



Τόμος Πρακτικών Φιλοσοφικού Forum «Ανάδρασις»
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ΔΙΕΘΝΗΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΗ ΕΤΑΙΡΙΑ
ΑΡΧΑΙΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑΣ

**MAN AND MEASURE:
COMMENTS ON THE CRISIS OF CIVILIZATION***

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Άνθρωπος και μέτρο : η διαχρονική ανθρωπο-φιλοσοφική κριτική του πολιτισμού

Από την Ελληνική αρχαιότητα κληρονομούμε όχι μόνο την μετρητική τέχνη σε τομείς πρακτικών εφαρμογών και τεχνών – αλλά και την έννοια και τις φιλοσοφικές διαστάσεις του μέτρου. Ενώ ο αριθμός εμφανίζεται στην αρχαία Ελληνική φιλοσοφία σε πλαίσιο θρησκευτικό – υπερβατικό, καθώς και φιλοσοφικό – επιστημονικό, το μέτρο δηλώνει την ανθρωπιά του: Έχοντας η ανθρωπότητα διανύσει αιώνες διαμάχης και συγκρούσεων μεταξύ επιστήμης και μεταφυσικής, τεχνικής και ανθρωπισμού, ας επανεκτιμήσουμε τη σχέση μέτρου (με την τεχνική, αισθητική και ηθική του σημασία) και αριθμού (με την μαθηματική, αφαιρετική και υπερβατική του διάσταση) κρατώντας ως ερμηνευτική μας προϋπόθεση την «ανθρωπολογική σταθερά» της πρακτικής - του τρόπου ζωής των εκάστοτε πολιτισμών.

Αντλώντας από τον κυκεώνα που συνθέτουν οι αμέτρητες πηγές - από Ορφικά αποσπάσματα, Πλατωνικά και Αριστοτελικά κείμενα, την επικούρεια και στωική σκέψη, από τα Νιτσεικά κείμενα μέχρι τις ιδέες φιλοσόφων της σύγχρονης εποχής – όπως Spengler, Y Gasset, Wittgenstein, Adorno, Horkheimer, Κονδύλη, Καστοριάδη, Αξελού, Μουτσόπουλου κ. ά. -, καταλήγουμε στο να ξαναδούμε με τα κριτικά «μάτια» της φιλοσοφίας τόσο τον νεότερο, όσο και τον σύγχρονο δυτικό πολιτισμό. Κύριος άξονας της κριτικής μας η αμφισβήτηση των αρχών και αξιών του διαφωτισμού που επικεντρώνονταν κυρίως στις έννοιες της αυτονομίας και ατομικής ελευθερίας – κυρίαρχες στη σύγχρονη αστική κοινωνία εδραιωμένες στην νεότερη φιλοσοφική κριτική παράδοση. Από την άλλη πλευρά συνυπολογίζοντας τον υπερβολικό θετικισμό και ανούσιο πραγματισμό της σύγχρονης επιστήμης, διαπιστώνουμε την ανάγκη για μια στροφή προς τις ανθρωπιστικές κλασικές – ανεπανάληπτες αξίες της αρχαίας Ελληνικής παιδείας.



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Στο πλαίσιο αυτό έρχονται στην επιφάνεια οι αρχές της διαλεκτικής, της αυτογνωσίας και κυρίως του *μέτρου* – ενός όρου που συμπυκνώνει τόσο ένα επιστημολογικό – οντολογικό νόημα, όσο και ένα αισθητικό – ηθικό. Έτσι, σε αντίθεση με τις επικρατούσες στην πολιτική και επιστημονική πραγματικότητα απαιτήσεις για ποσοτική και στατιστική αξιολόγηση των κοινωνικών πραγμάτων και της ανθρώπινης ταυτότητας, η αναβίωση του *μέτρου* – ως *ευ πράττειν* – με την αρχαιοελληνική αισθητικό – ηθική της σημασία προβάλλει σήμερα σαν φωτεινή προοπτική *θεραπείας* των τραγικών διχασμών και συγκρούσεων του σύγχρονου πολιτισμού μας.

Participating to the call for free meditation around the peak problems of today and about whether philosophy - one of the oldest human activities – could face them effectively, we might think of philosophy as an operation of nature, standing between the “moment” that was the starting point of life explosion and all the attendant species survival needs and the expected result of a natural selection that would prove the inferiority of human nature and culture, as an unnecessary and uneconomic for life phenomenon. Considering this pessimistic background about human reality and the role of philosophy I am proposing a possible way out that, as I argue in the paper, is concluded by the contemporary application of ancient Greek aesthetic-educational values with diachronic significance and utility.

I

In December 2015, the 21st Conference on Climate Change took place in Paris, as the Unesco official site informs us.¹ Various theorists and scientists have

*Many thanks to Xanthi Assimakopoulou for our inspiring discussions.

