

Vital Humanities: Their Educational Potential

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In Classical Greece, conversation was considered the supreme form of human expression, in that it was the most human way that a person uses his/her body. Learning to speak properly—as H.I. Marrou asserts—meant thinking and living properly. Eloquence was what differentiated civilized human beings from barbarians.¹ It is from these beginnings that the importance and meaning of the Humanities were understood in the most generic sense of the word.

The aim of this paper is to reexamine the Humanities insofar as they have a genuine educational dimension. The first part contemplates the Humanities from a classical perspective and its situation in present day knowledge-based society. The second part examines what happened to the Humanities in the nineteenth-century Western world, and compares that to what happened later. In the third part, some lines of argument are presented, which show how vital the Humanities are to education. This paper concludes that the Humanities are necessary to modern-day goals, both in the educational and social contexts.

¹ Cf. H.I. Marrou, *Historia de la educación en la antigüedad* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1965), 24.

The Humanities in Modern Knowledge-Based Society

Humanism is frequently thought of as a cultural movement which looks back at the Greco-Roman world and extracts from it the ideal of complete and harmonious education. This movement which is historic, linguistic, literary, ethical, and profoundly pedagogical is based on the educational value of knowledge based mainly on the study of literature and the other liberal arts. A large part of the present day study of the Humanities is a continuation of a long cultural tradition that regards the Greco-Christian synthesis as one in which every true and fruitful humanism consists.²

To promote the Humanities means stating the supremacy of the spirit, and extracting the consequences that derive from asserting that supremacy. Murdoch argues against the idea of

. . . two cultures of which science, so interesting and so dangerous, is now an important part

There is only one culture . . . the most essential and fundamental aspect of [which] is the study of literature, inasmuch as this is an education about the way of imagining and understanding human situations. We are people and we are moral agents before being scientists. . . . This is the reason why it is and always will be more important to know about Shakespeare than to know about any scientist; and if there is a Shakespeare of science, his name is Aristotle.³

W. Jaeger remarks in the Prologue of *Paideia*:

² Cf. A. Fontan. *Estudio preliminar a Humanism and Theology de W. Jaeger* (Milwaukee: Markette University Press, 1943).

³ I. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 34.

It is obvious that reading classical literature is not the straight road to finding solutions to educational or current social problems, but it can be a starting point from which one can consider these problems. It can be an opportunity to avoid well-trodden dead-ends, by using creativity and imagination together with reflection. The classics are a good beginning as well for avoiding the tendency to place an exaggerated distance between science and ordinary life, between metaphysics and morality, between theory and practice. The reward offered by the classics is learning more flexible and modern ways of seeing reality than some modern alternatives can teach, although it is important not to see classic and modern as opposed to each other.⁴

Today, there is a clear loss for the Humanities in education. Communication between different areas of knowledge, or to use a familiar term, interdisciplinarity, is regarded as utopia.⁵ In such a setting, an attempt must be made to work out a new synthesis, with the wisdom of the humanities at the base.⁶ A society which does not appreciate the Humanities is a society which has lost its way because they give light, purpose, and unity to human life.⁷

The knowledge-based society requires, more than anything else, educated people in the complete sense of the term. The most far-sighted people of our age, preoccupied as they are by economic compartmentalization, social conflict, and ethical deterioration, are

⁴ Cf. W.W Jaeger, *Paideia. The Ideals of Greek Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

⁵ Cf. S.G. Salkever, *Finding the Mean* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁷ "In a society oriented towards innovation and communication, the liberal arts take the central stage. The bonds of this society have a high level of symbolism and require rapid changes of perspective, which involve the use of the creative imagination. All these are themes which implicitly or explicitly concern the *artes ad humanitatem*, which for centuries, have been exploring the mysteries of thought and language, and lightning flashes have been seen in which these mysteries have been expressed through art rather than history" (Llano, 13).

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seeking to recover the unity which has been lost, and are turning their eyes to the Humanities. It would not merely be a question of reading Cervantes, Cicero, or Shakespeare again—though that would be a great idea.

