

The Education of Philosophy: Training in Humanization.

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Abstract.

People become more and more unable to do is to establish connections: to grasp the multidimensional connections between events or the connections in what is going on around them, to see the different kinds of their causes and thus to make right diagnoses and explanations of the situations in which they find themselves. This loss of the object of knowledge is a result of the loss of the object in epistemology. In the XXth century Pragmatism with its “many truths” and logical empiricism with its ideological concept of science had played crucial, though quite different, roles in the loss of the object in epistemology. The basic conditions of paideia, could contribute to the humanization of human beings. These basic conditions are “to know oneself” and to develop the ability to know the object, including values, i.e. to develop one’s intellectual and ethical capabilities, which also lead to self knowledge. Philosophical education is indispensable and especially a training to help everyone to develop what I call the “ontological approach”.

Key words: paideia, pragmatism, King Suleman, globalisation, human rights.

Resumen. *La educación de la filosofía: formando en humanidad.*

La gente cada vez es menos capaz de establecer conexiones: de captar las conexiones multidimensionales entre acontecimientos, o las conexiones en lo que sucede a su alrededor, de ver los diferentes tipos de causas y con ello, de formular diagnósticos y explicaciones acertados acerca de las situaciones en las que se encuentran. Esta pérdida del objeto de conocimiento es un resultado de la pérdida del objeto en epistemología. En el S. XX, el Pragmatismo, con sus “muchas verdades”, con su empirismo lógico y su concepto ideológico de ciencia, desempeñó papeles cruciales, aunque bastante diversos, en la pérdida del objeto en epistemología. Las condiciones básicas de la paideia podrían contribuir a la humanización de los seres humanos. Estas condiciones básicas consisten en “conocerse a sí mismo” y desarrollar la capacidad de conocer el objeto, incluyendo los valores, es decir, desarrollar las propias capacidades intelectuales y éticas que llevan asimismo al conocimiento de sí. La educación filosófica es indispensable, y especialmente constituye una formación para ayudar a todo el mundo a desarrollar lo que yo llamo el “enfoque ontológico”.

Palabras clave: paideia, pragmatismo, King Suleman, globalización, derechos humanos.

The Problem

Opposing tendencies and discrepant efforts characterize the intellectual climate of our world during the past 25 or 30 years: on the one hand we promote respect for human rights, i.e. for certain “universal” norms, “and on the other hand we promote equal respect to all cultures, i.e. respect also for sets of parochial, “relative” norms which not only are often discrepant among themselves, but also contradictory to human rights.

In the political sphere, on the one hand we create, and promote the creation of, supranational bodies, and on the other hand we establish, and promote the establishment of, smaller and smaller independent states, sometimes of one million citizens.

Yet, though human rights and their protection is a permanent item on the agenda of the world community, racism, fundamentalism, criminality, terrorism and similar calamities go on increasing all over the world. Why?

Efforts to face them are made mostly without trying to explain how this situation we find ourselves came about and what are the main factors underlying it.

One of these main factors seems to be education. In the best of the cases –i.e. when we don't promote education as acculturation or ideological initiation– we promote the cultivation of the intellectual capacities of individuals –we try to train “good” scientists or “good” technicians and to promote “creativity”, but we don't even think of cultivating their ethical capacities.

This is why, here, I shall try to put my finger on certain needs I see, related to the intellectual background of the situation and on the ground of the knowledge of these needs, to submit to your attention a part of my thoughts concerning how could philosophy contribute to tackle them, i.e. to rethink education.

One Main Need

Something that people become more and more unable to do is to establish connections: to grasp the multidimensional connections between events or the connections in what is going on around them, to see the different kinds of their causes and thus to make right diagnoses and explanations of the situations in which they find themselves. Thus different theoretical or practical starting points –different basic assumptions or approaches– lead, naturally, to different diagnoses and explanations still of the same, objectively same, situation or fact.

