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PHILOSOPHICAL IDEALISM AND THE SCHOOLS OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY. THE NEED FOR INTEGRAL EDUCATION FROM AN OPEN MINDSET

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Abstract

In this article, Dr Albert Ferrer delves into the different schools of educational philosophy as a reflection of different philosophical traditions in general terms. Behind every school there is a particular vision or world view. Dr Ferrer makes it clear that the proposals of integral education –as he advocates himself- are supported by Philosophical Idealism. From an open and dialogical mindset Dr Ferrer emphasizes the need for a fruitful dialogue between the various trends of educational philosophy, since they constitute complementary approaches each bringing its own valuable inputs into the pedagogic process. The author closes this presentation by putting forward the crucial issue of the child-citizen: protection versus liberation.

Keywords: Educational philosophy
Philosophical Idealism/ Existentialism/
Naturalism Realism/ Pragmatism
Integral/ holistic education
Education in human values/ Value education

Introduction

The role of philosophy of education and the scope for Philosophical Idealism.

Continental Europe was well-known for being somewhat the bastion of philosophy, but things have changed in the last years; philosophy has certainly undergone a process of decay, and some scholars dare to say that it has been intentionally undermined by the states, the European Union and the neoliberal reign. It is evident that philosophy has lost its traditional academic strength in various countries, and in many faculties of education philosophy of education has been discarded to the detriment of technological and practical subjects. That is why this paper reclaims the fundamental role of philosophy of education in a scholarly scenario that seems to be more hostile than ever; it also focuses on the millenary tradition of Philosophical Idealism amongst the various schools of educational philosophy.

What is the role of philosophy in an increasingly technocratic civilization that seems to overlook it more and more? Let us take the main tools of progressive or integral education as advocated by R. Steiner or M. Montessori. Pedagogic techniques such as self-learning, experiential learning or child-centred education will be void, distorted and ultimately useless if the teachers who implement them do not understand in depth the underlying educational principles. Montessori stressed something that Montessori Schools have not always followed: the techniques are not so important, the state of mind, the intention if the key. Without the adequate mindset,

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the mere technique will be fallacious and the illusive teacher will unconsciously repeat the old mainstream patterns with new cheerful colours only. The issue of the intention or the mindset puts forward the capital role of philosophy. Quantum physicists have understood and defended the foundational nature of consciousness, and this unveils the deepest role of philosophy in general and in education too. Neuroscience cannot inform us about the goals of education and its uttermost purpose and meaning. These are philosophical issues, which means that philosophy of education constitutes the very foundation of the educational process.

The Indian scholar, S.S. Ravi, stresses the need and importance of philosophy of education: Philosophy provides answers to ultimate questions, also for education¹.
Philosophy defines the goals and aims of education.
Philosophy lays down the values to be imparted in education.
Philosophy determines the direction of education.
Philosophy informs the pedagogic methods –which Montessori emphasized-.
Philosophy is the very basis of teachers’ training.
Education is the practical side of philosophy.
Great philosophers have been great educationists.
Education is the means for propagation of philosophy.

Another Indian scholar, R.N. Sharma, underlines the direct and profound connection between education and philosophy, which gives to philosophy of education a basal role in the educational process that only a technocratic civilization like ours could overlook. According to Sharma, there is no education without values, since any educational system will impart some values, while axiology is precisely one of the major fields of philosophical thinking. Similarly, there is no education without knowledge, since education is nothing else than imparting knowledge, while epistemology constitutes another core of philosophical inquiry².

After clarifying the role and importance of educational philosophy by itself, we may ask about the significance of Philosophical Idealism amongst the various schools of philosophy of education. The present civilization, increasingly technocratic, has certainly not favoured Philosophical Idealism, but rather realism and pragmatism. We are probably living in the historical period that has more sharply withdrawn from this millenary school of philosophical thinking. This paper tries to recall the message and importance of this philosophical vision precisely because it has been overlooked more than ever, knowing that there is a lot of misunderstanding and even prejudice today in relation to this ancient and venerable school of philosophy present in all civilizations, not only in Europe and the Western world.

1. Ravi SS, 2011, p 102-103.

2. Sharma R.N., 2011, p 30.

The renowned philosopher of science, E. Laszlo, has been an ardent defender of the new holistic paradigm that blends new science and Philosophical Idealism. The title of one of his most acclaimed books is meaningful enough: "Science and the Reenchantment of the Cosmos. The Rise of the Integral Vision of Reality". After a roundtable of leading thinkers he concludes:

"Despite the outdated world view most people associate with modern science, and notwithstanding the lingering skepticism of some scientists, science at its cutting edge rejects the idea of a disenchanted universe heading ineluctably toward a desolate destiny. The new cosmology discovers a world where the universe does not end in ruin, and the new physics, the new biology and the new consciousness research recognize that we are part of an instantly and enduringly interconnected integral reality."³

In particular, this paper tries to elucidate the profound connection between Philosophical Idealism and integral education. If we understand the educational process in holistic terms –not only in merely cognitive or intellectual parameters- we will discover that Philosophical Idealism provides the soundest basis and framework for this integral approach to education. Not by chance, both Steiner and Montessori were directly connected with Philosophical Idealism; both of them were members of the Theosophical Society, which makes the connection obvious and explicit.

Philosophical Idealism among the major schools of educational philosophy⁴.

By integrating the different dimensions of humanity and education, the pedagogic process should be truly integral or holistic, with a genuine spiritual foundation unfolding human values from within. In this horizon, the philosophical affiliation of integral education will be the traditions of Philosophical Idealism, both in the East and the West, coming back in Europe to Orphism, Pythagoreanism, Socrates and Plato, and in India to Vedas, Upanishads and Vedanta. Philosophical Idealism is the oldest school or tradition of educational philosophy in the world.

After the different schools of Neo-Platonism from Ancient Greece to Renaissance, European Idealism would blossom through the great Romantic movement, particularly keen on education, with eminent educationists such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel –who can also be seen as representatives of Naturalism-, and great intellectuals such as Goethe, Schiller, Schelling, Hoelderlin, Novalis, Jean-Paul, etc, close to German Idealism –Fichte and Hegel-. In the XXth century, R. Steiner, founder of Waldorf Schools, would inherit Goethe's legacy and Western Idealism or mysticism. We could still add some other names such as Comenius, J.F. Herbart, R.R. Rusk, T.P. Nunn, A.N. Whitehead, T.H. Huxley, etc.

