

Ethical Education as Normative Philosophical Perspective

Table of Contents

0. Foreword: The Great Global Heritage of African Philosophy..... 1

1. Introduction..... 2

2. Philosophical Models of Knowledge Acquisition Based on Capacities/Merit and the Perspective of Innate Ideas..... 3

3. The Great Global Paradigm Shifts Challenging Higher Education: Cognitive and Ethical Values Acquisition and Sharing 11

4. Self-directed Individual Education as Motivating Ground for Common Good and Social Education..... 13

5. Social Education and the Point of View of the Rights: Cultural Rights and Africa..... 14

6. Drones and Meta-ethical Dimensions in Education..... 17

7. Annex: Graph, Library Resources for Further Readings 19

Bibliography 19

0. Foreword: The Great Global Heritage of African Philosophy, the Afro-Asian Influences on the Ancient Greeks Classical Thinking

When we turn to history of philosophy: there are many obvious, but also partly concealed examples of the excellence of African thinking and philosophy¹. St Augustine of Hippo who was born in Thagaste (Algeria); Plotinus who was born in the Deltaic Lycopolis (Egypt); as Hypatia, from Alexandria; not to mention Kwame Anthony Appiah², from a British mother and African father, who grew up in Ghana; and John Henry McDowell, who was born in Boksburg (South Africa). Many French thinkers could be added, such as: Jackie Élie Derrida (better known as Jacques Derrida) who was born in El Biar (Algeria); Alain Badiou from

¹ We have constituted a list of African philosophers that is an open list; we welcome any suggestion. Read on the Afro-Asian influence on Greek antiquity: Martin Bernal (1987): *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization Volume One: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985*; the essay encountered debates and controversies as: Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth As History*, 1997. Also: Martin Bernal, *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to His Critics*, 2001.

² <http://appiah.net/>; see Adler's Ph.D. thesis on McDowell (2014) at the University of Charles in Prague (Czech Republic). <http://www.globethics.net/gel/12143951> .

Rabat (Morocco); and Albert Camus, born in Dréan, a small coastal town, 25 km south of Annaba in Algeria. Although it is subject to debate between historians to determine how much the fabrication of Athens's ideal of education has been shaped by African and Asian influences, the fact that most of the above-mentioned philosophers lived within the geographical limits of the African continent is not subject of controversy. But the object of our discussion is not the European mind, but some basic ethical habits shared among all people on earth, qua ethical discourse based point of view, cross-fertilizing the limits of good education. Part of education as an interactive exercise related to a community of practitioners of a dialogue-based philosophy of morals is to define ethical normative characteristics of the discourse. This can be done in relation to the lifeworld, i.e. to the understanding of the good life. Alternatively, it can be realized in relation to some cultural rights, since a mutual recognition based ethic, that aims to highlight culture as a necessary feature of human dignity, can explain an ultimate goal of higher education as global and universal education. Since the whole set of human rights should be seen as an indivisible system of basic limits to individual and collective freedom, a right-based approach would be the other main perspective, certainly relevant in the context of the African continent, as it is worldwide. Furthermore, a right-based understanding is a much ignored aspect of human rights, although intimately related to basic interests of the higher education system from either the point of view of the national education systems, or private universities and is also related to non-governmental organisations' understanding of the general aim of higher education development, where international organizations could help in the implementation of these cultural right-based good practices.

In the first section, we first develop briefly a normative ethical model of education based on innate ideas proper to most of us qua human being and then present an ethical transformative model, based on the discourse, and compare to an approach founded on cultural rights, in particular cultural rights related to education, and conclude by addressing the relevance for the African context of a contextual reflection on these rights.

1. Introduction

For a teacher/educator, as for an artist, education has in common with a work of art, in that, it takes shape from the moment it comes “to eliminate the elements that divert the attention of the form of and interaction with the painting³” (Bélanger, 2017). The element of interaction is what makes education similar to a game, for, a game must have interaction in order to return power to the player. It is the same in education processes; it is only when power is circulating between all the stakeholders in any social construction that there is a fair balance, or an ethical dimension present at the core of the construction, and the notion of just deserts is possible. That's what makes it a dynamic and transformative model. As the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights reminds us: fair conditions for higher education are met not when most basic conditions and rights to education are solely met, but when an additional condition has been fulfilled--when “higher education [...] [is] *equally accessible to all on the basis of merit*”:

³ Bélanger, Guy et al (2017) : Qualité des pratiques de développement des compétences informationnelles au sein du réseau de l'Université du Québec, Université du Québec, <http://rapport-qualite-pdci.uquebec.ca/Documents/Rapport-FODAR-CI-2017.pdf>



“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally *accessible to all on the basis of merit.*”⁴

“(c) Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, *on the basis of capacity*, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education”⁵.

Merit as capacity is either related to epistemic and cognitive processes, apprenticeship of any given discipline including pedagogy and ethics in education, and can be grounded on innate structures and capacities, as when we say we would empower people to develop their own potentials (or knowledge innateness) in a given domain, or ground apprenticeship on the empirical experience, built by social interactions.

2. Philosophical Models of Knowledge Acquisition Based on Capacities/Merit and the Perspective of Innate Ideas

We should remind ourselves that “the philosophical debate over innate ideas and their role in the acquisition of knowledge has a venerable history” (Fiona Cowie, 2008). This debate is as old as the classical Plato/Aristotle dispute on knowledge innateness, which first considers the idea of a “forgotten knowledge” that could be recovered through recollection. Raising the broader issue of the limits of human knowledge, of the nature of the soul, Plato thought we could have certain properties before birth, through the postulate of an access to divine Ideas. Smuggled into this wide question of the limits of human knowledge, the specific idea of a duality of the body and the soul, where for Plato, innate ideas have been forgotten because of the embodiment of the human being at birth. But if the world is related to us, as Aristotle opposes Plato, then knowledge is not formed by a hypothetic process of isolating what the disembodied soul is capable of, but by reflecting on the external conditions of knowledge formation, such as language, social interactions, etc.⁶ Equal access to all, based on our knowledge capacity, is a true principle, but one should not abuse truth principles, which could become less informative after strong use, and in this case, even become a joke⁷.

⁴ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26(1), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>. See also very recent references to this milestone, e. g. in: Gita Steiner-Khamsi et alii, “Foreword”, *The Right to Education Movements and Policies: Promises and Realities*, NORRAG Special Issue 01, January 2018, p.4.