As A. Llano asserts, "what we have to do is to overcome the dispersion of activities and forms of knowledge and recognize ourselves again as beings open to transcendence."⁸

There is a need to do something more than admire art, history, or literature. There is a need to point out a vision of academic learning which cannot be divorced from moral apprenticeship or the imagination without impoverishing all fields of human endeavor. In one sense, the past is not yet done away with, and a critical assimilation of it is a central task of education.⁹

A. Llano adds that the Humanities are precisely those disciplines which give an account of the human condition and of its modifications through time. It is the kind of knowledge which is concerned with what is most deeply human: thought, language, artistic creativity, freedom, memories and plans, virtues, concern for others, ambitions and fears.¹⁰

The 19th-Century Debate on the Humanities within the Framework of Secondary Education

The philosophies common to the 17th and the 18th centuries, the industrial and commercial expansion of the 19th century and the need to provide labor for the new economic structure created a state of

⁸ A. Llano. "Hacia una nueva síntesis de los saberes. El valor actual de las humanidades," *Aceprensa*, 178/88 (1994): 2.

⁹ Cf. A. Llano, *Ética y política en la sociedad democrática*, (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1981), and C. Naval, o.c., 1995.

¹⁰ Cf. A. Llano, "Hacia una nueva síntesis de los saberes. El valor actual de las humanidades," *Aceprensa*, 178/88 (1994): 1.

mind that was difficult to eradicate. It basically consisted in believing that education was a modernizing factor which was demonstrated by economic and scientific progress. Criticism of this model has changed with the passing of time, but its main arguments have been retained.

At the same time, a solid defense of the value of the Humanities had also begun.

The debate is best observed in 19th century secondary education. A deep confrontation between two views on education set the scene for consideration of one particular question, that which pleaded for or against the Humanities.

The 19th century consolidated and expanded primary education where there was little dissent—on objectives and content. The objectives, based on psychology, were established in accordance with the natural development of the human faculties. The aim of education was to stimulate and strengthen the senses, attention, and reasoning in a gradual, systematic process. The contents, even the instruments, had to fit into this natural order, with the intention of reaching a favorable degree of morality. Basic primary education thus acquired a general, common, and informative character.

The problem was naturally transferred to the next stage, the upper primary and secondary education. The entire weight of the problematic reform and the deep disagreements between the two educational attitudes fell on the traditional territory of classical education. Loosely tied to the prevailing mentality, the manner in which classical education was set up was considered useless and anachronistic. Indeed, until the middle of the 19th century, the study of the arts or of literature had scarcely been able to recover from its long decline. Although verbalism and technical terms had gone, cultural education showed a firm tendency towards aesthetics but without true educational value. It is not surprising that a society in the midst of social, political, and economic transformation would consider this model a luxury suitable only for those who had the means to cultivate good taste or sensitivity. Educational reform, already undertaken by the national systems, maintained this cultural attitude without hiding its interest in

the alternative—specialized teaching—that is, a secondary education specialized in the principal branches of labor activity. The realist institutions, as they were generically called, multiplied. In Germany during this period, for example, there were more than twenty kinds of *Realschulen*.

There was indeed a deep divide between the classicists and those in favor of a utilitarian, specialized, practical, and professional education. This second option gained ground and invaded even the field of higher studies. The danger presented by the end-of-century positivist spirit caused an intellectual reaction that brought about new cultural values related to the most profound needs of man and the contemporary world.

The debate was part of the confusion of society at the end of the century. The expectations of enlightened rationalism had changed into utopian ones. The generalization of education, along with other factors, had reduced illiteracy and given rise to an incipient mass culture. However, these advances could not hide serious developing problems. The general diagnosis pointed to an increasing imbalance between material and moral progress, between the advancement of the natural sciences and the stagnation of the sciences of the spirit. Of the two great ideas produced by Western civilization—the *person* and the *technique*—only the latter had managed to become the universal and unifying power, while the former was diluted into a crisis created by relativism and nihilism.¹¹

After a period of confidence in the natural evolution of humanity, the collective conscience of the new times showed a great insecurity. As in every critical period, there was an attempt to resolve the problem through education. A moral regeneration of society was envisioned, which would respect the complexity and plurality of the modern world. This impetus was not to be found in science or technology, but in the educational potential of the Humanities. The

¹¹ Cf. G. acone, *Aspetti e problemi della pedagogia contemporanea* (Fornello: SEAM, 2000), 37.

term "Humanities" now no longer referred to just the liberal arts, fine arts, literature, classical education, or literary studies, but to a culture of values founded on man and his inherent dignity. The traditional humanist model, anchored to the individualistic and minoritarian past, was abandoned. Purified by its own evolution and the weight of circumstances, this educational model accepted the new social challenges, without renouncing its basic principles.