In modern India, the Vedic heritage would be pursued by the Hindu Renaissance -Neo-Vedanta-, with spiritual masters such as Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Ramana

3. Laszlo E., 2006, p 196.

4. Cf the classic Suchodolski B., 1960.

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Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Swami Yogananda, until the contemporary teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. We should also mention the great spiritual poet from Bengal, R. Tagore, and the eminent philosopher, S. Radhakrishnan.

In this philosophical vision, ideas would have a real existence in higher planes, and consciousness would be seen as the fundamental reality. Ultimately, the totality of the universe would be Spirit or Consciousness in essence, a major statement of Philosophical Idealism upon which quantum physics has totally agreed. Still, modern Idealism, in Hegel for instance, acknowledges that ideas do not exist outside time and space, which implies society and history⁵.

At the same time, the philosophical tradition of Kashmir Shaivism would remind that consciousness is inseparable from energy or vibration -cit/ citi-, establishing an intimate connection between the Vedantic outlook, more focused on consciousness, and the Tantric view, more centred on energy. The primordial Consciousness vibrates; from this Source or Oneness emanates the whole process of Creation or Manifestation with some goal or purpose –Idealism is essentially teleological-. It refutes mechanistic determinism, whereas it is very close in spirit to quantum physics and new science in a multidimensional world view with interdependence and some sort of supremacy of consciousness.

In any case, all forms of Idealism would understand reality as essentially spiritual. Hence, the knowledge of the spiritual reality would be the highest and worthiest. This superior kind of knowledge could not be grasped by the intellectual mind or the senses, but only through the mystical insight, that is, the exploration within oneself or self-inquiry, through which we become aware of the Source of everything in us and everywhere, and the fundamental unity underlying the apparent diversity of things.

The Indian scholars, B.N. Dash and R. Ghanta, remind us that the European/ Western concept of philosophy has usually remained at the merely intellectual or cognitive level, whereas in the Indian world view the idea of “darshana” –equivalent to philosophy- implies another dimension beyond the intellectual which is internal and experiential in terms of vision and realization⁶. In parallel terms, the European/ Indian philosopher and scholar, R. Panikkar, always spoke of “the philosophical experience of India”. In Dash and Ghanta’s words:

“Indian philosophy is primarily dominated by metaphysical interests⁷.”

However, many Western or modern scholars would misunderstand the statement made by the Indian professors. The metaphysical interests of Vedas or Upanishads do not constitute a matter of intellectual scholarship but the expression of an inner experience and realization, as Panikkar also stressed.

5. Cf Chambliss J.J., 2013, p 370.

Cf also O’Rorty A., ed, 1998, and Tubbs N., 2011.

6. Dash B.N., Ghanta R., 2007, p 3.

7. Dash B.N., Ghanta R., 2007, p 9.

From the Idealistic perspective, education becomes then a process of self-discovery in depth, leading towards the highest moral and deepest spiritual awareness, developing character and positive values, and unfolding the universal human values that constitute the inherent patrimony of human and divine Consciousness. Self-realization would be the ultimate goal of education; only this can bring true freedom. Idealism looks at the child as a Self, as a spiritual being to be perfected through a process of transformation. This means that the teacher and the pupil are fundamentally equal, since both are spiritual beings in the process of self-realization. In the words of another Indian scholar, Prof. S.S. Ravi:

“Since Idealism believes human personality to be the most important, it wants education to aim at the development of human personality and the attainment of self-realization⁸.”

Dash and Ghanta make it clear that Indian terms for education such as “shiksha” or “vidya” –amongst others- go beyond the Western/ modern notion of merely intellectual training, and coherent with the metaphysical and experiential dimension of Indian philosophy and Philosophical Idealism, imply the idea of a deeper realization which is an inner experience and has an ontological texture⁹.

In fact, the etymological root of the term “education” is purely Idealistic. “Education” derives from the Latin “educare” which stems from “educere”, which means to unfold from within, from an inner deeper dimension. This Latin origin of the concept of education closely corresponds to another Indian/ Sanskrit term for education, probably the most beautiful: “bala vikas” which literally means the blossoming of the boy/ child –from within-.

R. Ghanta and T. Mrunalini still add that this “bala vikas” implies no less than the liberation of the soul, something that would certainly find echo in Plato’s philosophy¹⁰.

B.N. Dash recalls in another work the connection between education and initiation in the Indian tradition and in Philosophical Idealism in general, something that modern Europe obviously devastated and modern schooling seems to hold in abhorrence, notwithstanding Lord Baden-Powell tried to rebuild it through the creation of boy-scouts –one of the major educational ventures of the XXth century, often neglected by scholarship¹¹.

From the point of view of the curriculum, Idealism attaches a higher importance to the humanities, understood in terms of knowledge of the human condition and process, and therefore, in terms of self-knowledge, since each one of us belongs to this human condition and participates in this human process, which basically implies transformation and spiritual awakening.

8. Ravi S.S., 2011, p 115.

9. Cf Dash B.N., Ghanta R., 2007, p 8-15.

10. Cf Ghanta R., Mrunalini T., 2008, p 213.

Cf also Frank, Lodge, 2000, or before it, the well-known classic, Nettleship R.L., 1935.

11. Cf Dash B.N., 2005, p 15.

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However, Idealism does not discard the scientific study and mathematics, and in general terms, the use of reason. In fact, the oldest Idealist schools of Europe, such as Pythagoreanism and Platonism, incorporated the study of mathematics at the highest level, and another Idealist like Aristotle, pupil of Plato and deeply spiritual, integrated the scientific study into the spiritual insight. Idealism favours the interdisciplinary approach towards the development of an integral personality in a vision of interdependence between Man and Cosmos.

Idealism also favours the study of the cultural and spiritual heritage of mankind, especially from an intercultural perspective, underlying the fundamental values that are common to all philosophical and spiritual traditions.

The Indian scholar, R.Sh. Pandey, stresses the key to the Idealistic curriculum, which is not so much about one subject or another, but rather about the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge in connection with the value-based dimension of human life.

“Thus, we see that the Idealist does not advocate the teaching of any one subject. But he emphasizes that there must be realization of truth, goodness and beauty in all the subjects¹².”

With regard to the pedagogic methods of teaching, Idealism advocates the use of value-based and ideal-centred methods. While teaching any subject, the emphasis should be placed upon the dignity of humanity, the worth of human life, the highest goals of living, and the ideals of brotherhood and unity of mankind, together with the spirit of sharing and cooperation in a culture of peace. Idealism has also stressed the crucial importance of the most vital amongst human values, love.

Idealism also believes in the self-education of the child; here, self-inquiry and inner work or meditation become totally necessary. Since the main goal of education would be self-realization, Idealism naturally defends a child-centred kind of pedagogy.