⁵ Our italic; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 16 December 1966 entry into force 3 January 1976. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx> ; Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002456/245656e.pdf>

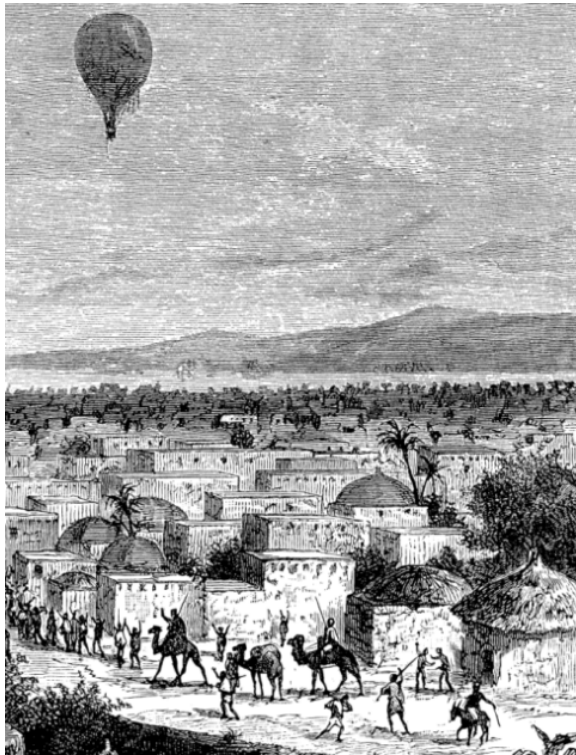
⁶ The modern version of this debate is between John Locke and Leibniz, and the contemporary version is between Piaget and Chomsky. Goad, Candice Shelby (1991): *Locke and Leibniz: The innateness debate*, Doctoral dissertation, Rice University, Houston Texas. <https://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/16442>; Piattelli-Palmarini, Massimo (1984): *Language and Learning: The Debate Between Jean Piaget and Noam Chomsky*, Harvard: University Press. Remnant, Peter and Bennett, Jonathan (Eds.): *Leibniz: New Essays on Human Understanding*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, Cambridge: University Press, 2003.

⁷ To constitute a propriety based on essential features could be seen as trivial as if we would ask to a student: “causam et rationem quare/Opium facit dormire”? The student would reply: “A quoi respondeo,/Quia est in

If merit is defined by some appropriate consequences of *rules* or *actions* by individuals or groups, in such a way that we don't focus on the intrinsic value of merit, but on the contrary, as dependent on some other [ethical] values, then we could found our system of education on a distributive principle, either as a right-based distribution, *sensitive to merit*, or on a eudemonist system, based on the idea of a life-world and the notion of desert adjustment.

The model of the balloon corresponds to this Platonist innate view of how we could help to get the best out of our human knowledge potential. The more the balloon would raise, full of hot air, and liberated from bodily weight, the higher the pilot of knowledge would reach, enhancing the ability to contemplate the full range of his capacities. In this divine/ideal model of progress, technical advancements are symmetric with wide educational political view, although not in the Modern sense, since the many, the people, and the self, are not in point of focus. A majority based rule cannot work for Plato, since most of the people are not trained lifelong to be good leaders, and the ideal republic is a mixed system, where a kingdom is ruled by the one or few wise preferably⁸:

Classical model from external sources of values



1.1 Natural and divine powers driving knowledge formation and ethical values

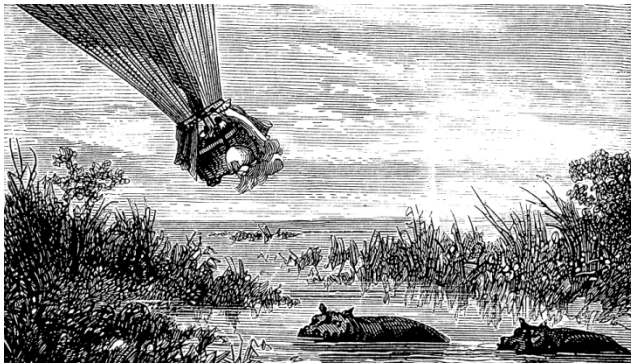
Ethical education and knowledge communication as accessing the highest peaks of technical and ethical virtue progress

(Plato, St. Augustine, Noam Chomsky)

eo/Virtus dormitiva,/Cujus est natura/Sensus assoupire”. This is a joke made by B. Pascal in the 17th century, in his *Thoughts*, where we also find the “the aperitive virtue of a key, the attractive virtue of a hook”. Blaise Pascal (1623–1662). *Thoughts*. The Harvard Classics, No. 55.

⁸ Chrysanthus Nnaemeka Ogboso (2018): Good Governance Requires a Metaphysic of the Good: Platonic-Aristotelian Insights, in: No Sustainable Future without Ethical Values - The Power of Values-Driven Ethics in Higher Education for Responsible Leadership” O. Ike and C. Onyia (Eds.), *Globethics.net Ethics in Education Series*, No. 2.

The practical problem with balloon is that floats in the air, and it is not possible to direct it entirely, but only to move it up and manoeuvre currents not of the pilot's choosing.



The classical model of education based on innate ideas is not meant to totally bring self-direction, but with Leibniz the question, whether there are “ideas and truths born with us”, or “the question of the origin of our ideas” takes a new perspective. Modernity is planning to escape from a simplistic duality between ideas which are learned vs. innate. Leibniz explicitly says: “I cannot accept... that whatever is learned is not innate. The truths about numbers are in us; but still we learn them” (Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*)⁹. In fact when we compare the framework of the innate ideas with the one of determined genetic factors of development, we see more precisely what innateness can bring and what it can't add to the process of learning and self-development. As Stewart-Williams rightly points out, the existence of an influence of innate ideas is not problematic *per se*, the central question is: “If evolutionary psychology reveals that certain aspects of our representation of the world have an innate origin, this raises an important question: Does the innateness of these aspects of mind give any reason to think they are accurate?”¹⁰

From the point of view of natural selection theory, “if innate contributions to our representation of the world were not accurate, they would not have been useful and would not have been selected. The fact that they were selected gives us some assurance that they are accurate depictions of the world¹¹”. Therefore we could wrap this argument up with Goldman as: “Natural selection is a process that produces true beliefs, if it produces beliefs at all”¹².

Innate contribution to a particular faculty can be considered as very plausible: the concept of cause or causal cognition, or the implication that one event necessitates another and the capacity to distinguish between event sequences that are causally connected and those that are not (see Stewart-Williams, Ch. 6). Concerning wider grounding structures of our mind, pertaining to topics in metaphysics, it is also likely that the existence of other minds, causation, space and time, constitute a naturalistic source of metaphysical knowledge¹³.

On this line of argument, Kronfelder explains further that we partly tend to underestimate innate potentials because they seem abstract structures as some fundamental subject-predicate grammatical structure of the discourse, but “traits we usually consider as

⁹ Remnant, Peter and Bennett, Jonathan (Eds.): *Leibniz: New Essays on Human Understanding*, ibid, see book I, for our quotation p. 85.

