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The Central Role of Narration in Education

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Editorial

The present 13th issue of the *Multidisciplinary Journal of School Education* is the first one to be co-edited by the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow and the Abat Oliba CEU University in Barcelona. It was prepared by an enlarged Editorial Board in collaboration with a large international team of authors and reviewers, to whom we are greatly indebted. One readjustment we have made with an eye to the Spanish and Latin American educational researchers and practitioners is including occasional texts in Spanish, while maintaining English – the most widespread medium of international communication – as the main language of the journal. We are continuing the journal's tradition of publishing thematic issues, featuring original research articles related to school education. However, we have also added a new section which contains miscellaneous articles in the field of school education, which do not fall within the scope of the current thematic section but are nonetheless timely and worth publishing. The last section, Reviews and Reports, includes book reviews and conference reports. We are also going to develop this section by soliciting teachers' reports and reflections on their pedagogical practices. The next issue will hopefully inaugurate the publication of such texts.

The main theme of the current issue is 'The Central Role of Narration in Education'. As a subject of discussion it dates back to antiquity. One of the earliest formulations of what we might call the epistemological potential of a fictitious tale was Aristotle's idea of mimesis. Understood as an imitation of reality in general, and human reality in particular, mimesis provides us with a basic explanation of why and how a set of invented events and acts carried out by invented characters may nevertheless efficiently convey some nonfictional truths concerning human behavior and human nature, moral nature included. Artistic and, particularly, literary illustrations of basic truths concerning the individual and social development of a person do not only supply valid and penetrating insights into

moral reality, but also deeply touch the affective and motivational dimension of the recipient. Powerful artistic works do this in a distinct though mysterious way, called *catharsis* by Aristotle. In his view, the identification of the recipient with the character (compassion) would entail a fear of the consequences of the protagonist's tragic error and thus generate in a reader a desire to avoid such a mistake in his or her own life. Is this not what one is invited to feel when seeing the consequences of the lazy and short-sighted behavior of the grasshopper in Aesop's fable *The Ant and the Grasshopper*? Or when contemplating the terrible consequences of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's disordered ambition for power and honor? Or, yet more recently, the definitive collapse and eventual self-destruction of Dorian Gray as a consequence of his adoption of a neo-hedonistic, socially insouciant and unscrupulous lifestyle? Examples could be multiplied nearly *ad infinitum* and they, certainly, would not exhaust all the possibilities of grasping the pedagogical potential of fictitious narrative work. For example, surprisingly enough, in his *Poetics*, Aristotle does not even mention the possibility of educating moral character through a positive example, i.e. obtaining in the reader the effect of desiring to imitate a virtuous character rather than avoiding the negative consequences of a vicious one, which seems to be an evident possibility too.

The vindication of the abovementioned educational potential of art and literature was heavily questioned and resolutely refuted by most of the twentieth century schools of literary theory and analysis, such as diverse formalism, structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstructivism, etc. Nonetheless, some authors like Paul Ricoeur, even in those times that were unfavorable for such types of theoretical approach, patiently developed a neo-Aristotelian theory, including the concept of triple mimesis (cf. Ricoeur, *Time and Narration*). More recently, some influential Anglo-Saxon theorists, such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Kristján Kristjánsson or David Carr (whose paper 'Narrative, Knowledge and Moral Character in Art and Literature' we are proud to present in this issue of our journal), have made outstanding contributions to upholding and refreshing the proposition of the central role of narration in the development of moral character, and, in a broader sense, in most aspects and at all stages of the

education process in general. This has been established both theoretically and practically (cf. The Knightly Virtues Project of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtue).

The reading of this issue of the *Multidisciplinary Journal of School Education* will, therefore, provide the reader with intellectually inspiring material for reflection and further development of both theoretical and practical inquiries into this ancient and, at the same time, incredibly current challenge of recognizing, understanding and using the breathtaking educational potential of literary narrations.

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Articles

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Narrative, Knowledge and Moral Character in Art and Literature

Abstract: Although the term 'narrative' has been subject to very loose usage, it should be clear that scientific theories cannot be considered as such in the same sense as literary and artistic works. But this clearly calls the latter into serious epistemic question. On the one hand, we are often drawn to saying that agents have learned or come to know (morally or otherwise) something from literary of other artistic fictions; on the other hand, their fictional status seems to preclude regarding this as knowledge. Drawing on insights from Plato's Socratic and other dialogues, this paper argues that such learning from art and literature should be deemed genuine knowledge of an epistemically uncontroversial kind.

Keywords: narrative, knowledge, moral character, art, literature

Knowledge and narrative

Despite arguments to the contrary of emotivists and sentimentalists, morality is clearly a function of rationality and not available to non-human creatures. Socrates, arguably the founder of western philosophy, identified (moral) virtue with knowledge and his great pupil Plato proceeded to give a highly influential – though not incontestable (Gettier, 1967) – account of knowledge as *justified true belief* (Plato, 1961b). On this view, knowledge needs to satisfy three conditions. First, it assumes belief: we could not say that someone knows that p, but does not believe it.

Secondly, while it is quite possible to believe what is false, beliefs need to be true in order to qualify as knowledge: one could not be said to know a falsehood. But thirdly, insofar as knowing in any substantial sense would seem to need some *understanding* of why what is known is so, it would also appear to require what Plato called a *logos* or justification.

Leaving aside (for the moment) more particular doubts about any prospects of moral knowledge, the most serious challenge to knowledge as such rests on scepticism regarding objective truth. In his dialogue *Theaetetus*, Plato addressed this challenge in the form of the sophist Protagoras' doctrine that 'man is the measure of all things' (Plato, 1961b). By this, Protagoras seems to have meant that since all perception is subjective and varies from person to person, there can be no independent way of resolving perceptual disagreements, so that any claims to objective (mind-independent) knowledge and truth are virtually idle or meaningless. In perhaps the most compelling philosophical 'knock-down' argument of all time, however, Plato (or Socrates) points out that Protagoras' argument is inherently paradoxical. The only reason we might hold that there cannot be objective truth on which to ground knowledge is the truth of this claim. But if the claim is true, then it is *ipso facto* false – precisely because, while denying that there can be objective truths, it seems to be itself an instance of such. And, of course, if the claim is false we have no reason to believe it either. For Plato, truth is therefore an ineradicable presupposition of any and all rational or meaningful human discourse and enquiry.

Despite this, the spectre of general philosophical scepticism concerning the possibility of grounding knowledge in some mind-independent conception of truth has continued to haunt philosophy – and, indeed, has been (at least in the present view) a major scourge of the last two centuries. The main drift in this direction takes off with the response to Kant of major nineteenth century German idealists, notably G. W. F. Hegel. Essentially, idealists reject Kant's 'noumenon' – construed as the objective basis of reality underpinning sensible experience — as a conceptually redundant notion. If there can be no knowledge of things in themselves beyond how they appear to us, then the only knowledge to which we may lay claim is that of appearances as variably interpreted by

human observers at different times and places. However, unlike earlier empirical idealism, nineteenth century idealists hold that human understanding of the world is not a matter of personal construction, but of social or cultural inheritance: individual agents come to believe or to claim to know what the particular social constituencies into which they have been initiated have taught them to hold. Still, what is denied is the possibility of any 'mind-independent' knowledge of reality as it is 'in itself' beyond such particular social perspectives: there cannot be, as it has been said, any 'view from nowhere' (Nagel, 1989).

It would be difficult to overstate the influence of Hegelian and other idealism or anti-realism on nineteenth and twentieth century western philosophy in both its main Anglo-American and continental European traditions. Hegelian idealism had immediate impact on Marxism and American pragmatism, the first of which reduces human knowledge to locally dominant ideology and the second of which measures it in terms of its practical utility for human problem solving. In turn, Marxism (combined with no less constructivist phenomenology and psychoanalysis) has had a formative influence on post-structuralism, post-modernism and the neo-idealism of recent British and north American moral and social theorists – for example, MacIntyre (1981) and Taylor (1989, 2007) – and pragmatism profoundly shaped the post-empiricist constructivism of modern analytical philosophy of science (into which Wittgenstein's later philosophy of meaning as use is also problematically mixed).

For present purposes, however, the main point is that attention effectively shifts from Plato's truth criterion of knowledge to his *logos* or justification condition: the key epistemic question is no longer that of whether this or that knowledge claim is true, but of the hermeneutical or interpretative role that any such claim plays in explaining or accounting for human social, cultural or practical life and conduct. This is perhaps nowhere more conspicuous than in the preference of post-structuralist or post-modern (anti-theoretical or 'post-truth') philosophy for characterising knowledge, not as descriptive of a humanly independent reality, but in terms of (inevitably contestable) stories or *narratives* (or, in the native language of J-F. Lyotard (1984) – a prominent spokesman for this view –

as *recits*). On this view, all forms of human discourse – scientific, historical, religious, moral, literary – are best regarded as locally constructed stories that are more or less meaningful or useful for this or that identity-sustaining or practical human purpose. On this view, we might say that the texts that support (respectively) creationism and evolutionary theory in recent bitter US controversies are merely rival narratives between which one is free to choose according to conviction or taste.

While this is admittedly a broad-brush picture of latter day epistemological developments, there can be little doubt that much highly influential philosophical theorising has moved in a direction from which conclusions of this sort are derivable. In the present view, however, such drift is no less plainly epistemically confused, indiscriminate and unhelpful. Clearly, evolutionary theory – and science in general – is not at all narrative in anything like the sense of creative literature in which we might well include the great creation myths of past cultural inheritance. Indeed, it is evidently no less mistaken to regard evolutionary theory as a narrative in this sense, than it is to take the stories of the Book of *Genesis* – or other pre-modern texts – as accounts of the actual (factual) historical origins of the world and human life. Here, it is significant that evolutionary theory stands or falls – that is, it might be *falsified* if never (at least according to modern philosophy of science) proved finally true – by appeal to empirical tests and evidence, whereas it would be seriously wrongheaded to try to provide such evidence of God's agency in past or present human or worldly affairs. In brief, evolutionary and other science aims to discover evidence-based knowledge of an objective mind-independent reality, but religious texts do not.

But isn't this just to miss the point of what idealists, anti-realists and narrative mongers from the Greek sophists onwards have argued: that there simply is no mind-independent evidence or 'fact' upon which knowledge might be based; precisely, that there can be no objective Platonic truth condition of knowledge? For such anti-realists, the so-called facts of ordinary observation or scientific theory are no less subjective – or, at least, socially constructed – than anything that human imagination might invent. But this is clearly confusion on a large scale. In the first place,

all normal humans do commonly distinguish between what actually exists or materially occurs from fictions, dreams and illusions, and life would be impossible if they did not. On a more philosophical or theoretical level, however, there seems here to be serious muddle between familiar but rather different senses of knowledge. In this regard, we clearly refer to *both* the deliverances of sense perception and the theories that purport to explain these as knowledge. Thus, we may say that we know *that* caterpillars turn into butterflies or tadpoles into frogs and also claim biological knowledge of *why* this is so.

We can have clear knowledge of the facts, but be mistaken about our explanations. Our theories of why caterpillars and tadpoles metamorphose may well be quite erroneous – in which case we really do not *know* why such events occur – and, indeed, it is an inherent feature of the drift of explanation that we may never have fixed and final knowledge of the 'whys' of things. This is the basic truth of familiar non-realist claims that we do not or cannot have incorrigible knowledge of things. But that is far from saying that we do not or cannot have knowledge of how things are in the world. On the contrary, it is the very purpose of theoretical knowledge to explain why the world is actually as it is: for example, it is precisely the task of biological explanations to help us understand the plain fact that tadpoles turn into frogs. Of course, we can also be wrong about how the world is: but this is quite another sort of mistake from failure to explain why or how it is as it is, and there are more straightforward and familiar procedures whereby such perceptual mistakes may be corrected. But that tadpoles do turn into frogs is something we need not generally doubt.

The prospects of moral knowledge

Thus, despite liability to (in both cases corrigible) human error about how things actually are and why they are so, there can plainly be accuracy in the former case and better and worse explanation in the second – and greater correctness and objectivity in both these respects is the goal towards which scientific knowledge aims. In that sense, if it is at all useful

to refer to scientific theories as narratives, they are clearly not so in anything like the same sense as the great imaginative output of other human literary culture – such as, for example, the stories of Bible and Shakespeare. In this regard, it is common to distinguish such literatures from the findings of science as 'fictions'. Indeed, far from being narrative mongers about scientific knowledge, many if not most people today – outside, that is, of academic philosophy seminars – are probably inclined to disregard anything other than the evidence-based findings of empirical science as credible sources of genuine knowledge. It may well be the prevailing contemporary view – at least in western economically developed liberal democracies – that while science is a reliable source of objective knowledge, most or all other cultural narratives of religion, art and literature are not.

Generally, indeed, the problem here might be said to be that of about *what* such narratives could or might count as knowledge. Essentially, this issue would appear to face two key difficulties. The first is precisely that of the epistemic role of narratives that are not directly descriptive of (empirical) reality. Leaving aside all implausible claims that the religious texts of *Genesis* or the *Mahabharata* are true accounts of historical events, it would probably be agreed by most educated people that the stories of Ovid or the plays of Shakespeare are ancient myths or imaginative fictions that do not describe any actual past events. However, the most obvious line of reply to this objection – that such myths and stories, while not literally true, are nevertheless sources of significant moral, spiritual or religious knowledge or understanding – is liable to the no less common modern objection that any such 'understanding' can only be 'normative' and/or locally constructed and therefore lack the impersonal and universal truth of genuine scientific knowledge. While some may believe that the stories of *Genesis* enshrine significant moral or spiritual truths, such truth is bound to be contested and must therefore fall well short of anything much worth calling knowledge.

Taking the former issue first, the grammatical, semantic and aesthetic aspects of non-empirical human discourses are clearly highly complex and perennial sources of conceptual, ethical and practical confusion.

While all human language – descriptive no less than non-descriptive – is rich in non-literal and figurative idioms and tropes of analogy, simile, metaphor, allegory and parable, such usage looms especially large in the imaginative constructs of culturally formative narratives (myth, legend, folk-tale and so on) and in the more obvious fictions of poets, dramatists and novelists. But insofar as such devices are general features of human language, it is not always easy to tell whether a given discourse is engaged in moral or spiritual instruction, science or history (if not just plain entertainment) – or some complex mixture of these. Thus, for example, while (educated) modern people would generally agree that Greek myths, the Arthurian legends and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are (at least mostly) human fictions, there is less evident consensus (at least in cultures of Christian heritage) about *Genesis*, the royal 'histories' of *Kings* and the (often factually inconsistent) events recounted in the Christian gospels.

