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Panos Eliopoulos**PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES AS A PRECONDITION FOR AN EDUCATION OF HUMANISM AND CRITICAL THINKING IN THE UNIVERSITY***“Veritas est in puteo”. Democritus*

Modern universities are imbued by Aristotelian reason: there is the natural world and we who can explain it, knowledge is feasible, and everything has an end, nothing goes on infinitely. This is the basic understanding of their endeavor. The second basic understanding of their endeavor is the influence of the industrial world and of the liberalization of knowledge. In the meantime, practical sciences turn to be in the highlight. Philosophical studies, to bring a major example in the humanities, are considered as unnecessary among this torrent of practical and very handy sciences which know how to best invest the attributed funds. Nonetheless, Philosophy still comprises a major precondition for an education of humanism and for an education of critical thinking in the university as well as in other levels of education. Thus, Philosophy is by far the most practical and pragmatic science of all. On a level of principles when it comes to collective life, such as the life of education is, it is permissible to violate or alter these principles when this action provides us with the capability to move on to a better level of principles, not just to a different one. Philosophy, with its emphasis on the scientific method, on epistemology, on the ethical approach to every human action, to mention only a few of its functional parameters, brings better principles, principles that need to be employed in order for our species to continue to be able to reinstate our collective as well as individual thinking protocols.

Key words: *philosophy, humanism, critical thinking, education, university, truth, knowledge, ethical action, criteria, methodology.*

Панос Еліопулос**ФІЛОСОФСЬКА ОСВІТА ЯК ПЕРЕДУМОВА ДЛЯ НАВЧАННЯ ГУМАНІЗМУ І КРИТИЧНОГО МИСЛЕННЯ В УНІВЕРСИТЕТІ**

Сучасні університети пронизані Аристотелівськими ідеями: існує природний світ і ми, хто може його пояснити, знання може стати реальністю, все має кінець, нічого не відбувається нескінченно. Це основне розуміння їх діяльності. Друге основне розуміння їх діяльності пов'язане із впливом індустріального світу і лібералізації знань. Водночас практичні науки виявляються в центрі уваги. Філософські дослідження, якщо подати яскравий приклад зі сфери гуманітарних наук, вважають непотрібними серед цього потоку практичних і дуже корисних наук, які знають, як краще інвестувати кошти та використати ресурси. Проте філософія як і раніше містить у собі основну передумову для навчання гуманізму і для формування критичного мислення в університеті, а також на інших рівнях освіти. Таким чином, філософія, безумовно, є найбільш практичною і прагматичною наукою серед усіх. На рівні принципів, коли йдеться про колективне життя, таке як освіта, допустимо порушувати або змінювати ці принципи, коли ця дія дає нам можливість перейти на більш високий рівень принципів, а не тільки якийсь інший. Філософія, з її акцентом на науковий метод, епістемологію, етичний підхід до кожної людської дії, якщо згадати лише деякі з її функціональних параметрів, творить кращі принципи, які повинні бути використані для того, щоб наш людський вид продовжував бути в змозі відновити наш колектив, а також окремі способи мислення.

Ключові слова: *філософія, гуманізм, критичне мислення, освіта, університет, знання, моральна дія, критерії, методологія.*

Панос Элиопулос**ФИЛОСОФСКОЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ КАК ПРЕДПОСЫЛКА ДЛЯ ОБУЧЕНИЯ ГУМАНИЗМА И КРИТИЧЕСКОГО МЫШЛЕНИЯ В УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ**

Современные университеты пронизаны Аристотелевскими идеями: существует природный мир и мы, кто может его объяснить, знание может стать реальностью, все имеет конец, ничего не происходит бесконечно. Это основное понимание их деятельности. Второе основное понимание их деятельности связано с влиянием индустриального мира и либерализации знаний. Вместе с тем, практические науки оказываются в центре внимания. Философские исследования, если взять наиболее выразительный пример из сферы гуманитарных наук, считаются ненужными для этого потока практических и очень полезных наук, которые знают, как лучше инвестировать средства или использовать ресурсы. Хотя философия, как и раньше, включает в себя основную предпосылку для обучения гуманизма и для формирования критического мышления в университете, а также на других уровнях образования. Таким образом, философия, безусловно, является наиболее практической и прагматической наукой среди всех. На уровне принципов, когда речь идет о коллективной жизни, такой как

образование, допустимо нарушать или изменять эти принципы, когда это действие дает нам возможность перейти на более высокий уровень принципов, а не только какой-то другой. Философия с ее акцентом на научный метод, эпистемологию, этический подход к каждому человеческому действию, если вспомнить только некоторые с ее функциональных параметров, создает лучшие принципы, которые должны быть использованы для того, чтобы наш человеческий вид продолжал быть в состоянии воссоздать наш коллектив, а также некоторые способы мышления.

Ключевые слова: философия, гуманизм, критическое мышление, образование, университет, знание, моральное действие, критерии, методология.

Ludwig Wittgenstein in his notes, in the *Philosophical Grammar*, quite predicatively remarks: “Tell me *how* you seek and I will tell you *what* you are seeking”¹. Indeed, and I will side with this remark, how we seek points out to the direction of what we seek; this wittgensteinian comment seems to chart out, to an impressive extent, not only the nature of our quest but our own subjective perimeter, who we really are, for reasons that will be exposed in this paper. However, it needs to be stressed from the very beginning that if the definition of the method, and subsequently of the pursuit, the problem that we pose for resolution, is connected with the systematization of these related efforts of ours, it has to be seen whether there is a clear purpose in it, whether the purpose will guide us to a specific end, and if that end will serve for the benefit of us personally and of the human kind in general. Does the way we seek in the university, which consists the systematization of our highest educational efforts, clarify our social, political and individual aims? Does it serve to their benefit? Which is the acid test of truth for this question? Finally, what are the criteria that need to be employed?