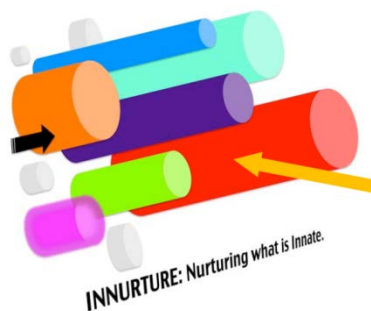
¹⁰ Stewart-Williams, Steve (2013): *Darwin Meets Socrates : Evolutionary Psychology and the Innate Ideas debate*, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand, pp. 2-3, <<https://www.globethics.net/gel/6393082>>

¹¹ Stewart-Williams, *Darwin Meets Socrates*, p. 225, ibid.

¹² Goldman, Alwin I. (1975), “Innate knowledge” in S. P. Stich (Ed.), *Innate Ideas*, New York: University of California Press, p. 117.

¹³ Cf. Stewart-Williams, *Darwin Meets Socrates*, p. 226, ibid.

acquired (as, for instance, the capacity to write a scientific article) are also not caused by acquired factors alone. On the contrary, lots of genes are necessary to make it possible. Furthermore, the situation that something is called a cause even though it is not sufficient for the effect is not specific to genes”. Circumstances that are important triggering factors to develop a capacity complicate the whole picture far more than we suspect, because we tend to believe that the environment is predictable, as conventional human rules and interactions but environment is not so simple to define. In order to answer to the difficulty of mapping from what exactly our environment is composed, a way to deal with this question it to turn it negatively and say that we can express about 75% of innate potentials that we are born with, through environmental stimuli as shown below by Morra and Zenker, who explain the difference between genes that will be expressed and those which will never be:



“The grey genes are inactive and will never be expressed. The coloured genes have been stimulated to different extents and act polygenetically to determine how well developed inborn traits are based on their collective stimulation and developmental reactivity”.

In a nut shell, innate capacities complemented by environmental factors play an important role, related to complex sets of accurate beliefs produced by natural selection, but as we suspected with our metaphor of the balloon, concrete limits to innate faculties have to be defined to. What are the aspects of our cognition that we cannot control, given the plausibility and the accuracy of innate causal relations in our mind? As we see in biology and medicine, the acquired-innate distinction is important, first because determinism should not be considered as fatalism. It is not as simple as Plato’s dualistic reduction of mind and body would suggest, about getting rid of the heavy obstacles of our bodily nature as in *Timaeus*, and affirm that the notion of perception is an innate form of space, is not depending on our sense but on “a spurious reason”. It is about us (not necessarily in terms of a discourse on free will), but by *ethically*, to realize how *ethical dispositions such as hope* play a key role.

Even if we would take some moral categories as being related to innate dispositions, is all ethical life reducible to causal evolutionary functions? What about the notion of ethical leadership itself? As Morra and Zenker show, these notions can be explained through the optic of inborn qualities that are phylogenetically activated, and can even apply to complex ethical and management notions as being an appropriate leader:

“Leadership is a contextual morphological position, action and/or symbol that is adaptive, by definition, to the contextual style and/or needs required by people in that context including but not adaptively limited to the establishment or removal of limitations on a person achieving goals; experiencing creativity and influence, innovation and change; realising trust, learning, team work and intellectual stimulation; understanding vulnerability, authenticity, empathy, commitment and performance; visualising goals, solidarity and motivational factors; training self-awareness, self-regulation and emotional intelligence; discovering and applying innate potential and talents through the actions of inspiring a shared vision enabling others to act; modelling, encouraging and empowering others towards that shared vision;

behaving with any or all attitudes as optimistically, calmly, flexibly, authoritatively, credibly, dynamically, persuasively, energetically, considerately, affectionately or any variations of and serving the needs of those in context¹⁴”.

Ethical leadership in particular or ethical life in general can certainly not be reduced to stimuli or morphological natural quality. When it comes to reflect about good and bad, right and wrong, ethical categories can be seen as part of an innate endowment, based on “the poverty-of-stimulus argument” derived by G.E. Moore (*Principia Ethica*, 1903), argument that the good cannot be defined in terms of any other property, also presented as one of the main aspects of a “naturalistic fallacy¹⁵”.

To give some concrete examples, to the question do we possess moral predilections? It could be answered that innate moral predilections related to issues as incest and the value placed on human versus non-human life may be seen as related to fundamental innate functions (Cf. Stewart-Williams Ch. VII¹⁶).

On the other side, to discover our innate potential or on the contrary genetic factors that tend to make our life more complicated, is not so much about scanning our genes, i. e. the necessary conditions for such and such potential (not to be confounded with causal relations), but about reflecting on sufficient conditions that are far more complex than scanning our genes and which are spread around us, in our environment. Although we tend to get innate factors as the most decisive factors, only for epistemic reasons: because “we believe in genes since we can now do things with them that we cannot do as easily with environments.” We will never be able to screen our personal environment the way we screen DNA. Environmental factors are multiple by definition and reasons based on these factors can be of a large variety.

We need an interactionist consensus based on this distinction (Kronfeldner, 2009)¹⁷. As an illness or physical disability is never only based on innate conditions, and genes would not directly cause an illness, genes may certainly interfere in specific ways, among other factors in an interaction process, as we say a disability is caused by genetic predispositions and environmental factors.

The model of the *good gardener* or *steward*, tries to answer some of the problems related to the strong heteronomy (lack of self-development), and weak anthropocentric nature of the balloon system in the Ancient Greek model of Plato and that is highlighted by the genetic approach of modern science on our capacities and on how environment is crucial as our ethical disposition to interact with both.

Long before modern sciences, the innate capacities centred model of education have been criticised, and it has been proposed to complement it by a moral sentiment based ethics (as the Christian compassion based ethical principle of *agapism*), a more equalitarian essence, and a redirected model of education toward the building of contemplative communities, instead of highlighting particular definitions of *the good*.

¹⁴ Morra and Zenker call this definition a “Grand Unifying Leadership Definition”, which includes their research of innateness. Morra, Erica; Zenker, Lisa (2014): *In Search of Innate Leadership : Discovering, Evaluating and Understanding Innateness*, Linnéuniversitetet, Institutionen för organisation och entreprenörskap (OE), Master Thesis Chapter 1, p. 36, <https://www.globethics.net/gel/15112537>

¹⁵ “The naturalistic fallacy always implies that when we think This is good, what we are thinking is that the thing in question bears a definite relation to some one other thing. But this one thing, by reference to which good is defined may be either what I may call a natural object—something of which the existence is admittedly an object of experience—or else it may be an object which is only inferred to exist in a supersensible real world.” Moore, G.E. (1903): *Principia Ethica*, Chapter II: Naturalistic Ethics, §25.

¹⁶ Cf. Stewart-Williams, Ch. VII, Selfish Genes and Moral Animals: Morality as an Adaptation, 175-176.

¹⁷ Maria E. Kronfeldner (2009): Genetic Determinism and the Innate-Acquired Distinction in Medicine, *Medicine Studies* (2009) 1:167–181, 168.