¹ www.anthropocene.paris/ Prog_Colloque_Anthropocene_Paris.pdf: “This conference raised as many fears as hopes: many considered it the last chance to reach a binding agreement on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, to avoid an excessive rise in temperatures, which would have catastrophic effects. By comparing the points of view of those who study the relationships between human societies in their diversity and their environment, this colloquium wished to highlight the contributions of human and social sciences to the fight against climate change and its consequences. Climate change is a global phenomenon; it is even par excellence the



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searched for answers and the causes of the environmental crisis that now threatens life on the planet just as war or terrorist attacks: *anthropogenic climate change* is recognized as the deep cause behind the many well observed symptoms we all know: deforestation, desertification, water, air and soil pollution, antibiotic resistance, virulent diseases, species extinction etc. The main question concerns whether the dominant capitalistic economy that by converting all value into *exchange value* aims at the maximum profit on the least quantitative cost possible, is to be considered as the final responsible for the climatic change threat, because conditions of its survival including over commoditization, growth, hyper consumption and waste disposal, produces necessarily catastrophic even self destructive results. It is not merely a moral question but a realistic causality foretold long ago by Karl Marx, since at the basis of crises lies the ever widening gap between the wealthy, privileged and powerful and the poor, destitute and weak. The suicidal effects for the ecosystem and non human population of the planet but in the far end even for human subsistence and the dominant economical system, only indirectly are presumed by Marxian criticism; it is about an hegemonic political as well as economical system that is also defined in cultural

phenomenon which manifests the planetary nature of the ecological upheavals, consecutive to human actions. This is the main reason for considering that the planet has emerged from the *Holocene* period to enter a new geological era - the *Anthropocene* - marked by the weight of human activities on geophysical phenomena. But this global change is also a diversified phenomenon, not only because it affects the people of the world in a very different way, by their effects on their environment, but just as much because they have very unevenly contributed and cannot respond in the same way. The hypothesis of the *Anthropocene* implies that human history and that of nature meet, which amounts to asserting the unification of humanity, considered as a natural force. What is the significance of the unity of humanity thus understood when it is found that the weight of human populations in global change is unequal and will be affected differently? What does it mean in terms of an anthropological approach that has always emphasized the diversity of humans in order to grasp the human? And, if search for a common agreement between nations necessitates the defiance of a general interest, on what political and scientific bases to think this unity? Climate change is a global phenomenon, it is even the phenomenon par excellence that manifests the planetary nature of the ecological upheavals consecutive to human actions.” (My translation)



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terms, projecting a minority of Western white humans to an authoritarian top elite, in the name of “development,” “economic progress,” “prosperity” as the supposed major benefits of global human culture.²

Philosophy on the other hand traditionally abounds in examples of criticism of human culture and even human nature: the situation could be corroborated by the philosophical psychology of modern times that was initiated in the 17th century with Descartes’ use of the first person primacy establishing also the primacy of the individual perception. The individual point of view is proved to be particularly important because it brings forth a skeptical standpoint, on which every single person may question and challenge conventions, the powerful ones, as well as any authoritarian control that could claim the uncritical imposition of its infallibility.

Such theoretical principles of philosophical criticism and self criticism, including the inner eye and consciousness theories, intensified by such philosophers of psychology of the 20th century like Ludwig Wittgenstein, Nicholas Humphrey and John Searle, inspire education with a subjective and individualistic point of view. Contrarily, scientific discoveries like those in the field of molecular cell biology are orientated towards a reductionist approach,

² A similar standpoint is taken by Professor Wendy Lynne – Lee, in her recent book *Eco-Nihilism: The Philosophical Geopolitics of the Climate Change Apocalypse*, Lexington Books, 2015: “The only way out requires ending the myth of endless resources, a rejection of climate change denial, and a radical re-evaluation of human-centeredness, not as a locus of power, but as an opportunity to take moral and epistemic responsibility for a world whose biotic diversity and ecological integrity make the struggle to realize it worthwhile. This solution demands not only an end to capitalism, but the deliberate reclamation of value—aesthetic, moral, and civic—and a radical transformation of both personal and collective conscience.” (cover page). This author bases her views on John Dewey’s pragmatist aesthetics. See my “For an Epilogue. Teaching Philosophy through Art”, in *Art, Philosophy, Therapy* («Αντί επιλόγου. Η διδασκαλία της φιλοσοφίας μέσω της τέχνης», εις *Τέχνη, Φιλοσοφία, Θεραπεία*), A. Lazou – G. Patios (eds), Arnaoutisbooks, Athens, 2016, pp. 117 – 162. In this article I discuss among else Dewey’s ideas on aesthetic education.



since their main efforts concern the identification of the brain expanding gene explaining human development through time.³

Critical traditions stemming out of a Marxist background, conceptualized the alienating man-machine relationship of the industrial period and entered 20th century with more composite explanatory patterns of a *negative dialectic*. Oswald Spengler (1880 - 1936),⁴ Ortega y Gasset (1883 – 1955)⁵ and Theodor Adorno (1903 – 1969), representative thinkers of the 20th century, criticized on different premises the cultural development of their time, on the basis of their belief that contemporary industrial civilization developed around big cities and metropolitan centers cultivates the type of a new man of the caves, who lives in conditions of barbarism with predominant the situation of over - individualism, *mass* behavior with the lack of real dialogue or mutual understanding.