This is what I call the loss of the object of knowledge, which is a result of the loss of the object in epistemology. In the XXth century Pragmatism with its “many truths” and logical empiricism with its ideological concept of science had played crucial, though quite different, roles in the loss of the object in epistemology. Among these consequences we see postmodernism, according to which “anything goes” –*ergo*, among others, “equal respect

to all cultures, i.e. to unscrutinized local, cultural norms, many of which are contradictory to human rights.

One chain result of this is the spread of various fundamentalisms and of different religious or semi-religious sects all over the world. Thus people commit suicide in order to get the comet which approaches the earth and go to paradise and some others buy space in paradise; the leader of a religion invites people to listen to his sermon and claims that the sins of those who do so, will be forgiven; or others try to persuade people about the existence of the angels by comparing them with the radio waves and claiming that just as we don't see these waves but we know that they are there, so with angels.

All these make me think that philosophical education is indispensable and especially a training which helps everyone to develop what I call the "ontological approach". I shall first focus on what I call "the ontological approach", which, I think, is very important in philosophical education and for *paideia* in general.

The Ontological Approach

If we look at the contexts in which the term is used, "approach" usually means an assumption which people, consciously or unconsciously, take for granted while they look at events, establish the facts or try to build any explanation.

Such assumptions on which people, both in everyday life and in fields of research or inquiry, base themselves, show a great variety: a true or false knowledge, an ontological-anthropological-epistemological view explaining its object in a right or wrong way, a belief with or without cognitive grounds, a principle, a thought, an experience etc., can all play the same role.

On the other hand, when we consider philosophical inquiries and scientific research in different fields with regard to their points of departure or the assumptions underlying them, we come across different cases, varying in accordance with a) what the assumption in question is, i.e. its epistemic value, b) the way, i.e. how one bases oneself on this assumption and c) the kind of the object of inquiry or research.

Let us put aside false assumptions and consider only those which in themselves correspond to or explain their objects, i.e. those that are true or right. So far as I can see, we can distinguish at least three different cases of "basing oneself on" such assumptions. We have the case in which such a "basing oneself on" leads to grasp a problem, i.e. to the objectification of a discrepancy of any kind,¹ and we have two cases in which an explanation of a phenomenon, a fact –general or individual–, an event, an action etc. is given through the application of such an assumption. The latter ways of "applying an assumption", which play quite different roles and signify two quite different activities, are both called "approaches".

What happens in the first case of the application of an assumption is the following: a true knowledge or a right explanation put forth in a specific field is used either in order

to answer a question in another field, or in order to explain a phenomenon, fact etc., belonging to an ontically different area. Such an application turns to be nothing else but the endeavour “to prove the validity” of the knowledge or explanation in question; if we leave aside coincidences, it distorts the facts and, as a result, it can not lead to a new and true knowledge. This is how a group of –isms comes up, to which the teleologist explanation of nature or history could be an example. “Approach” in this sense signifies an assumption which determines *a priori* how the thing objectified will be explained and, in this case, it is itself a way of explaining things –a way which could not lead to right explanations except by chance.