The essential ethical structure of our human condition, as an innate structure of human capacities, remain in the centre of this model, which should be seen as a logical development, rather than a radical shift from the balloon type of education as an axiological, hierarchy of values based, ascension of the happy few. The return to nature in philosophical garden related education adds the importance of sharing, among all human beings, some essential pleasures of life, of which the Epicurus model of philosophy remains an example¹⁸.



1.2 First crisis with external powers driving education, back to observable data, and building human original communities

Ethical education and knowledge communication as the good gardener/steward

(Epicurus, Jesus Christ)

The key question remains unresolved. What does adjustment to merit mean?

If we distribute education access as directly related to the result of a practice, without focusing so much on the innate qualities – and suppose we don't rely primarily on external sources of authority, but on the learned qualities of those who teach, or on students who enter an education system. What are these qualities of the self, that make education ethical, in a normative sense?

Let's present a third education model, that of *the juggler*, which will try to avoid the main objections directed against the previous ones.



1.3) Modern perspective: self- development, positivism, natural science discoveries, and economic and social science as main guides for technical progress¹⁹; self-oriented education as means for social progress. The problem of technical innovation, without correlative ethical progress

Ethical education and knowledge communication as the juggler and master of a multiplicity of competing cognitive and ethical influences and forces

(Darwin, Marx, Foucault, Harari)

¹⁸ See our forthcoming essay on reconciliation with the self, as reconciliation with the earth and conceptual philosophical poetry: *Truth, Conceptual Poetry and the Philosophy of the Garden*, Geneva: Globethics.net Philosophy Series, No.1, 120pp.

¹⁹ "The scientists, not the philosophers, now address most effectively the great questions of existence, the mind, and the meaning of human condition". Edward O. Wilson, *The Philosophers' Magazine*, Autumn 1999.

When persons are asked whether they believe they intimately have some ethical capacities, they for the most part, may well answer that they certainly think they do have them, at least to some degree, because we easily imagine some ethical or moral qualities present at early stages of human development. On the contrary, when persons are asked whether they would like to try juggling, most answer by raising some doubts about being able to juggle if they are not experienced jugglers, but most of us don't begin to juggle knowing how to juggle. "Everyone who has started to juggle has found it awkward, annoying, and exhausting – beginners drop the balls more often than they catch them²⁰." (Wallace, 2017). Access to education opportunities based on merit could therefore be represented in this third model, that of the juggler, since teaching ethics and education would not be natural and innate, following the point made by early in Greek Antiquity by Aristotle:

"Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name (ethike) is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word ethos (habit). From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature. For instance the stone which by nature moves downwards cannot be habituated to move upwards, not even if one tries to train it by throwing it up ten thousand times; [...] Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit". Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 1.

Furthermore, if we enter Modernity and remove an earth centric understanding of the universe, and put in brackets the classical cosmological vision of world, we find with the Newtonian model of physics, that man and the world are part of the universe, as Kant understood it, in his research on the place of the solar system in the milky way²¹. Kantian categories of space and time, the belief in freewill, the capacity for logical reasoning, the understanding of persisting identity of objects, people and minds can lead to reject the innateness hypothesis (see Stewart-Williams, Ch. 8, *ibid.*). Although categories are presupposition that could be seen as innate structures, the transcendental idealist perspective provided by Kant comes back to a common sense position on knowledge and Copernican turn positioning human subject in the center of the experience of knowledge, not innate functions²².

The education and teaching model of the juggler become more and more dominant, since the perspective of a struggle for power, survival, and recognition, follows the emancipation of man from the classical paradigms of education as presented earlier, which was not mainly focused on self-development, but on the leadership aspect. With Modernity, and the new classical liberal principles of individual benefits related education, various models of education emerge as the democratic liberal and the evolutionist liberal

²⁰ Wallace, Meg, "Juggling and Aristotle, Philosophy and Circus", 2017, blog entry: <http://www.megwallace.org/juggling-and-aristotle/>

²¹ „Dem Herrn Wright von Durham, einen Engländer, war es vorbehalten, einen glücklichen Schritt zu einer Bemerkung zu thun, welche von ihm selber zu keiner gar zu tüchtigen Absicht gebraucht zu seyn scheint, und deren nützliche Anwendung er nicht genugsam beobachtet hat. Er betrachtete die Fixsterne nicht als ein ungeordnetes und ohne Absicht zerstreutes Gewimmel, sondern er fand eine systematische Verfassung im Ganzen, und eine allgemeine Beziehung dieser Gestirne gegen einen Hauptplan der Raume, die sie einnehmen. „ Kant, E. *Allgemeine Naturegeschichte und Theorie des Himmels, oder Versuch von der Verfassung und dem mechanischen Ursprunge des ganzen Weltgebäude nach Newtonischen Grundsätzen abgehandelt*, Leipzig: Petersen, 1755, Fischer 1988, Bd. 2.

²² Op. cit. Stewart-Williams, p. 93.

perspectives. The latter perspective, inspired by the theory of evolution, and reactions to liberal models, such as the Christian democrat; the radical; and the Marxian or socialist socio-historical point of view, where man is the product of a social and historical conditioning, and an industrial (and fast-approaching) post-industrialized mode of economic production²³. If technical and economic production moves to the foreground of the model of society and model of education, this might induce an asymmetry toward human anthropological progress.

Merit based justifications can be viewed as the intent of the teaching process is either a making or doing, as opposed to access to disinterested understanding (knowledge is ethical only if it is definable on the basis of a (manual) mastering, or craftsmanship (*techne*), by contrast to any theoretical principle (*episteme*)). Merit based choices in teaching can rapidly be attributed to our contemporary post-industrial and liberal society, with the classical liberal belief that an activity should be considered good when it brings some benefits, but should not necessarily promote a market-centric paradigm opposed to an anthropocentric view of higher education. Post-industrialized liberal education could include idealized cultural wealth and the understanding of a deep system crisis hidden by the simplification of a university education transformed into an “entry and exit system”²⁴.

Liberal education is not necessarily utilitarian and techno centric, because merit based education can be understood as related to general principle, not only on practical and concrete ends, but entailing the aim of education as the purpose of knowledge for its own sake, through (at least) three varieties of possible normative ethical self-understanding of ethical values in education. As Metz (2009) summarizes it:

“So, one readily finds debate, often in the context of the liberal arts or humanities, about whether public higher education ought to pursue knowledge with little or no expected payoff in terms of health, wealth, liberty or other tangible goods, in order to realize a certain kind of well-being (utilitarianism), develop human excellence qua rational (eudaimonism), or accord with norms that persons would freely and reasonably agree to live by (Kantian contractualism)²⁵.”