The economic realm tends to separate technology from the spiritual substance of the human being resulting in the confusion of civilization with stupidity, according to Adorno. A consequence of this situation is the creation of the

³ As an example, under the supervision of Prof. Dr Wieland V. Hunter of the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics, recent research focuses on the study of human brain in the region of neocortex, which—as the name suggests—is the newest addition to our brain. In humans, this portion of the cerebral cortex is crammed with around 100 billion cells and is the center of higher cognitive function. Since its emergence in a mammalian ancestor some 250 million years ago, it has mushroomed and elaborated in primates, but to a significantly greater extent in humans. Although it seems that this gene may have been a key player in driving neocortex expansion, there must be other factors contributing to our unique mental abilities as well.

⁴ [The Decline of the West](#) (1918) , *The Hour of Decision* (1934), two of the most influential books of his.

⁵ *The Dehumanization of Art* (1925), *The Revolt of the Masses* (1930), *Man and People* (1939–40), some of his main critical books.



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phenomenon defined by Frankfurt thinkers, like Adorno, as the *massive culture*. *Massive culture* caused the extinction of traditional cultural forms, as well as authentic forms of art, filling free time of the Western civilized man with reproductions and of imitative low aesthetic value art products. Horkheimer and Adorno, argue in addition that capitalism while proposing the accumulation and profit-driven disposal of wealth, has created industrialization, growth and eternal reproduction of its own culture.⁶ Contemporary man is facing the ongoing danger of a dark economic and moral future, according to Ortega y Gasset, due partly to the reality constructed by individual profiting.

Theodor W. Adorno utterly thought that his time – middle of last century - was characterized by the lack of measure or symmetry and by barbarism: self criticism of philosophy was the necessary outcome of its failure in facing and depicting reality. As society develops chaotically any form of progress in the positive knowledge of nature, becomes more and more dependent on the commercial exploitative structure of dominant capitalism and what is supposed to be spiritual or philosophical production and criticism becomes more and more subservient to power and social authority, while, in contradiction criticism claims to understand and assess power and authority. In such a context, philosophy appears only as an aspect of knowledge – one of the many faced science and not at all as the main subject of the whole of it.⁷

⁶ Th. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment and Mass Deception”, 7, <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Adorno-Horkheimer-Culture-Industry.pdf>.



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Besides, philosophical criticism opposes metaphysical traditions of the past, as in the case of Panayiotis Kondylis' critique of metaphysics that underlined the historical period starting from Hegel – Nietzsche and up to the middle of the 20th century, with Heidegger and Wittgenstein. Kondylis pointed out that since the beginning of the modern era there had been a rapid development in the western way of thinking, with the climactic effect of technology and industrial economy in the practical everyday life of large populations.⁸

Seeking for a solution to problems mentioned above as causing a threat to our own self subsistence we may once again philosophically question how and by what principles or by what means, for whom and to what ends we should and could change the course of human development⁹ either in a social or in a natural context: judging from historical experience, two of the "loudest" and most "critical" philosophical proposals, are indicated by such terms like that of the *measure* (ancient Greece) and *silence* (India, Europe of the 20th century),¹⁰ emitting a stigma of "desperate" light, warning signals for the destructive and self-destructive human development on the planet. But they also function as a

⁷ "Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed." Th. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966), transl. by E.B. Ashton, RKP, London & New York, 1973, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004, p.3 and Introduction, pp. 3 – 57.

⁸ P. Kondylis, *The new-times critique of metaphysics (Die neuzeitliche Metaphysikkritik)*, publication in Greek, editor Th. Samartzis, Πανεπιστημιακές Εκδόσεις Κρήτης, v. A & B, 2012, pp. 17 – 25 ff.

⁹ W. L. Lee, *Eco-nihilism*, *ibid*, preface.

¹⁰ I refer to the concept of silence with a philosophicolinguistic background in a recent paper of mine ("For an Epilogue. On Teaching Philosophy through Art", *ibid*), that I relate mainly with Wittgenstein, a philosopher and Beckett, a playwright of the 20th century. On the origin of silence in Buddhist worldview and Indian philosophy, see H. Coward, *Language in Indian Philosophy and Religion*, Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2010; for comparisons with Western ontological philosophies, cf. H. Coward, *Derrida and Indian Philosophy*, SUNY Press, 1990, also J. S. O'Leary, "Heidegger and Indian Philosophy", in Eli Franco, *Beyond Orientalism: The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and its Impact on Indian and Cross-Cultural Studies*, published by Motilal Banarsidass, 2007; http://josephsoleary.typepad.com/my_weblog/2006/10/heidegger_and_i.html/



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prophylactic tendency in the very corpus of the intellectual vigor of human culture pointing to a possible remedy of the aforementioned sufferings.