Generally, however, the grammatical drift of discourses and narratives not primarily concerned with direct description of empirical reality is subjunctive, conditional or hypothetical more than indicative: it is closer to what is called, in the jargon of philosophers, 'counterfactual' usage. Precisely, such narratives either explicitly or implicitly take the form 'what if…' or 'suppose that this was the case… and invite – again either explicitly or implicitly – hearers or readers to consider or explore the implications or consequences of so supposing. Moreover, there is usually a normative dimension to such non-empirical discourses and narratives in which moral imperatives are invariably implicated. So, a given narrative of this kind may move from supposing that thus and so is the case, to a consideration of the consequences that might be expected to follow from such supposed actions or events to some (again either explicit or implicit) moral or spiritual evaluation of both action and consequences.

We may turn to the Christian gospels for a fairly good example of this. For while there may still be much modern disagreement about whether the events of the life of Christ related by the gospels are history, myth or legend, few would disagree that the parables attributed to Jesus are stories of non-literal meaning or import. One of the most famous and popular of Jesus' parables is the story of the prodigal son in which a young man

leaves home and squanders his inheritance in 'riotous living' returning to his family home only when his money has run out and he is starving. On his return, he is joyfully welcomed by his father ('For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'), but met with hostility and resentment by his older brother who had remained faithfully working for his father on the family estate. While in Luke's gospel this parable is apparently generally related by Jesus to his disciples and to hostile Pharisees, its meaning – and judgement on the elder begrudging son – is evident enough.

However, in Franco Zeffirelli's notable TV adaptation of the gospel story entitled *Jesus of Nazareth* (Zeffirelli, 1977): co-written with the distinguished British novelist Anthony Burgess), Jesus is depicted as telling this story to the tax-collector Matthew (soon to become a disciple of Jesus) and his riotous friends at the latter's home to which he has been (frivolously) invited. The fisherman Simon (soon to be renamed Peter) has refused to enter the home of the sinner Matthew, but eavesdrops on the parable from the doorway. As Jesus concludes the story, it dawns on Matthew and Peter that the story is about (both of) *them*: Matthew is the prodigal younger son and Simon Peter his pharisaical elder brother. The scene concludes with Peter tearfully embracing Matthew with the words 'I am such a stupid man'. But the point of this almost certainly made-up story is clear enough: all men (people) are in one way or another sinners who have strayed from the right path: and all are also prone to cast the first stone at others; to point to the speck in the eye of their neighbour, whilst ignoring the beams in their own.

All the same, it may well be said that the point of this story is epistemically questionable. In the famous (or notorious) judgement of David Hume (1985), since it does not refer to or describe any observable matter of fact (or express any necessarily related ideas), it hardly amounts to knowledge or truth in any robust sense. Moreover, even if it did, it is still not clear how it might ground the plainly normative conclusions that it seems intended to support. Insofar as the implied normative judgement of the gospel story – that it is generally proper to be non- judgemental and forgiving of others – it is evidently not beyond contest or controversy.

The story undoubtedly carries a good deal of ideological (Christian) baggage and one can certainly envisage some non-Christians – for example, Nietzscheans – taking considerable exception to any such morality as servile and spineless. But even from the perspective of secular sociological morality, it might seem reasonable to hold that morality is no more than a system of socially constructed rules for the effective functioning of human social orders. In this light, private or public censure of irresponsible behaviour might well seem indispensable for reinforcing such rules. But the key point is that it is hard to see how any essentially contestable normative judgement might be grounded in evidence-based knowledge or truth (rather than, say, local taste or convenience) as such.

A Platonic view of moral character and knowledge

Much modern ethics has followed the Humean formulation of the problem of knowledge and morality. Human reason may have knowledge of the world insofar as it can correctly distinguish truth from falsehood: but morality belongs to the sphere of action – which has its source in desire and will rather than reason – and no amount of factual knowledge can logically determine for agents what they should will or desire. For Hume, the epistemic deliverances of sense and reason are entirely limited to serving or satisfying the instrumental purposes of essentially non-rational desire. However, the first ever serious philosophical attempt to address this issue is that of Plato in his Socratic and other dialogues. Under the spell of Socrates, Plato is evidently persuaded that morality or virtue as exhibited in justice is rooted in knowledge as the grasp of truth, but he also worries about what kind of knowledge this could be. Thus, for example, many of the early Socratic dialogues consider and reject the idea that it is possible to construe the knowledge of (moral) virtue on the models of theoretical or scientific knowledge (of, say, medicine) or practical expertise (of, say, navigating or boat-building).

In Plato's *Symposium* (1961a), however, this issue is directly addressed in the context of a discussion of the nature of human desire, love or

attachment. In terms somewhat problematic to modern moral sensibilities, the *Symposium* focuses largely on the character of love and desire in the realm of local (ancient Greek) homo-erotic affairs between younger and older more experienced men. Perhaps conceding to the temper and conventions of the time, Plato's familiar mouthpiece Socrates does not directly question or condemn such associations (though one may suspect, from what seems said of Socrates elsewhere in the dialogues, that he may have taken a rather dim view of them), but apparently focuses more on the aesthetics of such relationships. Allegedly reporting the views of the mysterious priestess Diotima – with whom he claims to have had prior discussion on the topic of love and desire – there is general Socratic-Platonic agreement that human attraction has its basis in natural appetite and that human agents consider to be beautiful those things to which they are sensually drawn. To this extent, sexual attraction is clearly one basis for ascriptions of beauty.

Still, on the view he ascribes to Diotima, such attractions and/or the associations which are based upon them are not of equal merit – or to be considered equally beautiful. Indeed, those associations between older and younger men that are based only on raw animal attraction need to be considered as very inferior to those in which there is mutual personal respect and in which the characters of youths are morally improved by those of older, wiser and more experienced men. At this point, it seems fairly clear that Socrates is precisely defending the sort of educational relationship that he himself sought with his younger contemporaries and which often seems to have been crudely misconstrued by others in his circle. However, he is also more significantly arguing for a seriously revised account of beauty as the object of aesthetic sensibility. Relationships grounded in the positive moral influence of older over younger characters have to be regarded as more beautiful than those driven by naked lust, precisely because they are *morally* superior.

In short, entirely consistent with larger Platonic metaphysics, beauty is not a 'natural' deliverance of 'sensible' experience, but a rational or 'intelligible' ideal which is also subject to further development and refinement in the light of ongoing reflection. At the early stages of development,

under the delusive impact of sense experience, human agents are attracted to and take to be beautiful experiences and actions that are not really so, insofar as outward glamorous appearances all too often conceal or belie what is morally suspect. Indeed, such Platonic aesthetics might be supported by reflection on the time-honoured human art of portrait painting. Much past portrait painting flourished under the patronage of the rich and privileged who desired painters to depict them in the most glamorous possible light – and this is precisely what many such artists did. However, those we invariably regard as the greater portrait painters more often sought to depict the true – often less than flattering – characters of those they painted as precisely vain, arrogant or cruel. Indeed, a great literary work that might be said to express Platonic aesthetics to perfection is Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* (Wilde, 2012) in which the main character's portrait becomes increasingly grotesque as his conduct in life is more and more depraved.

Hence, to whatever extent this view may seem at odds with looser popular usage, a Dorian Gray could not be considered beautiful, even if his admirers considered him to be so. On the Platonic view, serious aesthetic judgement has an indispensable moral dimension and for those – or the associations to which they are party – to be considered beautiful or admirable, they would need to possess something approximating to good or virtuous character. But now, what is moral or virtuous character? Precisely, for Socrates (and largely also for Plato), in order to have virtue one must possess *knowledge*. So, back to square one, we need an answer to the question of what such knowledge might be or look like. In the terms of previous discussion of this topic, in what respects would any knowledge presupposed to moral virtue resemble or be related to the more familiar senses of knowledge as justified true belief or observable fact so far recognised in the present paper?

On the one hand, as Plato rightly appreciates in the 'divided-line' epistemology of his *Republic*, such knowledge is of a significantly different logical order from that of empirical theory and inherently normative to the extent of requiring a distinctive kind of moral, though no less objective, evaluation. But, on the other hand, with all charitable allowance for

Plato's antiquated epistemology (according to which no genuine knowledge can be grounded in the uncertain deliverances of empirical experience), the knowledge required for the wisdom of Socratic virtue – and hence for the cultivation of such particular virtues as temperance, courage, justice and respect for others – may be considered no less empirically factual than the knowledge of scientific theory. On the Socratic-Platonic view, what is epistemically needed for clear apprehension of virtue, justice or 'the good' is significant *freedom* from various (empirically and socially conditioned) personal delusions or prejudices about oneself and others, and from consequent *ignorance* of the *truth* of such matters. It is a general and persistent theme of Plato's work – from Socratic dialogues such as *Symposium* and *Republic* to such later post-Socratic dialogues as *Laws* – that the major obstacle to the wisdom of virtue is the vanity and prejudice to which the self or *ego* is prone in the Platonic cave of illusory sensible appearance (Carr, 2016).

The key present point is that for Socrates and Plato morality is essentially connected to the truth of knowledge or wisdom through the idea of virtuous *character*: virtuous character – which needs also to be beautiful or admirable character – is the site of that knowledge and truth that sets us free from the Platonic cave of vanity and delusion. The key difference between Plato and reductive empiricists such as David Hume is that the reason which affords access to knowledge of reality and truth is not merely an instrument for the satisfaction of basically animal needs and desires, but a defining feature of human – as distinct from non-human animal – desire. What it is to be a *human* person or 'soul' – as distinct from some beast of the field – is to have access to that Platonic 'intelligible' world in the light of which the false values of the sensible world may be weighed in the balance and found wanting. Moreover, it is largely this conception of the human person or soul that is implicit in the words of the founder of Christianity when He replies to his Roman interrogator that His kingdom is not of this world and His mission is to testify to the truth; and this is just the conception of human soul that Pilate calls into doubt when he asks: 'what is truth'? But the other-worldly truth to which Christ testifies may be considered plain old-fashioned factual truth

none-the-less: Matthew and Peter are both plainly mistaken in their estimates of themselves as well as of each other and need – for the moral and spiritual good of their souls – to get or see things right.

To elaborate further on this Platonic (and no less evidently Christian) conception of human soul or personhood, while human desire has inevitable origins in the sensible attractions of that part of human nature that is sensual, there is never a moment – at least in the development of the human child beyond first language acquisition – when it is *entirely* sensual and devoid of the powers of critical reflection and evaluation that define any and all serious human growth and progress. From this viewpoint, as already seen from Plato's *Symposium*, the human child or youth is not forever stuck with the initial attractions of childhood and youth, but is able – with further reflection and the good influence of elders or peers – to put away childish things for adult and higher purposes. So, again, insofar as beauty is the proper (logical) object of aesthetic contemplation, it is more than what is merely sensually attractive and is subject to critical re-evaluation in the light of the further knowledge and understanding that human education makes possible. A Dorian Gray can no longer be the object of attraction we formerly took him to be once we have sight of his corrupted soul in the portrait.

But isn't this view that our knowledge of beauty or of our own and other's characters is never complete and always liable to continual re-assessment and re-evaluation much the same as what non-realists or idealists claim about the essential inconclusiveness of human enquiry? It is evidently not the same. Aside from the fact that this view is not (like non-realism) sceptical about the prospect in principle of knowledge of reality – on the contrary, it holds that there is a truth of things regarding which we are humanly prone to be deluded – our moral mistakes are not inadequate theoretical explanations of how things are, but more basic failures to *perceive* how things are through the fog of our own self-deception. They are less like failures to understand fully why tadpoles metamorphose into frogs and more like refusals to accept that this creature is a frog (and not, one might say, a prince). When Peter and Matthew recognise that they are the main characters in the parable of the prodigal son,

they come to see themselves for what they *really* are: in the case of Matthew, not the clever, successful and cynical manipulator and exploiter of his inferior and despised brethren, but a miserable sinner; in Peter's case, not the righteous judge of others, but the self-righteous, hypocritical and resentful pharisee.

Understanding character through narrative

By way of brief rehearsal of the story so far, we began by re-affirming a time-honoured philosophical view that moral agency is fundamentally an aspect of rational human nature: creatures without rationality are incapable of the kind of reason-responsiveness and agent responsibility required for moral life. However, while we have also resisted the no less time-honoured scepticism concerning the possibility of knowledge as such – arguing specifically against non-realist and idealist claims that the findings of empirical science are of no greater epistemic objectivity than other human narratives – we have also basically acceded to the common ethical complaint that the normative knowledge and understanding of moral experience is not to be sought or found via empirical scientific enquiry. Nevertheless, following Socrates and Plato, we have continued to insist that agents who may have formerly behaved badly through ignorance, vanity or self-deception, but who have now seen the error of their ways, have acquired something like genuine moral knowledge and understanding. The question now, however, is that if such appreciation does require justification or explanation in the usual manner of knowledge, and this is not obviously best available through empirical scientific enquiry, from what source is it derivable?

In fact, it would appear that this question was fairly well answered by the end of the last section. In Zeffirelli's film *Jesus of Nazareth*, Matthew and Peter learn morally – more precisely they acquire genuine moral knowledge and understanding – by hearing and grasping the normative import of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. This parable gives hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind as part and parcel of the truth of

Christ's kingdom that is not of this world, but to which Jesus came to bear witness in the kingdom of this world. These key disciples of Jesus acquire (Socratic) knowledge of themselves, the world and their relations with others by means of a narrative that, while not an empirically grounded theory, nevertheless gives access to genuine truth of which they were formerly unaware. Actually, in the context of Zeffirelli's movie, what we have is a narrative (the parable) within a narrative (the movie), and the learning intended is not that of the actual Matthew and Peter, but that of the spectators of the film if they have eyes to see and ears to hear. But to be moved by the scene in the film (which it is hard not to be) is to imagine what the moral impact of this parable on the real disciples might have been had this event historically occurred (which it might well have done).

There is much more, of course, to be said about the precise status of such revealed truth and its implications for moral character in such narratives. To begin with, one may still be troubled by the role of imagination in and the fictional character of such narratives: we need not suppose either the story of the prodigal son or Zeffirelli's account of events in the life of Jesus to be true in any literally descriptive sense. However, apart from the point that imagination plays a no less indispensable role in rational scientific than in moral enquiry, the key point for moral learning is the *teleological* structure of normatively significant narratives: precisely, the possibility of their interpretation in terms of acts or actions with evident implications for human good or ill. From this viewpoint, while it is not clear that there might be any significant normative implications from an empirical account of the natural world couched entirely in terms of efficient causation – such as (for example) evolutionary theory – there may well be normative or moral learning from accounts that *are* factually true, such as those of history or news coverage.