Taking the eudemonist model as example, good life and personal development should be considered as important, in a *desert-adjusted intrinsic attitudinal eudemonism* that could give a foundation and aim to our highest value in education (cf. Feldman, F. (2004): *Pleasure and the Good Life*, 149; 192-198). As *right based adjustment to merit*, it would remain in line with education for its own sake, and follow the classical aim of knowledge as *mindfulness*, or practical capacity to focus on present issues (*phronesis*), and seek to realize a true form of authentic human knowledge, a collective cultural heritage across generations *paideia* (παιδεία ; cf. Meyer-Bisch).

Knowledge production and circulation as *sensible to merit* can help us start to address the central issue found, in the UNESCO “World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century” (1998), where the international organization alarmed us, already 20 years ago, on the need for an urgent recognition of an impending values crisis in the Higher Education sector, due to a lack of clarity in the definition of the value of values, for teachers, students, and university administration. But merit related education can only partially help us

²³ For a good presentation of this variety of liberal political view, and the explanation why it is not necessarily an extreme position, that would sanctify natural selection transposed to social phenomenon as the socio-Darwinism, read Harari’s good presentation in *Homo-Deus*.

²⁴ On this line read: Herrera Llamas, Jorge Antonio (2013): “Ética, equidad y meritocracia en la mercantilización de la educación en Colombia”, *Revista Latinoamericana de Bioética*, 13/1, pp. 9-10.

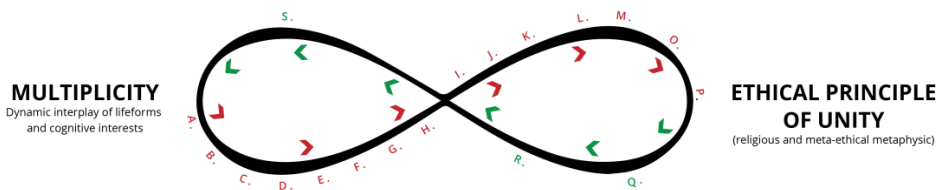
²⁵ Thaddeus Metz (2009): “Higher Education, Knowledge For Its Own Sake, and an African Moral Theory”, *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 28 (6), p. 518; see also pp. 517-536.

clarify some wider societal crisis and contextual specificities related to particular educational cultures and social phenomena. Many great systems of education and morals have been proposed as *great foundational systems*, since the 19th century in particular²⁶, but do we really want to find new solid foundation for any system of belief today?

A solution to this new situation, is to focus on a transformative model of education that can integrate the idea of unexpected paradigm shifts, and a multipolar world in a positive way, without fear of omitting any educational value, whether cognitive or ethical, as in the juggler paradigm above:

1.4 Looking for great synthesis and new utopias, not based on innovation but on [global] knowledge circulation, cultural rights and social economy of cultural goods²⁷

Ethical education and knowledge communication as transformative process; toward a circular Kairos



(Leibniz, v. Hartmann, Bolton, SDGs)

3. The Great Global Paradigm Shifts Challenging Higher Education: Cognitive and Ethical Values Acquisition and Sharing

The context of secularization: The historical conditions that explain the situation of the secularization of values are well documented since about the 19th century (Feuerbach, Stirner, Nietzsche, Marx). At a time known for finalizing the metaphysical shift of the subject, a paradigm shift that started in the Early Modernity of the 17th century with R. Descartes and B. Spinoza, also known as the Copernican turn of 18th, and realized by E. Kant, and the Neo Kantian, A. Schopenhauer. The crisis is first related to a mental shift from traditional education based on faith, and supported by the external authority of the Church, the interpretation of the Bible, and the State power of the Sovereign (T. Hobbes, J. Locke, J. Bentham). From the perspective of the method of knowledge formation, Locke's point of view on innate ideas was to catch the psychological apprehension of truth, while Leibniz's focus is to focus on enduring properties of the soul and to display the ontological structure of truth as realm of innate knowledge as Goad's good study shows it in details (Goad, 1991)²⁸.

The very late Modern understanding of Man, is close to a – sometimes agonistic – but surly critical understanding of the Man and his place in the society regarding the great problems of traditional metaphysics (as freedom of choice, the relation to God and life after death).

²⁶ The ethical system of von Hartmann is a significant example of a possible attempt of great foundation, that are now considered as outdated. Cf. Von Hartmann, E. v. *Phänomenologie des sittlichen Bewusstseins* (1871), Berlin: Dunker Verl. 871pp. In the infinity graph above we show our attempt to formalize Hartman's axiology and complete it, see also note 16.

²⁷ For the complete graph, including text related to the letters, see: the annex, at the end of this paper.

²⁸ Goad, Candice Shelby (1991): *Locke and Leibniz: The innateness debate*, op. cit.

Discussion of knowledge and values become ideally linked to the active inclusion of others, and as part of a rationalized public scheme process of building validity, they are related to a notion of solidarity, or inclusive interactivity, and not to the sole force of brute discharge of unequal powers, or institutionally legitimized inequalities. The role of education changes from an *antiquarian conservation of culture*, where knowledge is deeply rooted to some traditions, possible only for a minority, who would safeguard them, but who would not be ready to face any new contextual historical challenge, as met in a post-industrial and globalized world.

As Bolton (2016, p.14) wraps this change of paradigm by saying that when “cultural stock of knowledge is strong the lifeworld is dominated by political autocracy, tradition, dogma, and ritual, all relatively unchallenged. Over time it is rationalized in the sense that claims of validity increasingly are exposed to criticism and discussion rather than accepted merely on faith²⁹.”

Knowledge circulation and the role of the University: Between hierarchic, heroic innovators and a crucial contextual- but also mundane- daily work of filtering, evaluating, modifying, and channeling knowledge, the role of higher education institutions and knowledge, particularly, knowledge on how teaching should be adapted to new standards, follow ethical, political or pedagogical criteria, which is an important aspect of the freedom of the research and the responsibility of the teacher. Ahlbäck (2018) uses the antinomy between: “microcirculation” “countercirculation” to contrast two very different ways of moving knowledge around the university environment:

“I use the term *microcirculation* for the local, informal, and or unwritten circulations by which practical knowledge about teaching methods [are] shared, and *countercirculation* for how academic staff circulated critical knowledge amongst themselves that questioned the legitimacy and applicability of formalized knowledge about university pedagogy³⁰” [our italic].

In education, communication is a typical interaction, although it is not the sole inclusive path of interaction, as empathy, and unconscious pro-attitudes are other possible ways of interacting. Communication may be considered analogous to knowledge sharing, but communication without a desire to change the society and share with others, could be seen as a mere semiotic fact, as lacking an ethical value: for the one who has knowledge dominates the one who lacks it.

For this reason, the principle of communication should be regarded as a basic principle out of which constructive and culturally engaging discourse can flourish. In the following lines, I would like to sketch several normative dimensions that are possible through the interaction of communication, considered not as simple fact or empirical phenomenon, but as a normatively loaded exercise of a mutual power sharing process, between two ideal protagonists of a teaching praxis.