These negative philosophical criticisms may leave as an open salutary possibility, the reassessment of the achievements of ancient Greek civilization and its survivals; I think that this is what was insinuated by P. Kondylis' critical approach of metaphysics, briefly headed as social ontology. In the light of Kondylis' social ontology addressing the fixed substratum of human history that can objectively establish the basis and guarantee for the true knowledge of what diachronically proves true, in order to objectively investigate, and find that epistemological stable sustaining through different perceptions of past civilizations and periods, such as the ancient Greek world, developed many thousands of years ago and in such diverse conditions. Trying to give an answer to the question about the reasons of sustainability and timelessness of classical Greek ideals we derive important epistemological conclusions and exemplary knowledge of the treatment of related concepts and their evolution during the 19th century, which combined philosophical, historical and literary data with intellectual concerns and political debates.¹¹ Inspired by the example of the ancient Greek sociopolitical organization we may *revisit* the world, with a starting point offered to us now by art:¹² art embodying *επιστήμη* and scientific knowledge of nature and the universe [social sciences too].

¹¹ I discuss similar issues in my paper "Marx on Ancient Greece – following Hegel and the Neohegelians - and the problem of Historical Continuity: Kondylis quoted", published in Greek in *Φιλοσοφείν*, v. 7, 2012, pp. 45 - 73.

¹² Along with such major figures of Greek intellectuals of the 20th century: Castoriadis, Papaioannou, Kondylis or Axelos; cf. K. Axelos, *Το άνοιγμα στο επερχόμενο και το άινιγμα της τέχνης*, Nefeli Publications, 2009.



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Concerning the relationships between art and applied science, let us rethink the use of the concept of measure and related concepts in their ancient Greek context: the number appears in religious – metaphysical – philosophical contexts of antiquity with reference to practical applications of an art – τέχνη – of measurement – μετρητική. New conceptual aspects of number are produced – as it is the concept of measure – μέτρον. One of the oldest – even of orphic origin – antitheses or even waving between number as the conceptual principle of everything and number as the denotation of an experiential perceptual being of the world of objects, seems to be reflected in other areas like those of technical, aesthetic and moral uses of the number as measure, middle or harmony and as a mathematical, abstracted and even transcendent idea.¹³ In different historical periods, metaphysics and science, perception and intellect, humanity and mechanism are renowned dipoles in which numbers, measures and mathematical concepts obtain various connotations with a significant philosophical and practical impact.¹⁴

II

Starting from such old findings of the ancient world, now we come to the point to reconsider these relations after many centuries of conflicts and

¹³ 698 F (312 K): «Κέκλυθι, κόδιμ' αριθμέ, πάτερ μακάρων, πάτερ ανδρών», and various commentaries in Aristotle's *Physics A'* and *Metaphysics N'*.

¹⁴ The Orphic doctrines represent a series of various conceptions about the world and can be understood in relation with the whole of religious ideas of the archaic period, according to Nilsson (M. Nilsson, "Early Orphism and Kindred Religious Movements", *The Harvard Theological Review* 28.3 (1935): pp. 181–230; see also R. Parker, "Early Orphism", in *The Greek World*, ed. A. Powell, New York: Routledge, 1995, pp. 483–510). Cf. *Poetae epici Graeci: testimonia et fragmenta. Orphicorum et orphicis similia testimonia et fragmenta*. Pars II. Fasciculus 2, Alberto Bernabé Pajares ed., Walter de Gruyter, 2005.



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oppositions – not only philosophical – between science and metaphysics, art/humanism and technology. A work hypothesis in our proposal is to attempt a reassessment of the relations between members of these dipoles recurrent in history with different content at each time, taking as our principle of interpretation an “anthropological constant”, that, as we suppose, is provided by the practices – the way of life – of people in the respective cultures.

The various ways dipoles of opposites that first appeared in the orphic cult of numbers appear in the history of philosophy show an attempt of conjunction of abstracted and structural logic with experience and the world of practical human life. The Heraclitean dialectic, for example, turns to the inside, in awareness of change that underlies the natural and the human world, but in the form of measure necessary in public discourse. Here social and political behavior of man, what relates to the field of morals and politics are posited in line with the logic and regularity of the world variability. Heraclitus assembled and synthesized concepts such as *rhythm* and *harmony*. Shifting to the interior of man, the thinker poet enriches his secular verse with an early kind of endoscopy mutated with the human face and what can define it.¹⁵

Allied to the moral turn and the psychological dimension of the measure of the Heraclitean dialectics adds to the meaning of justice, a virtue of paramount

¹⁵ (DK B30) κόσμον τόνδε, τὸν αὐτὸν ἀπάντων, οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ' ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται πῦρ ἀεὶζῶον, ἀπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ ἀποσβεννύμενον μέτρα.

