***Personal worship to all! Thank you for constantly following the Sermon on Education. Obviously, this type of communication, this kind of conversation with smart people, with powerful minds, with minds for whom education is the most important thing in the world - a good format. In that name we continue, and I am privileged and grateful, and infinitely happy, with the esteemed prof. dr. Jelena Vranješević from Belgrade from the Faculty of Philosophy. Welcome, Jelena.***

I found you better, Nedime. Listen, after this announcement, you raised your expectations so much that I don't know if I will be able to answer them.

***You know, you taught me, here's just a little backstory, a background story - they attack me when I say some English, not translate it. I have known the respected Dr. Jelena for more than ten years. This is my first encounter with Step by Step and with one complete group of education lunatics who are constantly thinking, both before Nedim and after Nedim.***

***We started dividing all this time in Step into before Nedim and after Nedim.***

Thank you for your time on a very important topic. Thank you for allowing me to approach your work and I think it is extremely important to talk about it, in one way or another in the Sermons we have already talked about it. I would like to talk to you today about the concept of the power relationship between adults and these wonderful young people. But to get out of here, that right intrigued me, and you help me: "Children are pre-adults, while adults are post-children." So we are all children?

***Yes.***

***Is that paradoxical to your entire work?***

This is something that underlies this problem of power relations between adults and children. Since they are adult post-children, it means that they were children, which is good on the one hand, and bad on the other.

It is good that they have the experience of being a child, unlike a child who does not have the experience of being an adult. On the other hand, it leads adults to some wrong path to think since they were children to have an experience like being a child, they know even now what is in the best interest of children. You will often hear adults sending messages they are not even aware of, these are my favorite messages and they say: "Come and eat, you are hungry.", "Get out of the water, you are cold.", "Put on your coat, you are cold." ", Not: 'Come eat because it's time to eat, you're whirling all day, and you have to eat to have energy.'" Which is a completely legitimate request, but it's - I know how you feel. It is a sentence that tells the child that we are experts in his feelings and needs.

***And then more adults enter the system, so the system still tells you what you need.***

Yes, what is a problem in this area is that we adults grew up in a system where no one asked us for our opinion, where everyone, when we were children, thought they knew better than us and could determine our best interests, where even now as adults many do not ask for our opinion. Then it is very difficult how to create an atmosphere in which we can listen to children, to respect their opinion, to consult them, if we ourselves do not have that in experience.

***You know what I'm afraid of, we talk every year, I have the privilege to see you almost every year, about the cheapening of all these important concepts, we have cheaper everything in education, so even when you say participation, it sounds like a strange project of an international organization. It is essentially the essence of a healthy education.***

In essence, participation is the basis of a series of developments, that is what is somehow the essence. We constantly experience participation, when I work with teachers and talk about participation, I see exactly that they see it as a project that would take them a lot of time, which they would otherwise have to use for various other activities. They do not see it as an integral part of communication and encouraging children's development. Participation is something that achieves the development of children. What makes participation important to me, as important to someone who deals with developmental psychology, is precisely that it creates a kind of developmental continuity between a child and an adult. You mentioned that adults are post-children, and that they are pre-adults, and that is a dangerous dichotomy. When we look at a child as a future adult, then we define him with various prefixes "no": immature, irresponsible, independent, non-autonomous, etc. Then we fail to see what a child can do at a specific moment at the age of five, eight, or fifteen. It can't be the same as an older child or adult, but it can be a lot. If we constantly view him as a future adult, then we revoke many of his rights because he is still not mature enough, not independent enough, not autonomous enough. This is very dangerous. One of my favorite authors, who is one of the first advocates for children's rights, is the Polish doctor Janos Korocak, who was the director of a home for neglected children in Poland before the Second World War, and who introduced the first children's self-government in that home. There, the children, together with the educators, and together with him, decided on important things concerning the home. Since he lived in the Warsaw Ghetto, when the children were taken to the gas chamber, one of the soldiers recognized him and share to save him, but Janos Korocak said: "No. I am responsible for these children, I will go with them. " He also died in that camp. This is a small digression, but it really is one of my favorite characters. He spoke about the right of the child to the present moment. That means the right to look at him now and here, and not as a future adult, not as an adult embryo, but now and here with all the competencies he has at the moment. When we get rid of the idea that children are future adults, rather than watching them now and here, then we can really listen to them, then we can really understand them that they have some needs that we may not know about. We are too adult-centered.