What happens in the second case of applying an assumption, is something quite different. For, what is applied here, is nothing else but a possibility of knowing: the knowledge of the ontical specificity –or “nature”– of the objectified individual case which is to be explained, becomes a point of departure in this special study, and what is applied here, is the knowledge that, if we wish to attain our aim, it should be suitable to look at such and such points of the objectified individual case. A particular knowledge (to the extent it “exhausts” its object) and a view (in accordance with the amount of true knowledge that it contains) are suitable assumptions for explaining individual cases belonging to their ontical area, i.e. they may lead to the right explanation of, or afford true knowledge about, these individual cases. Good examples of such individual explanations could be found in studies in the field of History, achieved by historians equipped with the knowledge of the nature of historical being and of the peculiarity which the activity of interpretation carries within itself, i.e. by historians who have reflected on questions in the so-called Philosophy of History and in Epistemology²; good examples would also be found in literary studies made by people who are not ignorant of the ontical structure of the literary works and of the peculiarity that the activity of evaluation shows in this field, i.e. of people who have thought over questions in the Philosophy of Art, Epistemology, Value Theory etc. “Approach” in this sense signifies, not a way of explaining, but a body of knowledge –a view-independent and distinct from that explanation, explication, interpretation, evaluation which is to be put forth; it signifies a kind of assumptions which determine to which points of the objectified individual case one has to look at, if one wishes to explain, interpret or evaluate it. In other words: whereas the former kind of assumptions determines what has to be looked for in the object and has to be seen during the procedure of inquiry, the latter determines only what has to be looked at in the object. Thus “approach” in the former sense appears to be a misleading basis for inquiry or research, whereas in the latter sense, it is a suitably promoting basis, i.e. one which could lead to true knowledge or the right explanation of individual cases.

As to the true “assumptions” on which philosophical inquiries are based: these play a role quite different from both roles mentioned already: for they determine the object of

inquiry, i.e. they make the philosopher who is in possession of such a knowledge or view to grasp new problems. Some of them can also be approaches to individual cases.

Now, when we look at such assumptions, we realise that a) they are the knowledge of, or a view concerning, ontical structures or “whatness” and that b) they are the product of a special way of looking at reality –a way of looking common almost to all philosophers who have opened new paths to philosophy and thus made possible a deeper insight into the world we live in.

What sort of thing is this way of looking? To sum it up in a quite comprehensive manner, I would say that it is a way of looking which is directed to what is and which tries to see that what is within its connections and, also, to see its relations. Or: it is a way of looking directed at the ontical structure or the whatness of the objectified thing and of seeing its connections and relations with other things, i.e. what distinguishes it from other things. Such a connective way of looking at things, trying to see what the objectified thing is, can be called “ontological”.

Being, as a whole, and then special areas of Being can also be objectified and inquired into; their special structure or nature can be known as well. And such knowledge can play –and does play even if not very often– the role of assumptions that lead to problems to be inquired into, or, of assumptions in everyday life.

Now, when the assumption which leads a philosopher to grasp a problem and, as a result of his inquiry, to explain a fact or explicate a phenomenon; or when the view applied to explain an individual fact, event, action etc. is a piece of knowledge or a view concerning the ontical structure of the area to which object under consideration belongs, this view can be called “an ontological approach” with regard to its function and thus be distinguished from other kinds of approach. As we see, approaches of the kind which I call “ontological” are nothing but the knowledge of, or a view on, the ontical specificity –structure or whatness– of any thing, in its role of point of departure in looking at reality. Each one of such views can play this role.

The most important difference between other kinds of approaches and the “ontological” one, is to be found in the epistemic quality that the latter possesses. Its aptness to lead directly or indirectly to true knowledge and the degree of this aptness, depends on its epistemic value, i.e. on its content. Such assumptions, which are themselves philosophical knowledge, not only afford the possibility of bringing up new philosophical problems and consequently true philosophical knowledge; but also they afford suitable “approaches” to events, facts, actions etc. for other fields of knowledge and for everyday life too, they lead to a philosophical consideration of reality.

A Conception of *Paideia* in the Present-day World

Now, to help people –especially young people during formal education– to look at things with their own eyes, without prejudices, i.e. to look at the object, it would be good to make them aware of what they really do, when they objectify and try to know something.

This presupposes to train people in becoming aware of what they are doing, when they carry out knowing activities –such as conceiving, understanding, explaining, interpreting, justifying etc. – and whether they carry them out in a way that can lead to the goals inherent to these activities as intellectual human activities, or not.

This amounts to make them aware of the conditions of carrying out these activities, so that they can lead to knowledge.

