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IN TODAY'S WORLD, THERE IS ROOM FOR MASTERS AND STUDENTS

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"Masters are disowned, along with their work and their teaching.
They have nothing to teach us, because they come from a backward time, with outdated technologies and ways of thinking and seeing, according to the supreme tribunal of the present.
No inhabitant of the past can guide us into the future,
their keys of interpretation cannot unlock the doors of the time to come.
It is futile to seek a solution."

Henri-Louis Bergson
(Paris, October 18, 1859 – Paris, January 4, 1941)
from the master's notebook

Recently, I had the honor of receiving the title of Master Teacher of Pediatrics from the presidency of the Italian Society of Pediatrics. As I accepted this recognition – dedicating it to my mentors who taught me to consider medicine as the art of curing rather than just the science of healing, introduced me to academic principles, cultivated in me the spirit of service and collaboration, and welcomed me into our professional community – I found myself reflecting on whether it still makes sense to speak of mentors today. Is there still a place for mentorship in our modern world? Is there a future for the relationship between mentors and students? Unfortunately, this contemplation led me to a disappointing conclusion: I fear there may not be.

In our daily reality, where expressing opinions outweighs asking questions, where wonder at scientific discoveries has dwindled to almost nothing, and where the desire to learn, and especially to engage in meaningful conversations, has diminished, the mentor-student relationship grows ever weaker. It has become increasingly challenging for those who have completed their intellectual journey to fulfill their role as mentors, guiding others through the numerous paths available in their chosen field so that they may meet their destiny.

Amid all this confusion, we as mentors struggle to give our students the meaningful legacy they deserve as successors of our knowledge. Our era is defined by constant transformation without preserving the past – we discard our heritage in our eagerness to reinvent ourselves for the future, leaving no lasting traces behind.

One major issue of our post-technological age is that the past has no time to settle and leave its mark.

The rapid pace of technological change cannot be absorbed, and there is no ability to control, direct, or give meaning to this headlong rush forward. We become victims of speed, carried toward the unknown.

Whether in healthcare systems dominated by political careerists or universities drowning in endless bureaucracy, unpredictable processes, and obsessive careerism disguised as democracy, the question remains: Is there still room for meaningful mentorship?

The progressing decline of respect for knowledge and culture, along with fewer opportunities for teaching, extends far beyond our small world and our medical knowledge, leaving many of us bewildered by the difficulty of passing on our accumulated wisdom and experience.

This crisis in our era, which seems to erase all kinds of mentors – genuine, self-proclaimed, controversial, or false – increasingly leaves us without successors. There is no one left to entrust with what we have accomplished and think deserves to continue.

What can be done, then? How can we restore this vital exchange? I offer one simple recommendation: Do not remain passive. Whether you are a mentor or a student, keep the conversation going with mutual respect, always remembering that none of us ever knows enough.

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