What was defended was not a simple curricular question but a deep sense of the humanizing function of education. From this angle, the Humanities became the specification of an educational attitude, both relational and formative, whose essence as stated by Guardini, is found in the *ethos* of the immutable.¹² What characterized this contemporary pedagogical humanism was its return to the ethical and spiritual fundamentals of education. It could be added that these stable criteria were those which always allowed for dialogue within society, and produced answers to the most pressing problems regarding the human being and his destiny.

An Argument for the Humanities as Vital to Education

Having heard these voices from the past, specifically on the debate on the Humanities in Secondary Education, we present in this third section some lines of argument which show how vital the humanities are to education, to a certain extent through a historical perspective.

We will examine the different ways or spheres in which the "vital-ness" of the Humanities may be felt or may make a difference from the standpoint of education. Specifically, we will see the role that history, culture, the arts, the liberal arts, the Humanities in general play in promoting the search for the common good, the social dimension of education. We will also underline their starring role in sensitive and

¹² Cf. R. Guardini, *Persona e libertà* (Brescia: La Scuola, 1987), 119.

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creative education, as in aesthetics and ethics. They thus assist in the development of a complete individual. In short, we could say that the main arguments in defense of the intrinsic value of the Humanities are in their communicative and relational capacities—first conveyed through language.

Culture and history

Historical continuity refers to the recognition that culture is inserted, for good or ill, into the collective strength of humanity over the centuries. In opposition to the slightly naïve pride of an evolutionist thesis is the assertion that great intellectual and moral values had been maintained through time. History is the depository for this wealth of knowledge and experience and constituted the legacy of the Western world. However, this legacy, which education made its business to transmit to the new generations, was not of the same caliber for all the disciplines.

Stated F. Guizot, author of the first organic law of popular education in France, "unlike science which is always being renewed and must move at the pace of its progress, true morals from which virtue is born are unchanging."

En matière d'instruction et des sciences, il faut marcher toujours pour être au niveau de leurs progrès; mais, en fait de morale, il faut rester immobile et fixe au milieu des secousses que les révolutions du monde et de ses idées font subir aux principes qui la constituent. [...] La Physique d'Aristote a perdu beaucoup de sa valeur, tandis que la conduite de Socrate saisit encore les âmes de la même admiration qu'elle inspirait à ses disciples¹³

¹³ F. Guizot, *Instruction Publique : Éducation. Extraits*. (Paris: Librairie Classique, Eugène Belin, 1889), 180. One must always be updated when it comes to teaching (education) and the sciences; but the matter of morals must remain immobile and fixed amidst the revolutions shaking the world, and its ideas must be subjected to its constituting principles . . . The Physics of Aristotle has lost much of its value, while the conduct of Socrates still captures the soul of admiration it inspired in his disciples. (Italics and translation by Ed.)

Education, he concluded, has to follow the enlightenment of the centuries and the eternal virtues. If nothing could affect immutable ethical principles, what is to be done is to return to the gifts of God, guarded and beautifully expressed by so many generations.

Historical continuity, therefore, does not refer to scientific knowledge in constant evolution, but to what contains the keys to human wisdom, or which prepared for its assimilation into human wisdom. This cultural legacy, therefore, is not a deposit just to be safeguarded but a source of inspiration. As the Spanish philosopher García Morente wrote at the turn of the century, what barbarians did was to conserve conquered treasures to create clichés and cultivate the trite. On the other hand, the spirit of irony in the Socratic sense consisted of dissatisfaction and in constructive nonconformity.¹⁴

Thus, the past is detached from immobilism, and becomes a dynamic force for understanding the present and planning the future. This brings about two moments for education, one of understanding, in which the person would participate in the civilizing trend, and another, of collaboration in the communal work towards culture. Like the face of Janus, remarked the German philosopher and theorist of education, Otto Willmann, education “looks simultaneously at the past, at the chain of generations which will grow with a new link, and at the assets made up of transmitted custom, which are like an inheritance one is obliged to preserve and pass on.”¹⁵

Another essential feature of the aforementioned attitude which the Humanities supply is that of teaching a person *how to contribute to the good of society*. This had become inevitable and urgent by the end of the century. Bourgeois individualism on the one hand, and Marxist collectivism on the other threatened the social reorganization process embarked upon by the contemporary world. What was needed was the education of a new model citizen—which was an old ambition

¹⁴ M. García Morente, *Escritos pedagógicos* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1975), 34.