Modern universities are imbued by Aristotelian reason, that to an extent: there is the natural world and we who can explain it, knowledge is feasible, and everything has an end, nothing goes on infinitely. This is the basic understanding of their endeavor. The second basic understanding of their endeavor is the influence of the industrial world and of the liberalization of knowledge. The university is open for everyone; in many cases worldwide, open for everyone who has enough money to pursue his studies, but seems almost unavoidably to focus more and more on the practical side of our civilization. More funds are dispersed on medicine, engineering, computer science than for the humanities. The university seems to follow, and quite reasonably so, the trend of a necessity, where the necessity is to make this human world work faster, cheaper, better, more efficiently. But for whom, precisely?

In the context presented, practical sciences turn to be in the highlight. Philosophical studies, to bring a major example in the humanities, are considered as unnecessary among this torrent of practical and very handy sciences which know how to best invest the attributed funds. In the meantime, and while all this practical fuss is going on unremittingly, why should one worry about what Plato meant on episteme in his dialogue *Theaetetus*? Considering just the above can we be securely led to the affirmation that philosophy has little to do with the real world? Are philosophers impractical romantics who look up in the starry sky endeavouring to figure out celestial and human reality through a bunch of unsubstantiated hypotheses, with no instruments of precise measurements in their hands? And in the same spirit of assumption, why would someone prefer to study philosophy over mathematics, medicine, engineering, computer science, to name but a few? Certainly not for financial reasons, as philosophy seems to be by far the most interesting path to one’s personal poverty. All in all, what is the real object of philosophy, if there is any at all? If indeed there is, why would this object be important in the university curriculum today? Philosophy comprises a major precondition for an education of humanism, an education where the most prominent features of our species are emphasised, and also for an education of critical thinking in the university as well as in other levels of education. Thus, Philosophy, in my estimation, and this is what I will attempt to demonstrate in this paper, among a number of other parameters, is by far the most practical and pragmatic science of all.

The issue of education and university education is inescapably related with the problem of truth. Philosophical studies, for one thing, are closely related with theories of knowledge; as such they explore the epistemic criteria that all other sciences are in need of. This alone is no simple task. Let us for example see the humean analysis of this effort. For Hume every human action originates either from a motive of some kind or from reason². The Scottish philosopher upholds that all propositions are based on a vague impression regarding practical demands, an impression which is not rationalistic, does not come from right judgment and its source is not the intellect³. The functions of the intellect, the way it comprehends reality, logical necessities,

¹ Wittgenstein Ludwig, *Philosophical Grammar*, edited by Rush Rees, translated by Anthony Kenny, Blackwell, Oxford, 1974, 24. – 370 p.

² Bricke John, *Mind and Morality. An Examination of Hume’s Moral Psychology*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996. – P. 6–7.

³ Bricke John, *Mind and Morality. An Examination of Hume’s Moral Psychology*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996. – 106 p.

as well as logical weaknesses, influence the way knowledge is perceived. Reality per se is affirmed inside its pure symptomatology, with no stable criterion to verify its objectivity⁴. According to Hume, the human being strives to construct knowledge on the basis of an inherent tendency to go from perception to an idea, as in the case from the perception of fire to the idea of heat. Knowledge, according to this view, proceeds from impressions derived from either the senses or the intellect. Baruch Spinoza estimates this almost similarly: “it is not we that affirm or negate something; it is the thing itself that inside us affirms or negates something of itself”⁵.

In the *Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume records this vivid problematic for the exploration for knowledge, an exploration for truth actually, on the steps of Plato when he discusses “episteme” (science) and “doxa” (opinion), as follows: “For with what confidence can I venture upon such bold enterprises, when beside those numberless infirmities peculiar to myself, I find so many which are common to human nature? Can I be sure, that in leaving all established opinions I am following truth; and by what criterion shall I distinguish her, even if fortune should at last guide me on her foot-steps? After the most accurate and exact of my reasonings, I can give no reason why I should assent to it; and feel nothing but a strong propensity to consider objects strongly in that view, under which they appear to me”⁶. Hume’s skepticism is the skepticism of every wondering mind which feels prone to seek the criteriological beginning from which it will develop the fundamental principles of science and of knowledge intake; the very basis of education. What Hume clarifies is that in the quest for knowledge, experience is involved, as a principle that provides us with information about the several relations of things in the past and also ethos is involved, as a principle that guides us so as to expect the same results of these relations in the future. Without these two principles, the human intellect would not be able to substantiate any logical argument nor to extend its activity to objects other than those which are directly subdued to the sphere of our senses. In that case, we would be able to accept only perceptions which would be currently present in our consciousness and perhaps nowhere else at the same moment⁷, especially if we consider in this hypothesis Bergson’s view of time perceived as space⁸.

Wittgenstein comes at stage again, to facilitate our contemplation on philosophy and on the truth problem: “Philosophy is philosophical problems. Their common element extends as far as the common element in different regions of our language. Something that at first sight looks like a proposition and is not one. Something that looks like a design for a steamroller and is not one”⁹. As Wittgenstein has just shown, one thing that philosophy is, is a search inside the phenomenal world, it is the effort for the recognition of things through language. That is what Hume exhibited as well: a profound and lasting, not unjustifiable at all, anxiety for our capability for knowledge, our capacity to exceed what we already think that we know. Philosophy is an instrument to beat illusion. Among other uses, it is such an instrument in the form of a certain compilation of signs. Wittgenstein quoted again: “But if you say: ‘How am I to know what someone means, when I see nothing but the signs he gives?’ then I say: ‘How is *he* to know what he means, when he has nothing but the signs either?’ What is spoken can only be explained in language, and so in this sense language itself cannot be explained. Language must speak for itself”¹⁰. Analytic philosophy comprehends the importance of communication, the importance of utilizing a well defined and meaningful language to convey meaning. The problem of language is the problem of truth, and both, truth and language, the means to convey and identify any human thought, apart from science are prominent enterprises behind any method. This leads us to the claim that philosophy can serve as the method behind all method, an instrument for logic, for distinction, for critical thinking; a claim that we will explore even more in continuation.