This totally intellectual training –the first step in philosophical training– which can lead people to the ontological approach, is a condition *sine qua non* for the subsequent steps of this training, which all together can lead to the humanization of individuals.

The second step in this training is training in evaluation, as a human cognitive activity, which promises to lead to the knowledge of the value of the evaluated object. This is the ontological approach to the human activity of evaluation, which calls the attention of the trainee to the components of this activity and its determinants. This knowledge makes possible to see what distinguish what I call “right or wrong evaluation” from what I call “value ascription” and “value imputation”, which –in themselves– do not lead to the knowledge of the value of the evaluated object.

By “value ascription” I mean the mode of evaluation, in which an individual “object” is evaluated with regard to a special connection which the evaluator sees between himself and the object in question, or with regard to the consequences it bears for him; and by “value imputation” I mean another mode of evaluation, in which an individual “object” is evaluated in accordance with a cultural value judgement valid for the evaluator. This latter is a mode of evaluation, which in its simplest form functions as a syllogism, in which a minor singular proposition is subsumed under a general proposition, thus leading to a conclusion assumed to express “the value” of the given single object of evaluation.

It is obvious that taking as major premise different general value judgements, i.e. propositions with different predicates on the same subject, the conclusion concerning “the value” of the single evaluated object will be different. This is what often happens in private and public life and a fact that has lead the advocates of value relativism to claim the relativity also of value and values. Still this claim is true in the case of many general cultural value judgements and all singular value judgments which are not propositions of knowledge; but the claim is false in cases of value knowledge and of the philosophical knowledge of values. These latter propositions may be themselves true or false.

Sets of general value judgements, which show epistemological differences also among themselves, together with the imperatives into which they can be easily translated, constitute the various and varying systems of morals, or systems of norms, valid within

different groups, and are one of the main elements that differentiate one culture from another. Members of each group are expected to evaluate, i.e. to “impute value”, to things in accordance with such value judgements, namely to evaluate, in their interpersonal relations, the actions of other individuals –your actions, my actions in a given situation–, each of which is nevertheless a unique, in most cases complex, whole.

Still there is another fact we observe when we look at different systems of norms: that there are some recurring norms of evaluation and of conduct, which do not show a noteworthy change in time, e.g. “lying is bad”, “keeping one’s word is good”. This fact gave and still gives the impression that there are some “universal” norms or “values”, which, if identified, would constitute a “global ethics”, including also criteria for ethical evaluation.

Still there is no kind of general value norms, which, used as criteria of value, could lead to the knowledge of the ethical value of a unique action in interpersonal relations, or of any other unique object of evaluation. This is due to the epistemological specificity of value norms, on which I shall not dwell here.

The knowledge of the ethical value of an action as a unique whole, performed in a given unique situation, can be obtained through the activity of right evaluation, in which context the term “right” denotes that this activity is carried out so as to lead to its goal as a human activity. What I call “right evaluation” is a complex knowing activity.

Put very briefly the right evaluation of an action consists of three main steps: understanding a given action of a given person, done in a given situation, which means to grasp –as in detailed a way as possible– a) the evaluation underlying this action, b) the value-experience following it, and c) the intention and aim of this action, as well as how these were carried out. In other words, “understanding an action” means to be able to discern, as clearly as possible, as many as possible elements of its components and their determinants.

The next step of evaluating an actions is to be able to see the specificity of this action with respect to other possibilities of acting in the conditions in which it was carried or not carried out. This specificity of an action constitutes its value, which also determines its ethical value: its being valuable or valueless, right or wrong.

To be able to grasp this ethical value, one further step is needed: to relate this possibility, actualized in the given conditions, to the value of the human being: to the knowledge of its potentialities, which constitute its specificity, i.e. its characteristics and achievements.

Thus the ethical value of an action seems to lie in its significance for the human being –taken as species. To see this significance means to be able to find out what is protected or injured by this action. The knowledge provided by this way of evaluating an action is the knowledge of its ethical value –of its ethical specificity compared with other possibilities of action in the given real conditions.

