Mario Bros: An Interpretation of School and Contemporary Society

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> *MARIO KAPLÚN*
> *There is a seemingparticipation bylearners or recipients, but it is only on appearance, it is pseudo-participation: the contents and the objectives are already defined and programmed in advance. The learner only "participates" by executing them.*

It is noticeably interesting to see how witty video games are, especially those that connote with a common thread, a story, the famous beginning, knot or catastrophe as Aristotle would call it and closure in Todorov's terms. This plot represented on boards and scenarios in which a video game like Mario Bros takes place, has allowed me to metaphorize about the subjects that make up the school and society itself.

What I suggest here stems from a more elaborate interpretation that I have been associating withother investigations or articles on school, society, peace and the configuration of the political subject in the historical path of that school, while I have, off course, been a witness and participant of that context. Video games will serve as an example for me to dimension or characterize three subjects that metaphorically make up contemporary societies. Due to the fact that there is not a single andspeciallygenuine and superior idea of educating and learning, nor is there an unmistakable method, the teacher is nothing more than a conscious subject of his or her sensitive experience with the world. Thushis or her mission, is to share what those interpretations of their experiences with the world have been.

> *It is evident that society has not been a model and the issues on which it has built its economic, political and social capital on repeated occasions have been highly controversial and the pernicious thing about the matter is that they have been rooted in the depths of social morality, citizen and national. (Cardona, 2019)*

Let these considerations leadus to find, in our own praxis, some somewhat witty and -why not- absurd, although not ill-intentioned characteristics of ourselves, while we remember ourselves crossing boards and worlds in those video games of the 80s and 90s with special attention to Mario Bros, which could provide lessons to the character and temperament that could identify us in our own struggles, without forgetting that the school and the events that shape it always hover in a battlefield according to EstanislaoZuleta, which can be symbolic or abstract.

Those of us who are over thirty found subliminally in these games some particular lessons of life and knew in the advent of our childhood that practice makes perfect. Franchises like Kung Fu, Zelda, Donkey Kong, Mario Bros among others, evoked in us (and still do) emotions of various kinds, from frustration to pride, entertainment or constancy, subjectivity and intersubjectivity. "By subjectivity we will understand those interpretations and representations that the individual makes of his own reality that in a world of meaning turned

out to be analyzed or weighed and interpreted simultaneously by other individuals." (Cardona and Betancur, 2020).

Varied players with equally different skills and personalities that many times were immersed in those video-games own stories, (and there is no greater expression of intersubjectivity than a video-game where there is a single objective and multiple ways of being and thinking) it is not in vain that many speak of alternative realities. However, there is always a similar plot, a common and somewhat imperceptible element that still structures these interesting stories, as they are still stories that underlie with adverse narratives and whose characters must live or face their destiny in changing scenarios and times.

Here, it is possible to specify that the difficulty of these video games was not or is not decreasing, their levels that involves overcoming certain obstacles demand efforts where the senses are overturned in the destiny of a screen.Aswell as in the school, where in order to obtain the title that makes us creditors of an achievement that requires the society per se, these games also expose the logic of advancement in contemporary society. That society structured in hierarchical pyramids in trades and roles, whose steps and staircases support and define the functions that comprise that society.

The names and physical, mental and social characteristics may change, however, there is a very common ontological structure in three specific characters that I will try to describe with Mario Bros while I interpret the society I by fortune have taken part. This game that saw the light of day in 1983 by its creator Shigeru Miyamoto continues to be a very popular gameis 37 years old, (just as I am). Itgathers a universe of anecdotes and circumstances of a plumber who must rescue a princess from the clutches of a crocodile, dragon or monster (there has always been controversy about the identity of this character), and although these three characters have an equally varied universe, they remain unchanged, their essence in itself has not changed, and here we will identify them as the warrior (Mario Bros), the villain (Bowser) and the vulnerable (The Princess).

Each one could describe a feudal medieval society where skills, virtues, fears, defects, essentially personalities are developed in the course of the game and it is interesting and somewhat disturbing as the Middle Ages, that historical moment of the West that spanned nearly 1000 years of events, some dark, others significant, are supposed to be the most authentic context of this video game also because it becomes tangible the hero and the anti-hero.