Having inherited an era of humanism, we need to realize that the humanist approach has its own limitations and philosophy indeed can help us in it again. Humanism is the philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, and prefers critical thinking and evidence over acceptance of dogma. The meaning of the term humanism of course has fluctuated in the history of philosophy. Generally, however, humanism refers to a perspective that affirms the notion of human freedom and progress. This is more than an ideological rhetoric; humanism in fact has been able to

⁴ Deleuze Gilles, *Spinoza. Philosophie Pratique*, translated in Greek by K. Kapsampeli, Nisos, Athens 1996, P. 225–226.

⁵ Deleuze Gilles, *Spinoza. Philosophie Pratique*, translated in Greek by K. Kapsampeli, Nisos, Athens 1996. – 88 p.

⁶ Hume David, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Translated by M. Pournari, Patakis, Athens 2011. – 458 p.

⁷ Hume David, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Translated in Greek by M. Pournari, Patakis, Athens 2011, p. 459. Cf. Waxman Wayne, *Hume’s Theory of Consciousness*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.

⁸ Cf. Bergson Henri, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, Translated by K. Papagiorgis, Kastaniotis, Athens 1998, P. 311–322.

⁹ Wittgenstein Ludwig, *Philosophical Grammar*, edited by Rush Rees, translated by Anthony Kenny, Blackwell, Oxford, 1974, 141. – 30 p.

¹⁰ Wittgenstein Ludwig, *Philosophical Grammar*, edited by Rush Rees, translated by Anthony Kenny, Blackwell, Oxford, 1974. – 40 p.

fabricate the human being to feel superior to any other being on the planet, even superior to the planet itself. Postmodern critics, such as Jean-François Lyotard and Michel Foucault, have already foreseen this danger, that humanism can be used as a pretext for imperialism and domination of those deemed less than human, including unfortunate others. Nonetheless, humanism may be the safest and fastest approach we have to keep dealing with the truth problem and with our management of the planet.

So let us go back to the problem of truth and connect it with humanism, and see more of why philosophical studies are so important in the university syllabus; with an aim to see why one should study philosophy in this material-loving and passionately consuming world. For William James, the problem of truth is quite complex and related with our attitude to knowledge, humanism, our beliefs, our efficiency in science, our capability for critical thinking, among other things. James remarks that neither the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer¹¹. This shows to the direction of a combination of contemplative and methodological approaches that will be necessary in order to address the issue of truth. And philosophy, mainly as epistemology, offers a lot in this regard. James continues by upholding that we, the highly educated classes, are trained to seek the rare, the exquisite exclusively, and to overlook the common¹². We have become elitists that may be skipping the main core of things. Could critical thinking, with the aid of the methodological value of philosophy, bring us back to considering the common again, to see the primary reasons for science once more?

Common practice is not deprived of the tragic element, as the ancient Greeks rightly foresaw. James believes that the world is made on a specific pattern, tragically practical. The reason is that the actually possible in this world is vastly narrower than all that is demanded; that is how there is always a gap between the actual and the ideal which can be got through only by leaving part of the ideal behind. In education, like in all other spheres of human activity, we feel often enforced to abandon the ideal for the sake of the practically feasible. However, since some part of the ideal must be left behind, we need to know precisely which part that will be¹³. It seems to me that this is mainly the philosopher's task. That puts philosophy, as it is already historically, in the beginning of the specific awareness.

For the American pragmatist, what we know determines what we notice. I would like to add that what we notice determines who we become. Reality is the vaguest term of all, because we add things and notions to what we perceive through the senses and the intellect, because we are creative beings. Our minds exert an arbitrary choice; by their inclusions and omissions, by the emphasis our minds give to different aspects, we partly create reality, we partly foresee knowledge. Truth for us is simply a collective name for verification processes, according to the school of pragmatism¹⁴. The fact remains that humanism, critical thinking and truth are equally very important things which we cannot dissociate from the university. But we must be cautious, with all the tolerance to theory that philosophy teaches; no truth can be so firm as to never fail and rationalism should not allow us to get carried away. As William James rightly observes: "The Truth, what a perfect idol for the rationalistic mind... [it seems that] in everything there must be one system that is right and every other wrong"¹⁵. Eventually, to know an object means to lead to it through a context that the world supplies¹⁶. The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good for definite, assignable reasons¹⁷. Ideas become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience¹⁸. We plunge into the field of fresh experience with the beliefs our ancestors and we have made already; these determine what we notice as significant, as a significant truth. The pragmatic method in philosophy implies that truths should have practical consequences: the truth of any statement consists in the consequences¹⁹.

Thus, William James sets before us an interesting view about the nature of truth, a view that makes again evident why philosophical studies should be a critical precondition in today's university due to its ability to discern in depth such theoretical and methodological issues: "The truth of a proposition depends on its usefulness, on its serving a particular need. Truth with no practical effect is of no use. If I ask one 'what is

¹¹ James William, *Pragmatism and other writings*, Penguin, New York, 2000. – 285 p.

¹² James William, *Pragmatism and other writings*, Penguin, New York, 2000. – 281 p.