The ground for this comparison is the philosophical knowledge of values, i.e. of what values are and what being a value means.

The aim of this training is to help the trainees become aware of what they are doing when they evaluate –or assume that they evaluate– the action of another person in their relations with him or her, or when they evaluate a case or situation they are faced with. This is very important, because the first component of every decision and action of ours is an evaluation.

If we are not aware of the specificity of the object we aim to know its value, “anything goes” –provided that we reason in a persuasive way, as demagogues do. It is important to become aware of the fact that what is “relative” are the general value judgements of a culture –the goods and bads of each culture–, because such propositions are not proposition of knowledge, i.e. they have no object independent of themselves, while propositions of knowledge do have such an object and this object can be of different ontical specificities –it can be a real thing, an idea, a relation etc. Thus, the trainees become aware of what is relative and what is not, and that knowledge is beyond relativism and absolutism.

The third step in this training which presupposes again the previous one, focuses on ethical issues. An analysis of action is made in order to show the various components of action, and the kinds of determinants of these components, since the possibility of determination by factors of different kind –by relevant knowledge, by beliefs, by interests etc.–, has implications for the ethical value of an action.

For this training, examples can be selected from literary works, from films and also from the actuality of the country. The purpose of selecting examples especially from literary works and films is to prevent, as much as possible, ascribing probable causes and “reasons” to actions and situations, and is based on the awareness that each action (of a person) and each situation is unique.

The main objective of this part of the training is to help the trainees become aware of the fact, that nothing we do in our daily life and while exercising our profession, is “value free”, and consequently of the need not to lose sight of the ethical components of our actions, so that the trainees develop –as much as one can– an eye able to catch in every situation that they have to act, where human dignity is at stake.

The fourth and last part of this training consists of questions related to human rights. Questions such as “what are human rights?”, “what is the right to life and what are its implications in the present situation of our world?” –the death penalty, torture, modern forms of slavery and servitude; and questions assumed to be related with human rights, such as euthanasia, organ transplantation, abortion etc.– can be also discussed in this course, as well as other rights, on the ground of the main international human rights instruments and in the light of their clarified concepts. Implications of these rights for legislation and practice in the present situation of our world are exemplified.

This is an education of philosophy which everyone has to undergo and which, if carried out consistently, may lead, in different degrees, to the humanization of quite considerable number of individuals, in whatever culture they are, by chance, born.

An Example of the Ontological Approach to a Problem of the Present-day World

In the beginning of this talk, I gave a few examples of events related to the loss of the object. Yet the loss of the object is the epistemological factor of those events. There is also a psychological factor which makes them possible and this factor is the search for meaning.

The search for meaning is one of the main characteristics of human existence, a human characteristic, which just at this moment, in the historical situation we find ourselves, appears to be one of the main factors that have led to the revival of the interest in religions and in metaphysics in the popular sense.

Philosophical education can also help many of those who undergo it, to become able to find meaning, not in the fictions which different sects at present teach, but meaning which corresponds to the value of what they find meaningful. This can be done by becoming aware of what meaning is.

“What is meaning? If we leave aside the meaning of the term ‘meaning’ in linguistics, which denotes what is denoted by a word or a sentence, or any kind of verbal utterance –i.e. the message that someone wishes to transmit to someone else linguistically–; the other meaning of the term ‘meaning’ appears to be closely connected with the concepts of value and goal or end, with which it is often confused. What does then ‘meaning’ mean or denote in the latter sense? How can it be distinguished from the concepts of value and goal or end? And what is its relation to them?

Meaning too, like value and end, is a fact of the human world. Still if we take a look at what people consider to be meaningful, we may distinguish between “things” ascribed meaning by individuals in their own life, and by collectivities, in the life of the given collectivity, for various reasons –”things” which are meaningful for those individuals or those collectivities only; and “things” which are meaningful for the humankind.