Still, while the prodigal son parable and the Zeffirelli movie exhibit the required human purposiveness of morally or spiritually significant narratives, they are not literally but *counterfactually* teleological. Like many other great cultural narratives and works of creative and imaginative fiction, they suppose that such and such actions or events *might* have

occurred – in, as philosophers say, some *possible* world – explore the consequences for human good or ill of such actions or events and make, either explicitly or implicitly, normative judgements on these. Insofar as such narratives are moral, however, their prime focus is on *character* as the psychological and moral source of human agency and the site of responsibility for action. They show not only how human lives may come to grief through vicious character (the tragedies of, for example, Euripides and Shakespeare offer rich examples of this), but how good characters may fare well in adverse circumstances. In this regard, the great narratives of cultural and creative literature disclose the very logical form of human moral self-understanding: as the modern moral theorist Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) has argued, human agents understand themselves very much as characters in stories in which actions have normative consequences for human good or ill. From this viewpoint, arguably the first place to turn for insight into human moral agency is not to natural or empirical science, but to serious works of human cultural and creative (mythical, religious, fictional and so on) literary heritage.

To be sure, this may seem to raise a large question about what precisely counts as *serious* creative and/or imaginative work. Still, while this is certainly a significant question, it is not too hard to answer in general terms – though there is clearly much that is devilish in the detail and one should not expect complete consensus on the matter. To begin with, not all literature (or related narrative art) that we should not consider to be empirically scientific but as creative or imaginative is — or is intended to be – of serious moral import. Clearly, much of such literature (for example, in the present view, the spy novels of Ian Fleming or the romances of Barbara Cartland) is written to entertain or to sell books or movies and would not merit serious moral scrutiny. Further, however, it is not clear that all great literature is especially concerned with the exploration of moral themes or character. In this regard, while the comedies of an Aristophanes or Shakespeare may have some moral point, this may not be their *main* point; and though James Joyce's *Ulysses* clearly ranks as a great (according to many, the greatest) of twentieth century novels, it is not (in the present view) notably concerned with the exploration of moral

themes or character – and certainly not to make any (either explicit or implicit) moral judgements.

Just as clearly, however, there is not only much past and present human literature that *is* so concerned, but also much consensus – certainly among educated people – concerning which and what sort of literature should be so regarded. In this light, the first place to turn is to the generally accepted 'canon' of not just western but world literature. The list is endless, but clearly great poets, dramatists and novelists from at least Greek antiquity, via Milton, Shakespeare and Cervantes, to such modern writers (as well as other artists) as Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters, Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Emile Zola, Victor Hugo, Thomas Hardy, Henry James, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Virginia Woolf, John Dos Passos, Graham Greene, George Orwell, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Thomas Wolf and Sebastian Faulks have all been primarily concerned to explore moral themes and character. Character and moral action, as MacIntyre (among others) has argued, are just the prime stuff of such literature. Of course, all such authors were products of their times and cultures, and we should not today expect to share all their values and inevitable prejudices; but it would be foolish to deny the enormous insights into the implications for human good or ill of better or worse human character to be found on every page of a Jane Austen or Charlotte Bronte novel.

In line with the general Platonic theme of this paper of the dependence of good moral character on honesty and truth, however, it might be added that the reason why a great novelist such as Jane Austen (for example) is a rich source of moral insight is that her artistic imagination is clearly grounded in close observation of human nature and of the very real implications of better and worse character for good or ill. Like a great portrait painter, Austen gives us – despite the rather contrived plots and happy endings of much nineteenth century romantic and other literature (given that it is also hard for novelists concerned to make a moral point, not to ensure that villains get their 'come uppance') – a remarkably accurate picture of human individual and social psychology, particularly of the vanities, conceits and delusions to which human flesh (as long ago indicated by Plato) is heir. From this viewpoint, as argued by the modern

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Platonic British philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch (2003) – a prominent modern advocate of the moral purposes of great literature – the imagination of great literature and other art is not to be confused with wild or unbridled fantasy. In a similar vein, the great modern American novelist Tom Wolfe (2010) has also argued – at some odds with more experimental modern approaches to story writing – for an essentially *realist* conception of good fiction: that great novelists are precisely those who – even at their most literarily rhapsodic or rhetorical – try to paint the truest possible picture of how human beings are, so that readers may come to see how they might with clearer vision become (morally) better.

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La confesión burguesa de Sándor Márai. Lengua, cultura y formación en la vieja Europa[1]

Abstract: This article aims to highlight a key paradox in the life of a Hungarian writer Sándor Márai, who, as a European intellectual, defender of the humanistic continental tradition, was forced to emigrate to the United States. After the Allied victory in 1945, the Americans, as predicted by John Dewey in his autobiography, thought that Europe was to become a simple province of their nation, emerged with the Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776, which proclaimed the pursuit of happiness as a human right. Since the old Europe, based on culture, civilization, and education disappeared, its foundations had to be restored on an economic basis by the European Coal and Steel Community. The new Europe was made possible by the treaty signed by Adenauer and de Gaulle, who, like Márai, were suspicious of the Soviet Union, and its modern and materialistic worldview, which collapsed in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, nine months after Márai's death.

Keywords: Sándor Márai, Europe, modernity, culture, pedagogy

No hay duda de que entre los escritores húngaros más reconocidos destaca el nombre de Sándor Márai (1900–1989), «nacido en una familia burguesa de las Tierras Atlas» (Márai, 2016c, p. 137). En concreto, nuestro

[1] La investigación que ha dado lugar a estos resultados ha sido impulsada por RecerCaixa.

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protagonista vino al mundo en Kassa, una ciudad de cuarenta mil habitantes con una activa burguesía local, que entonces formaba parte del Imperio Austro-Húngaro y que hoy está integrada en la república eslovaca (Kosice). Por las circunstancias históricas, y después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, cuando Hungría quedó ubicada detrás del Telón de acero, Márai decidió emigrar en 1948 de su país para no regresar. Lamentablemente, se suicidó el 22 de febrero de 1989 en los Estados Unidos, donde se había exiliado, pocos meses antes de que cayera el muro de Berlín el 9 de noviembre de aquel mismo año.

Desde un punto de vista histórico, Hungría atesora una larga trayectoria católica vinculada a la dinastía de los Arpados y, más concretamente, al rey Esteban (997–1038), que según la tradición fue coronado en la Navidad del año 1000 por el papa Silvestre III, con lo que quedó asegurada la cristianización del país magiar (Mindszenty, 1989, p. 137). Sobre esta base religiosa se desarrolló el devenir de Hungría que presentaba una estructura agraria casi feudal, merced a un sofisticado sistema de castas censurado por Márai, hasta bien entrado el siglo XIX. Desde luego, la burguesía húngara intentó establecer un nuevo orden social y político, pero fracasó en el intento después de los conatos revolucionarios de 1848 y 1849 que fueron sofocados por los austriacos. Más adelante, y gracias al compromiso (*Ausgleich*) de 1867, se inició una nueva etapa que marcó el comienzo de la era liberal que había de renovar la Hungría atávica anquilosada en el pasado (Casals, 2003, p. 1). En aquel contexto, el imperio austro-húngaro optó por la doble capitalidad, lo cual favoreció la unión en 1873 de Buda y Pest, aunque como señala William M. Johnston era una «capital moderna para una nación semifeudal», a la vez que apostilla que «en gran medida fueron los judíos que se habían integrado en el conjunto social los que hicieron posible que Budapest pasase de mero centro de intercambio de bienes a metrópoli industrial y financiera» (Johnston, 2009, p. 786). Pero aquel resurgir que se dio a partir de 1867, gracias al desarrollo burgués, recibió un duro golpe con la derrota imperial de 1918 y la posterior firma del Tratado de Trianón (1920), entre Hungría y las potencias aliadas, que mermó la extensión geográfica, la demografía y el potencial económico magiar, a la vez que perdía la única salida al mar (Fiume, hoy la croata Rijeka).

Desaparecido el imperio, Hungría se convirtió en un reino apostólico sin monarca, a pesar de las pretensiones fallidas de Carlos IV de Hungría, el último emperador que sucedió en 1916 al longevo Francisco José que gobernó entre 1867 y 1916, después del atentado del 28 de junio de 1914 que costó la muerte del heredero, el archiduque Francisco Fernando de Austria. Aquel magnicidio desencadenó la Primera Guerra Mundial y obligó a que Carlos IV de Hungría renunciase el 11 de noviembre de 1918 al trono de aquel imperio dual, alrededor de cuyo escudo aparecía la inscripción «Indivisibiliter ac inseparabiliter», esto es, indivisible e inseparable. Tampoco está de más anotar que Carlos IV, conocido como Carlos I en Austria, intentó asumir las riendas del reino de Hungría, con un par de golpes de mano –con una fugaz batalla militar– que tuvieron lugar durante el año 1921. Finalmente, pudo escapar por vía fluvial para exiliarse en la Isla de Madeira, donde reposan los restos mortales del postrer emperador austriaco y último rey de Hungría.

La magiarización: lengua, cultura y formación

De un modo reiterativo, Márai insiste en afirmar la importancia del idioma magiar, convencido de que una nación –como Hungría– «comienza con la Literatura» (Márai, 2016a, p. 125). En las páginas de sus *Confesiones de un burgués* hallamos la siguiente aseveración: «Un escritor no tiene más patria que su lengua materna» (Márai, 2016a, p. 421). A este respecto, en la obra de Márai encontramos afirmaciones que confirman la trascendencia de la lengua en la génesis de la patria húngara, al constatar el milagro de que «en Europa una pequeña lengua de tierra asiática se convirtiera en cultura» (Márai, 2016c, p. 278), lo que constituía una especie de anomalía en medio de Europa. «Un inglés, un francés, un italiano o un alemán nunca podrán comprender lo que significa ser escritor en el mundo cuando se escribe en la lengua de un pueblo aislado y solitario» (Márai, 2016c, p. 397). Por lo tanto, resulta recurrente apelar a la conexión entre el idioma y la patria húngara, quizás debido a la dificultad que entraña esta lengua de origen urálico, que como señala Zilahy no tiene

parientes en Europa, en razón de las diferencias de «la conjugación y la declinación húngaras de las de las demás lenguas europeas» (Zilahy, 2010, p. 233).

Pues bien, la combinación entre lengua y literatura genera un universo cultural que no interesó demasiado a la nobleza magiar, pero que sí fue objeto de protección y promoción por parte de la burguesía que desde 1867 asumió las riendas del país, sobre el supuesto de que «el idioma húngaro seguía careciendo de palabras» (Márai, 2016c, p. 141). A la larga, se fraguó una cultura que propició que la burguesía se cultivase intelectual y espiritualmente y que, por consiguiente, pudiese articular sus ideales de formación que la habían de homologar con las restantes burguesías europeas. Con ello, se pone de relieve el interés de Márai por negar el carácter germano y eslavo de Hungría que lucha denodadamente por alcanzar una independencia no sólo política –reconocida parcialmente en 1867– sino también lingüística en medio de la Europa central.

Se constata así que para los escritores magiares, la lengua y la literatura se convirtieron en una manera de hacer política, al favorecer el establecimiento de un mercado, con sus editoriales, prensa y lectores, que contribuía a que la burguesía húngara tomase conciencia de su papel histórico y de su responsabilidad social al sostener a una clase literaria que necesitaba crear un idioma culto, más allá del utilizado por las primeras tribus que poblaron aquellas tierras alrededor del año mil. Se comprende entonces que la lengua y la literatura fuesen elementos civilizadores de primer orden para aquellas tribus orientales que llegaron hasta Hungría en la búsqueda de pastos para su ganado. Eso significa que se debía de conformar un idioma moderno que tenía que preocuparse no únicamente de la literatura, sino también del pensamiento, ya que Márai –consciente de que vivimos en un universo «empalabrado»– sostiene que «una idea necesita de palabras: sin palabras no puede haber intercambio, sólo puede haber un cosquilleo en la conciencia, parecido a un hormigueo en la piel» (Márai, 2016c, p. 142). En el caso húngaro, pues, lengua, pensamiento y formación constituyen un todo orgánico, cosa que Márai reconoce en diversos lugares de su extensa

obra. Sin ir más lejos, en *¡Tierra, tierra!* manifiesta que «escribir es una labor orgánica; de otra manera carece de sentido y se vuelve inmoral» (Márai, 2016c, p. 403).

Ahora bien, no sólo la cultura sino también la política queda vinculada al proceso de magiarización, ya que «para el húngaro –escribe Révesz– la política es inseparable de la literatura» (Zilahy, 1965, p. XIX). Por tanto, la *hungaridad* o *magyarság* es un concepto que caló en el mundo intelectual de escritores como Márai y Zilahy (Zilahy, 1945, p. 19). Además, la literatura sirvió para conformar una cosmovisión que –en el caso de Márai– se caracteriza por su vocación burguesa, de profundas convicciones liberales. «El ser humano –escribe Márai– es un animal dotado de palabra. Ese animal se hace hombre en la medida en que es capaz de expresar sus pensamientos» (Márai, 2016c, p. 424). En consecuencia, la palabra en manos de la burguesía se convierte en una instancia de afirmación nacional, sin olvidar su ligazón con la historia continental, con la tradición humanista europea. De ahí, el interés de las familias burguesas por dotar sus hogares de bibliotecas bien provistas, con presencia de autores húngaros y extranjeros, no como un simple decorado sino como una realidad viva (Márai, 2016c, p. 150).

Aunque la filosofía húngara cuenta con nombres de relieve como los de Georg Lukács e Imre Lakatos, no es menos cierto que la literatura ha sido uno de los vehículos utilizados por los intelectuales magiares para dar cuenta y razón de sus ideas, sobre el principio de que el pensamiento se da siempre «empalabrado». Así pues, no sólo recurre a la creatividad de los poetas sino también a la energía de periodistas y novelistas, es decir, de todos aquellos que han buscado palabras para construir libremente frases, discursos y narrativas. Además, al tratarse de una literatura minoritaria, los escritores húngaros se vieron obligados a escribir en la prensa y así adquirieron la condición periodística. Para Márai, el ser humano es un *Homo loquens*, dotado de palabra, y gracias a ella puede edificar un mundo que –en su caso– fue el de la Hungría liberal y moderna, producto del quehacer de la burguesía culta y progresista. Sin embargo, esta Hungría quedó colapsada por la dinámica histórica a partir de 1918 y, sobre todo, después de 1938, cuando Austria fue anexionada al III Reich

el 12 de marzo y el destino de la Europa central dependió primero del nazismo y, más tarde, de la URSS.