(DK B31) πῦρὸς τροπαὶ πρῶτον θάλασσα, θαλάσσης δὲ τὸ μὲν ἥμισυ γῆ, τὸ δὲ ἥμισυ πρηστήρ ... θάλασσα διαχέεται καὶ μετρέεται εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον ὁκοῖος πρόσθεν ἦν ἢ γενέσθαι γῆ

(DK B90) πῦρὸς τε ἀνταμοιβῆ τὰ πάντα καὶ πῦρ ἀπάντων ὄκωσπερ χρυσοῦ χρήματα καὶ χρημάτων χρυσός.



importance for ancient Greek thought. Justice based on the Pythagorean conception of the harmonized connection of parts of the soul conjuncts, in analogy, all relationships between people and the city. Here, the Orphic transcendence is tempered by chthonic *Dike* and the human law, i.e. the rules governing social behavior according to the standards, order and the laws of nature and the world.¹⁶

Justice, modeled by the divine laws, is realized in human societies, as a balance, measure and harmony in both the human relations and the natural world. According to Plato, a benevolent city is courageous, wise and fair (*Republic* 427 e) and that something to be good means to be valiant, wise and fair; justice therefore can be defined if we know what *phronesis* is, as valor and wisdom at the same time.¹⁷ These dimensions of justice in the diverse range of Greek thought are better understood taking into account the democratic structure of the Athenian state during the century of Pericles and Thucydides, where among many, democracy and meritocracy should prevail, since even the paupers were not excluded from the official ranks if they had something to offer to the city; free citizens shared equally the same educational and moral ideals, like bravery or skill.

¹⁶ This proportional relationship has also the character of determination, since divine logic produces the human law and mortals must follow the traces of God (cf. Homer, *Odyssey* II, 405 «μετ' ἔχνια βαῖνε θεοῖο» and «κατ' ἔχνια βαῖνε θεοῖο» in Joannis Stobaei sententiae ex thesauris Graecorum delectae ff., Frosch, 1575, Bavarian State Library, digitalized 2016, p.163; Cf. *Philo* v. VII, transl by F. H. Colson, LOEB Classical Library, 320, [1937] 1998, Harvard University Press, *On the Decalogue*, XX, pp. 93 – 101). See also P. Grabinger (Π. Γράβιγγερ), *Ο Πυθαγόρας και η μυστική διδασκαλία του Πυθαγορισμού*, Ιδεοθέατρον publications, p. 121.

¹⁷ See also K. Bormann, *Πλάτων*, Kardamitsas publications, p. 209 ff.



Justice is considered by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as the guarantee of people's rights to what they themselves acquired (also in *Rhet.* 1. 9. 7 «ἔστι δὲ δικαιοσύνη μὲν ἀρετὴ δι' ἣν τὰ αὐτῶν ἕκαστοι ἔχουσι»), and is distinguished in arithmetic – *αριθμητική* – and distributive – *διανεμητική* – or geometric – *γεωμετρική*.¹⁸ The application of justice dictates a relationship of obedience to divine rules and according to the Thucydidean political vision, by natural necessity the law of the strongest is prevailing, because a similar rank applies in the level of gods.¹⁹ In such a socio-political framework the pursuit of beauty with measure – *φιλοκαλία* – and philosophy without self-indulgence, combined harmoniously with art, are established ideals among the Athenian citizens. Athenians use wealth to produce work, not to boast, and do not consider poverty itself shameful but only if one is not trying hard to avoid it. It is up to the citizens to care for what is familiar and common; while dealing with a different work, they are well aware of the common assumptions of society. It is well known that anyone who is not participating in the common affairs is not considered just as a peaceable citizen but simply as a useless one. Athenian citizens achieved to calculate the consequences of their actions,²⁰ and, because of their education,

¹⁸ *Ethic. Nik.* E and 1139a 6.15: “ὥστε τὸ λογιστικὸν ἐστὶν [15] ἓν τι μέρος τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος. ληπτέον ἄρ' ἑκατέρου τούτων τίς ἢ βελτίστη ἔξις· αὕτη γὰρ ἀρετὴ ἑκατέρου, ἢ δ' ἀρετὴ πρὸς τὸ ἔργον τὸ οἰκεῖον.” Cf. *Polit.* E1, 1301b29-33.

¹⁹ Thuc. E. 105.1.