When facing the role of the teacher, Idealism prefers the Socratic method, that is, the dialogue between teacher and pupil, avoiding the passive role of the youth and bringing him towards understanding and realizing by himself.¹³ Idealism would also encourage the discussion method in the class-room in the same spirit. In conclusion, Idealism would always favour a participatory approach to pedagogy.

12. Pandey R.Sh., 1993, p 75.

13. Regarding the role of dialogue in education for Philosophical Idealism and Plato in particular, Cf Chambliss J.J., 2013, p 371.

In this philosophical school, the teacher becomes essentially a loving and caring guide, who accompanies and suggests but never imposes through pure love for the pupil, showing the path that the youth will have to tread by himself.¹⁴ Idealism grants the highest place to the educator; although it fosters the self-education of the child, this should never be to the detriment of the teacher's crucial role.

The Indian scholar, R. Sh. Pandey, beautifully expresses it:

"The teacher's role in the Idealistic philosophy is best explained by Froebel's familiar metaphor of the Kindergarten –The school a garden, the pupil a tender plant and educator the careful gardener-¹⁵."

We can find this profound educational philosophy beautifully expounded in the Socratic Dialogues of Plato. We can also follow it through the interaction between master and pupil in the Upanishads. Rarely has education reached such heights in the history of mankind.

In other great traditions like the Sufi in the Islamic world, the Taoist in China, or the Buddhist in India and Asia, we come across the same kind of Socratic pedagogy in an Idealistic horizon towards the realization of the youth under the loving guidance of the master. Even the indigenous peoples cultivated this kind of Socratic guidance; only modernity has destroyed it.

Still, the modern world has witnessed the emergence of new forms of Idealism through the profound Romantic movement and German Idealism –the Bildung-. In the XXth century, Western Idealism has produced a mature integral pedagogy through Waldorf Schools, set up by R. Steiner.

In parallel to that, India beheld a revival of Vedic/ Vedantic Idealism through the movement known as Neo-Vedanta, with major figures such as Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. In the last decades, Sri Sathya Sai Baba held the torch of Indian and Western Idealism on the verge of a paradigm shift.

In connection with discipline, Idealists like to give freedom to the child –without excess-. In fact, Idealism would pursue the ideal balance between love and (self) discipline. Hence, freedom would be allowed to the youth in a wise way, as qualified or regulated freedom, which should be directed towards activity and creativity. Freedom would be twinned to responsibility and would develop maturity.

Finally, the emphasis would be put on self-discipline. Idealism does not believe in external controls and repression, even though they may be necessary in social life to some extent;

14. Regarding the role of pedagogic love for Philosophical Idealism and Plato in particular, cf Chambliss J.J., 2013, p 370-371.

15. Pandey R.Sh., 1993, p 73.

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rather, it prefers the development of internal controls and self-discipline, which means that the place of volition is highly valued.

“Understand the importance of disciplined freedom in education.”

“Today the talk is all about freedom. But freedom should be within limits.”

“Be self-disciplined.”

Sathya Sai Baba.

The deepest philosophical affiliation of integral education will be found in the millenary traditions of Idealism, in particular in the European and the Indian contexts, coming back to Platonism and Vedanta. At the same time, we will be open to the Idealist views of other traditions of mystical philosophy, like Buddhist Asia, Sufism, etc.

However, integral education should also be open to the valuable contributions of the other major trends of educational philosophy: existentialism, naturalism, realism, and pragmatism –which apparently seem to be so far from Idealism-. Avoiding any kind of narrow-minded dogmatism, we do believe in dialogue and mutual enrichment with an aperture of mind.

Therefore, the foundation of integral education in Idealism and the traditions of mystical philosophy should not discard the worthwhile insights of other philosophical schools, believing that all the philosophical schools of human history keep their own truth and value, like different windows open towards a vast reality that has been apprehended in many ways from different points of view -still complementary in depth-.

From this perspective, integral education should follow a truly integral philosophy. Ultimately, we should attempt to integrate the various constituents of different facets of reality:

- the 5 basic domains of human personality: physical, intellectual, emotional, psychic (love), and spiritual;
- the 5 basic dimensions of education: I. physical and health, together with the contact with Nature and the environment; II. the relational and communitarian nature of the human being, together with emotional intelligence, positive values, ethics, and love and compassion; III. intellectual/ academic training towards free creative thinking and self-expression; IV. aesthetic and artistic formation, with its counterpart in terms of emotional education and creativity; V. the spiritual path towards self-inquiry and self-realization, education from the self unfolding human values from within;
- the 5 major historical schools of educational philosophy: Idealism, Existentialism, Naturalism, Realism, and Pragmatism.

Let us see in more detail the main contributions of the other major schools of educational philosophy (that we should also integrate in any holistic pedagogy).

Existentialism, as expounded in the modern age by Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Berdyaev, Buber, Marcel, Jaspers, Sartre, Camus, etc, would assert that existence precedes essence, reversing the Idealist order, according to which essence would precede existence¹⁶. Only in some existentialists like Sartre would this position have an agnostic connotation, while in others such as Kierkegaard, Berdyaev, Buber, Marcel, and Jaspers, there would be a spiritual outlook. Therefore, the apparent contradiction between Idealism and Existentialism could vanish from a deeper understanding of human condition and cultural history. Then, the Idealist and the Existentialist views could just be complementary ways to approach the same reality, depending on the stand point where we start from.

Furthermore, a positive criticism in relation to the Idealistic tradition, either Platonic in Europe or Vedantic in India, should be always welcome, since the highest truths get distorted in the process of human history, and become ossified in dogmatic systems which do not correspond to the genuine spirit of inquiry in total freedom of the original masters. Existentialists assert the value of our inner life and experience against any form of system-building and generalization. In this sense, Existentialism would be radically subjectivist.

However, it is interesting to realize that this existentialist spirit can be found at the very core of the teachings of Socrates, Buddha, or the Upanishadic masters. The existentialist revolt should be directed against the ossification and the building of systems in the later traditions, rather than the free spirit of the original masters themselves, and in that sense the existentialist revolt should be welcome and becomes necessary; it can help us go back to the original message of the great masters of Idealism, who requested us to look towards ourselves, to experience by ourselves, and not to stick to any system outside. This was also the true spirit of Romanticism, which revolted against the ossification of neo-classicism in order to come back to the genuine grandeur of Classical art.

In the field of education, existentialists would help the child realize the best that he is capable of, so that he can understand himself and his own existence. From this point of view, education should be deeply child-centred. Moreover, every individual would be unique, and education should develop this uniqueness. Hence, education should cater for individual differences and a multiplicity of geniuses.