Llegados a este punto, es menester advertir que una de las constantes de la cultura húngara estriba en situarse a medio camino entre el germanismo –con su *Kultur*, que aspira a que el alemán sea algo más que una simple *koiné* centroeuropea de acuerdo con el *ethos* prusiano– y el paneslavismo soviético con sus proyectos lingüísticos rusófilos. Tampoco es accidental que la lengua alemana fuese una de las materias que formaban parte del currículum escolar de los institutos de educación secundaria en Hungría, incluso después de la Gran Guerra, aunque la presencia del latín constituía una realidad que vinculaba la cultura magiar a la tradición occidental, al mundo latino-romano. El alfabeto latino supone uno de los lazos de Hungría con Occidente, al margen del alfabeto gótico germánico y del cirílico eslavo. Siendo esto así, Márai –que pasó por un internado católico de los premonstratenses– comenta que los «religiosos nos inculcaban sentimientos de libertad y justicia». Igualmente, anota que «nunca los oí hablar mal de la Iglesia reformada», cuya presencia también era notable en Hungría (Márai, 2016a, p. 167–168). A su vez, y con relación al plan de estudio de los idiomas, de raigambre humanista, comenta: «Teníamos una clase de latín diaria, podían aprender francés los que querían, desde quinto curso nos enseñaban alemán y a nadie se le ocurría estudiar inglés» (Márai, 2016a, p. 169). Por esta razón, Hungría confirma su voluntad de ser europea, gracias al cristianismo y al alfabeto latino, dos condiciones de posibilidad para asumir el legado de la cultura occidental.

De todos modos, después de 1948 la única lengua extranjera que se enseñaba en las escuelas húngaras fue el ruso, de acuerdo con el profetismo mesiánico soviético de ambiciones paneslavistas. En consecuencia, escritores como Sándor Márai –que viajó en su peregrinaje formativo durante diez años por diferentes países (Alemania, Francia, Inglaterra, Italia, etc.)– confirman que Hungría participa de los valores occidentales, tal como corresponde a su historia cristiana y a su voluntad de sobrevivir en medio de distintos imperios, de ascendencia teutónica y eslava. Por descontado, Márai se manifiesta de manera equidistante respecto a Berlín y Moscú, y así se aleja del expansionismo germánico y del paneslavismo

ruso, o, lo que es lo mismo, del nazismo y del comunismo, dos cosmovisiones totalitarias que limitan la libertad humana al pervertir el sentido de la palabra. En esta dirección, Márai dirá que «el vocabulario comunista es tan pobre que provoca bostezos» (Márai, 2016c, p. 246).

Tampoco hay que pasar por alto que, con independencia de posibles consideraciones políticas e históricas, la literatura y la música, los vocablos y las notas del pentagrama, sin olvidar bibliotecas, pinacotecas y museos, constituían los resortes primordiales de la formación centroeuropea (*Mitteleuropa*) que seguía a corta distancia el modelo de la *Bildung* alemana, un ideal de formación surgido en el período del neo-humanismo germánico (1780–1830), que se extendió por la Europa danubiana y que cuajó en Austria como atestiguan autores como Zweig y De Waal. Se trata, como bien ha puesto de relieve Rosa Sala Rose (2007), de una opción más cultural que política, que desvela el extraño caso de las letras alemanas que pervirtieron la *Bildung* hasta devaluarla a simple *Kultur*, con lo que el ideal de formación (*Bildung*) que había de liberar al ser humano en un sentido intelectual y espiritual se transformó en una vulgar atadura (*Bindung*), que predisponía a una imposición ultranacionalista, xenófoba y expansionista.

Ni que decir tiene que la sombra pedagógica de la *Bildung* alemana también influyó sobre Hungría. «Los húngaros estaban fascinados por las cualidades alemanas: organización militar, sistema de enseñanza, habilidad para el comercio y la técnica» (Fejtö, 2016, p. 138). En el fondo, aquel ideal pedagógico de signo formativo –no pragmático-utilitario, ni comercial-industrial– se distinguía por su dimensión humanística, si bien marginaba los aspectos físico-corporales que en el caso húngaro quedaban reducidos a la práctica de la esgrima, el único deporte que la opinión pública aceptaba. «Debido al espíritu "humanista" de la escuela [*vale la pena insistir que Márai estudió en un centro católico*], descuidábamos y despreciábamos deliberadamente el ejercicio físico» (Márai, 2016a, p. 168). Se trataba, pues, de una educación más intelectual que corporal, alejada de las veleidades germanas, siempre proclives a la gimnasia agresiva de los *turnen* (con sus aparatos gimnásticos) y a los combates de los jóvenes en las mensuras. Más que el cuerpo interesaba el espíritu, la formación

humanística, de modo que uno de los rasgos distintivos de aquella burguesía radicaba en fomentar la cultura, no en amasar riquezas y acrecentar patrimonios.

Resulta del todo evidente que la escolarización decimonónica coadyuvó al proceso de magiarización ya que, gracias a la enseñanza de la lengua y literatura húngaras, se estructuró una narrativa patriótica en que se explicaba la traslación, bajo la guía de la dinastía de los Arpados, de las tribus que abandonaron los Urales para instalarse junto a los Cárpatos. «En los montes Urales, al lado del río Volga, existió una *Ungaria Magna*, una Gran Hungría…» (Móricz, 2016, p. 185). No en vano, el protagonista de *Sé bueno hasta la muerte* –la novela escolar de Zsigmond Móricz– es un joven que, a pesar de su pobreza, está apasionado por la poesía romántica de Sándor Petöfi (1823–1849), cuya madre –según Magris– no dominaba la lengua húngara. Lógicamente, el currículo escolar también establecía un canon literario con nombres como Sándor Petöfi, János Arany y Endre Ady que, con sus poemas, predispusieron a la toma de conciencia del pueblo húngaro.

Al margen del ambiente escolar, Márai también reconoce esta dependencia al escribir que «con Arany he aprendido y sigo aprendiendo el idioma húngaro» (Márai, 2016a, p. 272). No acaba aquí la cosa porque además de Arany –el gran poeta nacional– Márai destaca igualmente los nombres de dos periodistas y escritores como Gyula Krúdy (1878–1933) y Dezso Kosztolányi (1885–1936) que contribuyeron a la vertebración de la Hungría liberal. Bien podemos añadir que Márai encuentra en Kosztolányi un modelo personal, periodístico y literario que regeneró la lengua húngara. «Todos los días le regalaba a Hungría una expresión sabrosa, un matiz nuevo, irónico o deslumbrante» (Márai, 2016c, p. 161).

De acuerdo con lo que exponemos, la magiarización promovió el uso de la lengua húngara como vehículo escolar y cultural a lo largo de un proceso que se extendió durante el siglo XIX. «Hacia 1900 se publicaban en Budapest más de doscientos periódicos y revistas en lengua magiar» (Johnston, 2009, p. 801). Al mismo tiempo, este proceso literario –que según Johnston se dio acompañado de un pensamiento mágico– favoreció el culto húngaro a la fantasía, en un contexto que facilitó la

recepción de la *Bildungsroman* apolítica alemana (Johnston, 2009, p. 799). Está claro que la literatura y la música, dos elementos esenciales del ideal de formación (*Bildung*) burgués, experimentaron un gran incremento en las manos de la burguesía liberal que protegía la cultura húngara, bien al contrario de lo que había hecho la nobleza durante siglos.

No obstante, conviene destacar que la defensa de la cultura húngara –canalizada a través de la magiarización– no estaba reñida con el proyecto de una Europa unida, mediatizada por la idea de la confederación danubiana, preludio de una Europa supranacional. Pese a todas las tensiones y contradicciones, la Monarquía Austro-Húngara fue un gran invento, aunque un día estalló (Márai, 2016b, p. 87), si bien para algunos historiadores como Fetjö (2016) la hicieron reventar. Tampoco es menos cierto que Márai mostró siempre una inveterada fe europeísta –«me había jurado, bajo palabra de honor, que sacaría las mejores notas en europeísmo», leemos en *Confesiones de un burgués* (Márai, 2016a, p. 234)– hasta el extremo que se considera un precedente del ideal paneuropeo. Durante sus jornadas de peregrinaje pedagógico, a semejanza del *Meister* de Goethe, Márai adquirió una conciencia paneuropea, incluso anterior a la de los pioneros (Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Alcide De Gasperi, etc.) de la idea de Europa:

> Examinaba a todo el mundo bajo este aspecto, quería saber si ya existía el hombre europeo, si en algún salón polaco o en alguna universidad danesa estaba manifestándose ya el hombre que primero era europeo y sólo después polaco o danés. Ni Coudenhove-Kalergi ni Hubermann Bronislav hablaban todavía de paneuropeísmo, pero la idea estaba ya presente. (Márai, 2016a, p. 276)

Vistas así las cosas, Márai puede ser considerado un antecedente del ideario europeísta, entendido como un proyecto cultural y pedagógico, una idea-fuerza que circuló por el continente gracias a las facilidades de comunicación que representaban los ríos (especialmente el Danubio) y la red de ferrocarriles. Capítulo aparte merece el conjunto de

establecimientos educativos –muchos en manos de confesiones religiosas católicas– que garantizaban la presencia de la tradición pedagógica humanista. Entretanto, las compañías de teatro y las orquestas esparcían por doquier la llama de la civilización, que alentó el clima espiritual un tanto confiado del burgués que, en el caso magiar –bien al contrario de lo que aconteció en Austria– quedó supeditado al control ideológico de la democracia popular impuesta por el Ejército Rojo, cuya liberación se transmutó en una ocupación.

En efecto, el lenguaje en poder de las políticas totalitarias –ya fuesen nazis o comunistas– pervirtió la palabra y traicionó un pensamiento que se da siempre «empalabrado», cosa razonable si tenemos en cuenta la identidad que se produce en el término «logos» entre palabra y pensamiento. Agréguese que Márai piensa en una Europa humanista y erasmista, tolerante y conciliadora, un conjunto de pueblos y culturas que recurren a la literatura para canalizar sus aspiraciones, en una atmósfera de paz y concordia. Ahí reside, justamente, el compromiso de la burguesía que se convierte en guardiana de esta cultura que la barbarie dinamitó, en el breve periodo comprendido entre 1938 y 1945, ya que lo que siguió después de esta fecha para Hungría es bien conocido: el totalitarismo político, una razón de estado que acabó con la libertad de pensamiento y el acervo humanista heredado de la tradición continental. De este modo, la lengua magiar –la mejor seña de identidad de Hungría– quedó contaminada hasta el punto que no pudo garantizar lo que Márai designa como «vida plena», esto es, una existencia alimentada a través de la cultura en libertad (Márai 2016c, p. 311).

A la pregunta sobre qué es el humanismo, Márai responde con un argumento que recuerda a Protágoras, ya que después de destacar que estriba en «una medida humana», añade a continuación que el humanismo implica «la constatación de que el ser humano es la medida de todas las cosas» (Márai, 2016c, p. 277). En última instancia, para Márai ser burgués implica justamente esta medida humana, el cuidado del alma de conformidad con esta sensibilidad humanista y liberal, al margen de la fortuna económica que uno acumula o del trabajo que uno realiza. De tal guisa que la condición de burgués se vincula a una visión culturalista,

de raigambre humanista y liberal, que se enraíza en la libertad intelectual y espiritual (Márai, 2016c, p. 93). Desde luego, uno de los capitales más preciados por este tipo de burgués que encarna Márai radica en su biblioteca que en 1944 contaba con seis mil volúmenes, la mitad de los cuales fueron pasto de la destrucción después de los combates que se produjeron durante el asedio y la conquista rusa de Budapest. «La mayoría de volúmenes habían quedado destrozados a causa de los ataques aéreos» (Márai, 2016c, p. 115).

Como es lógico, y en sintonía con lo que Márai sugiere, la clase media húngara adquirió la condición de garante de un mundo burgués –esto es, moderno, liberal, humanista e ilustrado– que consumía cultura. «Una clase media humanista que leía libros, que iba al teatro, que sobrepasaba sus posibilidades económicas a la hora de educar a sus hijos y que salvaguardaba la tradición de las relaciones sociales sin llamar la atención…» (Márai 2016c, p. 349). Una clase media que a menudo escondía sus penurias y una clase trabajadora que hacía esfuerzos para sufragar los costos de la educación de sus vástagos.

Sin duda, podemos considerar a Márai como un intelectual burgués de modo que resulta bien lógico que rotulase sus memorias con el título de *Confesiones de un burgués*, un libro que causó un gran revuelo cuando apareció en 1934 en su país natal. A decir verdad, la burguesía tuvo un papel primordial en la toma de conciencia magiar, siendo Márai –como reconocía F. Oliver Brachfeld– «un burgués, con todo lo bueno y malo que implica este término». A renglón seguido, Oliver Brachfeld añadía que *Las confesiones de un burgués* lo atestiguan claramente. «Esta autobiografía –la de un hombre, pero al mismo tiempo de todo un estamento social– desencadenó toda una "ola" de confesiones de escritores en Hungría y es uno de los libros más fascinadores que he leído en estos últimos años» (Oliver Brachfeld en Márai, 1946, p. 14).

Procede añadir que estas *Confesiones de un burgués*, que fueron traducidas en 2004, no contemplaban la época más oscura de la historia de Europa, esto es, cuando la garra del nazismo se extendió por la cuenca danubiana con la anexión (*Anschluss)* austriaca. De ahí el interés de la tercera parte de sus confesiones, que durante años permanecieron silenciadas

por expresa voluntad del autor y que fueron traducidas en 2016, bajo el epígrafe de *Lo que no quise decir*. En *¡Tierra, tierra!* lamenta que, una vez finalizada la Segunda Guerra Mundial, su obra fuera objeto de una crítica durísima que procedía de un importante estudioso (la referencia nos induce a pensar que se trataba de Georg Luckás), lo cual le movió a no publicar aquel tercer capítulo, que «sigue guardado en un cajón, cubierto de polvo» (Márai, 2016c, p. 344).