In fact, individuals ascribe meaning to “anything”, independently from its value. As an extreme example of such an ascription of meaning, we can think of the old man in Albert Camus’ *The Plague – “le petit vieux”*, who everyday after lunch, “when the whole town was sleeping in the heat, used to appear on the balcony, call the cats by saying “minet, minet” with a mild voice, throw some pieces of paper” (1237) and when the cats on the road, attracted by the white pieces of paper, were coming under his window, the old man splitted on them and smiled when one of his splits attained its aim. But on the other hand we can think, also as examples, of Mother Theresa, of Albert Schweizer and Maximilian Kolbe (Padova).

Collective ascriptions of meaning are also made to “anything”, independently of its value. As examples we can think of all kinds of collective ideals, such as nationalism, racism and patriotism, as well as “the unification of all the workers of the world”, “releasing Jerusalem” or Panturanism.

Besides such ascriptions of meaning to various “things”, made independently from their value, we also see cases of “things” considered meaningful, in which meaning is the subjective correlative of the value of that which is considered meaningful; in other words, we see cases in which the value of something constitutes the objective correlative of meaning (of something’s being considered meaningful).

Here you have probably already noticed the distinctions I am trying to make between the value of something and its meaning: something is meaningful always for some body –a given individual or a collectivity–; while value is an objective characteristic. Yet in the case of value ascriptions (that mode of evaluating, which I mentioned earlier), the meaning ascribed to “something” is also assumed to be its (objective) value. Or *vice versa*: the value ascribed by someone to something –be it an activity, an object etc.– for any reason, makes it also meaningful for him or her. And this is, so far as I can see, one of the reasons of confusing value and meaning. In this case the value of something and the meaning ascribed to it (by someone) do not correspond: its value and the meaning ascribed to it do not amount to, but are assumed to be, the same thing, while in the case in which the meaning ascribed by someone to something corresponds to its (objective) value, value and meaning amount to the same thing.

Let us dwell a little more on the latter case. To do this, let us first focus for a moment, in relation with our problem, on the individual and his actions and then on the human being or on human activities.

Considered from the viewpoint of the individual: bearers of meaning are his main goals in life and what he does for the realization of those goals. Meaning consists of an individual’s thoughts concerning what he wants to see being (permanently) realized in his life and/or in the human world (including in his life in “the other world”). It consists of the connection, which an individual establishes –but which does not in fact exist– or sees –and which does in fact exist– between his actions and his main goals in life. Consequently everything he does for such a realization is meaningful for him. Its being meaningful for him does not necessitate that it is meaningful also for somebody else or for the humankind, though it does not prevent its being so either.

Thus, seen from the viewpoint of the individual, the meaning of one’s goals and actions consists either in one’s assumptions or in one’s awareness of their being valuable. In the first instance meaning is not the subjective correlative of the value of a given goal or action, while in the second is.

Considered from the viewpoint of the humankind, on the other hand, the meaning of a given goal, or of an individual action, consists of the knowledge of its being valuable –i.e. of the knowledge of what the fulfilment of such a goal and the action(s) fulfilling it secure for the individual who carried it out, the situation in which it was carried out, as well as for the human world. A valuable goal or individual action is meaningful for the human being, for the human world as a whole and for all those who are aware of the value of that goal.

It appears that there are given goals and actions of individuals which are meaningful only for those who have those goals or carry out those actions, i.e. which do not correspond to the value of the given goals and actions. Metaphysical beliefs and the actions and practices they cause belong to this kind of the meaningful. Besides them, there are given goals and actions of individuals which are meaningful –for whom ever they might be meaningful– because they correspond (due to their correspondence) to their value.

Both of these kinds of the meaningful –or of the kinds of meaning– play the same role in the determination of individuals' actions, though they differ in ethical value and though their consequences for the human world are different.