²⁰ Thuc. B 40.



responded to more activities with grace and skill²¹ being able to easily succeed in them.²²

Art poetic or constructive, political activity too for Plato, are *τέχναι* – arts interconnected between them, since they are belonging to the general category of *art*, meaning the ability to do something that requires a skill, expertise and knowledge. Plato divides the arts into arts of workmanship or acquisitive – *κτητικήν* - and those of producing or creative - *ποιητικήν*.²³ He places side by side painting to weaving and architecture to the making of furniture, without discriminating, as we are used today, fine from useful arts. It seems though that Plato implicitly accepts a distinction between art and craft. In the *Republic* and the *Laws* whenever there is reference to the superior art or skill of political activity, Plato compares it with the composition of a tragedy and with painting a sculpture or a piece of painting. *Πολιτική* described by Plato in the *Statesman* as art as well as in the early works, like *Menon*, as the science of leadership, and in the course of evolution of his views, shows a reflection on the proper organization and orderliness of civil society obtaining an ethic practical content that tends increasingly to identify the worldview of antiquity altogether.

²¹ Ibid 41.

²² C. Castoriades, *Η ελληνική ιδιαιτερότητα*, τ. Γ', *Θουκυδίδης, η ισχύς και το δίκαιο*, Kritiki publications, 2011, pp. 190-191.

²³ *Sophist*, 219 b – c.



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In the last book of Cornelius Castoriadis, published in 1999 – the author transcribes seven seminars he had given in the *Ecole des hautes études en Sciences Sociales* in 1986, analyzing Plato’s *Statesman*. As pointed out by V. Kalfas in a thorough critical presentation of the book, Castoriadis subscribes to the platonic affirmation of the spoken word and the value of philosophy in *Phaedrus* 276d, where the true philosophy is “the living word, written with knowledge of the soul”, while even the best philosophical writings are to be thought as nothing but memos prepared for the sake of play. Castoriadis’ thinking in this book is influenced by the Platonic text of the *Statesman*, whereby democratic society is being self regulated through the underlying political activity, municipality and totality of citizens and, given the substantive distance between the dead letters (laws) and the constantly alternating reality it is supported that every law must be constantly capable of change. This is how the importance of continuous self-constitution of the political system is being stressed and analyzed by Castoriadis’ reading of Plato.²⁴

Respectively, and in that regard Castoriadis notes down that in one of Plato’s later dialogues, *Timaeus*, the *χώρα* is introduced as a radical factor of indeterminacy of matter while his *7th Letter* expressly denies the possibility of secure knowledge of the first principles. Key to the appreciation of these conclusions is to understand the importance of the platonic art of dialectic and the concept of the measure as one of its main logical presuppositions. Finding the

²⁴ On Plato’s “*Statesman*”, translated by D.A. Curtis, Stanford University Press, 2002. V. Kalfas’ critical presentation of the Greek edition, *Polis Publications*, Athens, 2001, in *Eleftherotypia*, 1.3.2002, pp. 8 -10.



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measure, a difficult task, requires as necessary the balance between opposing forces to prevail so that community is conditioned and preserved. The difficulty in finding the measure requires also knowledge of a specific art of measuring which is likened to weaving, the art of warp and weft. Exceeding the measure is first of all a source of disruption of political life – that risks the cohesion of the city in a similar way that the fire of Heraclitus can be destructive, while the value of the middle pointed out by Democritus and Aristotle is also stressed as a unique “remedy” to any lack of measure or hyperbole.

Aristotle indeed defines the middle as the measure in every excess or lack, both in each person for the sake of personal happiness, and in the political acts of rulers and ethical operations, which will succeed when the pursuit of the middle in our actions become a daily habit. Application then of the middle as a measure of daily life is not just a technical matter, but a comparative art that has to do with the knowledge of the substance of things. Wanted in this art is the achievement of symmetry, accuracy and the continuous division of disparate species and things, incorporating all associated data to the substance of a kind, which also constitutes the benchmark of different sizes together. It is a methodology applied in principle in all arts and sciences, but eminently and most of all in politics.

The model and prototype of this regulating, harmonizing, symmetric and calculating art is nothing else than the art of weaving, a traditional handicraft applied by women. Its operation is being described in detail by ancient authors, while Herodotus makes it a pivotal point of cultural antagonism between Persians and Peons – a Greek population of that time.²⁵



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Additionally, one needs to bring forth the analogy between bodily health and political order as a balanced situation to be revealed and activated by the application of a therapeutic kind of justice – *δικαιοσύνη* – presupposing that there is a determining natural limit behind all human matters: at various instances of the *Republic* Socrates considers the city – *πόλιν* – as a naturally based and grown entity.²⁶

Martin Heidegger discusses Aristotle's distinction between making (*ποίησις*) and growing (*φύσις*) meaning that the former is not the same with making or fabricating but rather with allowing something to appear, to become present or revealing it: there is a substantial and basic difference between generating something by constructing it in accordance with a *παράδειγμα* or *εἶδος*, e.g a table, and recreating naturally one's own *εἶδος* without any external help or intervention, as in the case of an animal – *ζῷον*.²⁷

Combining the Platonic with the Aristotelian view of *φύσις* vs *τέχνη*, Timothy Wilson, in one of his recent papers, considers philosophy as the art of unfolding of *δίκη*, inherent in all natural beings, as their internal truth, *οὐσία*, in the purposeful –

²⁵ Herodotus Book 5, *Terpsichore*, 12 – 14.