Inútil decir que hoy contamos felizmente con la edición completa de aquellas *Confesiones de un burgués*, integradas por tres capítulos. Ahora bien, antes de que viese la luz la tercera parte titulada *Lo que no quise decir*, se había traducido *¡Tierra, tierra!*, una obra en que Márai da cuenta y razón de lo sucedido en Hungría entre 1944 y 1948, es decir, desde que cayó en manos de los nazis, el 19 de marzo de 1944. Fue entonces cuando la *Wehrmacht* invadió Hungría pocos meses antes de iniciarse la sovietización del país a comienzos de 1945. Con anterioridad, el 16 de octubre de 1944 se produjo la defenestración del regente Miklós Horthy promovida por el Partido de la Cruz y la Flecha con el apoyo nazi, cuando intentaba negociar la paz con los aliados de espaldas a Alemania, lo que comportó el sitio de Budapest que se inició el 29 de octubre y se alargó hasta 13 de febrero de 1945, cuando las tropas rusas se apoderaron de la ciudad. Se trataba, según manifiesta en *¡Tierra, tierra!*, de la «barbarie puante» (Márai, 2016c, p. 104), de una ocupación que supuso un nuevo estilo de vida, esto es, una cosmovisión de tipo oriental inconciliable con el sistema liberal que Márai defendió desde su posición burguesa que, además, pone en relación con la historia de Hungría y, por extensión, con la modernidad:

> Ser burgués nunca ha sido para mí una categoría social; siempre he considerado que se trata de una vocación. La figura del burgués representa para mí el fenómeno humano creado por la cultura occidental moderna, justamente porque el burgués es quien ha creado la cultura occidental moderna: tras ser aniquilada la envejecida estructura social basada en la jerarquía feudal y haberse desmoronado en el mundo un orden

> social caduco, el burgués estableció un nuevo equilibrio. (Márai, 2016c, p. 136)

Por lo demás, las confesiones de Sándor Márai también pueden ser consideradas como un relato de formación, de alto contenido cívico-moral, no en el sentido de la lucha intestina entre las diferentes facciones políticas, sino desde la perspectiva del encaje de Hungría en una Europa que, después de los sucesos acaecidos entre 1938 y 1948, perdió sus mejores rasgos espirituales, esto es, el humanismo, la tolerancia y la libertad. Por ende, la burguesía había sabido labrar un patrimonio mental a través del fomento de la cultura y de una conciencia patriótico-nacional que perseveró por sobrevivir entre el pangermanismo nazi y el paneslavismo ruso-soviético. Es de notar que aquella burguesía liberal, progresista y deseosa del orden, constituía una palanca del reformismo social que, después de la derrota de la Primera Guerra Mundial, sufrió en carne propia las consecuencias de los diez años que van de 1938 –fecha de la anexión austriaca– a 1947, cuando se consumó el sometimiento absoluto de Hungría respecto a la URSS. No por azar, Márai cierra la segunda parte de sus *Confesiones de un burgués* con afirmaciones de esta guisa:

> La palabra del escritor había perdido el efecto, el respeto y la credibilidad, ya no era capaz de cambiar ni un gramo de arena en el mundo. Los literatos habían malgastado la herencia histórica de los enciclopedistas, la autoridad de la palabra para cambiar la sociedad. La literatura había perdido su credibilidad moral. (Márai, 2016a, p. 411)

A nadie se le escapa que esta falta de compromiso por parte de los escritores depende en buena medida de la connivencia que algunos adquirieron con los regímenes totalitarios o, en el mejor de los casos, con la aceptación de los principios del hombre-masa del americanismo. Este conjunto de factores, comportó la quiebra de la vieja Europa, burguesa, liberal y progresista que había optado por el camino de la formación y la cultura, según los postulados de la *cultura animi* heredados de la tradición

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humanista que ahora estaba herida por la irrupción de unos vientos materialistas contrarios al cuidado intelectual y espiritual.

> El hombre europeo vivía con una herida, viajaba, escuchaba música, leía libros, amaba y rompía con sus amantes, dentro de su destino europeo, como si lo hubieran herido. Es el sufrimiento del hombre culto que sospecha que los bárbaros ya se hallan ante la puerta tallada, blandiendo las mazas… Fueron muchos quienes escribieron sobre ello, y de diversas maneras. (Márai, 2014, p. 67)

No nos cansaremos de repetirlo: la barbarie de la guerra, el enfrentamiento germano-soviético, acabó con la tradición liberal que la burguesía húngara defendía desde 1867. Aquello supuso la bancarrota de un universo, de una cosmovisión, de una manera de entender la vida: el amor a los libros, la afición a la lectura, la pasión por «empalabrar» un pensamiento a través de la literatura y el deseo de mejorar la condición humana a través de la formación. Por todo ello, resulta lógico que, frente a la barbarie de la invasión de las tropas alemanas, Márai buscase refugio en su biblioteca que en aquel tiempo –la noche del 18 al 19 de marzo de 1944– continuaba intacta, con sus seis mil «volúmenes reunidos en mis andanzas por el mundo». A renglón seguido, y al rememorar lo vivido en aquellas lúgubres horas nocturnas que no encerraban buenos presagios, Márai escribió en *¡Tierra, tierra!* lo siguiente:

> Me fijé en el ejemplar de Marco Aurelio que había comprado a un librero de segunda mano a orillas del Sena, en las Conversaciones con Goethe de Eckermann, en una antigua edición de una Biblia en húngaro. Seis mil volúmenes. Desde las paredes me contemplaban los retratos de mi padre, mi abuelo y otros parientes muertos. (Márai, 2016c, p. 16)

De estas palabras de Márai se desprende cuáles eran sus tres títulos preferidos –un autor estoico latino, el clásico por antonomasia del neohumanismo alemán y la Biblia– que sintetizan el itinerario de la cultura

occidental, amén de la presencia de la tradición familiar que, procedente de Alemania, se había afincado en Hungría a la vez que asumía el proceso de magiarización. A este respecto, y con independencia del caso de Márai, podemos añadir que Hungría estimaba los libros propios, los escritos en húngaro, pero también las traducciones de los clásicos universales a la lengua magiar que sólo conocen diez millones de personas aunque, por su vocación de pertenecer a la tradición occidental, garantiza desde el punto de vista intelectual una vida plena (Márai, 2016c, p. 311). Sin forzar demasiado el argumento, en el universo mental de Márai –y de la misma manera que acontece con su vocación burguesa– Europa constituye un proyecto cultural que se manifiesta en una conciencia que deriva de su historia y tradición, porque «una Europa económicamente unida, sin conciencia de su misión, no puede convertirse en una potencia mundial como lo fue durante siglos, cuando sí creía en sí misma y en su tarea» (Márai, 2016c, p. 307). Una conciencia que se dibuja en la matriz que trazan aquellas tres obras elegidas de su biblioteca: la Biblia, o gran narrativa semita y cristiana, crisol de la tradición judeo-cristiana, obra que llevaba consigo en sus viajes; la filosofía helenista representada por Marco Aurelio que perfila un estilo de vida estoico y la síntesis del neo-humanismo moderno (fruto tardío del clásico y del renacentista) que simboliza el Goethe de Weimar que conversa amablemente con Eckermann. «Uno pertenece a una familia espiritual, y en la jerarquía de ese árbol genealógico está Goethe como padre primigenio de todos, de los demás miembros de la familia, de nuestros hermanos y tíos espirituales» (Márai, 2016a, p. 344). En suma, Europa asume, a los ojos de Márai, una historia espiritual cuyos momentos estelares pueden simbolizarse en estos tres jalones que representan la Biblia, el helenismo y el humanismo.

La palabra y la barbarie totalitaria

Como hemos visto, la burguesía había alentado un clima intelectual que confiaba en la cultura que dio sentido a Europa desde los tiempos del helenismo, vivificados con los aportes del Renacimiento y la Ilustración.

Tal estado de ánimo se personificó en la figura de Goethe, con el antecedente de Schiller, en quien los lectores veían «al precursor del liberalismo, al revolucionario» (Márai, 2016a, p. 47). Por contra, entre 1938 y 1948, se consumó la derrota de aquella generación, culta y moderna, liberal y civilizada, eminentemente burguesa, que había cultivado la llama espiritual europea, enraizada en los valores del humanismo, que claudicó ante la barbarie del nazismo y del comunismo. «En esos diez años desapareció también toda una forma de vida y toda una cultura», declara de manera contundente Márai en las primeras páginas de *Lo que no quise decir*, una idea-fuerza que encontramos en otros lugares de sus libros (Márai, 2016b, p. 10).

Ni que decir tiene que la aniquilación de esta forma de vida que caracteriza la civilización europea implicó un desmoronamiento de la moral de los intelectuales, inmersos en una profunda crisis e incapaces de rectificar el rumbo de los acontecimientos. «Los escritores expresaban cada vez con más fuerza y genialidad el hecho de no tener fuerza, de haber fracasado» (Márai, 2016a, p. 411). No es sorprendente, pues, que Márai se lamente de esta renuncia, de esta traición de la intelectualidad húngara que no supo estar a la altura de las circunstancias. «Los literatos habían malgastado la herencia histórica de los enciclopedistas, la autoridad de la palabra escrita para cambiar la sociedad. La literatura había perdido su credibilidad moral» (Márai, 2016a, p. 411).

Sin lugar a dudas, este proceso de decadencia se había gestado anteriormente, cuando Márai –formado según los patrones de la *Bildung* centroeuropea, espíritu viajero y curioso, dedicado al periodismo ya que había colaborado en el *Frankfurter Zeitung*, «diario de altísimo nivel y espíritu verdaderamente europeo» (Márai, 2016a, p. 279)– constató que en los años de crisis que siguieron a la Gran Guerra (con la firma de los tratados de paz de Versalles en 1919 y de Trianón en 1920) peligraba la cosmovisión burguesa, «que deseaba celebrar el triunfo de la razón por encima de los instintos y que creía en la fuerza y en la resistencia de la inteligencia y del espíritu» (Márai, 2016a, p. 472). No cabe sino señalar que la barbarie totalitaria se impuso a la civilización y a la cultura, lo cual comportó la desaparición de un estilo de vida culto que la burguesía había hecho suyo en Europa, tal

como se desprende de las obras de escritores de la talla de Marcel Proust, Elias Canetti y André Maurois. «Sándor Márai es el novelista de la burguesía magyar, como Proust lo fue de la francesa», escribió Oliver Brachfeld meses después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial (Márai, 1946, p. 14).

Por todo cuanto decimos, Márai reflejó la visión burguesa del mundo, emparentada con el humanismo liberal, un fenómeno no sólo centroeuropeo sino también continental que se gestó al socaire de los vientos del humanismo renacentista que proclamaron la dignidad del ser humano. No en balde, en la capital de la Toscana, Márai quedó impresionado por la belleza, hasta el punto de que «en Florencia empecé a vivir en un éxtasis conmovedor» (Márai, 2016a, p. 368). Más todavía, Márai –que vivió en Berlín los años ajetreados de la República de Weimar– sale en defensa de la burguesía culta, que gustaba de la formación (*Bildung*), gracias al trato con las artes y las ciencias, a los viajes de aprendizaje, en un todo que deseaba –como buen burgués– transformar Hungría para sacarla de la postración feudal y convertirla en una especie de provincia pedagógica. Consideraciones aparte, lo cierto es que Budapest había de asemejarse a Weimar, en una visión que combinaba el sentimiento magiar, la dimensión humanista de Goethe y la vocación europea de Hungría que quedaba así ligada a Occidente. Forzoso es reconocer que aquella burguesía se constituyó como un elemento civilizador de primera magnitud, que se desmarcaba de la inanidad cultural de la nobleza, a la vez que defendía un modelo de sociedad liberal que sucumbió ante el nazismo y el bolchevismo.

Es obvio que Márai confía en el vigor de la palabra –«Creo que el mundo no sólo es materia y que el espíritu no sólo es una consecuencia química o eléctrica de la materia. Creo que "al principio era el Verbo" y que "el Espíritu de Dios se movía sobre la faz de las aguas"», declara sin ambages en *Lo que no quise decir* (Márai, 2016b, p. 11). En tal sentido, apela a la fuerza de la palabra para dejar constancia del significado de la vieja Europa que en su opinión no desapareció en 1918 –cuando la *Belle époque* dio sus últimos coletazos– sino que se prolongó hasta 1938, al producirse la anexión de Austria por parte del III Reich. No podemos sino remarcar que Márai confía en la energía proteica de la palabra, como

único recurso para denunciar –de acuerdo con la fuerza del Logos– la barbarie totalitaria. Dicho esto, hemos de añadir que su mundo no se basa en la lógica de los números, ni en una interpretación físico-matemática de las cosas, que genera una cosmovisión fría y racional, geométrica y tecnocientífica, «porque la tecnología empieza con los números árabes» (Márai, 2005, p. 391). En vez de números, logaritmos y ecuaciones, Márai apuesta sin restricciones por la palabra, por el discurso y la narrativa.

Desde luego, Márai es consciente de que vivimos –como bien señalan los pensadores hermenéuticos como el profesor Octavi Fullat (Fullat, 2005 y 2016)– en un universo empalabrado, a pesar de que algunos autores como Joseph Roth dudaron de la viabilidad de la palabra en aquella encrucijada histórica. No por azar, Roth escribió el 9 de octubre de 1933 a Stefan Zweig lo siguiente: «La palabra ha muerto, los hombres ladran. La palabra no tiene ya ningún significado, es decir, ninguno actual» (Roth y Zweig, 2014, p. 112). Bien mirado, las cosas empeoraron después de la barbarie totalitaria, cuando la palabra fue manipulada por la propaganda del nazismo y la filosofía materialista del pan-eslavismo comunista. Aquellos años de brutalidad comportaron la miseria de Europa, que acabó transformándose en una especie de mentira generalizada, desde el momento que –una vez eliminada la libertad– la palabra perdía toda su fuerza originaria, la que surge con nitidez del evangelio joánico. Mientras la libertad en manos de la burguesía hizo posible que la lengua húngara –«yo creo que de todos los escritores europeos, los húngaros eran los lectores más aplicados» (Márai, 2016c, p. 140)– sirvió de palanca para construir un país, después de 1945, al precipitarse la sovietización, la palabra quedó contaminada por una razón de estado que adulteraba todas las cosas.