Existentialism would not believe in prescribing a rigid curriculum; the pupil should choose his or her own curriculum –self-education of the child, in parallel to his or her innate freedom-. This can be difficult to implement today in many places, since most of the

16. B. Suchodolski summarizes the diversity of schools of educational philosophy into two major currents: essentialist –namely Philosophical Idealism- and existentialist. Cf Suchodolski B., 1960.

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schools are legally affiliated to a specific board. However, even within the prescribed framework can we allow a certain space for the selection of the student under the teacher's guidance, through optional subjects, the combination of different afternoon workshops for integral education, the realization of projects, essays and thesis, etc.

Like Idealism, Existentialism would also give more importance to the humanities in order to come to terms with existential problems and human condition.

Like the Idealist school, existentialism would also favour the Socratic method of teaching, and would give more individual attention to the student, something that any good school should try to implement, mainly through the role of guardians, tutors and monitors.

Naturalism would have its oldest roots in Thales of Miletus, Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius. Thus, it would be connected to pre-Socratic schools such as Atomism and more significantly Epicureanism and Stoicism, both Greek and Roman. In the modern age, Hobbes, J.J. Rousseau, Comte and Herbert Spencer would follow Naturalistic trends of thought. The Naturalistic philosophy of India would crystallize in the Charvaka school of Brhaspathi.

In philosophy of education, Naturalism would inspire great educationists like Rousseau himself, and also Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori and Piaget. A certain kind of Naturalism, in particular through Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel, would intermingle with Romanticism, and therefore with Idealism. After Idealism, this is the second oldest school of educational philosophy.

In general terms, one of the main concerns of philosophy would be about reality. For Idealism, reality would be ultimately consciousness –inseparable from vibration and energy-. Another main concern of philosophy would be epistemology, the theory of knowledge. For Idealism, the most valuable knowledge would be the spiritual one. In Naturalistic thought, the focus would fall upon nature itself as it is, and the preferred kind of knowledge would be the scientific; Nature is the best teacher.

Then, Naturalism views education as the process of development of the natural life in the growing child; here, balance and harmony would be highlighted. Education becomes a natural necessity. This means that the educational process of development must be natural and integrated. In this horizon, education would be basically for the body and mind. But it should always be adapted to the nature of the child, which means that the child is put at the very centre of the educational process: child-centred pedagogy. In the words of Prof. R.N. Sharma:

“Naturalist education is paido-centric. The child occupies the central place in it.”¹⁷

Naturalists look at the child as different from the adult. A major contribution of Naturalism has been its emphasis on the progressive evolution of education through the successive age groups while respecting the characteristics of each stage. Naturalism also considers that the child is able to educate himself or herself until a certain point. So, kindergarten and even primary school should be largely based upon the spontaneous activities of the child and self-learning.

Naturalistic philosophy of education has nurtured developmental psychology, with scholars such as Piaget, Kohlberg, etc, who have studied the order and pattern, the very rhythm in the growth and development of the child.

We should warn about some limits in this kind of approach, which become visible through the intercultural perspective; then, we may realize that what seems to be normal for a Western scholar of the modern age was quite different in another place or in another period of history. That is why this kind of developmental psychology should be counterbalanced by anthropology and cultural studies, with the fundamental intercultural dimension that will become so crucial in the XXIst century.

The Naturalistic methods of teaching emerged as a revolt against the old-fashioned bookish pedagogies, stressing the value of the inductive method and observation in a scientific spirit. The teacher should tell the students as little as possible in order to allow them to discover as much as possible by themselves. Nature should be regarded as the best teacher, and education should be provided as much as possible in a natural environment so that the child can evolve his or her own nature.

Undoubtedly, this kind of pedagogy has become very popular in many progressive schools. Direct experience and the contact with Nature should be some of the pillars of the pedagogic system. Then, knowledge emerges naturally out of experiences and situations that have been arranged by educators. For naturalists, observation and experimentation should replace the chalk and talk method; moreover, the relation with Nature would be crucial. Certainly, there is something very true in the Naturalistic approach.

However, we can observe today in the Western world how this Naturalistic pedagogy has sometimes been pushed too far, producing an excess that has turned to the detriment of academic standards. The fundamental teaching of wisdom, the middle path and moderation, should certainly apply to this domain. Any sensible pedagogy should find the middle path between the chalk and talk, that is, the necessary teaching given by the educator, and the direct observation and experimentation by the student.

Naturalists have also advocated the play-way method, especially for the earlier stages,

17. Sharma R.N., 2011, p 73.

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since playing reveals the very nature of the child. Again, we face here an interesting pedagogy that has been fully implemented and has become quite popular, even though we should avoid the excess that has also been committed. Once more, the middle path in a wise way will find the necessary balance.

The teacher must always give the basic information, supply the materials and provide the opportunities, and very especially, he must help the student understand, think by himself and express himself, something that neither the experimental nor the play-way methods can bring; here, we require the dialectic dimension: relationship, dialogue and guidance from the elder.

When speaking about the curriculum, Naturalism would clearly make a difference between the earlier and the later stages. For the younger children, Naturalism would prefer sensory training, since senses are the doors opening to knowledge and experience. This has certainly become integral part of primary education in progressive schools. For the elder youths, Naturalism would emphasize scientific study in the general framework of academic training.

From the point of view of discipline, Naturalism defends that the child should be given freedom to develop his or her natural tendencies. It also advocates self-discipline, disapproving the practice of punishment, especially of a physical kind, but also of a psychological nature.

Here we find another fundamental issue of modern education. Naturalism has revolted against the tough tradition of punishment and outer discipline coming from traditional schooling and home education. But, as it happens so often, mankind goes from one extreme to another one, and from the necessary correction brought by Naturalism, we have sometimes fallen in the Western world into the opposite extreme of misunderstood freedom, discarding the needed (self)-discipline too easily.

In the original writings of the classical exponents of Naturalism, such as Rousseau, we find a more balanced approach. In his famous "Emile", Rousseau gives the example of the child who breaks a window; instead of the traditional physical punishment, Rousseau suggests that we allow the child to experience the cold of the night. Of course, we can also make him repair what he has broken. According to the classical forms of Naturalism, punishment should be determined by the natural consequences of the wrong deeds towards a positive transformation of character.

Another interesting contribution of the Naturalistic school would lie in the organization of the school as a free natural society, where children could learn about the rights and duties of citizenship and democracy through participation.

