.

In the age of information and automation, remembering what it means to be human is a gift. Machines don't know what it's like to be afraid. They don't know how frustrating it is to suck on your first day at work. They don't know the warmth of a hug when all you want is to fall apart. They don't know how it feels to write like Woolf or Lispector.

The human protagonism in a real-life reality show

To be a great leader in a crazy world, is to understand that people have gained power and protagonism. Their feelings matter and have an impact on behavior, which generates large-scale effects. Among his immense legacy of leadership, according to Peter Drucker:

"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."

It seems paradoxical to think that we need to see what isn't being said in a world that's buzzing with information and opinion all the time. And that's precisely the point... When the world goes silent, what do you hear? And what does it hear from you?

Cameras are being pointed all the time. Lights, camera, action... What makes your heart beat faster, now you rediscovered how it feels to be human? Ideas that don't come out of the imagination are just ideas. Leaderships without courage to take risks among the fear are just titles.

The answer is we

I was 16 when I left behind everything I knew to chase my dream. I desperately wanted to be an actress. Having lived in a small town all my life, I suddenly found myself alone in Brazil's largest city. My greatest companion was a notebook in which I wrote down all the good things that happened so I could remember that there was kindness and generosity in chaos. Even though I cried every day in the bus queue to get home at dawn, because I didn't know if I could handle the pressure of discovering the unknown by myself.

In the five years until I graduated, I was a student, an assistant, a make-up artist, a camera operator, an intern, among many other extra activities that I made myself available for, because it gave meaning to my soul. There wasn't a person I didn't know, from teachers to students to cleaners.

It took me a while to understand that I didn't have to defeat all the monsters in my head on my own. The weight of the whole world doesn't have to be entirely on your back. You don't become weak by assuming that you also need help.

From the day I entered until the day I left, with all the fears accumulated in my stomach, I decided that I wanted to leave a mark on everyone I met. Because leadership isn't about who you are, it's about what you do to the people around you. As Peter Drucker continued:

“Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.”

The terrifying monster under our bed is not a literal monster anymore

In The London Economy article “The 40 most common childhood fears revealed”, it shows the research of 1,582 parents with children aged 16 and under about their biggest fears. Commissioned to celebrate the release of the DVD of Michael Rosen's book ‘We're Going on a Bear Hunt’ in 2017, in which he says: *“When children join in the Bear Hunt, they discover that the thing about today and tomorrow is that you can't go over it, you can't go under it, you do have to go through it!”*

As we grow, our fears transform as the world changes and we ourselves transform. The monsters under our bed became fears of the future, of failure, of

not having enough money, of growing old, of being replaced by technology... Ultimately, fears of succumbing to inevitable change.

In the film industry, of which I'm a part, it's inevitable to ask yourself and the corporations how the impact of technological advances will affect the work, not only from a cultural and social point of view, but also of the total disruption to what we know today.

Over the years, the way people manage information has changed. With the advance of social media, democratizing access to information has also led to its amplification. In the age of internet influence, the process of working on mental and psychological issues takes on different colors, in addition to the high volatility of developments.

As a result of the lack of regulations for emerging technologies, the Writers Guild of America went on strike for 148 days in 2023, discussing the lack of residual payments on streaming platforms, as well as calling for effective regulations on the use of AI in the industry, to be used as a tool to support professionals and not as a method to replace them. In October of the same year, the WGA voted in favor of their contract with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, walking away with an agreement that ended up being a solid win for the writers.

Sometimes I feel like I'm sailing on a paper boat, except that it's a little tougher than most papers. It's fragile, but even in the midst of storms, it keeps going and looks for the best route. It doesn't suppress the ecosystem around it, much less the icebergs that may appear along the way, instead it tries to understand where it fits best with all its colors, ideas and vivacity.

The world's most valuable asset

On one of the many days when I couldn't silence my mind to focus on writing, I surrendered to the frightening comfort of social media, in endless scrolling. At one point, I paused the video when I realized that I hadn't paid attention to a single word the person had said, even though I had my phone practically in my face. That was the day I realized that I had automated my consumption of information, without even paying attention. It's not even fun, it's *highly terrifying*.