> Occidente ha mentido con la palabra hablada y con la palabra escrita; ha mentido hasta con la música, al arrebatarle la melodía y la armonía para sustituirlas por unos histéricos aullidos convulsos y epilépticos. (Márai, 2016c, p. 310)

Ante el espectáculo de una Europa que renunció a sus ideales después del fraude que representaron los sistemas totalitarios, ya fuesen

fascistas o soviéticos, Márai optó por mantener viva su independencia intelectual y espiritual y así, no sin dificultades, pudo marchar al exilio en 1948. En el fondo, Márai antepuso como Sócrates la libertad de conciencia al embuste y al engaño, a las renuncias acomodaticias para sobrevivir. Sólo de esta forma se puede entender su reivindicación de que la palabra sea siempre auténtica, una palabra viva sin deslealtades ni vilezas que sirva para canalizar la libre expresión de la conciencia. Por este motivo, Márai se opuso, con el concurso de la palabra y de la literatura, a la sinrazón de la barbarie, ya fuese la arbitrariedad del totalitarismo nazi o la manipulación ideológica comunista en que «todo se podía comprender a través de la ideología marxista» (Márai, 2016c, p. 258). Naturalmente, Márai tampoco se muestra satisfecho con el consumismo americano, con su cultura al servicio del hombre-masa, del gregarismo que busca el consumo y la diversión al margen del esfuerzo, en una actitud que coincide con la expuesta por Zweig cuando en 1932 se refería a la desintoxicación moral de Europa (Zweig, 2017). Veamos sus palabras:

> La civilización comercializada e industrializada exige, en Occidente, un producto de masas que satisfaga sus gustos, mientras que en el Este de Europa sólo se aceptan las obras politizadas, patentadas y medidas según la ideología reinante. (Márai, 2016c, p. 151)

Frente a estos atropellos, únicamente queda una solución, el recurso de la palabra, de la denuncia a través de la escritura. En las últimas páginas de *La mujer justa*, Márai desarrolla esta idea de la palabra como mecanismo de rebeldía, aspecto que puede vincularse a la estética de la resistencia de Peter Weiss (1999) porque en su visión del mundo el ser humano, en cuanto *homo loquens*, también deviene un ser estético, una dimensión propia igualmente del ideal de formación burgués, de la *Bildung*. Dicho en otras palabras, frente a la barbarie sólo queda la apelación a la palabra, al *logos*, que actúa no sólo como acto de denuncia sino también de lucha y combate, a la vez que se encauza como posible salida a la dicotomía entre la razón mecánica que acaba en un burdo materialismo

y la razón política-totalitaria, dos enemigos que cercenan y destruyen el espíritu humanista. Y aunque un personaje de *La mujer justa* «ya no creía en las palabras… pero seguía amándolas», de la misma manera Márai escribió hasta 1948 en su patria húngara, y después, hasta su muerte, en el exilio.

A modo de cierre

Es hora de recapitular y recordar que, según Márai, desde aquel aciago 12 de marzo de 1938, Europa dejó de ser lo que había sido, lo cual generó en la Europa central un conflicto que se agudizó con la entrada de las tropas del Ejército Rojo cuando liberaron los territorios ocupados por los nazis. Una liberación –título de la narración que cuenta la entrada de las tropas soviéticas a Budapest, obligadas a una lucha dramática casa por casa similar a la de Stalingrado– que se convirtió en un nuevo oprobio. En *Liberación*, Márai narra el asedio de Budapest, una ciudad de un millón y medio de personas. «Porque aún ayer existía un mundo al que se pertenecía. Y había además un continente, ahora en peligro, con catedrales, hogares y casas, viaductos, paisajes, música de Bach y libros, Europa…» (Márai, 2013, p. 65). En definitiva, una liberación que, poco tiempo después, se convirtió en una opresión que en 1956 hizo saltar en las calles de Budapest una revolución que los tanques soviéticos acallaron sin piedad.

Con el trasfondo de la paz soviética, se consumó en Hungría, como en el resto de países satélites de la URSS, la muerte definitiva de la Europa ilustrada, de la mentalidad burguesa culta y civilizada, conformada según un ideario presidido por el liberalismo y el humanismo. Está claro que esta situación obligó a Márai –después de la destrucción europea que se originó entre 1938 y 1948, pero cuya gestación se produjo durante el período de entreguerras– a emprender el camino del exilio en 1948. Mientras tanto, Hungría vivió jornadas de ilusión y esperanza como la del año 1956, cuando el cardenal Mindszenty se convirtió en el abanderado de la libertad, después de haberse opuesto anteriormente a la nacionalización de las escuelas católicas en 1948 (Mindszenty, 1989, p. 151).

He ahí, pues la paradoja: un intelectual europeo como Sándor Márai, defensor de los valores y de la tradición humanística continental, se vio obligado a refugiarse en los Estados Unidos que –después de la victoria aliada de 1945 y tal como vaticinó John Dewey en su autobiografía– pensaban que Europa había de ser una simple provincia de aquella nación surgida con la declaración de independencia del 4 de julio de 1776 que, entre otras cosas, prometía la búsqueda de la felicidad para el ser humano. Mientras tanto, y una vez desaparecido el ideal de la vieja Europa culta y civilizada, que promovía el ideal de formación, hubo que volver a poner los fundamentos de Europa, sobre una base económica de una comunidad del carbón y del acero y el entendimiento entre Adenauer y De Gaulle, que –a grandes rasgos– también recelaban, como Márai, de la Unión Soviética, una visión moderna y materialista del mundo que naufragó en 1989, con la caída del muro de Berlín, aquella imagen televisiva que Márai no pudo ver.

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Moral Education and Literature: The Contribution of Utopias and Tales

Abstract: Since the beginning of Western culture utopias and tales have been involved within moral education. The contribution aims to make clear that this kind of literature is suitable from the pedagogical point of view principally because of the symbolic communicative style. It is important to be aware of the difference between ancient and modern utopias too.

Keywords: education, pedagogy, utopia, modernity, symbol, freedom

Utopian texts play a major part not only in literature but also in pedagogy. Throughout the centuries, moral education in particular has been promulgated through narrative communication, including utopian stories. There must be a specific reason for this. I aim to show:

1) on one hand, that narrative communication is fully coherent with the symbolic communication which is essential in moral education;
2) on the other, that utopia, in going beyond actual situations, is perfectly suited to the task of education, providing a challenge for the future;
3) that in truth, the utopian literary genre partly changes with the modern age, bringing consequences from the educational point of view.

I would like to analyse these three topics in order to meet today's educational challenges.

1. Narration, moral education and symbolic communication

From the historical perspective, it is indisputable that narrative communication stands at the beginning of moral education. In fact, in terms of Western culture (I will deal with this because it is my specialist research field), the most ancient document related to educational practice is *The Iliad* which contains some verses concerning Achilles' education (IX, 565–566; XI, 1093–1094); consequently, the historical root of moral education lies in the epic. Subsequently the moral apologue came into being, for example the tale of Hercules at the crossroads, which is still well-known in the modern age. Its subject is Hercules (the hero renowned for his physical strength) facing the choice between "Vice" and "Virtue", which is described as a challenge of moral strength. Even from the lexical point of view, the relationship between virtue and vigour is clear. In fact, the second word comes from the Latin *vigor* which is related to the word *vis* ("strength"); the first comes from the Latin *virtus* which is derived from the word *vir* ("hero"): *vir* is such because of *vis*. We find the same association of ideas in the ancient Greek idiom in relation to *areté* ("virtue"), *héros* ("hero") and *róme* ("strength"); thus every hero is defined as such because of the connection between their physical and moral strength. The heir to the narrative-pedagogical literary genre is the modern Bildungsroman whose ancient precursors are romanticized biographies like Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*.

There is another kind of storytelling within moral education: the fable, which uses animals to describe human conduct. Aesop is the most ancient fabulist followed by Phaedrus, and there have been many other authors active throughout the whole Western tradition. Narrative communication is very close to ancient mythological tales. In fact, it is characterised by its symbolic register, going beyond the descriptive approach: it is for this reason that it is useful from the moral point of view. Both an-

cient and modern stories are concerned with the recurring topics of moral heroes' challenges, the fight between good and evil, the difficulty in choosing good, the victory of good over evil, the tests to achieve adulthood, and so on.

There is a third type of narrative communication that is well-suited to moral education: the historical tale. This kind of communication is deep-rooted within our cultural tradition, starting from Greek civilisation. Since Herodotus we have had many historical works at our disposal which embody the Latin statement *Historia magistra vitae*, "History is life's teacher". Plutarch is the typical case of the morally engaged historian: he aims to prove the equal value of Greek and Roman civilisations by putting Greek and Roman biographies side by side. The most important historical narration in Western culture is surely the Bible. "Salvation history" is clearly morally connoted, as Clement of Alexandria already showed in publishing *The Educator*. At the beginning of the Patristic Age this author's aim was to make clear that God leads mankind through history to meet Him. Once again, this type of communication embraces the symbolic register because events are interpreted as having not only one, but many meanings. Literal and spiritual meanings sit side by side, the latter being divided into three levels: allegorical, moral and anagogical. The medieval monk Augustine of Dacia composed two well-known verses to express this (*1929: 256*):

Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria
moralis quid agas, quid speres anagogia

(the literal meaning teaches the facts, the allegorical one what you must believe,
the moral one what you must do, the anagogical one what you must hope for).

The three narrative registers I have set out are different to each other, but they do have something in common: symbolic interpretation. Why is

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the symbolic approach so important to human communication and education? Ernst Cassirer expresses it well:

> no animal progresses to the characteristic transformation of the grasping movement into the indicative gesture. Even among the most highly developed animals, 'clutching at the distance', as pointing with the hand has been called, has never gone beyond the first, incomplete beginnings. This simple genetic fact suggests that 'clutching at the distance' involves a factor of general spiritual significance. It is one of the first steps by which the perceiving and desiring I removes a perceived and desired content from himself and so forms it into a 'object', an 'object' content. (…) Sensory-physical grasping becomes sensory interpretation, which in turn conceals within it the first impulse toward the higher functions of signification manifested in language and thought.[1]

Symbolic knowledge is such because it goes beyond perceptible knowledge, even if it starts from it. For this reason, the notion of mentally "catching" something is frequently present in its translation into concepts (the Latin word *conceptum* comes from *capio*, "to catch" in the same way that the German word *Begriff* comes from *greifen*). Just as conceptual knowledge turns sensory perception into intellectual ideas, so utopia turns actual situations into future projects: both are essential to mankind because both are related to the uniquely human freedom "to go beyond", i.e. to be open to transcendence.

2. Utopia and pedagogical literature

Utopia and pedagogy have been connected since their very beginnings. When was pedagogy born? Many answers are available. I think that

[1] E. Cassirer, *The philosophy of symbolic forms*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1953, t. I, p. 181.

the best is: in the Platonic dialogues. In fact, each science is such because of the proper study subject. For this reason, pedagogy as a science needs to recognise the proper meaning of education. That is why I link pedagogy to Platonic thought. In fact, within his *Republic*, Plato wonders about the essence of education. He finds the answer through the "allegory of the cave", the well-known story told to distinguish between "education" (*paideía*) and "lack of education" (*apaideusía*).[2] Consequently – in light of the tale – we can assume that, according to Plato, to be educated means to be able both to discriminate between appearances and truth, and to embrace everything within the Idea of Good. Aristotle (Plato's most important disciple) also indirectly gives a specific meaning to education. In fact, he says that human beings should not only live, but live well. In this we see the Aristotelian description of the "human task" (*érgon*)[3]: education is the way that leads to the achievement of that aim.

It is interesting to note that the "allegory of the cave" is situated in a utopia, perhaps the most ancient in Western culture. Plato is aware of the utopian features of his work, which is dedicated to imagining the perfect political community. In the dialogue Socrates has a conversation partner. At a certain point he asks the philosopher about the town they are discussing. Socrates' answer is very profound: "I understand (…) you mean the city whose establishment we have described, the city whose home is in the ideal; for I think that it can be found nowhere on earth (…) perhaps there is a pattern [*parádeigma*] of it laid up in heaven for him who wishes to contemplate it and so beholding to constitute himself [*eautòn katoikízein*, "to build oneself"]. But it makes no difference whether it exists now or ever will come into being (…)".[4] Through his master, Plato says that, in order to educate the human being, it is necessary to look at something non-material, i.e. something which does not exist in the world. Why? Because the essence of humanity is freedom and freedom does not exist as a material thing. For this reason, Plato refers to an *ou-tópos* ("not-place"),

[2] Plato, *Republic*, VII, 514a.

[3] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 5, 1140a 25-30.

[4] Plato, *Republic*, IX, 592a-b.

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which corresponds to the non-material identity of freedom as a spiritual reality, beyond time and space. This is a pedagogical idea.

I previously emphasised the relationship between pedagogical communication and symbolic narration: the "allegory of the cave" is a clear example of this. In fact, Plato tells his allegories not to destroy the knowledge of the power belonging to the *lógos* but to deepen it, going beyond strictly argumentative thought. Within his *Republic*, Plato divides knowledge into two parts and four levels: representation/*eikasía* and trust/*pístis* (sensible knowledge); and thought/*diánoia* and intelligence/*nóesis* (super-sensible knowledge).[5] Plato stresses that the highest level deals with "hypotheses" (*hupóthesis*), i.e. underpinnings able to make thoughts arise (*hupo-títhemi*). In other words, noetic knowledge – unlike dianoetic knowledge – does not rely on argument, but on the intuition which gives rise to the not-hypothetical knowledge concerning the original reality; not on discursive reason (*diánoia* as *dià-nous*, "to think something through"), but on symbolic reason (*súbolon*, from *sumbállo/sun-bállo*, "to put together"). This is exactly the kind of narration which relates to allegory. As previously mentioned, allegory as *muthos* means to go beyond discursive *lógos*: it is an intuitive way of thinking. In the "allegory of the cave" the word *exaíphnes*[6] ("suddenly"; the moment when the prisoner described in the tale becomes free) is related to intuitive knowledge because it identifies that something unexpected happens, whereas, in discursive reason, conclusions are predictable because of the premise/consequence relation. The word *exaíphnes* is also utilised by Plato in his *Letter VII*, when he says that knowledge of the truth "is born suddenly".[7] The same thing happens each time intuition overtakes thought and moves aside the veil of ignorance.

What I have explained here makes clear the type of communication that deals with moral education. It is a form of communication that goes beyond strict descriptive reason. Aristotle is very effective when he

[5] Plato, *Republic*, VI, 509d-511e.

[6] Plato, *Republic*, VII, 515c.

[7] Plato, *Letter VII*, 341d.

speaks about different levels of exactness corresponding to different levels of knowledge: "Mathematical accuracy is not to be demanded in everything, but only in things which do not contain matter. Hence this method is not that of natural science".[8] Aristotle is not a utopian writer, but he offers the best explanation of the kind of reason that supports the utopian narrative.

As the Platonic text quoted above clearly states, what moral education and utopian literature have in common is that they both go beyond factual knowledge and improve concrete action. That is why Rousseau considers Plato's *Republic* as a pedagogical treatise: "If you wish to know what is meant by public education, read Plato's *Republic*. Those who merely judge books by their titles take this for a treatise on politics, but it is the finest treatise on education ever written".[9] I quote the French author not by chance: in fact, the most important pedagogical utopia belongs to him.