***You are great in your work, so let me mention it when I take inspiration from it for this conversation: "Oppressions and power relations between an adult and a child and how to achieve the best interests of the child." One phenomenal article, that one that changes you in an instant adult position, we talked about it. If I were to simplify it to this level, I would be that child, later we will talk about marginalized groups, whether they are all children or just some marginalized groups. I think that is also an issue with young people. Now, what is the definition of children, until when are you, what are you, I keep to these statements, and you correct me, that something is culture, or an integral part of culture, I think those are dangerous determinants, and has it almost become a cultural thing , almost - here I am guarding from all three points, that we do not perceive children and young people at all as any partners in anything meaningful, and even in things that concern us?***

It's a cultural thing, and now I remember what we started with when you mentioned young people - I said that participation is something that gives you developmental continuity. What is a cultural problem in our societies, let me say in Western societies, is that there is a great discontinuity between the role of the child and the role of the adult. The child is expected to be obedient, independent and irresponsible. After all, they send him messages: "Let you, I will.", "Don't, you're small.", "While you're under my roof, you'll listen to what I tell you." And then we expect an adult to think for himself. head. And what happens to young people, during adolescence they are suddenly expected to wean themselves from those patterns of behavior that they were taught as children. Now we suddenly tell them - now you have to think with your head, you have to be independent, you have to be responsible, so what if we didn't teach him that. Participation, counseling children, giving children the opportunity to participate in some decisions that affect them, serves to teach children those important competencies that they will need for adulthood, which society values ​​and links to the role of an adult. An adult thinks with his head, he is independent, he is autonomous, he is responsible. We must then teach the children at the earliest levels. There are some authors, such as cultural anthropologist Ruth Benedict - who says that adolescence is completely a phenomenon of Western society. And in some societies where the roles of adult and child are very similar, that is, the child is expected to do the same things that are expected of an adult: to be independent, responsible, in relation to the current level of development, adolescence is not a turbulent or crisis period. The crisis period is only in our societies, where the roles of adult and child are so separate, that the adolescent is somewhere in no man's land: "I am not a child, I am still not an adult, no one has ever taught me to think, I have never been he did not ask for an opinion, and now I am expected to think for myself and be independent, so how will I do it !? ”.

***What if we address children long enough with such messages and with such an attitude when we act towards them?***

Then we get adolescents who, even when given the opportunity to decide on something, say school parliaments are a great illustration. When school parliaments were introduced, I think the first five, six, seven to ten years, they didn't work. Why? Because suddenly young people are given the opportunity to decide on something, and they are not used to it. They have the image of themselves that adults have of them, and that is that they are small and incompetent. A study conducted by the Center for the Rights of the Child in Belgrade, in 2000 or 2001, shows that adolescents think that they can decide on much fewer things than their parents and teachers think. So parents and teachers give them more freedom than adolescents give themselves.

***Now I'm thinking about the freedoms I had.***

They think that they can decide on some secondary things, and not on some more important things, because, these are some self-fulfilling prophecies, they have an image of themselves that adults have about them.

***And when you give them a chance - it doesn't happen, so of course it doesn't happen. Just as critical thinking stops with "put your hand down."***

May I tell you one favorite example, which probably those who have had the opportunity to listen when I talk about participation know that example, but it is to me the best possible example of what happens to a child growing up in a country where his opinion is respected from the earliest days. How does that child grow up? What kind of young person does that child grow into? This is an example that I heard two thousand and some from one of our colleagues who works at Save the Children Sweden. She told me that in their schools, children - students of higher grades of primary school also participate in the commissions for the selection of teachers. Well, I also made a face like you, like - how. We immediately told her from this area that it is the use of children for decorative purposes, it is an illusion of participation, how now a child can choose teachers, and how now a child has the competencies to assess the competencies of teachers. And she told us the example of a boy aged 13-14 who was on the commission for the selection of mathematics teachers. The commission, the adults, asked him one by one, and then it was the child's turn. Now when I tell the students - I ask them very well what you would ask a math teacher to assess if he is a good math teacher, and then they start talking: "Are you strict?", "Do you like children?", " How much did you study? ”, Which again does not say what kind of mathematics teacher he is. This child took a collection of math problems, selected one task, showed it to him and said, "Can you explain this task to me?"

***Phenomenal!***

Isn't it phenomenal !? That child grew up in a system where his opinion was respected and he knows how to ask the right question.

***How to break that regionalist power of adults?***

Nedime, if I answer this question, you can possibly promise me that I will become the new Minister of Education for the countries of the Western Balkans.