¹⁵ O. Willmann, *Teoría de la formación humana* (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1948), 50.

that was resurrected by the state of affairs. What was beginning to be understood was that an atomized world required good leadership to replace the diminishing dominant class which has entered into the scene, as Chateaubriand had foretold. Indeed, good citizens were needed, but democratic coexistence also required guiding forces. In his analysis, the eminent Belgian sociologist and professor at the University of Brussels, Adolphe Prins, expounded this need:

S'il n'y a ni fin de siècle, ni fin d'une classe, il semble bien qu'il y ait un de ces moments d'évolution rapide de la civilisation: le développement prodigieux de toutes les sciences a agrandi, dans de proportions inconnues jusqu'ici, le champ de la pensée; la concentration prodigieuse des richesses a agrandi dans les mêmes proportions le champ des conflits sociaux. Les conceptions se transforment dans tous les domaines; l'aspect des choses varie dans toutes les directions. Pour suivre ce mouvement, pour s'y adapter, l'esprit public devrait être plus fortement armé que jamais par la haute culture, et c'est précisément maintenant que l'on constate un appauvrissement indéniable de cette haute culture qui est cependant aussi nécessaire à l'homme pour bien penser que l'air lui est nécessaire pour respirer.

Quelle est la cause de la situation? Pourquoi notre culture n'est-elle pas plus générale? Et tout d'abord, quand on parle de haute culture, on songe immédiatement aux universités et l'on se demande quelle est leur part de responsabilité dans l'état des esprits.¹⁶

¹⁶ A. Prins, *L'Organisation de la liberté social et le devoir social* (Paris : F. Alcan, 1895,) 217. If there is no end of the century, or end of a class, it seems that there is a period of rapid evolution of civilization: the prodigious development of all Sciences expanded, in proportions hitherto unknown, the field of thought; the prodigious concentration of wealth has expanded social conflicts. Concepts transform all domains; things differ in all directions. To follow this movement and to adapt to it, the public mind should be more heavily armed, now more than ever, by high culture, and it is precisely now that we can see an

To the intellectual world and its principal institution, the university, were relegated this social responsibility. But as Adolphe Prins indicated, the University was not simply to be a factory producing doctors, lawyers or economists, although this is of course one of its functions. Its true mission, however, is to promote a highly intellectual and moral culture given that, like it or not, it would be the education for the majority of future statesmen and leaders. But alas little could be done. Public opinion, dominated by the culture of the masses, did not want it that way. The legislators gave in to this sentiment and pressured the universities toward more practical studies.¹⁷

The same mentality was applied to secondary education, and the result was that the University could not find an adequate preparatory education within a system lacking in organic coherence. The question went right back to where it began that of giving importance to superior primary and secondary education. The democratization of culture, in turn, would give rise to equal opportunities for all citizens where their particular capabilities, and not their economic status, would involve greater participation in public life.

On the other hand, one of the most reiterated criticisms of this educational model, that of intellectual elitism, also surfaced. This accusation was based in part on the social background of the students, and in part on the classical definition of the Humanities as liberal and disinterested knowledge. In the collective imagination, cultural education continued for the well-off bourgeoisie who were sure of the economic and professional future of their children. It was the "letter" that had been taken into account and not the "spirit" of these studies. According to the letter, the Humanities constituted knowledge that had

undeniable impoverishment of high culture which is, however, necessary for man to think, the same way that air is necessary to breathe.

What is the cause of the situation? Why is it that our culture is not general? And first of all, when we talk of high culture, we immediately think of universities and we ask what is their share of responsibility in the [formation of the] state of mind. (Italics and translation by Ed.)

¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid*, 219.

no practical applicable end, and was therefore, useless. Or, according to the positivist vision of Herbert Spencer, merely an ornament of civilized life which could in no way stifle the march of progress.

This argument was eventually refuted when the unity of wisdom artificially disintegrated. The sciences and the arts were not really groups of separate subjects and were actually far from conflicting. The error consisted in believing that the Humanities were a beautiful bundle that had no fundamental aim while the sciences were sought only for their material usefulness. In actuality, both should share the same disinterested search for truth, and both, in turn, should persevere in the love of wisdom; the noble and eternal spirit of *philosophy*. But, if this spirit had been lost from view, it was precisely the sciences that were so pressured by dominant utilitarianism. On detaching themselves from their educational and cultural meaning, they had without doubt begun a brilliant career, but one unfortunately threatened by their very essence.

Henri Poincaré, a member of the *Ligue por la culture française*, made it very clear in his writing that there was a need to reorientate that utilitarian viewpoint toward an intellectual one, and rescue the objective; the education of wise men.

*Alors, cela est bien clair. Le savant ne doit pas s'attarder à réaliser des fins pratiques; il les obtiendra sans doute, mais il faut qu'il les obtienne par surcroit. Il ne doit jamais oublier que l'objet spécial qu'il étudie n'est qu'une partie d'un grand tout qui le déborde infiniment, et c'est l'amour et la curiosité de ce grand tout qui doit être l'unique ressort de son activité. La science a eu de merveilleuses applications, mais la science qui n'aurait en vue que les applications ne serait plus la science, elle ne serait plus que la cuisine. Il n'y a pas d'autre science que la science désintéressée.*¹⁸

¹⁸ H. Poincaré, *Les sciences et les humanités* (Paris:A.Fayard, 1911), 31.

So, this is clear. The scientist must not dwell on the achievement of practical ends; he will obtain them without a doubt, but he must get them only in addition. He must never forget that the special object that he is studying is only a part of an

The education either of a wise person or of a modest student from the popular or bourgeois class should not differ or depart from a spirit of love for knowledge and truth. Incompatibility between general and specific should not exist. As the Spanish pedagogue and disciple of Krause, Giner de los Rios, averred, this particular aim of education should continue developing, in harmony and solidarity. He thus distinguished between the two educational orders—the general and the specific—both of which are indispensable:

If the latter corresponds to our interior vocation and it makes us useful organs in the division of social work, then the man without a profession although educated, intelligent, good, and honest, rich or poor, must be considered a parasite.

In turn, general education, whether good or bad, is imposed on us, it interests us in all the remaining orders, aims, and works alien to our profession, it keeps the spirit open to the universal communion, and prevents it from being distanced and degenerating, closing itself in the routine of the profession in which it inevitably falls, whether this profession be priest, poet or philosopher. Both educational orders must help each other, one having to progress with the other and by means of the other, not in an inverse ratio, as sometimes it used to be thought.¹⁹

Many contemporaries of de los Rios must have been startled. The secondary curriculum was thought to be already excessive. Physicians

infinitely greater whole, and it is love and curiosity for this great whole that fuels his activity. science has had wonderful applications, but science without a view of its applications would no longer be science, it is no more than cooking. it will only remain an uninteresting science. (*italics and translation by ed.*)

¹⁹ F. Giner De Los Ríos, "*Pedagogía universitaria*," in *Obras completas*, t. X (Madrid: Imp. Clásica, 1916-1936), 14.

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began warning the public about the health risks to which students were exposed because of their overloaded curricula, where the arts, the sciences, theory, practice, the modern languages, the numerous activities which modern education proposed, were combined. To further add specializations was an exercise in confusion. Giner de los Ríos understood, however, that even the best curriculum could not aspire to include all the spiritual richness of humanity, or all knowledge, or all the abilities of a professional. The important thing was to give an adequate orientation, which would open the minds of the students. This was a necessary point in a period overwhelmed by cultural and scientific growth and still new facets which had been introduced into the life of the scholar.