3. Rousseau's pedagogical utopia

Rousseau – principally in his Bildungsroman *Emile* – addresses a subject very close to that of Plato. In fact, the Greek philosopher had to face sophists' idea of knowledge, which was inferior on account of its instrumentality. The sophistic attitude was that human education is related to the transfer of useful competences – providing only technique without soul. In short, it was something completely without reference to the moral identity of the human being. Plato claimed that to learn virtue was unlike learning material competences because the deep identity of virtue is related to the good, not to the useful. This is why Plato referred to virtue as the contemplation of truth in the *hyperuranion*. Rousseau faced the

[8] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, II, 3, 995a 15-20. Within *Nicomachean Ethics*, he also says: "we must not look for equal exactness in all departments of study, but only such as belongs to the subject matter of each, and in such a degree as is appropriate to the particular line of enquiry" (I, 7, 1098a 25-30).

[9] J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile*, book I.

same problem because of the Enlightenment idea of knowledge, which was identified only from an instrumental point of view. In fact, Enlightenment authors shared the idea of Francis Bacon that knowledge and power are the same thing.[10] That is why the aim of knowledge – according to the Enlightenment authors who were followers of Bacon's philosophy – is pragmatic and functional.

Rousseau realised the distance between that idea of knowledge and the freedom particular to the human being. In fact, to be free means to be able to go beyond what is useful as Aristotle had already clearly stated by writing that "nature always does only what is useful".[11] Mankind, however, is original because it is able to go beyond what is useful, for example through the fine arts. This is why Rousseau is a supporter of the "myth of the noble savage". Within his book *Discourse on the origin of inequality* he says: "As an unbroken courser erects his mane, paws the ground, and rages at the bare sight of the bit, while a trained horse patiently suffers both whip and spur, just so the barbarian will never reach his neck to the yoke which civilized man carries without murmuring but prefers the most stormy liberty to a calm subjection".[12] The same idea can be found in *Emile*: "Civilised man is born and dies a slave. The infant is bound up in swaddling clothes, the corpse is nailed down in his coffin. All his life long man is imprisoned by our institutions".[13] Why is there this kind of slavery? Like other Enlightenment authors, Rousseau charges the *ancien regime*, but – according to him – this does not solve the problem, because – unlike other Enlightenment authors – Rousseau thinks that the social system is structurally bad due to widespread greed: "It is through the hustle of commerce and the arts, through the greedy self-interest of profit, and through softness and love of amenities that personal services are replaced by money payments. (…) Make gifts of money, and you will not be

[10] See F. Bacon, *Novum organum or true suggestions for the interpretation of nature*, book I: aphorisms, 3.

[11] Aristotle, *Generation of animals*, II, 5, 741b 5.

[12] J.-J. Rousseau, *Discourse on the origin of inequality*, second part.

[13] J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile*, book I.

long without chains".[14] Here is the challenge according to Rousseau: to make the human being able first of all to choose what is good and only then to learn useful competences. *Emile*, like Plato's *Republic*, imagines a supernatural model – the "nature state" – in order to make people morally good through education. Like Plato's Idea of Good, Rousseau's "nature state" is also outside of space and time. Rousseau is aware of this utopian situation. Within his *Discourse on the origin of inequality* he says: "For it is by no means a light undertaking to distinguish properly between what is original and what is artificial in the actual nature of man, or to form a true idea of a state which no longer exists, perhaps never did exist, and probably never will exist".[15] If the "nature state" were the primitive condition, it would still be possible to encounter it today!

Rousseau refers to the "nature state" as the "original state". This is a reference appropriate to education. It goes beyond what is described and studied in an objective way. Within this attitude we can recognise a new perspective, different from the one common to Enlightenment authors. Obviously, in Rousseau's thought, we can find many references to Enlightenment culture (for example, the "profession of faith of the Savoyard Vicar" in his *Emile*), but he is able to recognise the problems of the Enlightenment from a cultural point of view, especially the faith placed in description and functionality, which corresponds to a technical civilisation: Emile is educated in the country in order to make him able to recognise first of all what is good, and only afterwards what is useful. Rousseau says, "Life is not breath, but action"[16] and "Life is the trade I would teach him".[17] In these statements we can see Rousseau's youthful passion for the ancient moral authors, Plutarch in particular.[18]

[14] J.-J. Rousseau, *The social contract*, chapter XV.

[15] J.-J. Rousseau, *Discourse on the origin of inequality*, Preface.

[16] J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile*, book I.

[17] J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile,* book I.

[18] J.-J. Rousseau, *The confessions*, book one: "My romance reading concluded with the summer of 1719, the following winter was differently employed. My mother's library being quite exhausted, we had recourse to that part of her father's which had devolved to us; here we happily found some valuable books, which was

Obviously Rousseau's doctrine about the perfection of nature is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of original sin; nonetheless, and without any confusion, we can also recognise that Rousseau's critique of modernity – as an ideological and functional civilisation – is close to the Christian one and remains useful today because it allows us to recognise the limits of the purely descriptive approach in pedagogy and to accept today's educational challenges.

by no means extraordinary, having been selected by a minister that truly deserved that title, in whom learning (which was the rage of the times) was but a secondary commendation, his taste and good sense being most conspicuous. The history of the Church and Empire by Le Sueur, Bossuett's Discourses on Universal History, Plutarch's Lives, the history of Venice by Nani, Ovid's Metamorphoses, La Bruyere, Fontenelle's World, his Dialogues of the Dead, and a few volumes of Moliere, were soon ranged in my father's closet, where, during the hours he was employed in his business, I daily read them, with an avidity and taste uncommon, perhaps unprecedented at my age. Plutarch presently became my greatest favorite. The satisfaction I derived from repeated readings I gave this author, extinguished my passion for romances, and I shortly preferred Agesilaus, Brutus, and Aristides, to Orondates, Artemenes, and Juba. These interesting studies, seconded by the conversations they frequently occasioned with my father, produced that republican spirit and love of liberty, that haughty and invincible turn of mind, which rendered me impatient of restraint or servitude, and became the torment of my life, as I continually found myself in situations incompatible with these sentiments. Incessantly occupied with Rome and Athens, conversing, if I may so express myself with their illustrious heroes; born the citizen of a republic, of a father whose ruling passion was a love of his country, I was fired with these examples; could fancy myself a Greek or Roman, and readily give into the character of the personage whose life I read; transported by the recital of any extraordinary instance of fortitude or intrepidity, animation flashed from my eyes, and gave my voice additional strength and energy. One day, at table, while relating the fortitude of Scoevola, they were terrified at seeing me start from my seat and hold my hand over a hot chafing-dish, to represent more forcibly the action of that determined Roman".

4. Modern utopias, moral narrations and today's educational challenges

Modernity is full of utopias from the pedagogical point of view, but they do not all share a common direction. Most modern utopias are coherent with the modern age as characterised by the new idea of "method". In fact, in the ancient world, the Greek word *méthodos* meant the concrete way to learn about the world. For this reason, ancient philosophers were aware of the plurality of methods as previously quoted in Aristotle. This idea is well expressed through the Alexandrian Mouseion founded by Demetrius of Phalerum, Theophrastus' disciple, who in turn had been Aristotle's disciple. In fact, the first handbooks were published under the auspices of the Mouseion: *Elementes* by Euclid about geometry; *Art of Grammar* by Dionysius Thrax about grammar; and *Almagest* by Ptolemy about astronomy, among others. This happened because of the plural identity of the school.

By the beginning of the modern era, the word "method" had changed in meaning, becoming strictly singular. In fact, modern authors are convinced they have found the right way to study nature using a scientific method based on empirical evidence, experimental verification and mathematical language. This is why they aim to find the "natural laws" ruling the world. There was a pronounced "knowledge reformation" related to the new techno-functional attitude that is well expressed by Francis Bacon's statement: "Knowledge and human power are synonymous, since the ignorance of the cause frustrates the effect; for nature is only subdued by submission, and that which in contemplative philosophy corresponds with the cause in practical science becomes the rule".[19] The Baconian attitude is far removed from the Aristotelian primacy of *theoría* – above all in its regard of knowledge as being valuable in itself, irrespective of its usefulness or otherwise. From now on, only what is useful is good, and social philosophy also expresses the aim of technically manipulating politics.

[19] F. Bacon, *Novum organum or true suggestions for the interpretation of nature*, book I: aphorisms, 3.

The turning point in modern utopias is clear. First of all, they are very attentive to technical powers, as both *New Atlantis* by Bacon and *The City of the Sun* by Campanella clearly show. In *New Atlantis*, Bacon describes "Salomon's House", where young people are educated. The aim of the institution is to impart the knowledge of causes and secret motions of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire to the effecting of all things possible. This kind of knowledge is very far removed from the classical tradition, because it deals with the preparation of instruments suitable for all sorts of technical enterprises. The same approach is evident in *The City of the Sun* where the citizen who has found out new arts and very useful secrets is honoured. Even if there are also fine arts in the "ideal city", primacy is given to the mathematical and technical knowledge, as is confirmed by the reverence shown to Pythagoras by the inhabitants of the town.

Rousseau's utopia stands against this trend inspired by the primacy of the technical viewpoint. Within the modern age, the anomaly is represented by Thomas More's *Utopia*, whose aim is principally moral due to his strong Catholic identity. In fact, Utopian citizens

> do not place happiness in all sorts of pleasures, but only in those that in themselves are good and honest. There is a party among them who place happiness in bare virtue; others think that our natures are conducted by virtue to happiness, as that which is the chief good of man. They define virtue as living according to Nature, and think that we are made by God for that end; they believe that a man then follows the dictates of Nature when he pursues or avoids things according to the direction of reason. They say that the first dictate of reason is the kindling in us a love and reverence for the Divine Majesty, to whom we owe both all that we have and, all that we can ever hope for.[20]

[20] T. More, *Utopia*, "Of the travelling of the Utopians".

The Christian root of the text is clear. Nevertheless, in More's utopian society, mechanical competence is appreciated just as it is in other modern utopias, and "sometimes a mechanic that so employs his leisure hours as to make a considerable advancement in learning is eased from being a tradesman and ranked among their learned men".[21] But the true aim of More's utopia is to promote spiritual and moral growth, not technical progress.

Unfortunately, throughout the modern age the tendency towards functionality prevails in utopias, which are generally related to the uncritical celebration of technical power. In particular, this attitude is clear in positivistic culture and, as happened under twentieth century totalitarianism, is related increasingly to the use of the school as an institution of conformity. This is the "dark side" of utopian literature, corrupted by ideologies, because they became separated from their former moral aims and were put under the rule of enemies of human freedom, with no regard for human dignity. Today we are facing an ambiguous situation: on the one hand, human liberty is continuously evoked; on the other, the diffuse tendency towards consumerism is morally noxious. What can we say with regard to narration in general, and utopias in particular, from the pedagogical point of view, drawing together all aspects of this review?

The narrative style is essential to anthropology. Both Ricoeur, from a philosophical point of view, and von Balthasar, from a theological one, draw attention to the "narrative" side of human identity, i.e. the fact that human identity is continuously composed by self-comprehension through narration. We cannot stop narrating and we cannot give up utopias because this would mean deleting symbolic knowledge in favour of the merely descriptive and functional. But we must be also aware that going beyond the functional-descriptive approach means above all encountering the moral and spiritual identity of the person. It is not enough to be learned from the point of view of usefulness, nowadays well-expressed in the idea of "competence"; it is not only necessary to be educated in order to "learn something": it is essential to be educated in order

[21] T. More, *Utopia*, "On their trades, and manner of life".

to "become someone". The Platonic distinction between those who are educated and those who are not, accepted by Aristotle's saying that to live – for a human being – means to "live well", i.e. morally well, is the main challenge for us too. It is strictly connected to the Christian idea of "personal dignity", which recognises that each human being "is desirable by itself" (*autòn airéton estin*)[22] because – as the Second Vatican Council stated – the human creature is "the only creature on earth which God willed for itself" (*propter seipsam*).[23] Today we must also be aware that to educate someone means to lead them to choose only what is morally good, not to passively accept everything that is capable of attracting their attention. For this reason, today it is still important to have educational narratives (including utopias in the ancient tradition) that include a knowledge which is not only descriptive and technical, but also (and particularly) symbolic, providing wisdom and openness to transcendence.

[22] Clement of Alexandria, *Christ. The Educator*, I, 7.

[23] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 24.

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"To teach, to delight, and to change": Didactic Narration in *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*

Abstract: Written in French towards the end of the fourteenth century and translated into English by William Caxton in 1484, *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry* is a conduct book for girls. It is composed of numerous short narratives through which the Knight of La Tour-Landry, after the loss of his wife, instructs his daughters on their duties. The purpose of this paper is to examine various pedagogic strategies used by the father-narrator to engage his young daughters, to hold their attention, and to make his lessons memorable. Attention will also be paid to the tone and formal markers of the work, which has been classified as an example of medieval children's literature.

Keywords: medieval education, conduct books, narration

To teach is a necessity, to please is a sweetness,
to persuade is a victory.
Cicero

Since the central focus of this issue is narration, I will first recount a story which happened more than six hundred years ago in medieval France. In the feudal castle of La Tour-Landry, there lived a knight with his wife, their two sons and three daughters. Supposed to have been built in the twelfth century, the castle was located in the ancient province of Anjou, which lay between Poitou and Brittany (Wright, 1906, p. vii).

The Landry family lived happily until the lady died. Concerned with the welfare of his daughters, their father composed a book of instruction, for – as he states – it is the duty of every parent to teach their children "that thei shall kepe with hem som good ensaumple forto flee euell and withholde the good" (Prologue, p. 4, ll. 9–10).[1]

Written at the end of the fourteenth century in France, the book was translated into English in the fifteenth century, first by an anonymous writer and then in 1484 by William Caxton (Dronzek, 2001, p. 139). *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry* belongs to the genre of courtesy books, also known as conduct or deportment books, which is a distinct branch of didactic literature. The central focus of such books was "a dialogue between a more experienced, wiser (and therefore usually older) narrator and a less mature, less knowing (and therefore usually younger) audience" (Vitto, 2003, p. 93). Even though medieval manuals of behaviour were written almost as much for adults as they were for children, *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry* was clearly intended for a young adult audience "in need of an older generation's wisdom" (Vitto, 2003, p. 94), for it not only addresses children directly,[2] but was supposed to serve as a reading aid for the knight's daughters: the father-narrator explicitly states that the purpose of his book is "forto lerne hem to rede" (Prologue, p. 4, l. 8). In the Middle Ages, literacy was inextricably connected with immediate practical advantages, namely the instruction of boys and girls, as can be seen in *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*. Its author expresses concern for the educational well-being of both his sons and daughters, declaring that he also composed a book aimed at educating his sons, which unfortunately has not survived the test of time.

