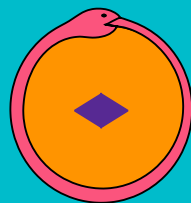
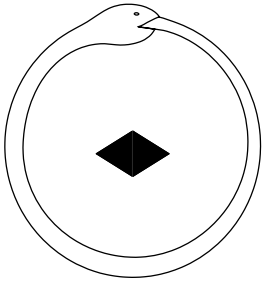


THE HUMMINGBIRD'S EMBRACE  
AND THE JOURNEY OF EDUCATION

Muniz Sodré



cadernos  
SELVAGEM



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This notebook is the written register of Muniz Sodré's speech, prepared for the in-person Selvagem cycle of studies on May 14th 2022, The kiss of the hummingbird, that took place in MAM Rio. The speech, transcribed from a recording made by Muniz, was stated orally by Luiz Rufino on the day of the event.

I want to thank Ailton, Anna and Madeleine for calling me to speak, to have the honor of being there. It would be my first event in person, but I couldn't. Before the hummingbird, the dengue mosquito caught me and I came here to have myself examined, the rates were deranged and I couldn't go out today. I send everyone a hug, because this hummingbird knowledge is a hug. It is a knowledge of embrace. The hummingbird embraces the flower.

Originally, "educate" means "travel". To the letter, *ducare* means "to move, to displace oneself" from one point to the other. Therefore, education is originally a journey. We can understand "Journey" as a flight, as a change of space. So the hummingbird is a bird that travels all the time. It's characteristic of the hummingbird to travel. Therefore, it doesn't stop. It doesn't stop. So, it is fair and accurate that it can symbolize knowledge. The knowledge of kissing flowers and extracting the honey from there, of pollinating, occasionally. And to displace itself, spreading other realities, spreading the intrinsic knowledge of things — which is the intrinsic knowledge of nature. However, the West assumes — and have always assumed — that education takes place only in a given space, guided by a master. But it is not like that. Platão himself conceived a peripatetic method, of walking, of displacement. This is what the peripatetic method is, it is displacement, it is continuous journey.

Continuous journey within the same space. Within the academy space, that is true, within the restricted space of Greece itself. But there are other civilizations, non-Greek ones, that make the journey, the journey itself, the source of knowledge. Indigenous peoples, traditional peoples, that walk through the forest, live temporarily in a place and later abandon that place, because they know that that place has been worn out, it is no longer teaching anything. There is no more interaction, no exchange, between them and the trees, and what is natural. So, it is necessary to rediscover the meaning of education beyond the paralyzed or paralyzing dissemination of contents. Of paralyzed knowledge. That is, knowledge that contains in itself the movement of the hummingbird, which in its very movement is teaching and learning.

So, to educate, therefore, is to move. Teaching and learning. It is the same thing. Who doesn't learn, doesn't teach. Those who don't teach, even when they know they are not teaching, are not learning. And many are the philosophers, even Western ones like Heidegger, that say that to educate is to put yourself to walk. It is to undertake a journey. I see this as an originary take off, which the hummingbird does by accelerating.

African people – a community such as *Axé Opô Afonjá*, to which I belong, and that in fact I humbly know little about –, people there do not learn by someone speaking to the other. They learn by displacing themselves. They learn by traveling. They learn by traveling through the woods, by traveling for the fulfillment of their obligations. They learn by discovering. And when they stop, when there is an object that they have to know, they don't look at it from only one angle. The Nagos, the Yorubas, they take the object they want to know and surround it from all sides, in all ways. It can be the speech of someone who studied medicine, someone who studied science. It can be a religious speech. All of these can be accepted, can be weighted. Because all of these speeches are part of the many perspectives that you can take on an object.

So, this knowledge is the ecological knowledge. It is a knowledge in which the human being is at all times in interaction with the environment, at all times in interaction with others. And, in order to be in interaction with others, you have to be open, with your hands open to the other. They have to reach out to the other as well. You may learn

with someone who cannot read. One of the masters of one of the black traditions I came to know in Bahia – which was *capoeira*, a ludic, festive, warrior tradition – was master Bimba. He was illiterate. But an illiterate and a wise man. The Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) gave him, in 1974, an *honoris causa* degree. And it was heavily criticized by the cultured press of Bahia. They said “what do you mean, an honorary doctor?”, revering a popular master, a master of corporeality. And the university, wisely, sagely, gave him the *honoris causa* degree on Bahian wisdom.

So look at that, when you go picking up these fragments, these examples that come from the terreiro, that come from *capoeira*, that come from *samba*, from *maracatu*, from *jongo*, each one of these fun and ludic forms of knowledge, that maybe we think that are only entertainment; but they are actually organized, incorporated, as institutions. They are popular institutions of knowledge transmission, of non-organized knowledge transmission, and yet an institutional transmission, one that graduates people. As time passes, people understand that those are institutional forms of acquisition, of transmission of knowledge.

Therefore, I would like to remember that the most antique, longest-lived and most solid institutions of Brazilian society are, of course, the civil-society institutions that preserve democratic fundamentals, but mainly popular institutions. The popular institutions are long-lived, they are solid. They are not just a party, not just a festivity. They are like the hummingbird: pollinators and transmitters.

## MUNIZ SODRÉ

Journalist, sociologist, writer, doctor of Science of Literature, professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Author of several books; among them we highlight *Reinventando a educação: Diversidade, descolonização e redes* [Reinventing education: Diversity, decolonization and networks] and *A Sociedade Incivil* [The Uncivil Society]. Muniz Sodré is *obá* of *Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá*.

## LUIZ RUFINO

Carioca, son of father and mother from Ceará, pedagogue and doctor of Education. He develops research on Brazilian cultures, and corners, wheels, streets, games and the woods are his main sources of interlocution. He is a professor at the Education University of Baixada Fluminense (Febf), at the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), and the author of several books, including *Pedagogia das Encruzilhadas* [Pedagogy of the Crossroads] (Mórula, 2019); *Fogo no Mato: a ciência encantada das macumbas* [Fire in the woods: the enchanted science of the macumbas] (Mórula, 2018) and *Flecha no Tempo* [An Arrow in Time] (Mórula, 2019), both in partnership with the historian Luiz Antonio Simas; and *Vence-Demanda: Educação e Decolonização* [Winning battles: Education and Decolonization] (Mórula, 2021).

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This notebook features the special participation of Madeleine Deschamps in the Portuguese version. The editorial coordinator of English translations is Daniel Grimoni. Design is by Isabelle Passos and editorial coordination in Portuguese is by Victoria Mouawad.

## TRANSLATION

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## REVISION

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An artist, poet and educator. He has published poems and short stories in literary magazines and anthologies, and is the author of *Todo (o) corpo agora* (2019), a poetry book. He also conducts poetry workshops and studies matters related to the dialogues between geography, ecology, art and education.

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