In any case, what was proposed was not to impoverish education by making it accessible to all, but to raise everybody to a high educational level. True cultural values and properties were identified, universal and common legacy distinguished from partial expressions such as national culture, born from the "spirit of the people," or to differentiate it from the phenomenal growth of the education of the masses now based on the paradigm of the consumer and social leveling, and even the identification of culture with ideologies or religions. Neither the involvement of these two different spheres nor the richness which the cultural expressions contributed to the general panorama was denied. It was only warned that what united human beings was not the expression of the peculiar but the sharing of wisdom. To this end, Newman spoke of a "common-wealth" or "human society" driven by the same principles, the same esteem and respect for the classics: "and the subjects of thought and the studies to which they give rise or, to use the term most apt for our present purpose, the Arts, have generally been the instruments of education the Civilized *orbis terrarum* have adopted."²⁰

²⁰ H. Newman, *The Ideal of a Liberal Education. A Selection from the Works of Newman* (London: Harrap, 1953), 51.

The studia humanitatis or *bonae litterae*, liberal arts, arts, classical studies, or Humanities reappeared under a new concept—general culture, in contrast, not to scientific realism, but to the excesses of professional specialization. The risk that this approach involved, however, consisted in the fact that general culture would be understood as a juxtaposition of equivalent knowledge: a little of everything and at the same level, in as full a curriculum as possible. This would have endangered not only the already weakened synthesis of knowledge, but also the specific value of each discipline. In other words, when the connection between the arts and the sciences is lessened, the chances of them losing their original significance become greater.

There was no difficulty with regard to the sciences. A century of pedagogic reflection has clearly left their capacity for developing the spirit of analysis, for increasing observation, and forging a rigorous and solid reasoning. The Humanities, on the other hand, were traditionally considered the truly educative discipline, yet if the sciences were to be set on the same level, there would necessarily be a different understanding of its meaning.

The relational value of the Humanities

The principal arguments in defense of the intrinsic value of the Humanities were in their communicative and relational capacities—first conveyed through language. Through the process of minimalization which had appeared in modern Humanism, knowledge was divided into *verba* and *res*, words and things. This dualism, which was related to the process of simplification, considered the art of language as the nucleus of all studies within the Humanities, where, unfortunately, it became the first priority. While it was true that for centuries, language has been the basis of this educational model, it was so because it has been used in the best humanistic tradition, as the key to knowledge, its principal means of transmission, and the human resource *par excellence*

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for communication. To think, to write, to speak or converse well and with style required language. It is for this reason that Greek, Latin and the classical arts, which Newman described as the language of civilization, survived through time.

In the contemporary world, however, these languages, although considered immortal, began to be thought of as unnecessary. They became the target of critics and a symbol of the futility of the Humanities. Their study eventually became part of the same specialization that they wished to combat. New fields of the study of languages were subjected to philological investigation, and in secondary school, modern languages substituted for the classical. The ancient classics, while they remained a universal heritage, became accessible in translations, and substituted by the "new classics." Although these studies continued to be defended for their historical importance or, as Unamuno explained, for "the difficulty of renouncing work which had taken so much effort to acquire," it was understood that they were replaceable by others which fitted in more easily into modern culture.

Contemporary humanism arose in order to save what was fundamental—the human capacity for transcendence, to open up to one another, to communicate through time and space by means of precise, expressive, and pleasing language. This is something that could not be provided by the physical sciences, nor was it acquired through observation and experimentation. It was, as it had always been, the prerogative of the arts, of grammar and literature, rhetoric and oratory.

Yet beyond what is considered simply the disciplines, and what was emphasized in humanistic pedagogy, was the value behind the master-disciple relationship, the formative strength of dialogue, the connection between two souls by means of the word. It tried to rescue that which the educational experiences of rationalism and naturalism, in their obsession for geometrically linked lessons and indirect education, had lost.

Sentimental and creative education

From then on, another important educational facet of the Humanities was deduced, that of feelings. Among the different approaches related to this question throughout the 19th century, the common denominator was once again the reaction against the dryness of the scientific model proposed by the enlightenment. One of the most complete and detailed treatises of the century, *L'Éducation progressive ou étude du cours de la vie* by the Swiss educator Necker de Saussure, is also one of the most reasoned defenses for the education of the feelings. She states that those who put reason first are wrong because the child loves before he understands or plays. But it is above all in his youth that a person needs ideals, ideals which are guided by noble and high sentiments. To awaken sympathy, admiration, or taste was to develop the creative capacity in all its aspects, but particularly the artistic and the literary. Education had to shape the poet as well as the logician.