In front of some extreme positions of modern Idealism, in Berkeley for instance, there was a reaction led by Locke, who emphasized that the world around us is real and not a fantasy. Realism has strongly postulated the objective reality of the world, discarding the

view of a subjective reality depending on the perception of the individual. Before this kind of modern Realism reacting against the extreme positions of modern Idealism –from Locke to B. Russell-, the standard scholarship would trace the origins of Realism back to Aristotle in Greece or Saint Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages.

Nonetheless, these common assumptions about the history of philosophy should be qualified.

First, we should tone down the apparent opposition between Idealism and Realism, especially if we take into account the classical authors. Aristotle would be the best example. The father of the Lyceum could be considered both as an Idealist and as a Realist. In fact, Idealism and Realism combine together as two sides of the same coin in Ancient Philosophy. The mystical philosophy of Platonism in Greece and Vedanta in India never denied the real existence of the external world. There has been a tremendous misunderstanding about the Vedantic concept of Maya. The metaphysical illusion does not mean that the world outside is not real; it means that the world outside is not the whole reality, since there is much more than that. Hence, true Idealism postulates the existence of a complex universe with different levels of reality, from the gross matter of the physical world to the ultimate reality; in between, there would be intermediate subtle stages until the causal plane. Here, the coincidence in depth between Greek, Indian, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, and Sufi metaphysics would be striking. In conclusion, Realism and Idealism could be totally compatible; they would just behold different dimensions or levels of reality.

Secondly, the sharp affirmation of the objective reality of the world against an extreme Idealism, with its consequent materialism and mechanism, would face some difficulties after the development of Quantum Physics and Relational Theory, showing the interdependence of subject and object, of consciousness, matter and energy, in a profound approach that converges with the great traditions of mystical philosophy.

Prof S.S. Ravi also reminds us that we can identify different forms of Realism, such as humanistic realism (Erasmus, Rabelais), social realism (Locke), scientific realism (Bacon, Ratke), neo-realism (Bertrand Russell), etc¹⁸.

In any case, the Realist school of the modern age has also brought valuable contributions to philosophy of education. From the realist point of view, the biological origin of Man should be turned into a cultural and social being; hence, the crucial necessity of education. For Realists, education should basically be a preparation for life, so that the child can later perform his role in society. Education should also unfold all the potentialities of each individual.

With regard to the methods of teaching, Realism would promote the use of lectures and discussions. It would also encourage the Socratic method of teaching. Realists certainly

18. Ravi S.S., 2011, p 128-134.

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defend the use of memory, especially in the earlier stages, without excess. In the Realist school of education, the motivation of the child should play a central role.

It is needed to point out that Realism defends the role of the teacher as a scholar, reacting against the excesses of other pedagogic schools that have dismissed the teaching responsibility under a certain aura of progressive pedagogy centred on playing methods, direct experience of the child, etc. Realism would not deny the pedagogic possibilities of such ways, but it would not accept the dismissal of the teacher as a scholar and lecturer. We do believe that this Realist reaction has been totally necessary in front of some abuse that has occurred in the Western world.

In terms of curriculum, Realism would certainly prefer the sciences without despising the humanities, which would be the opposite preference compared to Idealism. We must stress, however, that there is no contradiction between the two schools, between the sciences and the humanities. The preferences of Realism or Idealism would be a matter of accents or tendencies only.

The realist pedagogy would never be satisfied with a simple use of memory, but would require understanding and later application of knowledge. Realism would also advocate a solid basic education or general knowledge in the earlier stages until the middle school; specialization should come later. This Realist appreciation of general education/ knowledge is also welcome in a world like ours that has produced an abuse of specialization, creating ignorant specialists that know nothing outside their area and are unable to connect their own area with other fields.

In the Western world, Realism has been the established pedagogy of public education directly controlled by the state and also most of prestigious private schools; in general terms, this educational philosophy has largely shaped the modern school system primarily based on academics and the rational mind, being French rationalism and the French Baccalaureat its finest formulation.

In front of this over-emphasis on reason, science, academics and discipline, the Western World has produced a Naturalistic and Romantic reaction, from Rousseau to Montessori, together with different trends of progressive pedagogy, and more radical formulations through libertarian pedagogies like Neill's, the famous founder of the equally well-known Summerhill School.

Realism has often been criticized for its undue over-emphasis on academic knowledge and neglect of the child as a human being. Sometimes, Realism has fallen into an excess of academics. Then, the reaction of the paidocentric or child-centred vision has become necessary. However, these child-centred views have also produced their own excess and have sometimes resulted in a neglect of academics. Then, the Realist priority on academic knowledge must be welcome. Again, the middle path could bring a desirable harmony between the academic stress on knowledge and the paidocentric pedagogy focused on the child.

Pragmatism is derived from the Greek word “pragma” which means action. The concept was coined by William James in his famous book “Pragmatism”. As a philosophical school, it turns away from abstractions, systems and generalizations, first or absolute principles, and then turns towards the concrete facts of life, action and its consequences. While Idealism is characteristic of the Ancient traditions and Romantic moods, while the somewhat disturbing insights of Existentialism and the more scholarly concerns of Realism are typical of the strenuous thinking of modern Europe, Pragmatism easily fits the American mind, less predisposed than the European towards pure thinking and more directly attracted by action.

Basically, Pragmatism is more an attitude or frame of mind than a system of ideas. Before modern Pragmatism, this kind of mental predisposition has been traced back to Greece, in particular to the school of the Sophists, the rivals of Plato, among whom the famous Protagoras and Gorgias. In Renaissance, Francis Bacon would be a main figure, and after him this kind of approach would be nurtured by the dominating currents of the modern age: Utilitarianism, Empiricism, and finally Liberalism. Another kind of Pragmatism would be found in the historical enemy of Liberalism, Marxism. In the XXth century, Ch.S. Peirce, William James and John Dewey would be the most salient figures. In particular, Dewey would bring many interesting contributions to philosophy of education and would help shaping the XXth century school system. Dewey’s pedagogy would be developed by W.H. Kilpatrick¹⁹. We could also add Bertrand Russell among the godfathers of pragmatism.

In the field of education, Pragmatism would encourage the capacity of the child to learn by himself or herself through active participation, direct experience, creative projects, etc. Pragmatism does not see the child in passive terms, as a mute listener, but as an active, creative participant. In the words of Prof R.N. Sharma:

“The aim of education, according to Russell, is to create individuals who are creative and may realize a creative society. Such a system will be democratic²⁰.”

Among the general aims of education, Pragmatism would emphasize social efficiency, economic competence and good citizenship. From this point of view, Pragmatism would be very functional in its relationship with the established social order, something that would be inevitably criticized by Marxist and critical thought.