***I don’t promise what I can’t fulfill.***

You know what the problem is - what I was hoping for when this crisis started, when I was thinking about what we adults, who work with children, are learning from this crisis, one of the first things that came to my mind was that we didn't omniscient and not omnipotent, not knowing, wandering, having no idea what was happening to us, being helpless, feeling on many different levels just as children feel in contact with us. Then I hoped it would be a space for some dialogue with the kids - ok, and we’re helpless, and we don’t know, and we don’t know how to help you, let’s hear what it is that you have to tell us. However, let's see if it will bear fruit, and it seems to me that the key thing, even without this crisis, is to try to give up our adult-centeredness. Let's just remember that we are not the bearers, that we are not the guardians, of our knowledge of this world.

***So isn't that an archetype of a teacher?***

Let's loosen the teacher's archetype a bit.

***You remove the whole leg on a tripod, it will fall.***

Only that - we are not the bearers, guardians, of our knowledge of this world and children are experts in their experience. As we are experts in our experience, let us give children the opportunity to be experts in their experience, they know what they need.

***In preparation for this interview, you remarked to me not to ask you about some particular groups, marginalized children, and ask me about children as a marginalized group as in general. It's phenomenal for me.***

And it is. Of course, within the group of children, there are groups that are more marginalized in relation to: race, social status, in relation to abilities, etc. but children as children are a generally marginalized group. It’s something called, we don’t have a word, some kind of adult discrimination against children called adultism.

***We'll introduce it to the language. It has to be more bombastic, it has to be juicier.***

Let's figure out what we can call it.

***We also receive suggestions from those who watch us.***

So how do we translate adultism? Adult-centeredness is one thing, but adult-centeredness is not essentially discrimination. Adultism.

***What is this in the context of education? I think for a start for serious change we need to stop lying. The truth is far from what you wrote the "truth regimes" that we now believe. To begin with, admit that we are adult-centric. To make it easier for us like this, participation is difficult, it requires dealing with children, it requires giving them time, space, to be really open. All this in the context of our educational systems.***

Two things are key here. From conversations with teachers and some research that I did and after all, various seminars and trainings, it seems to me that two things are key. One is to understand that the participation of children is useful to them, that it can make their lives easier. If you do not know what to do with the child - ask him. I remember one teacher who had a dilemma, the child is in the fourth grade, the parents are going through a difficult divorce, the child has withdrawn and the friends have started to avoid him. And now from someone who was a favorite, the child has become a negative star. She wondered what to do, whether to say what was happening to other children so that the children would understand him, or to respect the child's privacy so that he would be silent. And we talk in groups and I say, a child is ten or eleven years old - fifth grade, and I say - did you ask the child, did you point out the problem and ask him what he would like. Alas, he says, well I didn’t but that would be a good idea. It is a small indication of how when we consult children we can be more confident that we will make a decision that is really in their best interest. If you do not know what is in the best interest of the child - consult him, ask him. In that sense, it often takes away time that is valuable at school, but on the other hand it makes life much easier for teachers. It will simply be much safer that what they are doing is really in their best interest. And the reform, and the textbooks that are used, why shouldn't we consult the children and see their view on whether there is something they would talk about, what they would include in the program, whether what we do suits their needs, how they see the ideal teaching, as they see the ideal classroom. We are afraid that they will give banal answers - they will not, if they are really aware that their answers can lead to some change, then they can give us meaningful answers. The other thing is that they really see participation as a part of communication and work with children, and not as a project, as you said - of non-governmental organizations, which they have to do because they are asked to. Not. It's just a part of everyday school life.

***You blaspheme there in Belgrade and you even wrote a manual about children as researchers, what will research do now as children?***

Yes, it's really crazy, but through research, children learn. Children acquire competencies through research work, and for us as adults, when we include children as researchers and co-researchers, we are sure that this problem is really relevant for children, that questions will be asked from the children's point of view, and I have a couple of my favorite examples. One of the favorite examples is a research where risky behaviors of children and young people were examined, so researchers could not come to open children to be honest enough, about what risky behaviors they participate in, so they asked a group of young people to help them make a research instrument. The young people said: "Ask us about the scars. Ask us if we have scars and how we earned those scars. ”Then through that they got the children to open up and talk about what they were doing and so they got information about what all the risky behaviors were in which there were children.

***Phenomenal. I heard that this is exactly what one of our teachers did, she looked for places in the school where children feel safe or insecure, it was not a survey, but she let the first-graders do both places in the school where they feel insecure. It turned out that the student toilet was the most unsafe place in the world.***

From the point of view of adults, we would say that it is probably the one behind the school, some dark corner.

***We’re going to tell them where they feel insecure anyway. Can a generation have some traits since you are a developmental psychologist?***

Generation, you mean the generation of the eighties, the nineties?

***Yes.***

I think it can, but not because of some biological developmental specifics, but because of the context - how old were they when some important events took place that simply changed the system, how did the parents feel in those periods, were the parents themselves confused .