In a judgment admirable for her time, Necker de Saussure recognized the advantages, but also the limitations of an analytical spirit and a utilitarian education. What developed, she noted, was a society that was calculating and aged, and incapable of enthusiasm. Like so many intellectuals, she admired the advances of science and the benefits of realist education, but she recognized the educational capacity of the Humanities which were more in harmony with the deepest desires of the human heart, and with religious education. In her opinion, the principal feeling which inspired man to perfection in every order, including the cultural, was love for God.²¹

Moral education

If the aforementioned type of education did not fall into the weakness of sentimentalism or into an aesthetic vacuum, it refined the soul; it

²¹ Cf. A. Necker de Saussure, *L'Éducation progressive ou étude du cours de la vie* (Paris : Garnier Frères-Paulin, 1847).

led it to good, and prepared it for moral truths. The sciences lacked this capacity. Their path to morality was slow and indirect, since they entrusted education to the method and to its capacity to strengthen reasoning. Its contents were neutral and exact, but they said nothing about the most intimate human problems.

The Humanities, in this sense, were superior. In the middle of the 19th century, in a session in the House of Deputies, Lamartine stated the need for uniting the arts and the sciences. He was convinced that they were complementary, but not equivalent:

Si le genre humain était condamné à perdre entièrement un de ces deux ordres de vérités, ou toutes les vérités mathématiques, ou toutes les vérités morales, je dis qu'il ne devrait pas hésiter à sacrifier les vérités mathématiques, car, si toutes les vérités mathématiques se perdaient, le monde industriel, le monde matériel subirait sans doute un grand hommage, un immense détriment; mais, si l'homme perdait une seule de ces vérités morales dont l'études littéraires sont le véhicule, ce serait l'homme lui-même, ce serait l'humanité entière qui périrait... Cette éducation exclusivement professionnelle, scientifique, industrielle, que je veux, comme vous, doit-elle commencer avec l'enfance ou ne doit-elle pas être précédée par une éducation morale, littéraire, par une éducation commune²²

²² A. Lamartine. *Chambre des députés, séance du 23 mars 1837*, in O. Gréard *Éducation et instruction. Enseignement secondaire, t. II* (Paris: Hachette, 1889), 64. If mankind were sentenced to totally lose one of the two orders of truth—all mathematical truths, and all moral truths—I say that he should not hesitate to sacrifice mathematical truths, because if all mathematical truths were lost, the industrial world, the material world would severely suffer without doubt, a huge injury, but if man loses a single one of the moral truths taught to him by way of literary studies, it is man himself who will be lost, it will be the whole of mankind who would perish. . . This education that is exclusively professional, scientific, industrial that I want, just like you, should it start in childhood or should it be preceded by a moral and literary education, by a common education? (Italics and translation by Ed.)

The Humanities, therefore, contributed to moral education and, along with scientific education, prepared the way for the study of philosophy which was the culmination of the curriculum and the key to a complete construction of knowledge. As so insistently opposed to the confusion created by positivism, philosophy was the mother science, the trunk from which the branches of knowledge grew. This role had arisen from the philosophical attitude for excellence, the admiration of man, and the need to respond to radical questions about God, the world, and himself. It stood, therefore, above the rest; independent of them, and at the same time closely related. Without the help of philosophy, the natural sciences, centered on the particular and the contingent, would only become isolated, and finally routine. It could be said that in the 19th century, the defense of the organic unity of wisdom, philosophical reflection, and the value of the interdisciplinary dialogue was already incipient.

Final remarks

The current crisis is no more than the continuation of an open process of modern thinking. The creation of an atomized society resulting from individualism was clear in the 19th century. One solution was commitment to an education that would stamp out the isolation and partiality of the scientific-technical paradigms. In short, what was defended in the 19th century was the cultural and educational value of the humanistic tradition. The opportunity was presented with the construction of secondary education. The arguments have not altered the standpoint, and the conclusion remains unchanged: an education which disregards the Humanities will renounce an essential part of itself. Most inevitably, it is time to reconsider the Humanities, and time for educators to resurrect its vital existence.

SYNERGEIA

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