As Gingell and Winch write:

19. Dewey’s pragmatism would be criticized by spiritually-oriented philosophers of education such as Th.E. Shields; cf Shields Th.E., 2009. In spite of Dewey’s contribution to progressive education, his secular vision could be seen as a limitation to the integral nature of education that should also incorporate the spiritual domain in emancipating non-dogmatic ways.

20. Sharrma R.N., 2011, p 106.

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“Peirce believed that education had more than instrumental purposes and that by pursuing education for its own sake one would serve instrumental purposes, almost as a by-product²¹.”

Pragmatists would dislike the traditional rigid curricula heavily charged with information and based on scholarly lectures. Instead, they would propose units of integrated knowledge around significant social issues and problems of life, an interesting pedagogy that has been implemented in the last decades. So, the Pragmatist pedagogy would avoid the rigidity of the classical division into different subjects and lessons.

Here, we should once more underline the pedagogic potential in a moderate way, warning at the same time against the possible abuse that has certainly occurred and has sometimes produced an educational catastrophe in Western countries in the last years. Without a minimum of classical systematization through subjects and lessons, children get lost in an ocean of attractive issues and problems arising amidst confusion and ignorance of the most basic trends and facts. It would be wiser to combine a moderate use of teaching through issues and problems together with a basic and more classical teaching through subjects and lessons. Once more, the middle path and balanced perspectives with wisdom, avoiding opposite extreme points: neither a traditional, scholarly, dry and boring exposition of lessons and lectures only, nor a total confusion and mess through attractive but chaotic issues, topics and problems discarding an orderly process of learning.

In the area of methods of teaching, Pragmatism would prefer activities rather than books: learning by doing. Learning should happen through activity rather than lectures. The child should be enabled to search for information by himself or herself, instead of being given the information in a passive way. Students should be encouraged to investigate and discover. So, the fundamental method of teaching should be experimental.

Here, the same question arises as in the previous point, both of them being closely related. Certainly, this experiential pedagogy in a spirit of investigation and discovery brings a huge pedagogic potential, but without excess, without totally denying the contribution of the teacher in terms of lectures in order to bring some basic information adequately presented together with fundamental understanding.

The teacher can never be replaced by the own investigation of the pupil. Both pedagogies should be complementary. It is undoubtedly enriching for the child to discover and experiment by himself. But no child will learn to think by himself and to express himself alone. The teacher is also needed and has a fundamental role to play. He cannot be just cancelled or downgraded to a secondary position. In education, the teacher has a major role to play, and his major contribution to the child's growth will be to help him understand, think by himself and express himself, something vital that nobody can learn alone without any model or guidance.

21. Gingell, Winch, 2004, p 161.

Pragmatism will also stress the pedagogic value of projects, something that has become very trendy in the last years and has again a profound pedagogic significance. However, an intelligent and sensible pedagogy will implement the evaluation through projects under an appropriate guidance from the teacher who does not disappear but fully accomplishes his or her educational role.

The intention of the projects pedagogy is not to get rid of the students so that teachers do not have to take care of them, as it has been so often the case in schools where the message of Pragmatism has not been properly grasped. Projects do not cancel the pedagogic role of teachers, but enhance it. The active participation of the student and the active pedagogic role of the teacher are not contradictory but complementary. It is through the awakening of the capacities of the student that the real teacher will fully and deeply accomplish his educational responsibility –through an adequate and mature supervision-

In this kind of active pedagogy from the side of the student, Pragmatism prefers group projects rather than individual ones, cooperation and team spirit with its inherent sharing of responsibilities. Certainly, this group approach has a pedagogic potential, but not necessarily to the detriment of individual effort. Individual and group projects should be again complementary in a wise and harmonious perspective.

When it is a matter of learning the foundations of thinking, nothing can replace individual effort. In good education, we cannot get rid of individual dissertations or essays. All the great treatises in the history of philosophy have been produced by a single person, not by a team. The famous triple Criticism of Immanuel Kant is not a group project. No group could replace Kant's effort of thinking by himself. Sometimes, the needed personal effort is lost in the easier group therapy, and instead of sharing of responsibilities, it becomes the vanishing of responsibilities. Anyone who has observed the evolution of Western education in the last decades has witnessed the abuse of the group pedagogy. Group projects should be harmoniously combined with personal projects and personal works –composition, commentary, dissertation, etc-.

Another interesting contribution of Pragmatism has consisted of conceiving the school on a social basis in terms of community, and not only as a set of class-rooms and buildings. In this communitarian perspective, Pragmatism would give a certain amount of freedom to the child; but this freedom should not be mistaken for licence to do anything, as it has happened too often in the West. Here, Pragmatism would present the teacher as a guide, promoting first of all self-discipline.

In general terms, the main figures of Pragmatism or other schools like Naturalism have not encouraged the excess that many progressive pedagogies have produced in the last decades in the West. The excess of bookish scholarly knowledge given by traditional pedagogies has produced a reaction that has often gone into the other extreme, with an abuse of playing methods, activities, self discovery, group projects, issues and problems, etc, leading to the dismissal of the role of the teacher, the decay of cultural and intellectual

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standards, and confusion and ignorance in terms of academic knowledge. Mankind too often shifts from one extreme to another one. And very often, the extreme positions were not promoted by the original authors, but have been produced by the latter followers.

In integral education we should try to avoid all sorts of extremes, striving for a middle path and a balanced, harmonious pedagogy, where the different contributions of the major schools of educational philosophy are integrated in a wise way for the benefit of the child, for the sake of his or her education and realization as a human being in freedom, and also under the necessary loving guidance of the adult or educator.

Integral education should try to implement this middle path by developing the harmony between academic standards and a child-centred holistic pedagogy.

Ultimately, we should be able to enrich the fundamental pedagogy grounded in Idealistic philosophy through the dialogue with the other major schools of educational philosophy, convinced that reality is so vast and complex that we cannot reduce it through any concept or system of thought. Rather, we should be capable of being open to any valuable contribution, to any intelligent discourse that can teach us something new.

Even if our foundation lies in Idealism as developed by the great traditions of spiritual philosophy, we may find meaningful inputs in the other philosophical schools. Our pedagogy will be supported by an enriching dialogue with the finest insights of the various pedagogic schools for the benefit of the children, far from any dogmatism and far from closing ourselves in any rigid system of thought.

Life cannot be trapped in any intellectual jail. We can be inspired by a grand cultural heritage, like Idealism and mystical philosophy in different civilizations –East and West-. But we may see the history of thought as a house with many windows, all of them opening to a reality that is so vast and beautiful, that it cannot be reduced to any fixed pattern or dogma.