¹³ James William, *Pragmatism and other writings*, Penguin, New York, 2000. – 255 p.

¹⁴ James William, *Pragmatism and other writings*, Penguin, New York, 2000. – 96 p.

¹⁵ James William, *Pragmatism and other writings*, Penguin, New York, 2000. – 105 p.

¹⁶ James William, *Pragmatism and other writings*, Penguin, New York, 2000. – 143 p.

¹⁷ James William, *Pragmatism and other writings*, Penguin, New York, 2000. – 38 p.

¹⁸ James William, *Pragmatism and other writings*, Penguin, New York, 2000. – 30 p.

¹⁹ James William, *Pragmatism and other writings*, Penguin, New York, 2000, p. 146. Cf. *ibid*, p. 88: "Pragmatism asks this question: grant an idea or belief to be true. What concrete difference will its being true make in one's actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What is the truth's value in experiential terms?"

the time?’ and he answers: ‘I am Mr Smith’, then his response is of no importance to me even if what he utters is true. If truth is disconnected from practical interest and from human activity, then its existence is not substantiated or necessary. This conception of non-abstract truth generates a range of truths that are selected in accordance with the temporary environment in which they are found. E.g. water is not only the chemical molecule H₂O but also a liquid that will quench my thirst, or a substance that helps me keep clean”²⁰. Its many definitions provide diverse aspects of the truth, all equal among them, all functional or useful at the time of inquiry²¹.

As we have seen so far, Philosophy is the need of people to know right from wrong. But that not only epistemically. Let us gain some insights into that while exploring why philosophical studies are a precondition for an education of humanism and critical thinking at the university level. The same perception, to a certain extent, permeates the Hellenistic era. In the philosophical disciplines of the time, emphasis is constantly given on self correction as the sole means of returning to the primal and authentic reality of the person. Seneca in his *Dialogi* and *Epistulae* as well as Iamblichus, through his recording of the Pythagorean life in the *De Vita Pythagorica* bring to light a way of living which has been constructed on the grounds of unlimited credence in man’s inherent abilities for the attainment of wisdom. Man can be educated humanistically, he can be guided to a complete metamorphic procedure by means of which his life will be rendered eudaimonistic despite his mortal nature²². Knowledge is considered to be the first philosophical demand in the perspective of an “ars vitae”. The alienation of man from his nature is the consequent axiomatic acceptance which this art is called to resolve. It also resolves the conflicting nature of the human being, along with the inner conflicts that inhibit psychological progress. The right criterion for proper social behaviour is, as Pythagoras induces, similarly with Plato in some of his dialogues, for each person to be himself in the exact manner that he would like others to perceive him. Under the prism of this heterogenous comparison, man has a measure for himself that keeps him integrated into the social corpus²³. Education, self education, are important because they facilitate the political effort of bringing the individual to society, the person to communality and to the political life. That is the result of a practising mind, not of a mind that memorises or follows thinking protocols. Pythagoras claimed that it is not possible to consider “dianoia” as the best of things and according to it to make all decisions and still not dispose of any time or effort for focused ascesis, training, on it. The education that influences and shapes the intellect is the only thing that remains intact in life, the only indisputable assistance in the existential strife²⁴. Education is so important and critical due to the fact that it depends on man’s proairesis, on his free will. Thus it is rendered the only factor that distinguishes the free from those who are enslaved²⁵, a conception that follows even the school of Frankfurt and the pedagogical views of Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and others later on.

Referring directly to the essence of Pedagogy, the sage from the island of Samos suggests though that it should be desirable to those who are not very capable of learning, to be benefited by what they see others do and by following their example, by pursuing a set paradigm²⁶. The spectre of the paradigm has been neglected, perhaps as being too romantic or not feasible in modern education, especially so in the university; as if the university teacher is deprived of his pedagogical role, sterilised in a process that recognizes in him or her only the limited mission of higher knowledge on a particular discipline of science. What a narrow conception of education this seems when contrasted with the multifaceted needs and abilities of a modern person, with a plethora of social roles to say the least, an employee, a citizen, a person as an aftermath of the ideas of the Enlightenment. The moral approach is necessary in education, insists Pythagoras. By means of a metaphor he explains that it is like desiring to show the sun to someone who cannot look at it directly with bare eyes and as a consequence the only thing that can be used is the reflection on water or on tar, as a kind of speculum²⁷. Wisdom is the real science that is related with the knowledge of the beautiful, the appropriate, and the significant. Philosophy is the untainted zeal for this theory²⁸. As a corrective science, philosophy works deeply inside the ontological level.

²⁰ Pelegrinis Theodosios, *Lexiko tis Filosofias*, Ellinika Grammata, Athens 2004. – P. 42–43.

²¹ See William James, *Pragmatism, A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, Popular Lectures on Philosophy, Longmans, Green, and Company, New York 1907. Also, William James, *The Meaning of Truth, A Sequel to ‘Pragmatism’*, Longmans, Green, and Company, New York, 1909.

²² Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica*, VI. 30: «ἴνα τὸ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας τε καὶ φιλοσοφίας σωτήριον ἕνασμα χαρίσῃται τῇ θνητῇ φύσει».

²³ Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica*, IX. 46.

²⁴ Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica*, VIII. 42.

²⁵ Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica*, VIII. 44.

²⁶ Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica*, XV. 66.

²⁷ Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica*, XV. 67.

²⁸ Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica*, XII. 59: «καλὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ αὕτη παιδείας ἦν ἐπιμέλεια ἢ συντείνουσα αὐτῷ πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπανόρθωσιν».