So, if we would want to simply introduce how applied ethics in education largely relies on assumptions we make from the normative ethical side, this means education is built on our ethical values, as part of our ethical life. Therefore, we need to present some of the

²⁹ Bolton, R. (2016): “A comparison of Habermas-inspired approach and economists' approaches to social capital”, North American Regional Science Conference, Conference paper, p. 14.

³⁰ Anders Ahlbäck (2018): “Unwelcome knowledge: Resistance to pedagogical knowledge in a university setting, c.1965–2005” in: *Circulation of Knowledge: Explorations in the History of Knowledge*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press, pp. 126-7; see also pp. 125-143.

key dimensions of these normative assumptions, related to the ethics of discourse and communication, so that good education is not presented in a descriptive normative way, but in a way relevant to any teacher's experience in action, or concern for the student experience of learning, where communication eliminates the elements that divert attention from what the teacher has to transmit.

Individual, social and meta-ethical presumptions are also important to note, while focusing on normative ethics as the ethics of discourse. We all want to know what sort of reality a value is attached to, in order to live the values we have, without fear of being indoctrinated or worse: that our values are fake values and we have been cheated.

I would like to exemplify all these assumptions and meta-ethical suppositions, by current possible issues in education in the African context.

Finally, I would like to discuss the relevance for non-philosophers of this axiology (an axiology is a hierarchy of values) and why understanding the difference between normative, meta-ethical and applied ethical dimensions in teaching are vital, in order to present the form of the "works of art" of education in an interactive and honest way- to revisit the metaphor of the artist and the painting. But the painting is not only our work of art. As teachers and students, it is also a cultural heritage that we want to transmit to future generations, including the freedom to adjust cultural rights along some basic norms of education.

If we are concerned about the reality of a power relation between the teacher and the student, then we need to realize how serious ethical values are for us compared to the important didactic aim of teaching technical competencies. This is the reason why eudemonistic understanding of the aim of education should be complemented by a right based approach that is aware of the challenging agenda of being founded on democratic processes, cultural heritages, freedom of research, and the conflict between rights, their negation, and the importance of recognizing the dignity of the human person. At this point, we would have achieved the aim of clarifying the extent of good and ethical education, as originating in the lifeworld of our individual and social ethical life, which would entail transforming, or changing, a dialectic category into a right based realization of life and a civil society phenomenon.

4. Self-directed Individual Education as Motivating Ground for Common Good and Social Education

- *Teachers and student as learners:* Borrowed from the classical Greek normative ethics: the concept of *aletheia* is central, it means unconcealedness, and can be defined as being in the truth and should be understood as disclosure, exposing what is hidden, all of which is subconsciously in conflict, and repressed in our nature. It is viewed as coherence occurring between our thoughts and words, and coherence between words and deeds (Probuscka, 2016). In the framework of education there are many ways to understand this concept and apply it. One way is to say that a student is essentially a learner. Once truth has become part of the student's life, the student has de facto become a learner, and we know that teachers are the main learners in a higher education institution.

We can introduce the understanding of unconcealedness from the point of view of communication ethics in the empirical field of documentation and library resources, with the student being an agent.

- *Teachers and student as agents:* Communication ethics, as unconcealedness, is creating conditions for active learning processes, by opposition of passive learning conditions, particularly in the construction of knowledge, through library resources. The teacher should draw attention to the importance of the student adopting an intellectual approach

of his own, and this should in the first instance, include proper library resources monitoring, involving teacher, student and the [university] librarian. Indeed “... for a concept to be well assimilated by the student, there must have been an intellectual approach. To assert a fact to him or even to make him notice [as in a lecture] will not have the same impact in the long term, than if a student has participated at the construction of his knowledge” (Papin, 2010), by interactive communication processes and the introduction to library resources³¹. How frustrating it can be when access to information is not available, when a library door is being closed, after effort is made to get to the entrance. Teachers have the responsibility to monitor library resources information as prerequisite to any discipline teaching.

- *Teachers and student as virtuous agents*: One trivial objection against communication ethics as an attempt at being unconcealed is to say that many aspects of the learning process are de facto, either hidden, or beyond voluntary intentional capacities turned in the direction of an explicit language flow between the learning parties. Consider the instance of a university library entrance being hidden or closed. Strong ethical commitment to appropriate axiology of values certainly favours good communication and active learning processes, but it supposes some particular learning virtues.

When it comes to shaping the right personality and character, a cardinal learning virtue is the virtue of patience: ‘makrothumia’, a combination of two words makro + thymia, which means long + anger. “It implies that there is a sufficient long pause, an amber sign of ‘wait’ before deciding to express one’s anger. It could be described as “long-tempered” (...) as against a more familiar and accepted use of the term: “short-tempered”. This means that primarily, there is legitimacy for the emotion of anger that rises in one’s body, mind and soul, to be expressed in public. Patience does not mean swallowing one’s pain, pathos and humiliation forever.” (Anderson-Rajkumar, 2016). A philosophy of the truth as unconcealedness, is therefore, a philosophy of the mask of patience as well. If education is defined as a kind of political philosophy, then having the right friends and building the right communities is as important as having the right means (resources, books, discovery tools). Schools and universities need to be organised as communities (Sas, 2010). The aim of education is to shape character and moral civic virtues, before forming competencies of any type. To develop what we mean by civic virtue we first need to better understand social education.

5. Social Education and the Point of View of the Rights: Cultural Rights and Africa

Contemporary fears of technological and environmental threats have put the concept of responsibility into a dominant place. The parent-child relation can be viewed as the central paradigm of responsibility, as it relates to who we are as human beings, with essential characteristics and who we ought to be, as an ethical responsible person. (ref. Hans Jonas; Neequaye, 2013). Responsibility can be understood as religion-related and/or philosophical ethical. In the African context, a religious based understanding of responsibility has some advantages over secular ones related to the place of Africa in the global Church history and the resilience of African faith to 20th century Western secularism³².

³¹ Papin, D. (2010): Favoriser la construction des connaissances dans les formations documentaires, <https://tribuneci.wordpress.com/2010/09/20/favoriser-la-construction-des-connaissances-dans-les-formations-documentaires/>

³² See e. g.: “Earth integrity” as community and Church commitment, toward future generations; a WCC global ecumenical programme.

In the following paragraph we shall present how a philosophical faith - not religious institutions only- and philosophical dialogue based motive of social ethics can help build some epistemic and ethical normative paths toward African community ethics, and human development; and how this initiates some key elements of the concept of collective cultural rights, in an unexpected way.

From a collective self-oriented point of view, human rights education needs to move in the direction of cultural rights understanding in order to develop a convincing framework for global citizenship education. Only if ethical philosophy helps address this gap between different understandings of human rights, that ethical philosophy, in the education sector, would not only be aimed at professional philosophers, but at the grasping of the diversity of cultural facts, and outlining (as has always been its task) an anthropology of global knowledge and global ethical values in context.