In fact, this free spirit of inquiry open to dialogue has been the very essence of the teachings of the great masters of Idealism, both in the West and the East. It is the state of mind of any intelligent and open-minded person.

This should be the spirit of integral education: free inquiry and dialogue, beyond any system, pattern or ideology²².

22. In "The Philosophical Child", 2015, J. Mohr Lone defends that we must bring philosophical inquiry into the schools and educate the children within this spirit of inquiry, something that the prestigious International Baccalaureate tries to implement through its curriculum and we totally endorse here.

As Immanuel Kant pointed out in his “Reflections on Education”, the educator himself must be educated, and the history of mankind offers a huge treasure of accumulated experience from which we can certainly learn a lot.

Some academic courses, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, present a different classification of schools of educational philosophy. Quite often, five schools are also mentioned, but the categories would change in comparison with our inventory.

- Humanistic pedagogy, linked to holistic education –as we defend in this book-.
- Liberal pedagogy, stressing intellectual development with lesson plans and courses designed to foster rational and critical thinking.
- Behavioural pedagogy, instilling “survival skills” in students that will allow them to navigate any situation.
- Progressive pedagogy, putting forward an educational agenda in accordance to progressive thought, and hence, promoting socio-cultural development and change.
- Radical pedagogy, similar to the previous school, although more radical, associated with the avant-garde trends of political thought and the left wing.

In the matter of classification, we can find as many formulas as we wish. The classical enumeration that we have offered above implies a more historical and philosophical perspective, while other taxonomies like the one shown here are centred in the modern world and even more precisely in contemporary debates.

Humanistic pedagogy would be obviously connected with Idealism and integral education, while liberal pedagogy would be related to the philosophical school of Realism. Behavioural pedagogy constitutes a recent trend in fashion in Anglo-Saxon countries. Progressive and radical pedagogies, very close to each other, would be historical developments from Naturalism and Pragmatism with more political connotations derived from non-conformism and the left wing.

Another categorization would differentiate the following five schools of contemporary educational philosophy:

- Perennialism, ensuring that students acquire understanding about the great ideas of Western civilization, since these ideas have the potential for solving problems at any time. Schools must teach concepts that are everlasting, and must provide enduring truths that are constant.
- Essentialism, defending that there is a common core of essential knowledge to be transmitted to the next generations. This would often be a conservative position, defending a certain set of intellectual and moral standards.
- Existentialism, putting forward existence before essence, and postulating the fundamental matter of individual freedom.
- Progressivism, focusing on the whole child rather than the school system.
- Reconstructionism and critical theory, wishing to rebuild society through education.

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In general terms, any school of educational philosophy will answer to some fundamental questions, such as:

- What is the purpose of education?
- What methods should be used?
- What should be the standards and contents of the syllabus?
- What is the role of the teacher/ educator?
- How do we understand the child/ youth?
- What is the relationship between teacher and student?
- How should the progress of the student be evaluated?

Through sound educational philosophy and comprehensive pedagogy integral education should be able to thoroughly answer to this kind of questions.

The contemporary debates on education can be easily traced back through history²³.

Let us take, for instance, one of the most fascinating and fruitful periods in the history of mankind, European Renaissance.

In the schools of the XVth and XVIth centuries, the two opposite tendencies of the Middle Ages and the Modern world co-existed. While medieval institutions still survived, there was a sharp questioning of the past pointing at a new world. The century of Leonardo da Vinci witnessed the reaction of Humanism in front of Scholasticism.

The French writer, Rabelais, already criticizes the scholastic ways of teaching in his ridiculous portrait of Gargantua. The eminent sage of French Renaissance, Montaigne, also condemns the ossification of the scholastic method and its intrinsic authoritarian spirit.

Some great men of Renaissance, such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, still attach a great importance to books and the art of writing and speaking. But other prominent figures of the period such as Rabelais himself emphasize the new study of experimental sciences and the direct experience of life. In England, Bacon equally stresses the importance of teaching sciences in front of the medieval weight of the humanities.

The authoritarian legacy of the Middle Ages would be radically questioned by one of the greatest philosophers of France, Descartes, who started his philosophical inquiry by examining and denouncing the limitations of the Jesuit education that he had received in his own boyhood.

The Jesuit schools had initially brought a healthy renewal of European education, but later they would be seen as excessively narrow, too literary and traditional, without taking enough into account the fast advance in the new sciences, and with too much submission of the child to the adult concepts, something that would never be favourable to the blossoming of the child from within.

23. For the major debates in philosophy of education, cf Noddings N., 2006.

In this historical period of rapid mutations and profound questioning, Descartes warns us not to accept anything as true unless we recognize it as such by ourselves. This modern spirit of free thinking in front of any inherited system of thought would not differ so much from the teachings of the great spiritual masters of India, such as Buddha, who guided his pupils towards their own experience and self-inquiry.

The grand quest for human freedom and realization throughout history presents deep similarities everywhere, in spite of the contextual and more apparent differences. Descartes opposes the internal criterion to the external authority, one crucial point on which Buddha would totally agree.

Certainly, the Cartesian “cogito ergo sum” –“In think, therefore I am”- is still a mere intellectual experience of the second eye of knowledge –the mind-. It does not enter the realm of the third eye. It does not deal with the inquiry of Ramana Maharshi about “Who am I?” The Cartesian “cogito ergo sum” is still far from the Vedantic “So Ham” –“I am God”- Integral education should try to bring together the Cartesian “cogito ergo sum” and the Vedantic “So Ham”; that is, the best intellectual and academic education from Europe and the West, directed towards intelligence and thinking, and the most profound spiritual education and self-inquiry from India, pointing at self-realization.

The great debate on education in the XXIst century:
Liberation (or freedom) versus protection and education.

The French scholar Alain Renaut expresses in “La liberation des enfants” (“The Liberation of Children”)²⁴ some of the major concerns on education today: parents’ lack of authority, children’s rebellious behaviour, the proliferation of “professionals” of education replacing parents and even schools, the ban on physical punishment –even the slightest slap-, the crisis of traditional values and hierarchy, etc.

By tracing back the social/ cultural representations of childhood through history, the French philosopher approaches the modern concept of childhood in a democratic society that sees the child as an “alter ego” or an equal in spite of obvious differences and the objective facts of immaturity and dependence –more or less according to age-.

In his celebrated essay, Renaut puts forward a crucial issue for the XXIst century: if the modern world establishes the universality of principles like democracy and equality, is it a logical consequence that the child becomes an equal to the adult? (While the traditional pedagogic relationship would be founded on intrinsic differences and some sort of hierarchy.) The matter of children’s rights, recognized at an international level by United Nations, unravels the principle of the child-citizen. However, other perspectives -more traditional- will strongly oppose children’s liberation with the argument of the protection of children²⁵.