For Seneca, the Roman Stoic, philosophy is all that the human being has in his possession in order to alleviate the pain and anguish of his inauthentic life. This notion is based primarily on his acceptance that philosophy is both an art (*ars*) and a science (*scientia*)²⁹. Seneca considers philosophy to be a moral and rational art³⁰, furthermore, an awakening force: “Sola autem nos philosophia excitabit, sola somnum excutiet gravem. Illi te totum dedica” [Philosophy is the only power that can stir us, the only power that can shake off our deep slumber. Devote yourself wholly to philosophy]³¹. When the individual commences spending his time with philosophy then, Seneca assures, there is an abysmal gap created between him and the other ordinary people³². The Roman philosopher realizes that it is all about a matter of self knowledge practically: where there has been accumulated too much redundant knowledge there is no space for the knowledge of virtue, therefore no space for self knowledge. The senecan art of life is not an advance at this point but a transition to the innate potentiality and capability. In this context, the teacher is not the authoritative figure who seizes all knowledge. Philosophy makes all equal, despite rank, race or origin³³. Self relationship is the first and indispensable phase before the sage reaches out to society. His “humanitas”, i.e. his philanthropy, is always the criterion for the participation of others on the route to wisdom. In the senecan theory man is not orientated to a “political” conformity with everyday experience. The therapy of all inadequacy that the human being may suffer from, instantly places him in a frame of new existence, a genuine life experience or an art of living according to unwavering methodological principles.

Let us bring the above in a modern perspective and see them in their functionality. Generally speaking, the systems which are served through education are culture and economics. When humanism is not defended at modern schools, then economics becomes ideology and we deter students and teachers from serving culture, thus creating a school of authoritarian if not totalitarian stance. Modern education has turned to serving the needs of the *thymos* (passions, in the platonic sense), the needs which are dictated by desire. So how are the principles of humanism, right reason, self correction, excellence, as depicted in the theories of pythagoreanism and stoicism served? In practice, in our epoch, this is an education for consumers and technocrats, which is not concerned with autonomous and complete cultural experiences³⁴; on the contrary an education which would estimate classical studies highly would be a locus where the lack of the medium could be evidenced more clearly³⁵. Modern education suffers from many of the pathologies that Plato notices regarding the sophist way of education. In the sophist scheme, the errors committed are the following: a) the sophists teach the technical lessons and those which are for real education, namely culture, in the same way (the former regard technical skills and the latter concern humanistic studies, b) they believe that what is sought in education is to fill the soul of the learner with cognitive material, c) they do not accomplish to teach virtue as they are morally neutral, they do not serve any moral idea or moral orientation, d) they receive money from their students, thus damaging the internal human link between teacher and learner. The problems which arise from the sophisticated penetration into our educational system are manifold. The produced and transmitted knowledge is frequently of propagandistic or instrumental nature. But this is not proper practice to teach exclusively a cognitive item without any care for the humanistic principles that will ensure the proper and critical use of this item. Similarly, no lesson can be taught without any reference whatsoever to the manner, the method of how to contemplate and how to form new, innovative thinking. As a result we have classes which function under the pretext of pedagogy but with nothing pedagogical in them. Hence, Barrow & Woods, two American philosophers of education, assert that education is considered to be the commitment to what is believed to be significant. In this spirit, education is committed to change the human being to the better³⁶. Classical studies, philosophical studies and the humanities can imbue university courses and scientific disciplines with this idea. Nonetheless, it needs to be clarified that offering such studies as the humanities and in particular philosophical studies cannot be an end in itself; it should produce an educational result of the highest caliber, a result derived from the development of critical reason which will make the educational effort meaningful and constructive in its totality; this signifies the passage from technicality to morality, to the moral stance of an educated person, as a social person, as a whole person, who seeks eudemonia. For the Athenian Plato there is no wisdom alone, without virtue; the two need to be perplexed and interdependent. Let us remember

²⁹ Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, XXXI. 8.

³⁰ Bruhl Lèvy, *La morale et la science des mœurs*, F. Alcan, Paris, 1937. – 223 p.

³¹ Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, LIII. 8.

³² Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, LIII. 9-10.

³³ Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, XLIV. 1-2.

³⁴ Anton John, “The classical education of the Greeks and its ecumenical spirit”. In K. Boudouris (ed.), *The Philosophy of Greek Education*, Ionia, Athens, 1991. – P. 13–27.

³⁵ Anton John, “The classical education of the Greeks and its ecumenical spirit”. In K. Boudouris (ed.), *The Philosophy of Greek Education*, Ionia, Athens, 1991. – P. 13–27.

³⁶ Barrow Robin & Woods Ronald, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, 4th edition, Routledge, New York, 2006. – P. 9.

the platonic words in the dialogue *Menexenus*: «πᾶσά τε ἐπιστήμη χωριζομένη δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς πανουργία, οὐ σοφία φαίνεται» [every form of knowledge when sundered from justice and the rest of virtue is seen to be plain roguery rather than wisdom]³⁷.