Social ethics could be defined, not as religious *aliquid* and a strict Church community matter, but as a philosophical praxis (with Wittgenstein) and, as we introduced above a transformative model in the critical theory perspective with J. Habermas and H. Arendt. The ethics of communication is grounded in a philosophical faith through questioning, as means to uncover the most urgent educational and anthropological progress agendas, - or what we name simply: “social dimension” in education. Authority may prefer that intimate truth be considered latest truth, as opposed to truth related to dialogue, debates and confrontation. The ethical intention, with regards to prospective or retrospective dimensions of human choice is important in new domains of information and communication (Agostinelli, 2005)³³.

In a possibly surprising way for non-Africans, we might discover the African conception of the personhood as presenting the advantage of being already rooted in a dialogical way, because of the African conception of the person. Personhood “is something that is attained in direct proportion to one's moral worth and one's relations with her surrounding community” as a key asset (Matolino, 2008). Mbiti (1970, 140) argues that within the African system, this network of relationships binds everyone together, such that African people conceive their relations as familial. Human beings derive his/her identity from his/her “shared fate with her other fellow human beings”. The family in the African scheme is not limited to the immediate relations of what he describes as a household, but distant relatives are part, as is anybody who “belongs to the same kinship system”. If society is understood by analogy to family, then citizenship might be related to natural virtues instead of pure artificial conventions (as when I might feel just to favour my family, my ethnic identity, my tribe, etc.). Although, early modern philosophers such as Hume, and later Hegel, warn us against the analogy of natural based communities and social conventions, there might be a dialectical relation between the levels of commitment, the proto-conventional level of the family, and the conventional level of social norms and active citizenship.

Furthermore, metaphysical and religious ethical dimensions of life should help us to understand ourselves as part of the big family of the human species (*homo sapiens*) and prevent us from being reduced to a strictly individual understanding of our role on earth, in social life, and in regard to our human rights and duties. If African Ubuntu “is both a state of being and of becoming, both of which are anchored in reciprocity of care, thus as a process of self-realization through others”, then Ubuntu should be considered as a great development in understanding human rights as it not only covers self-directed individual rights, but also collective or interdependent rights. Particularly, for comprehension of the importance of cultural rights, the African community based system of values should be considered as

³³ Agostinelli, Serge (2005) : « Introduction » in : *L'éthique des situations de communication numérique*, Paris : L'Harmattan, pp. 7-9.

showing the path to understand cultural rights, and recognize their logic of interdependency, (cf. the *Fribourg Declaration of Cultural Rights*, Chuva, 2014; Meyer-Bisch, 2016³⁴).

5.1 Extract of the main definitions of cultural rights regarding education:

In the Art. 2, under “definitions”, the *Declaration of Cultural Rights* proposes a constituting understanding of cultural rights, where culture is not seen as an exterior product of language behavior without value oriented consequences on the development of the whole human being. It says that:

- a. “The term “*culture*” covers those values, beliefs, convictions, languages, knowledge and the arts, traditions, institutions and ways of life through which a person or a group expresses their humanity and the meaning they give to their existence and to their development;
- b. The expression “cultural identity” is understood as the sum of all cultural references through which a person, alone or in community with others, defines or constitutes oneself, communicates and wishes to be recognized in one's dignity;
- c. “Cultural community” denotes a group of persons who share references that constitute a common cultural identity that they intend to preserve and develop.”

In relation to higher education, cultural rights concern, in reference to cultural communities the right of:

“Everyone [to be] free to choose to identify or not to identify with one or several cultural communities, regardless of frontiers, and to modify such a choice” (Art. 4a);

From the point of view of African understanding of the person, this later possibility to choose freely one's reference to a particular community might need further reflections, that we leave for any possible additional enquiry or survey.

Cultural rights are, delimitating the right to access knowledge in relation to:

“The freedom to develop and share knowledge and cultural expressions, to conduct research and to participate in different forms of creation as well as to benefit from these” (Art. 5b) (see on ethics in research: Toulouse, 1998)³⁵

The following two articles explain why the right to education as right throughout one's lifespan, include not only fundamental educational development capacities, but as in Greek paidea, special care is taken for the cultural heritage of individuals and groups, across multiple generations, in respect of others' similar rights and in acceptance of cultural diversity. Therefore, this right is not based on the ideal of a conflict of cultures, as in the 19th century idea of Kulturkampf. But is it possible to have only a non-competitive understanding of cultures, without any agonistic layers?

Art. 6 (*education and training*)

³⁴ Chuva, L.T. (2014): "Ubuntu Ethics", in: African Indigenous Ethics in Global Bioethics Interpreting Ubuntu, New York: Springer Verl., p. 33, Ch. 2. Fribourg Declaration of Cultural Rights, <http://www.unifr.ch/iiedh/assets/files/Declarations/declaration-eng4.pdf> . Patrice Meyer-Bisch, Stefania Gandolfi, Greta Balliu (éds.) : Souveraineté et coopérations: Guide pour fonder toute gouvernance démocratique sur l'interdépendance des droits de l'homme (2016), Geneva : Globethics.net. http://www.globethics.net/documents/4289936/19073413/GE_souverainete_cooperations_web_final.pdf

³⁵ See also examples since twenty years to formulate the deontology of the researcher as call to federate education and research around ethical values as: Gérard Toulouse (1998): *Regards sur l'éthique des sciences*, Hachette Littératures, p.24.

“Within the general framework of the right to education, everyone has the right throughout one's lifespan, alone or in community with others, to education and training that, in response to *fundamental educational needs*, contribute to the free and full development of one's cultural identity while respecting the rights of others and cultural diversity. This right includes in particular:

- a. *Human rights education and knowledge;*
- b. *The freedom to teach and to receive teaching of and in one's language and in other languages, as well as knowledge related to one's own culture and other cultures;*
- c. The freedom of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions while respecting the freedom of thought, conscience and religion of the child on the basis of her/his capacities;
- d. *The freedom to establish, to direct and to have access to educational institutions other than those run by the public authorities, on the condition that the internationally-recognized norms and principles in the area of education are respected and that these institutions comply with the minimum rules prescribed by the State.*

Art. 7 (*communication and information*)

Within the general framework of the rights to freedom of expression, including artistic freedom, as well as *freedom of opinion and information*, and with respect for cultural diversity, everyone, alone or in community with others, has *the right to free and pluralistic information that contributes to the full development of one's cultural identity*. This right, which may be exercised *regardless of frontiers*, comprises in particular:

- a. *The freedom to seek, receive and impart information;*
- b. *The right to participate in pluralist information, in the language(s) of one's choice, to contribute to its production or its dissemination by way of all information and communication technologies;*
- c. *The right to respond to erroneous information concerning cultures, with full respect of the rights expressed in this Declaration.”* (ibid.; our italic)

If cultural rights are ethical, values-based entities, then the question of the meta-ethical grounding of these values should be clarified in order to address new forms of cultural goods and developments.