²⁶ *Πόλις*, exactly like the human body, is considered as a self healing entity out of its own natural sources, by excising what is diseased or incurably corrupt for the good of the whole (III.409e-410a). *Πόλις* is also a being stemming and growing out of *φύσις*, following a cumulative process of improvement (IV.424a). Invalids without restraint in giving up a vicious – and unhealthy way of life – become a negative example for the self regulating system of *πόλις* Socrates is suggesting (IV.425e-426a). On the contrary, “when the natural principle, by which we live, breaks down in confusion, then a man thinks - wrongly - that he can, of his own choice, avoid what will rid him of wickedness and injustice, the acquisition of justice and excellence, without ever achieving to be cured” (IV.445a-b).

²⁷ M. Heidegger (1976), «On the Being and Conception of Phusis in Aristotle's Physics B, 1» (transl. Th. J. Sheehan, *Man and World*, v. 9.3, 1976, pp. 219 – 270), pp. 260 – 261.



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artistic sketching of the *εἶδος*, a *τέχνη* of making something in conformity with – *ὁμοίωσις* – the original beauty of natural beings, exactly where ethics and aesthetics coincide and converge (*Rep.* III.401a-d). This is not to be meant as an imitation of a prototype, but rather as the representation of the internal truth of revealing all concealed beauty.

A major point in the Socratic use of art in the *Republic* is the exaltation of the importance of measure and justice by the artist who is to be considered just in the sense of achieving what is good and of course in opposition to Thrasymachus' support of an egoistic type of limitless strife for power as the natural disposition of man for his self-serving advancement competing and outdoing for the sake of competition, without a standard, that is beyond the command of measure in one's actions and art. In that Socrates, does not follow the principle of fight and antagonism among craftsmen in the way exemplified by Hesiod but puts forth instead a different principle that of the good in tuning and harmonizing as the good musician is attending to while striving for the correct tone (*Rep.* I.349e).²⁸

In the modern era empiricism and enlightenment determined the practical and aesthetic relationship of man with the world of objects, while 19th century dialectics re composed theory with practice on new grounds by establishing a rather pure distinction between the two. Reuniting modernity with ancient philosophical origins one needs to examine the concepts of science – *επιστήμη* and

²⁸ Ησιόδου *Ἔργα καὶ ἡμέραι*, 25 – 26: «ἀγαθὴ δ' Ἔρις ἦδε βροτοῖσιν. καὶ κεραμεὺς κεραμεῖ κοτέει καὶ τέκτονι τέκτων, καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῷ φθονέει καὶ αἰοιδὸς αἰοιδῷ.» Cf. B. Mitchell & J.R. Lucas, 2002, *An Engagement with Plato's Republic: A Companion to the Republic*, Oxford, Oxford UP.



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art/craft – *τέχνη*, that thinkers like Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus and the Stoics informed with such a contradictory content as to allow the dialectic relationship of theory and practice to be understood today. For Aristotle, practice – art/craft requires a kind of particular knowledge of an epistemic status, knowledge conforming to the standards of practice; Plato too, provides us with a most interesting background of politics as art exercised by the philosopher ruling the city. For the Stoics, morality is nothing more than the practical art of leading human life on the grounds of understanding nature and the laws ruling the universe.²⁹

So, the optimistic outlook of the young Nietzsche in praising the ancient Greek artistic values and standards in his early texts³⁰ may be seen as an eclectic but also deeply influential modern composition of older dialectic dipoles: Nietzsche keeps the thread of the Heraclitean dialectic of measure as the limit and order of a universal balance. The same process is dramatized in tragedy with an exemplary of work Aeschylus' *Oresteia*: there, the blood revengeful justice of the Furies is being transformed and institutionalized into the lawful contest of Orestes' trial under the inspection of Athena.³¹ The Nietzschean aesthetic -

²⁹ Cf. R. Parry in <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/episteme-techne/>

³⁰ *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), in Nietzsche, *Basic Writings*. edit. and transl. W. Kaufmann, New York: Modern Library, 1966, pp. 3-144. Cf. "Homer on Competition" (1872), transl. C. Diethe, in Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. K. Ansell-Pearson, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994, pp.187-94 (v. I Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1988, pp. 783-930); *Unpublished Writings* (1872-74), in Nietzsche, *Unpublished Writings*, from the Period of Unfashionable Observations, transl. R. T. Gray, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995; Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (1873), transl. M. Cowan, Washington, D.C., Regnery Publishing, 1962; *Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* (1874), in Nietzsche 1983, *Untimely Meditations*, transl. R.J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, pp. 59-123. *Schopenhauer as Educator* (1874), in Nietzsche, 1983, *ibid*, pp. 127-94.