It all made even more sense when I read the work of Herbert A. Simon, an American social scientist, known for his contributions to many fields, including psychology, statistics, mathematics and operations research, all of which he synthesized in a key theory that earned him the 1978 Nobel Prize for Economics, when he said: “...*a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention...*”

Another work that helped me understand the lines of impact between information and attention was the very pungent and compelling work of Mary Oliver, an American poet who won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize, when she said: “*To pay attention, this is our endless and proper work.*” and added in another selected essay: “*Attention is the beginning of devotion.*”

The discourse extends to the psychological fatigue of wanting to achieve the ultimate dream as soon as you decide what you want with a few steps. Then, the frustration of understanding that it will take a lot more than that, but instead of racking our brains exploring possibilities, we scroll through other lives in an attempt to mitigate our fears of failing.

The world in which Herbert Simon and Mary Oliver made such assertive observations about attention is already far different from the one we are living in, in terms of the control we have over the technologies in our lives. Or more precisely, the lack of control.

James Williams, PhD in philosophy and ethics from Oxford University, writes: “*The main risk of an abundance of information is not that attention is filled or drained, as if it were a quantifiable and limited resource, but that control over the processes that regulate attention is compromised.*”

The education of the new generation requires much more than just a traditional foundation, but rather a deep dive into the technological impacts on society and how to work with them, as well as the psychological foundation of human relationships that may tend to be nullified by the strengthening of automation.

I'm not afraid of sharks anymore

When I was a kid, I was afraid to swim alone in the pool because I thought I'd run into a shark. Even though the pool was much smaller than the smallest shark. I would force myself to swim with my eyes open to stay alert. This fear lasted

through my teenage years, until I discovered that I was afraid to keep my eyes closed because it made me vulnerable.

I was 17 when I swam to the bottom of the pool and closed my eyes until my heart calmed down and the fear finally went away. It was the first time I'd been back to my hometown after it left. I understood that I needed to see the colors of the world without the lens of my deep fear of being vulnerable.

In the Brazilian song "Ninguém" by Fran & Chico Chico, they sing: "*And I'm going to dance, where no one can look at me, I reside in myself, I'm my home, and no one can sing my song*". To see beyond what haunts is to respect the legacy of existing as a human being whose deep existential doubts often plunge inside when the surroundings are suffocating.

The future will always be different and time is definitely transformative, but no one will ever sing your song. That's the beauty of being human. The creativity that springs from one's own scars. The constant desire to understand paradoxical issues. The insane devotion to creating. The beauty of the future is that humanity resists in its little paper boats. So... I'm not afraid of sharks anymore.

Unless I'm in open waters.

Leading in an abstract future

A good leader is one who sees the truth in people. The one who understands how to get the best out of them. The one who knows that he is dealing with humans, because he is one too, who laughs as well as cries.

In order to lead in such an abstract world that is unfolding before our eyes, we need to understand that we don't have to lose our minds trying to make the decision, we just have to make the right decision. Rambling on about the possibility of having made a mistake is not only a waste of time, but it's disrespectful to the version that made the decision with the best reasons it had at the time. The moment you empower yourself with knowledge, no option will be more right than the one you have at the moment, because everything else is expectation and not reality.

As Peter Drucker brilliantly wrote: "*Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.*"

Great leaders understand that the secret to successful relations is to deeply understand the human mind. It is an intangible asset for the machines that arrive, adding up and not dividing. Repetitive activities can easily be operated by artificial intelligences, leaving time for what humans are really good at: creating.

As Franz Kafka, a German-language writer of visionary fiction, said so assertively: "*By believing passionately in something that still does not exist, we create it. The nonexistent is whatever we have not sufficiently desired.*"

Finally, I'm beginning to understand what I'd like to think when I die, if we have the chance to think about something.

I'd like to think about how funny it is when I walk barefoot on wet grass and the little leaves between my toes tickle me.

I'd like to think that I owe a lot of my life to the 16-year-old me who decided to chase a dream, even with all the fears accumulated in my stomach.

I'd like to think about all the stories of the people I've met who have made me rethink my whole life.

Above all, I'd like to think that the future didn't scare me, but made me want to live even more, because the unknown is a mystery for us to unravel.

Therefore, it is beautiful.

After all, as Peter Drucker himself said: "*Results are gained not by solving problems, but by exploiting opportunities.*"

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