Certainly, in Ancient Greek Philosophy, the educational effort is intertwined not only with a gnosological aspect but also with an aim to facilitate personal development in the sense of embracing especially those ethical values that are essential for human living. Science and an ethical awareness of life are founded on the premise of logos, reason and orientate the human being to the telos of eudaimonia. In meeting with the world and its phenomena the human being has the capacity to overcome this discrepancy by means of principles so as to become not only a knowledgeable but also a better being. In the Presocratic thought there are already elements that point to the direction of approaches which consider the person in a perspective of continuous development towards a certain telos, as in the case of the Ionian philosophers, the Atomic philosophers and others who exert their pedagogical activity in the Greek cities aiming at students' most efficient improvement. Plato places the emphasis on his theory of knowledge whereas he gives insights on the importance of the moral educational method which pursues the holistic development of the citizen who is trained to participate in the ideal polis along with that of the person who transcends his desires and uses dialectics or Eros to reach the highest Good. Such education, as demonstrated in the allegory of the cave, is meant to free individuals from false opinions and convictions. Aristotle makes manifest the human potential for perfection and highlights certain ethical practices created in the context of education. His didactic proposals are not technical; they rather address the multifaceted aspects and needs of the human nature through the practices of "hexis" (habit) and "mesotes" (mean). In ethical activity Aristotle anticipates a comparison with a work of beauty. The creation of a perfect human being, an individual that has acquired intellectual and ethical virtues, is the most worthy artefact, an "ergon kalon". The Greek conception of education is a critical commitment not only to the metaphysical premises of right reason but also to the thesis that personal as well as collective progress cannot be dissociated from an implementation of ethical values in daily life.

Ortega y Gasset, the modern Spanish existentialist, proposes another hermeneutics which interprets the components of the crisis we face in our societies and in our education, so that a crisis is not considered to mean a financial or political crisis solely, neither a value crisis, but a crisis of the human factor on the whole. Ortega's remarks necessitate the presence of the awareness that philosophy and critical thinking are absolutely essential. Ortega y Gasset theorizes strongly against rationalism, claiming that the fundamental error that rationalism allows is its own dominance on life, which means that life is deprived of the physical element and the human being is deprived of its vital potencies.³⁸ This wrong evaluation of rationality and its role is the fundamental reason for the creation of the masses; masses that Adorno later on will call "half educated masses" despite their huge amount of access to university courses and to a number of degrees. Ortega suggests that science, ethics, art, religious faith, justice, have escaped the place of subjective awareness and have obtained an objective utility that does not allow them to be functional and effective. An objective culture ends up against the subjective element that gave birth to it.³⁹ Pure reason cannot be right reason.⁴⁰ The modern westerner has gained technical knowledge but he is a barbarian as regards his limited understanding of the driving forces of the creation of his culture. He is an ignorant, whose only knowledge refers to technical development, but misses the true essence of life, the morale behind the benefits, which is no other than obligation and commitment to a certain target. Thus, very usefully for today's discussion, the philosopher from Madrid diagnoses an increasing homogeneity in the western world, which is responsible for the creation of the deep crisis of the 20th century. "El hombre masa", the mass-man, is responsible for this crisis. This type of man, the modern man, is characterized by the *idola fori*, with no internal reference whatsoever, so similar all over the western sphere, docile to the international imperatives of fashion, ways of life, current values, opinions, and ideas. This type of man is held accountable, by Ortega, for this "asphyxiating monotony" that has dominated all the so-called civilized places, among them universities. The mass man can be formed according to anything, which makes manifest that he is a vacant being. Similarly the world seems empty of purposes, anticipations, ideals. Nobody has concerned himself with supplying them, Ortega remarks. We could add, quite securely: nobody has pondered effectively how to overturn this scheme of education that leads to this lack of pluralism, this lack of culture, of active humanitarianism, of innovative historical effort.

³⁷ Plato, *Menexenus*, 247 a.

³⁸ Ortega y Gasset Jose, *En Torno a Galileo (Esquema de las Crisis)*, Revista de Occidente en Alianza Editorial, Madrid 1956, lección V: "Lo humano es la vida del hombre, no su cuerpo, ni siquiera su alma."

³⁹ Ortega y Gasset Jose, *En Torno a Galileo (Esquema de las Crisis)*, Revista de Occidente en Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1956. – P. 64–65.

⁴⁰ Cf. Esperanza Guisán, *Razón y pasión en ética. Los dilemas de la ética contemporánea*, Anthropos, Barcelona 1986, passim.

The mass man practically lives in the darkness, having been subjugated to a deterministic adoption of the collective desiderata; he is losing the potential to remain open to a superior level of life.⁴¹ In this epoch, the presence of a mass is more noticeable than that of any preceding period, but differing from the traditional type in that it remains hermetically enclosed within itself, incapable of submitting to anything or anybody, believing itself self-sufficient. The mass man is the average man; in this manner, what used to be only a quantitative definition is now also a qualitative one. This qualitative trait leads to the affirmation that each man is so uncritical, no dissimilar to others, therefore he belongs to a type of genus (*tipo genérico*). As a consequence, the mass man is the man who “feels like everybody else” and who also feels at comfort with the admittance that he evaluates himself as almost identical with anyone else. Thus the different, the individual, the capable, the noble, are disregarded, ignored, or rejected. Whoever is not like “everybody else,” whoever does not contemplate like “everybody else,” is in danger of being trodden upon by the horde of barbarians which is the mass. By this conversion of quantity into quality there has been achieved a genesis, of a type of human being whose desires, ideas, ways of life, and every life reference, coincide with those of the homogeneous massive collectivity which he is also part of. The hermetic man, *el hombre masa*, among other things, most importantly loses his personal mark, his authenticity. So does the western culture through the repetition of an education that becomes more and more focused on technical detail rather than fresh, critical, creative, substantial and original thinking.

