Classic tales, seeds of science in our lives

escrito por Ramón Flecha | 9 de agosto de 2023



Alfonso Rodríguez, from Mexico, made a wonderful connection between the literary book he was reading and the essay book he had just finished reading and discussing. In the story of the three old men in «The Arabian Nights,» one is extraordinarily good to his two brothers. They more or less live together until an attractive woman appears and chooses the good one. Unable to bear it any longer, they throw the two lovers into the sea. In the dialogic society, the concept of ethical envy is developed, which reaches its maximum intensity when the most successful and attractive person is also the most virtuous.

Alfonso has triggered intense internal contemplation within me, as the author of the book and the concept, about the relationship between my scientific creativity and the narratives I have cherished throughout my life. My self-conception aligns with that of a person of significant intellectual creativity. However, I acknowledge that my creative achievements owe much to other individuals, including those who penned the finest works of literature in human history.

Would I have been able to formulate the concept of ethical jealousy if I had not read and listened to tales of the «Arabian Nights» during my earliest years? My response is

negative. When I conceived this concept, I did not consciously think of stories like the three old men, but of other situations in today's society. But would I have had that perspective on those scenarios without these preceding narratives? Again, my answer is negative.

I hope that no postmodernist or deconstructionist would misconstrue the essence of what they have just read; My stance stands in stark contrast to figures like Derrida. I possess no intention whatsoever to deconstruct; rather, my motivation is to construct. For Derrida, science is just another narrative, with which he futilely tries to destroy both sciences and narratives. The tale of the three old men is a narrative, not a historical, scientific explanation of a reality. The concept of ethical envy explains reality in a scientific way, open to refutation with new arguments and evidence.

García Lorca said that «Through poetry, man approaches more quickly to the edge where the philosopher and the mathematician turn their backs in silence». I have devised —and will devise— relevant intellectual and scientific concepts that I would not have been able to, had classical tales not led me to the very sources from which they originated. During my visit to Cambridge, where I reunited with my children and beloved, I noticed a copy of «The Iliad» on the little boy's bedside table. This discovery followed our viewing of «Romeo and Juliet» in the gardens of King's College. These narratives and scientific works don't merely accumulate effects; rather, they multiply them.