Knowledge of human goals, which constitute the conditions of the actualizability of certain human potentialities (i.e. human rights) or of certain possibilities of experience and action (i.e. ethical values), make up the meanings of the historical human being. Each of these conditions is meaningful for those who know them and act on the ground of this knowledge, and by thus acting add the dimension of meanings to the human world.

These meanings of the historical human being are the correlatives of human values, i.e. they correspond to human activities when these are carried out in accordance with their goals as human activities and to certain human possibilities of experience and actions, i.e. they correspond to ethical values.

All other meanings are only ascribed meanings by someone or someones, for different reasons; they do not correspond to any values. Metaphysical meanings are this kind of meanings, ascribed to products of the human mind related to entities, goals etc., beyond the physical world and to actions and practices related to them.

Thus it appears, now, that the only case in which value and meaning are objectively the same thing, is the case of ethical values. Their value (or significance) constitutes their meaning for those who know it, i.e. for those who know the specificity of the personal characteristics, which constitute what I call “ethical personal values”(?), among other personal characteristics, and the specificity of certain personal experiences, which I call “values of ethical relations” among other personal experiences. The awareness of those ethical values constitutes what we call “human dignity” in the active and passive sense.

For human dignity –the dignity of the being human– consists in the ethical achievements of, and their consequences for, the human species. These achievements make the human being –and consequently every human being– worthy of a special treatment: the treatment which human beings have to show to other human beings or the treatment that the demands of human rights express. *Paideia* can lead to such an awareness which is indispensable for the humanization of individuals.

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I have tried to communicate some of my thoughts, concerning how the education of philosophy, i.e. the basic conditions of *paideia*, could contribute to the humanization of human beings. These basic conditions are “to know oneself” and to develop the ability to

know the object, including values, i.e. to develop one's intellectual and ethical capabilities, which also lead to self knowledge –to the Socratic.

This is why I would like to close with the Simorgh story –a story from the East– which successfully exemplifies *paideia*:

Concealed or blatant... one day, all the birds of the world assemble to choose their king. One among them –the Hoopoe whom the wise King Suleman never forsakes, who “reveals wherever the water is”– tells that there is no need to choose a king, for they already have a king: his name is Simorgh, he lives on the Kaf Mountain; and that if they can go to the Kaf Mountain, they can see him.

Many of the birds enounce that the way to Kaf Mountain is difficult, that they cannot endure such a flight, and ask for mercy. But Hoopoe insists, he claims that if they want, they can make such a journey; he encourages them by telling anecdotes. Thereby, thousands of birds set forth.

After a while, birds begin to feel tired, to get suspicious along with the weariness: what if they cannot see their king at the end of the journey... Hoopoe answers all the birds who ask questions, tries to free them of their doubt. Nevertheless, the road is as long as it is difficult: it requires passing valley after valley.

Those who cannot endure weariness perch on a tree; those who cannot endure hunger choose to land. Finally, thirty birds out of thousands see an immense door before them. The sergeant at the door does not want to take them in, tries to convince them that they have to return; but upon the insistence of the Hoopoe he opens the door and takes the birds into a vast room.

Each bird, sitting on one of the thrones in the room, reads his own story in detail on the papers he finds in front of himself. Each becomes bewildered. While this bewilderment of the birds continues, a voice announces that “Simorgh is coming”. And when the thirty birds look up, each sees his own face in the mirror hanging on the wall.

In our world where concealed or blatant interest and conflicts of interest are predominant, are we brave enough to try and bring about such an education?

Notes

1 By a problem I mean a discrepancy between a fact observed and something we know already, an impasse to be objectified and inquires into, an *** in Greek; and I should like to recall the common etymological meaning of the words “*antikeimenon* and *obiectum*”.

2 E.H. Carr's *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923* could be given as an example approaching this kind of historiography.

3 Published in *Socrate pour tous/ Socrates for Everybody*, Pour demain, Vrin, 2003, pp. 9-14.