6. Drones and Meta-ethical Dimensions in Education

6.1 *Freedom of Research and the Promises of New Technologies as Biotechnological Enhancements*

Let's just imagine, as a thought experiment, that knowledge building and communication could follow the path of the latest new drone, released on the 5th March 2018 by Skydio (Skydio, R1). The drone can fly totally freely without any control by a skilled pilot, can follow you in motion, as well as record while dodging obstacles, using a number of sensors and sophisticated filming procedures. The very purpose of this machine exemplifies the expression, you can run but you can't hide; it is a perfect tool for surveillance, and many persons cope very well with not at all controlling the flying companion of ski escapades, bike trips or other Robinson Crusoe types of adventures. What about the robots that will soon write our books and pass university examinations in our absence, without monitoring or assistance as with Skydio?

The discrepancy between human and technological progress remind us on the need to define more carefully, the structure of our values related to education, knowledge acquisition

and cultural heritage development, so that robots cannot tell our stories without our permission.

Following the previous example, new horizons of human-divinity or a world-divinity have been adapted on the model of Ancient classical myths and great narratives of a *demiurge*, presented by Plato in *Timaeus*, who created the world. We can look to the thought-provoking book *Homo Deus* (Harari, 2015), where the author envisions the experience of a world where the human being would not be relevant, because our fate is determined either by our internal biochemical system, or by adjusting, and adapting to new expectations on subjective fictional capacity level. Are we simply conditioned by our bio-physiological nature?

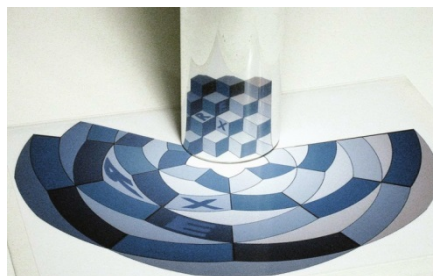
6.2 Meta-ethics – True Believes Lie in the Eye of Subject

Contrary to this non eliminative materialistic reductionism, we might think that enhancement might just be the new face of the temptation of narcissism, and inauthenticity, and that technologies expose human beings to the vulnerabilities of the human condition. It introduces *the meta-ethical/metaphysical relevance of the «image of man»* of central importance to understanding criticism against attempts to ameliorate the human being by hiding some constituting rights and capacities (Becchi & Tibaldeo, 2016).

Edmund Husserl's phenomenological reduction justifies an important perspective introduced by Socrates, Plato, and Augustine, then modernized by Descartes and Husserl, to what we could call a "sui generis form of internalism". Internalism states that the conditions of [ethical] knowledge lie in strong subjectivist elements, warrant of truth in relation to some grounding mental acts, in the intentionality of the perceiver of the values³⁶.

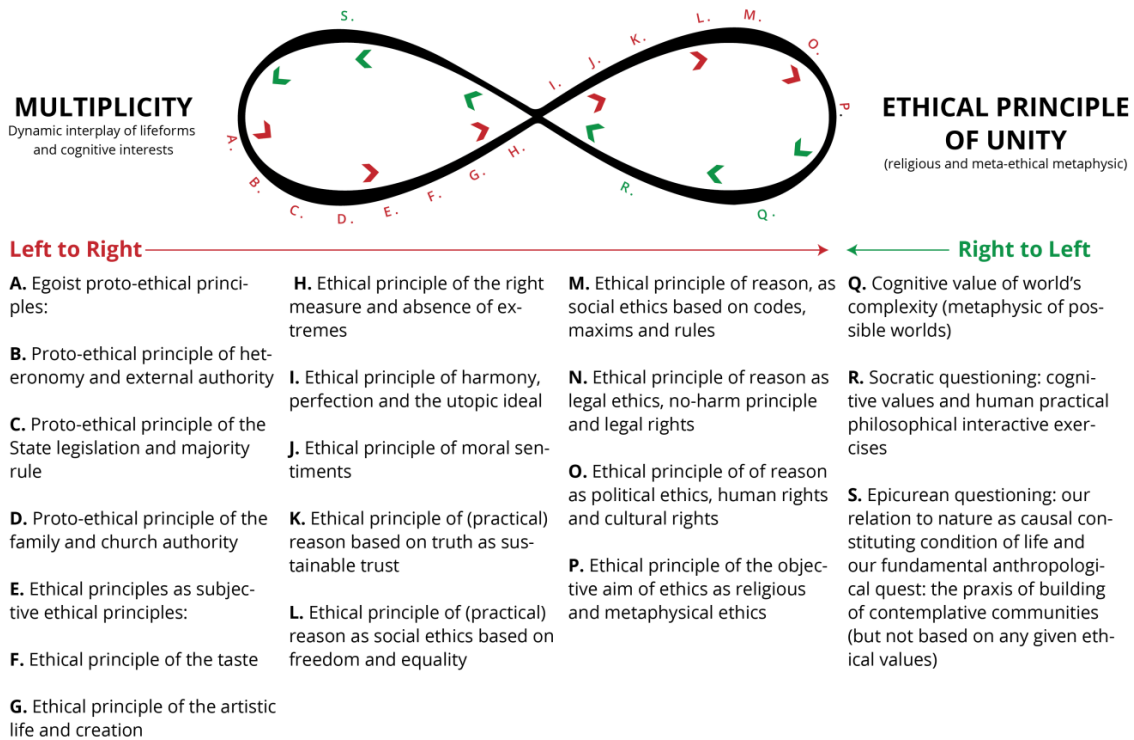
Ethical education as essential rights should be viewed as an example of some *true ethical kind of values* based in *dignity, responsibility, respect* and *freedom*. Teaching and research would truly be ethical under some internal conditions of experience that any person could experience, given some ideal possible values, and a transparent and explicit map showing where the transcendental conditions for accessing these ideal values are to be found. Quickly changing perspectives on any given thing is possible, but meta-ethics teaches us that there is a designated time for good teaching and good research, that of *ideal values* based research and education.

Without an ethical compass or map, the educator would be moving in a circle, facing the worldly, less perfect manifestations of his object of knowledge. Values such as dignity, responsibility, respect and freedom, would remain as shadows if we turn our back to the best angle of experience possible that could show all things as given in a tantalizing vision, provided we would have the right angle of perception, that which alters the dissonant parts of a whole, as in the below *anamorphosis*, transforming the imperfect form into a well proportionate ideal picture.



³⁶ St. Augustin has wrapped in a few words the epistemic principle: « Noli foras ire, in te redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas ». (St. Augustine De Vera Religione, XXXIX. 72) [“Do not go outwards, but travel into yourself, for truth lives in the interior of the human being”].

7. Annex



Library resources for further readings

Ethics in Education

<http://www.globethics.net/web/ethics-in-higher-education>

Philosophical Ethics

<http://www.globethics.net/web/philosophical-ethics>



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