Ortega holds responsible three distinct factors for this dominance of the masses and for the loss of any character of critical thinking in our moral, political and educational action: liberal democracy, scientific advancement and industrialism. In the field of science, there are now more elements, more clues, more techniques and branches than ever before. While the traditional professions were very few, the fragmentation of science has now created relevant new professions.⁴² Even though we are in an era during which we have the knowledge and skills to achieve so much, it is apparent that we do not possess what is most crucial: a specific target setting process. This crucial absence of orientation leaves man incomplete, inauthentic. Is any other science able to fulfill this role better than Philosophy? Paradoxically, despite the fragmentation of science and professions, the crowd appears as a singularity, that has been conquered by the goods of the technological culture. Inside this almost unexpected abundance of tools, abilities and goods, provided by the technological culture, man stands aghast, bared from any aims and visions.⁴³ In schools, it has been impossible to do more than instruct the masses in the technique of modern life; it has been impossible to educate them. They have been given tools for an intenser form of existence, but no feeling for their great historic duties, no sense of individual self completion⁴⁴. Ortega y Gasset’s reference to axiology principally aims at highlighting a life of “servitude for something transcendental.” The man, who is not vulgar, grows restless and invents some new gnomon, more difficult, more exigent, to adhere to, a life of obligation and duty. This is life lived as a discipline, life against the radical solitude (*soledad radical*) of the human being⁴⁵.

The words of philosophy and the proper knowledge and use of language are indispensable, for the Greek enlightener Adamantios Korais [19th century], in order to lead the people to the acquisition of virtue through education. The relationship between language and morality is mutually functional and effective, as one who does not use the concepts correctly, also does not call and does not use morals correctly either. According to Korais: “If the barbarization of the language, twisting the true meanings of the words, ends in the corruption of morals, it is deduced that the correction of the language also corrects the morals of the nation and makes them meeker. Virtue, justice, prudence, sainthood, and even more, countless words, which denote the dispositions of the soul, mean another thing in an uneducated man’s mouth and another in the enlightened man’s mouth”⁴⁶. This means that the common people must be educated. The scholar from the island of Chios upholds that a people must be a people of philosophers, in the sense of seekers of wisdom, able to live by the theoretical principles that will allow them a true and meaningful life, not only commercially and productively effective. People deserve lives of freedom. Freedom from the darkness of ignorance is the most fearful of all. People, who are deprived of education, are deprived of freedom as well.

⁴¹ Ortega y Gasset Jose, *En Torno a Galileo (Esquema de las Crisis)*, Revista de Occidente en Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1956. – P. 32–33.

⁴² Ortega y Gasset Jose, *La rebellion de las masas*. Revista de Occidente en Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1979. – 71 p.

⁴³ Ortega y Gasset Jose, *La rebellion de las masas*. Revista de Occidente en Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1979. – 74 p.

⁴⁴ Ortega y Gasset Jose, *En Torno a Galileo (Esquema de las Crisis)*, Revista de Occidente en Alianza Editorial, Madrid 1956, lección V.

⁴⁵ Ortega’s examination on the qualitative criteria, which should be supportive to the individual and collective effort for excellence, is taken from the point of view of vitalism and perspectivism, whereas it also confronts with the questions raised by the phenomenological approach of the common life.

⁴⁶ Adamantios Korais, *Prolegomena to the Ancient Greek Writers*, vol. I, Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, Athens, 1986. – 504 p.

Regarding the role of philosophy in the enlightenment and education of people, Korais notes in his *Improvised Meditations on the Greek Education and Language*⁴⁷: “Philosophy does not only tackle with the problem of the correction of one’s mind but also of one’s will. Where you may see a malignant and perverse man, do not doubt that his malice is the result either of total lack of any education or of bad and unmethodical education”. In such statements Korais connects modern educational strife with the realizations of Socrates⁴⁸, with the certainty that man is not naturally evil, but evil is the result of bad thinking, of bad exis (habit) and ignorance. Education is an ontological process, directly connected with refining man so that he can be a better being⁴⁹. Furthermore, it is a work of pacification, honesty and virtue⁵⁰. This recognizes an education based on targeting claims and not on a random cultural basis. It includes the enlightening concept of “anthropourgia” (making of people), i.e. the formation of people according to an axiological-formative exemplar which will influence constructively and imbue the natural constitution of man so as to render man eudemonistic but also socially beneficial. Moral values, as considered in the Greek Enlightenment, must be mixed with scientific action, they must comprise an unaltered and unswerving component of education. The moral and practical proposal of the new Greek philosophy focuses attention on the education of young people and, *salva veritate*, on lifelong education, in the form of an endless quest and effort for virtue, on the one hand, and individual and political eudemonia, on the other. Values are not placed in a utopian manner in the minds of societies and individuals. Virtue is teachable but at the same time it is a daily, not automated pursuit. It mostly comprises a war against bad habits, therefore it mobilises man’s best abilities and devoted will. This is the uncompromising message, the broad anthropocentric conception of the Enlightenment.

Edward Wilson rightly remarks that: “Knowledge humanely acquired and widely shared, related to human needs but kept free of political censorship, is the real science for the people”⁵¹. This real science, as Wilson calls it, is the starting point of free expression and for access to truth values, a compass for synthesis and organization inside any democratic society and any antiauthoritarian educational system. The danger shall always remain that the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge can be assymetrical to the situation of those who are underprivileged. The answer may indeed start from a subjectivist view of individual value (using personal preferences as the basis for an account of a person’s welfare) and relate the individual good to the collective good within a framework⁵². From my perspective, values, especially within the context of university education, should not be taken for granted; they ought to be re-invented (especially within the context of university studies, with the main aid of philosophy which is the major guide in this process), re-established, re-confirmed anew in any form of social unity, as the immobility of values in accordance with old ideals, uncritically inherited from previous centuries, would lead to an unacceptable prevention of the historical progress, especially in western society. It remains exceedingly difficult to establish truth objectively. How can one objectively prove that a particular society’s dependence on certain values is erroneous beyond contradiction? Which are the methodological loci on which differences of tradition and modern theorizations can be met and reconciled? Perhaps notions of scientific or philosophical objectivity will need to be relaxed, if the concept of truth is to operate in a political and educational environment. As Aristotle suggested, political and social truths are true for the most part and are far from absolute. Therefore, a kind of structured subjectivism may prove workable, so long as it does not degrade into a vulgar relativism.