Irremediably, the narrative is consigned under parameters of dichotomy and disjunction, there is a hero and a nemesis, a single slogan and a single solution that comes from the hero and with it a truthful and incontrovertible version of understanding their country, their reality, their society under a nationalist paradigm if you will, not to mention that on this appreciation other concepts of important discussion such as conflict, power, democracy, education are understood (Cardona and Cardona). (Cardona and Betancur, 2020).

To make this reflection more specific, let us first ask ourselves:

I.   What can we think or distinguish about Mario Bros?

We could point out and in the attempt to describehim saythat Mario Brosis servant, the serf of the glebe who makes a living as long as he fights for the king.In the middle age, his work is what grants his existence, that is why in the first games is clearer the idea of a princess who must be rescued by a serf and not by a prince because it is a mandate of the king. Mario is obliged and his obedience guarantees his housing, his maintenance, his citizenship, ultimately his right to belong to a place. Although Mario is categorized here as a warrior, it must be made clear that in the Middle Ages warriors are equipped for battle with strong and heavy armor, but Mario

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is not, his condition as a servant leaves him naked in the face of adversity. Neither is he a knight, as they were seen in medieval times, since he does not have a horse in his fight. Sometimes a sign equivalent to the horse appears with Yoshi as a reference (a small dinosaur that eats everything in its path) but eventually he wins and loses it.

II. What can we think or distinguish about Bowser?

Bowser, the enemy could also be described as a feudal lord, a being who has the luxuries of the high middle ages: castle, pawns, weaponry and a purpose that seems simple, but this requires a more elaborate interpretation. Perhaps the villains have been romanticized or demonized in textbooks and medieval stories and narratives.

The truth is that the villain determines and from the conflict seduces the warrior to validate his struggle and his condition of savior and liberator. The villain then symbolizes in literature the marginalized outside the village and sometimes surpasses with his story the hero himself, so much so that it is Bowser, who builds and organizes that superstructure of difficulty levels for Mario to recognize himself, either because he loses and does not get up or on the contrary, he gets stronger and learns with each difficulty. The castle is therefore so symbolic in the Middle Ages and allows us to organize and recognize many details of our own institutions.

III. What can we think or distinguish about the Princess Peach?

The princess is a character that seems to be extremely invisible or useless because she is not present in the game, she appears at the beginning and end and intermittently to encourage the warrior. The properties or human characteristics of the princess could be underestimated and it is clear that she has no direct action in the game. However, if the villain reaffirms the hero's condition, he does it through the princess, she who exalts and flatters the warrior as to force him to give up his moral comfort to go into battle.

A princess to whom we could infer weakness, vulnerability, fragility, lack of will and action, but she mediates, that is, she is at the center of the struggle and establishes the rigor of the plot. Rescuing or freeing her dignifies the warrior and makes him visible before the great superstructure where the powers are hierarchically well distributed.

Now, it is here where we will take some somewhat uncomfortable but essential characteristics to describe ourselves in what goes on in the school, whatever our role in it. Education and its institutions, that is to say the specific places that represent it, are not exempted from criticism, especially when it is possible to perceive in it a certain confinement (a word that has taken on certain nuances in these last months) since:

"The school has been confined by bureaucratic conditions, dressed in a utilitarian appearance, endowed with an exegesis that skimps on expenses while fraternizing with tradition, which assumes, at least in Colombia, that private and public are two alternatives, in that order, one better than the other of ascending the pyramids of the establishment (invisible to many) while learning what that establishment conceives as functional, and given its distancing, since one is accessed under the paradigm of lack and the other, of opportunity, the social gap becomes more and more aggravated. " (Cardona and Buitrago, 2020).

Therefore, we will place these categories in very simple examples from which we could identify ourselves, not identify, much less categorize others.It is about doing an exercise where introspection is the way to make self-reflection, the school has already pointed out enough, providing a capital of terms and words extremely unfortunate, and if the school has done it is because society has urged it, sometimes with its dynamic paradoxes.