24. Renaut A. (2002)

25. G.F. Kneller, for instance, already considered educational philosophy as part of a larger field of social and political philosophy; Cf Kneller G.F., 1971.

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No doubt, the controversy unfurled by Alain Renaut will become a central challenge for humanity in the next decades, and sensible arguments will have to combine -like in Renaut's essay- anthropological, historical and philosophical considerations. As already suggested earlier in this book, the middle path should guide mankind in this delicate and fundamental matter.²⁶

- To deny the liberation of children would be reactionary.
- To blindly embrace a liberation that overlooks undeniable differences and discards essential pedagogic duties would be demagogic.
- To forget the necessary protection implies irresponsibility.
- To negate some basic freedom is authoritarian.
- And to dismiss the pedagogic process is just foolishness.

Only a sensible middle path with anthropological, historical and philosophical grounds can offer some valuable guidance in order to harmoniously combine liberation –from oppression-, protection –against abuse- and education –which makes us human-. In this matter, the growth and evolution of the child through different stages should naturally suggest a diversity of treatments: from birth to 2, 2 to 5, 5 to 7/ 8, 7/ 8 to 10/ 11, 10/ 11 to 14/ 15, and 14/ 15 to 18 or 21, the situation cannot be the same, remembering also the key stages in the olden cultures of initiation around 7/ 8 and 10/ 11.

In the horizon of this middle path, we do believe that the extraordinary tradition of philosophical Idealism –both Western and Eastern-, together with the sublime schools of mystical philosophy and wisdom, can provide precious insights to humanity –in dialogue, as we have defended here, with the other schools of educational philosophy that also have something to bring-. Here, the spirit of Enlightenment, always at the background of Alain Renaut's reflections, is of paramount importance for the future, knowing that humanism is not different from mysticism, and that both are the culmination of Enlightenment.

Philosophical Idealism has outlined through centuries a middle path with qualified or regulated freedom avoiding all extremes. Moreover, Idealism has shown the path of love and the depth of love. Amidst contemporary polemics, Westerners have something to learn from the pure love binding master and disciple in the Indian Gurukula; here we have a shining torch to cast light on the middle path.

But this intercultural sensitiveness implies that modernity drops its arrogance and accepts to look to the past or to other cultures; Western scholars must remember that the West is not the only civilization in the world, and European philosophy is not the only philosophy in human thought. Then, the Western world can discover the treasures of Indian philosophy –among other traditions-, and from the beauty and depth of Vedas, Upanishads and Vedanta, Western educationists can catch a glimpse of the amazing pedagogy of the Indian tradition, capable of giving sensible answers to the crucial contemporary debates.

26. For a contemporary discussion of these fundamental issues of educational philosophy, cf also Curren R., ed., 2003.

The message of the great spiritual master of India, Sathya Sai Baba, can also bring essential inputs to the major pedagogic discussions, provided that Westerners acknowledge that there is such a spiritual master in India, and assume that human culture and pedagogy is not confined to the well-known evolution from Plato to John Dewey.

Immature or childish spirituality would not easily recognize the importance of Enlightenment or Kant. Narrow-minded orientalism would not apprehend the contribution of modern philosophy. But many Western scholars still fall into the inertia of cultural imperialism instead of striving for intercultural dialogue; hence, they neglect the illuminating message of the Indian Gurukula and philosophy, or the astounding mission of one of the greatest spiritual masters of contemporary India, Sathya Sai Baba.

As quantum/ new physics have grasped, interdependence lies at the core of reality. Dialogue is essential to the survival of mankind. The middle path naturally unveils dialogue, which is the very nature of humanity and the Cosmos.

Conclusion. From Socratic dialogue to quantum physics.

An education for consciousness, an education for the whole human being.

Through this paper we have examined the different schools of educational philosophy as mirrors of a global philosophical vision. We have certainly focused on Philosophical Idealism which provides the soundest theoretical frame for integral education beyond the mere cognitive or intellectual terms of realism and pragmatism and hence the mainstream school system behind them. We have insisted that the various schools of educational philosophy are ultimately complementary instead of contradictory, each stressing some particular aspects of the educational process, the human condition and reality. Needless to say, Philosophical Idealism is the school that puts forward the most comprehensive view on education because its world view is integral or holistic in front of the reductionism operated by modern materialism and its pedagogic translation into mainstream schooling.

A lot has been written and discussed about quantum physics, new science and the new emerging paradigm in the last decades. However, many have overlooked the deepest insights of the major figures of quantum physics such as Heisenberg, Planck, Schroedinger, Bohm, Goswami, etc. Quantum physicists have turned their attention to Philosophical Idealism and have understood it and praised it in front of the prejudice and clichés prevailing in a materialistic culture like ours. Quantum physicists have discovered that matter is but an illusion since it constitutes in fact a “slowed down” form of energy, which means that everything is energy. This was clearly postulated by Philosophical Idealism in India thousands of years back. Still more enthralling, quantum physicists have also concluded that what we call consciousness and is still a mystery to science represents the very key to the understanding of reality. The foundational role of consciousness was precisely asserted by all the traditions of Philosophical Idealism in the East and the

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West. Quantum physicists became deeply aware of this historical convergence and even delved into major texts of Philosophical Idealism, especially in India, such as Vedas or Upanishads. In the words of the renowned Cambridge scientist, P. Russell:

“I believe that when we delve as fully into the nature of mind as we have into the nature of space, time and matter, we will find consciousness to be the long-awaited bridge between science and spirit.²⁷”

Turning from India to the West, the major figure of Philosophical Idealism would be Socrates, the teacher of Plato. Everybody will know the famous motto from the Temple of Delphos reappraised by Socrates: “Know yourself and you will know the gods and the cosmos entire”. Quantum physicists have grasped all the depth of this millenary statement. Know yourself implies the foundational role of consciousness; only from here will human knowledge unveil all the secrets of the cosmos.

Can we draw the consequences for the educational process? Reducing education to a merely cognitive/ intellectual process as in mainstream schooling is but an illusion in the eyes of quantum physics and Socrates. Both Philosophical Idealism and quantum physics coincide in a broader and deeper vision of reality and therefore education, which becomes an education of the whole human being, an education for consciousness far beyond the mere bookish knowledge of mainstream schooling easily forgotten after exams are over, leaving an empty mind stupefied by tons of information and an obsession for tests that has discarded the deepest meaning of education and its uttermost purpose: to put it in words dear to Kant, the emancipation of the human being.

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27. Russell P., 2003, p 127-128.

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