³¹ See A. Lazou, "Φόβος – εκδίκηση – θεραπεία: μια ανθρωποφιλοσοφική προσέγγιση του τραγικού χορού στο παράδειγμα των *Ευμενίδων*", in *Orchesis and Athletics* (eds A. Lazou – I. Mastora),



therapeutic proposal is inspired by the two gods, as symbols of the two natural powers in strife, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, incorporated in the tragic philosophical art of the philosopher - artist. In this way, Aristotelian catharsis (*Poetics* 49b 25-7; *Politics* 1342a 1-18) obtains a specific content as the artistic practice of putting a limit in all excessive or disruptive human emotions and realities. Still, the pivotal for modernity and contemporariness consequence of these issues is the political impact of art and poetry in society in general and in modern society more particularly.

Several thinkers of the 19th and 20th century have stressed the platonic origin of the philosophical hypothesis about the political function of art as well as the conception of philosophy itself as a political operation – thousands of years before the emergence of Marxism: philosophy has direct political effects and dynamics not only as a form of criticism but also as a practical activity; so, by means of art, as a balancing process, the Socratic opposition between philosophy and politics could be overcome.³² Nietzsche recognizes the Socratic basis of Plato's exclusion of the artists in his ideal city but at the same time grasps the opportunity to reverse this position in favor of a political as well as artistic philosophy he –

Arnaoutisbooks, Athens, 2015, pp. 93 – 104. Cf. “The law court, the theatre and the assembly were ways in which the Greeks channeled the violence of natural strife into socially productive forms. In all three, the conflict of blood becomes the conflict of accounts [logoi] of what is just or good. Each account is put into its proper limit through this conflict; the partial nature of an argument is highlighted in its confrontation with another argument. Tragedy, through the use of ambiguous words, or words with multiple levels of meaning on different semantic registers, highlights the conflicts between characters and within nature itself.” T. H. Wilson, “Nietzsche's Early Political Thinking: “Homer On Competition””, in *Minerva - An Internet Journal of Philosophy* 9 (2005), pp. 177-235, p. 206.

³² C. H. Zuckert, (1996), *Postmodern Platos: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Strauss, Derrida*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, pp.156 ff. L. Strauss (1959), *What is Political Philosophy? and Other Essays*. Glencoe: The Free Press of Glencoe, pp. 153 ff.



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paradoxically - also finds in Plato's theory of competition – agonistic – that he considers as a practical attainment of the arts - *τέχναι*.³³ Philosophers, the failed rulers in the literal sense, may become successful transformative sociopolitical moderators as Dionysian wise artists.³⁴

Considering the pessimistic approach adopted by certain of the most representative thinkers and philosophers, we may proceed with a reassessment of the values informing younger and lifelong learning educational practices in Europe today. Again, a straightforward connotation for education today is the challenge to find ways and techniques for the cultivation of values that respond to contemporary social needs for science, multiculturalism, technology and sustainability, keeping as well as respecting at the same time traditional moral achievements and ideas that conform to humanitarian ideals without risking environmental balance. Going back to the ancient Greek philosophical and educational traditions and goals seems to be more than an urgent task and quest of our society.³⁵

³³ Fr. Nietzsche, "The Greek State" (1871), transl. C. Diethe, in Fr. Nietzsche 1994, *ibid*, pp. 176-86 (v. I, Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, *ibid*, pp.764-78). "For Nietzsche, therefore, competition has a political significance – the forging of the unity and identity of a particular community – and a transpolitical significance – the forging of a "republic of geniuses" on the part of artists and philosophers across the expanse of the tradition." T. H. Wilson, *ibid*, p. 228.

³⁴ T. H. Wilson, *ibid*, p. 229. Cf. A. Lazou, "Πέρα από το χορό: σύγχρονες αισθητικοθεραπευτικές χρήσεις του χορού στο φως της νιτσεϊκής σκέψης, in *Φιλοσοφείν*, v. 8, 2013, pp. 90 – 106.

³⁵ "Like Damon of Oa, encouraging our youth to study and even educate themselves in the spirit and practice of ancient Greek culture – reviving the therapeutic and humanistic impact of these dances - may be philosophically justified, both in the analytical and in the historical track, as a therapeutic restoration of the axiological integration of our societies and a safeguard of the future of mankind.", A. Lazou, "The contemporary value of *Orchesis*: A tribute to Evangelhos Moutsopoulos", in *Orchesis and Athletics* (eds.) A. Lazou – I. Mastora, *ibid*, p. 11.



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