The little princess, no longer that of the feudal society, nor that of Mario Bros, but that of life, we see her evoked in actions that demand realization, but that are never executed because we do not have the resources.Whenwe assure that if we had the means, resources, skills, we would do what is necessary, but we are kidnapped or imprisoned by certain conditions that we assure external and immovable, this is a very common personality that reaffirms its vulnerability and the weakness of itself above its potentials.Ithas the potentials, but lives waiting for its rescue, and this condition is recurrent in the different planes of life.

The villain, under this metaphor could be extremely valuable, he will not be censured in fact he is the one who finds in the world the instruments to subsist but, not enough with it, he rises to the point that this individuality and ambition leads him to take possession of the labor force.The force and the property, he is devastating and determined absolutely conscious of his potentials and more not of his weaknesses, which could turn him into someone effectively selfish. In the school it is visible, it is glimpsed in her or him a special force or conviction with a competitive spirit many times annihilating. His or her temperament can occasionally turn him or her into an inquisitor of other people's dreams, and in life they are reflected in many ways.

The warrior should not be idealized and under this metaphor of reality with video games does not have a role superior to the villain and the princess, in fact the warrior is the character -for lack of words- more predictable and perhaps with it simple, his struggles and virtues are only manifested when he shows his few dreams and expectations with life, he is glorious and brave when he is hurt, but while this does not happen, he is extremely inert. This does not detract from his courage because it could be said that he is the least ambitious, there is a breath in her or in him of greatness while he thinks of others, so he is brave because without armor and horse without the protection of the king, he must face the adversities of life so much so that in school - the context that summons us - it is not necessary to be heroic under the protection of an armor forged in knowledge to win, indeed, it is clearly seen that Mario falls in increasingly difficult obstacles, but he gets up.

To conclude there are many more personalities in the school but these three serve as an example to identify your purposes hand in hand with your actions, I am a believer in considering the school as the greatest of struggles and in the social pyramid that does exist even though many are reluctant to deny it. They are expressed in the whole framework of how our society works. An unjust society that is terribly unequal and one that is careful to think of its individuals as functional cogs, performing, in the dispassionate and very meaningful words of Byung-ChulHan, with performance.

But that school is the only one that allows many to climb those imperceptible stairs of realization. Ultimately the role of school and education and the role of the teacher is to accompany processes of self-management and work realization that allows the least favored by the inequalities and palpable iniquities, cross boards to save the world, their world, rescue their princess or prince, their dreams that are held captive by injustices in castles of obstacles and dangers.

The educator has an extremely complex role because it seems that he is the one who can project the obstacles and difficulties that await his students, he is suspicious of those scenarios because he infers that there are traps that can affect, hurt or unfortunately destroy the learner. But he also understands that he should not dissipate from his interventions and interpretations, his invitation to criticality see the world. He knows that students must continue this essential work whatever the choice of their life project. The educator must not forget that educating, as its etymology suggests, implies that his students must lead what is inside and take it outside, for:

"the teacher has also been confined because his role and title, in a hedonistic way have made him quantify himself on the one hand: under vertical structures, thinking himself unattainable and sacred or, on the other hand, because when attending to assigned iniquities he neglects his social calling; that, which Hippocratic oath

that doctors or lawyers solemnly cry out when they promise to serve with ethics, equality and social retribution." (Cardona and Buitrago, 2020).

Finally, these three characters complement each other, as has been the constant lesson of human civilization, both in the video game, in school and in society there are levels and difficulties that tend to injustices, as well as sacrifices.Each scenario has exposed the villain because he has taken ownership of the world, mechanisms and resources. He is highly individualistic whatever his role is in that context, and his ambition has taken what by law, by right or by simple intuition belongs to the other and has made us captive, prisoners and unconscious.

And the consolation really or the incentive of this profession so questioned, sometimes little dignified and from which so much is expected must always give place to critical thinking. The interpretation that starts being subjective and becomes intersubjective through dialogue, and as in the video game can also materialize in the player who is linked to the story and wants to finish his game overcoming the obstacles that he did not ask for.Butthat always come without invitation, that is why the profession of educating is complementary, because one learns and teaches in simultaneous dimensions, the school happens out of doors. Mario Bros is an example of this where Bowser is Princess of his ambition but Warrior of his passion and will, the Warrior is Princess of his fears and Villain of his loneliness and the Princess is Villain of her manipulation with others and Warrior of her self-knowledge.

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