***To the extent that the world was ruled by war or not?***

It is. Whether there is a crown or not, what will happen now in this period when we are all overwhelmed by some annexation and we don't care.

Is it time for education to question the possible consequences of this period?

The aftermath of the corona, this pandemic?

Will this postcoronal society have consequences for children or is it ungrateful?

I think he will. It seems to me, I can't tell you exactly what and how, but I read somewhere that after this we will return to a normal that will not be like the normal from before the crown. I don't think we can still imagine what our new normalcy will be like.

***Can we prepare for this new normalcy? What can we do with those children in the meantime?***

It seems to me that what, let's try to ask them too.

***Phenomenal!***

Two things came to my mind. First, what the Minister of Finland did, the Prime Minister, and then she answered the children's questions. One whole press conference was dedicated to children and children's issues. After that, I thought how wonderful it would be to do it with us, and after that my colleague said to me: "Are you normal, imagine that children have to listen to the answers of our ministers of education."

***Imagine, we would have three conferences.***

But it's a great idea, because we can see what it is that worries children. From our perspective there can be some worries, and their worries can be completely different from our worries, let’s start with what it is that worries them, and then build some strategy of what it is that we can do to address those worries , that is, to respond in some way to help them overcome those worries.

***I have another question from the profession. I didn't know that there was a theory, it all came out of my head, I say everything as an adult in BiH and I live there, as there are too many other people's lives in my lives, the lives of adults. I know that the generation is experiencing both the fears and habits of some previous one generations, but what is too much is too much. That is why I asked you about the characteristics of the generation, as someone who is a developmental psychologist, is there now a discrepancy in our educational systems between how it works and what theory and common sense say?***

If I go back to this topic from which we started, the theory says that education should be child-centered, child-centered, and it seems to me that education is adult-centric. We assume what children need because we are smart, because we are learned, and we have never checked that with children. We do it with the best possible intention, and I have no dilemma at all that what we do we do with the best possible intention to help children, but we have never checked with children if it really works, if it is what they need, or if there is something other.

***You often say, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."***

Yes. And we really think that, and we think we do our best and we do. We are probably right in many aspects, we just know some things, we have learned some things, we know what theory says, what research says, but let's see what children tell us.

***What do we need to learn in this period? I’m not asking you now about this mantra: we all have to come up with new skills, we all have to come out three times smarter and better, I’m not asking you about that.***

I'm not one of those. I read it somewhere, and I liked it a lot, that's my motto. Because at one point I felt guilty, I can't work, I can't concentrate, it's hard for me, then I read: "Don't blame yourself if you're not productive. You are not productive because this is a pandemic, not sabbatical, unpaid leave. ”I am guided by that. So I don’t think we have to come out now with I don’t know how new knowledge, learned sixth language, etc., but what I think we have to learn is that nothing is implied. Everything that we thought was given to us by God, and that it is a privilege for us, and that it should be so, is not taken for granted - from the smallest to the biggest things. To learn that we are not omnipotent and do not know the answers to all questions and to accept that we are helpless, and that we are not well, and that we are annexed, etc., and that when we work with children and when we want to help them ask them . To work with children, not on behalf of children. When we do something with children, let it really be work with them, not on their behalf.

***Professors, we are mostly watched by dear teachers. What is your message to them, here now in the context of this time, and that they are burning with their e-school?***

I really admire them. That's right- all credit to them. I see how it is organized with us, and here with you, and everything is there, and various omissions, but it doesn't matter. These people are really trying to give their maximum and somehow do something they can in this time of general chaos. What I would advise them, and not specifically now during this time, this will pass, but simply when this passes and when we return to some new normalcy, to relax and not take themselves too seriously. I think the key problem is when we take ourselves too seriously. When we don't take ourselves too seriously, then we are wonderful, then those children are wonderful, then working with children is wonderful, then we can relax and admit that we don't know much, and listen to children, and learn from children, and to encourage children to ask questions - it's just important that we don't take ourselves too seriously.

***Professor, we miss you.***

Both you and I hope that we will soon meet and embrace as people.

***So whatever!***

So whatever it is! This is something that I miss the most, I also trust people who work with children and educators, teachers, especially those who work with small children, that kind of physical contact.

***We will want everything. I wish you all the best in a hundred lives, professor!***

Also, Nedime, I greet all those who will listen to this.

***I will also deliver emails to everyone who listened.***

If I went into various digressions, forgive me, but this is a topic I like to talk about a lot and this is some of my first love and my passion.

***Maybe from September we will start a new series of Sermons on Education, but every day with you. Greetings to Belgrade, everything will be fine, hold on!***

Also, greetings to Sarajevo and BiH!