What counts is that professional science, should not take the form of theology, should not become fundamentalist in its pursuits and aspirations, nor should it enjoy the solitary privilege to possess truth. If not conducive to the public good, whichever that good is concluded to be within the limits of a moral consensus shared by members of a community, the search for truth would remain futile in the practical level of making people’s lives better and enhancing their bond with their polis. That is why philosophical studies are so important; because they are the critical tool. Under this prism, humanism cannot be a product of rhetoric but it comprises a valuable political and educational event, a most essential certain episteme. The democratic ideal and therefore the quest for the significant truth that is indispensable for educational action is supposed to contribute to people’s welfare. That unavoidably will always take us to a discussion about what are the constituents of this welfare: a rapid increase in our convenience of purchasing material goods or eudemonia in

⁴⁷ Adamantios Korais, *Prolegomena to the Ancient Greek Writers*, vol. I, Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, Athens 1986. – P. 178–179.

⁴⁸ Cf. Sotiris Fournaros, “Socrates in Korais”, *Journal for Classical Studies* MS, n. 7 (2005). – P. 91–102.

⁴⁹ For a thorough guide on education in the years under discussion see Konstantinos Malafantis, *The pedagogy of neohellenic enlightenment*, Poreia, Athens, 2001.

⁵⁰ Adamantios Korais, *Prolegomena to the Ancient Greek Writers*, vol. I, Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece, Athens, 1986. – P. 159 p.

⁵¹ Edward Wilson, “Academic Vigilantism and the Political Significance of Sociobiology”. In *Bioscience*, 26, 1976. – P. 187–190.

⁵² Paul Kitcher, *Science, Truth and Democracy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001. – P. 116 p.

the ancient Greek philosophical perspective? Is this type of society, this type of university, allowed to change our values if the truth that is revealed points out to that direction as a necessity and not as mere choice? Despite the deontological quest for objectivity⁵³, despite our inability to verify or assert true facts, truth, even in its potentially fractional forms, should not be abandoned in a number of semantic constructions, but, instead, it ought to encourage towards a conscious and consistent method.

Philosophy is necessary if you want to have political choice in learning and access to knowledge. Other systems usually offer predesigned decisions or answers. At the beginning of philosophy, philosophy as dialectics, there is problem setting, the question; therefore dialectics, as Aristotle explains in *Topica*, in *Prior Analytics* and in *Posterior Analytics*, is headed to the area of “inventio”, as an attempt to extract logical arguments. By this approach of critical thinking what is mainly pursued is for one to be able to use his cognitive and evaluative capability in order to meet the demands of everyday life and discourse. For Aristotle, those who do not comprehend the meaning and the power of the words may be led to irrational attitudes and thoughts. In fact, there is a gap between thought, language and reality as human beings have to use discourse instead of the things themselves. The Stagirite upholds that dialectics can offer the method for proper communication, based on definitions and logical thinking, in an ethical way. The essence of critical thinking is evaluation, a mental procedure by which claims, allegations and arguments are assessed⁵⁴. As such it remains as a constant pursuit, of purely dialectical form, which principally recognises the logical elaboration of the existential and empirical data as the most appropriate, despite the ontological, metaphysical psychological and epistemological obscurities due to which this activity is hindered. The most reliable approach, in an environment which keeps us vigilant about the relativity of any type of knowledge, is the critical and dialectical approach, the non abandonment of the critical subject, i.e. the human being, to the dark, interior space of our language and intellect, a certain advancement towards the world that *is* and the world that *we are*. Teaching, while it considers as a sine qua non condition the logical practice, the logical elenchus on the syllogisms, and comprehends the dynamic and unalterable connection between reality, human intellect and language, can be implemented not only as pedagogy but also as the terminus a quo for the practical as well as theoretical influences of critical thinking.

In my view, we are relational, not isolated beings, and that in a twofold way: one is with the necessity of communication and coordination with other human beings and one is with the surrounding space, with reality. In all these interactions, there is a personal hint, a personal mark, which originates from our own distinct and unique contribution, in our unique and distinct being, that redefines these relations. Still, this is a world of unfamiliarity, uncanniness, “unheimlichkeit”. “Barbarus hic ego sum, quia non intelligor illis” [Here I am a barbarian, because nobody understands me], Ovid writes in his *Tristia*. How do we proceed with this gap, which is not only a gnoseological but also an existential breach? The one thing that counts in philosophy is that a man should see things, see them straight in his own peculiar way and be dissatisfied with any opposite way of seeing them⁵⁵. This is the only pragmatic way, the only scientific way. On a level of principles when it comes to collectivity, to collective life, it is permissible to violate or alter these principles when this action provides us with the capability to move on to a better level of principles, not just to a different one. Being “different” per se is not a value, an ability or a virtue. In the same sense, “variety” is morally, politically or educationally speaking, a neutral term, it does not necessarily induce a negative or positive coloration but only it induces an analogical, according to certain secondary attributes that may accompany it. A better principle, a better method or action is introduced in the form of a necessary principle, method or action in the sense that it may be able to ameliorate the totality of the principles of the collective form in which we are included. This is how philosophy is necessary in our university curriculum, also in our thinking systems and protocols, as a good and ameliorative principle, not as a principle in difference to others.

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⁵³ Cf. Wright Crispin, *Truth and Objectivity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1992.

⁵⁴ Ruggiero Vincent Ryan, *Beyond Feelings. A Guide to Critical Thinking*, 7th edition, McGrawHill, New York, 2004. – 17 p.

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