Writing about the differences in educating boys and girls in the Middle Ages, Shulamith Shahar lists certain traits praised in didactic literature

[1] Unless specified otherwise, I follow Caxton's translation, reprinted in 1868 and revised in 1906 by T. Wright for the Early English Text Society, from a manuscript of Henry VI's reign.

[2] I follow the definition of children's literature suggested by Nicole Clifton, according to whom this category of literature refers to "any text that either appears to have addressed children or can be shown to have been read by them" (Clifton, 2003, p. 10).

in the context of female education. Instructed primarily to obey their husbands and religious observances, the girls were encouraged to practice "piety, obedience, submission, devotion, and sexual chastity" (Shahar, 1992, p. 221). In order to instil such traits in his daughters, the father-narrator employs certain pedagogical tactics, which reveal his self-contradictory position. In my examination of these narratorial tactics, I will draw upon the classical notion adopted by St Augustine in his educational philosophy, according to which an effective preacher should be able to meet the following three goals: to teach (*docere*), to delight (*delectare*), and to move (*movere*). My intention is to show the means by which the father-narrator tries to engage his young daughters, to hold their attention, and to make his lessons memorable.

Commenting on the three aims of effective preaching, as underlined by Cicero, St Augustine writes: "To teach is a necessity, to delight is a beauty, to persuade is a triumph" (Augustine 83). The primary aim of an orator, i.e. to teach, depends on the subject matter, whereas the secondary aims, i.e. to delight and move, depend on the manner of delivery. Teaching is most essential for two reasons. First of all, the hearers must be instructed before they are moved, and secondly, if the truth is clearly pointed out, it can become a source of pleasure itself and no further recourse to pleasing and persuasive discourse will be needed (Augustine 84). Therefore, an effective orator should always begin with teaching, and the vehicle of instruction that St Augustine recommends is narration. "If the hearers need teaching, the matter treated of must be made fully known by means of narrative," he says (Augustine 75). The narrative should be short and clear, and the language perspicuous. "He, therefore, who teaches will avoid all words that do not teach; and if instead of them he can find words which are at once pure and intelligible, he will take these by preference," he advises (Augustine 82). This is particularly important when the listeners can neither ask questions nor show by means of gestures that they have understood, which is exactly the situation that the Knight of La Tour-Landry and his daughters find themselves in. Casting himself in the role of a writer, the father makes sure that his words are understood by his daughters.

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In order to make his instructions more palatable to the young adult audience, the knight uses prose narration, which – he hopes – will facilitate comprehension, and illustrates his teaching with about 140 examples. Explaining the method of composing his book, the knight states: "But y wolde not sette it in ryme, but in prose, forto abregge it, and that it might be beter and more plainly to be understond" (Prologue, p. 3, ll. 32–34). His intention to write prose is in line with the common procedure adopted by French writers in the thirteenth century, when verse was abandoned in favour of prose because of its association with "factual accuracy and instructional value" (Robertson, 2015, p. 159). The instructional value of *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry* is communicated through the many *exempla* which are aimed at inculcating certain truths and virtues to the knight's daughters.

The subject matter of the stories the father tells is directly correlated with his central concern, which is to protect his daughters against evil men. Recalling the days of his youth, the father-narrator remembers how his companions used to deceive women by swearing false oaths (Prologue, pp. 2–3), which leads him to the main purpose of his work, explained as follows:

> Therefore I concluded that I would cause to be made a little book wherein I would have written the good manners and good deeds of good ladies and women and of their lives, so that for their virtues and bounties they be honored, and after their death renowned and praised, and shall be to the end of the world, to take of them good example and countenance. And also by the contrary I shall cause to be written and set in a book the mishap and vices of evil women, who have used their life and now have blame, to the end that the evil might be eschewed by which they might err, who yet are blamed, shamed, and defamed. (Vitto, 2003, p.102)[3]

[3] In some instances I use the translation included in Daniel T. Kline's anthology and quoted by Vitto (Vitto, 2003, pp. 101–111).

To make himself more persuasive, the father-narrator refers to the authority of his own experience, which was one of the markers of medieval exemplary narration. Defined as "a brief narrative presented as truthful (that is, historical) and used in discourse (usually a sermon) to convince listeners by offering them a salutary lesson" (le Goff, 1992, p. 78), the *exempla* were based on biblical and historical stories. It was not an uncommon practice, however, to supplement the stories by a dose of personal anecdotes, which is what the Knight of La Tour-Landry does, by referring to people he has known. In fact, his confessional assertions, such as "Y knew another lady that…", "I haue herde of a knight and of a lady" or "y will tell you a tale that was tolde me of a lady that y knewe", are among the greatest strengths of his narration, for they bring the meaning closer to the young readers by placing an emphasis on "the recent past, on the time of the narrator, who insists on the contemporary character of his stories by situating them in 'nostris temporibus'" (le Goff, 1992, p. 79). According to Jacques le Goff, it is from their recent origin that the medieval *exempla* derive their persuasive power, for while the time of ancient history was not directly accessible to the eyes and ears of the contemporary man, recent history could be grasped directly and tangibly, without recourse to retrospection (le Goff, 1992, p. 79).

Another distinguishing feature of exemplary narration is the fact that it is less complex than the allegorical mode, and thus more accessible to a medieval audience, but less appealing to a modern one (Burrow, 1992, p. 108). Since the aim of an *exemplum* is to reveal some general truth by means of illustration, the story may be presented in short rather than in its entirety. Always bound with the speaker's intent, which is to demonstrate a particular aspect of a given phenomenon, the exemplary mode is based on a selection of the most relevant elements of meaning. In *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry* selection is closely bound up with repetition, for the tales – even though each forms a self-contained unit – are presented in groups of three or four narratives, inculcating and reinforcing the same or substantially the same wisdom. Describing the method of compiling the stories, the Knight of La Tour-Landry reveals that he was assisted by two priests and two clerks; he stresses the point that the stories his daughters

are presented with are illustrative of both appropriate and inappropriate behaviour so that "thei might vnderstand how thei shulde gouerne hem, and knowe good from euell" (Prologue, p. 3, ll. 24–26).

For instance, to underline the power of prayer and the dangers of premarital sex, the father-narrator tells the story of two sisters, the younger of whom was a very pious person, which exposed her to the mockery and ridicule of her elder sister, but prevented her from shame and death. When two young knights enter their chamber at night, the one in love with the younger sister soon withdraws, having seen "a thousand dede bodies about her in shetis" (Chapter III, p. 6, ll. 6–7). The knight who visits the elder daughter begets a child upon her and in this way endangers three lives, for the girl's father casts his pregnant daughter into a river and scorches her suitor. In a similar vein, the following story tells of a knight who would have a lady by force, but – similarly to the previous tale – when he follows her into a bush, he sees ten thousand dead bodies, i.e. the bodies of the Christian souls she has been praying for, who save her honour. In yet another tale on the power of prayer, similarly to the first tale, two patterns of behaviour are contrasted. The author tells the story of a knight who had two daughters: the elder always prayed fasting, whereas the younger was willful and fond of eating. The elder daughter marries a rich knight and lives happily with him; her younger sister also marries a knight, but she fails to correct her behaviour and suffers grave consequences. One night, her husband wakes from his sleep to find his wife among the company of men and women, singing and playing. When he sees one of the men holding his hand under his wife's clothes, the husband hits the man with a staff, which breaks, and the splinter blinds his wife. Having lost one eye and the love of her husband, the young lady learns about the importance of leading a temperate and moderate life in accordance with God's will. The stories evoked above show that the lessons that the Knight of La Tour-Landry imparts to his daughters are reinforced through repetition, which is one of the main strategies used by the father-narrator in his attempt to teach his daughters.

From the present-day perspective, the intensity of the actions taken against the disobedient girls may seem incommensurate with their deeds.

Such blood-curdling acts of violence, however, were not unusual in *exempla*, which relied on stories "of an extreme kind, illustrating a vice or virtue with a conspicuous and out-of-the-ordinary instance" (Burrow, 1992, p. 114). By medieval standards, extreme disobedience called for extreme punishment, often corporal, which resulted in either death or physical disfigurement. It was imposed on fictional, and probably not only fictional, women by male authority figures – either by God, as in the story about a woman who was so attached to her fine clothes that she was carried down to hell after she died; by their husbands, as in the story about a lady who berated her husband in front of others and was knocked to the ground and kicked in the face by her furious spouse, who broke her nose and left her disfigured forever; or by their fathers, as in one of the stories about the two sisters, which were quoted above. Examples of such severe punishment "serve[d] as an important pedagogical technique, indirectly conforming to the theory that physical correction led a student to learn better" (Dronzek, 2001, p. 146).

Domestic violence was conceived as being especially instructive in the case of girls, whose experience was rooted in the domestic realm. The punishment of boys, as depicted in texts intended for a young male audience, did not tend to take a physical form, for men's honour was not located in the domestic, but rather in the social and public spheres. And yet violent and bloody action was generally typical of medieval romances edited for a young audience, as Mary E. Shaner argues, others being: simple piety, a preference for direct over indirect speech, the focus on domestic values, the motif of sin and repentance, as well as a simplification of morality. While these features "are not those which the modern critic associates with the best in children's literature", they may have accounted for the success of medieval texts intended for children (Shaner, 1992, p. 9).

The element of violence must have been particularly attractive to young boys and may have served as a deterrent to both sexes, but the Knight of La Tour-Landry also seems aware of the specifically female tastes and it is probably for this reason that he introduces elements of romance into his narration, based on the assumption that "the hearer must

be pleased in order to secure his attention" (Augustine 84). In his attempt to make his book not only instructive, but also appealing, the father-narrator reveals his self-contradictory tactics, for – on the one hand – he tries to protect his daughters from those who speak of love and dismisses "loue fables" and "other wordely vanitees" as unworthy of study (Chapter XC, p. 118, l. 24), recommending reading the lives of saints instead, and – on the other hand – he himself assumes the role of a courtly lover in order to lure his young female readers into the text. In this way, he satisfies his parental obligations, but also lets his authority be replaced by the authority of a courtly lover. In other words, he distances himself from poetry, claiming that prose is a more suitable vehicle for moral instruction, and yet he opens his book with a scene taken out of a medieval romance, composed originally in verse.[4] The knight finds himself in a spring garden, listening to the songs of wild birds and musing on his youth, love and marriage:

> In the year of our Lord 1371 as I was in a garden under a shadow, as it were, in the end of April, all mourning and pensive, I rejoiced just a little in the sound and song of the wild fowls, which sang in their language, as the blackbird, the redwing, the thrush, and the nightingale, which were gay and lusty. This sweet song enlivened me and made my heart enjoy all, so that then I went remembering the time passed in my youth, how love had held me during that time in service by great distress, in which I was many a year glad and joyful, and many another time sorrowful, as it does to many a lover. (Vitto, 2003, p. 101)

In this passage, the father-narrator identifies himself with courtly lovers and recalls both the joys and pains of love. His confession bears a striking resemblance to the description of the garden of pleasure, which

[4] The fact that verse was more suitable for talking about love is expressed in medieval poetry. In *The Romance of the Rose*, for instance, the poet describes his intention in the following way: "Now I should like to recount that dream in verse, the better to delight your hearts, for Love begs and commands me to do so" (De Lorris & De Meun, p. 3, ll. 25–27).

opens *The Romance of the Rose*, a work "in which the whole art of love is contained" (De Lorris & De Meun,1994, p. 3, l. 40):

> I dreamed that it was May, the season of love and joy, when everything rejoices, for one sees neither bush nor hedge that would not deck itself for May in a covering of new leaves… The birds, silent during the cold, harsh, and bitter weather, are so happy in the mild May weather, and their singing shows the joy in their hearts to be so great that they cannot help but sing. It is then that the nightingale strives to sing and make his noise, and the parrot and the lark are glad and joyful; it is then that the young men must seek love and merriment in the fair, mild weather. The man who does not love in May, when he hears the birds on the branches singing their sweet and touching songs, is hard of heart indeed. (De Lorris & De Meun, pp. 3–4, ll. 46–92)

Similarly to the French lover depicted by Guillame de Lorris, the Knight of La Tour-Landry recalls the pain he suffered in the service of love. Unlike his literary model, however, the father's service was rewarded with a wife who was "bothe faire and good" (Prologue, p. 1, ll. 12–13). Even though death did them apart, "a true loveris hert forgetith neuer the woman that enis he hathe truli loued," the knight declares (Prologue, p. 2, ll. 2–3). In doing so, he shows that love is not incompatible with marriage, a point which he will later try to reinforce in the debate with his wife.

The debate, which is narrated towards the end of his book and constitutes one of the most interesting parts of the entire work, provides an opportunity for the knight to ingratiate himself with his daughters. This is to say that before he warns his daughters about the dangers inherent in reading romances, he wants to have their full attention and therefore takes the side of a young lover. In fact, the father seems to represent the voice of Love, whereas the girls' mother represents the voice of Reason. His central argument is that "a lady or damsel might love paramours in certain cases, for in love is good worship unless any evil be thought in it" (Vitto, 2003, p. 106). A man in love, he says, is "the more encouraged to

exercise himself more often in arms" (Vitto, 2003, p. 106). The girls' mother does not appear to trust in the lovers' true intentions, for she claims they perform daring feats of arms "only to enhance themselves and to draw to them the grace and vainglory of the world" (Vitto, 2003, p. 106). Her response is decidedly against love mainly for two reasons, the first being that earthly love turns the lady away from God, and secondly, those who speak openly about love are deceivers, for – according to her – the mark of a true lover is bashfulness and perseverance. To illustrate her point, the girls' mother tells them the story of a knight whose advances she once rejected. His sin was twofold, as he was not only bold enough to openly confess his feeling – a true lover would never dare to confront the lady – but also thoughtless enough to reveal that merely two years had passed since he first felt the pangs of love. For a lack of any redeeming features, the lover was dismissed by the lady, who advised him "that he should go to the church to cast holy water upon himself and say his Ave Maria, and his temptation should soon after go from him, for the love was new" (Vitto, 2003, p. 110). The length of time that has to pass for temptation to turn into true love is seven and half years, the lady's daughters learn.

Cindy Vitto notes that the domestic debate between the husband and wife serves as a transition point and marks the beginning of more personal instructions that the parents give to their daughters (Vitto, 2003, p. 111, n. 9). It seems to me, however, that this part of the book offers very general advice and its merit lies elsewhere, namely in promoting a discussion on love by giving voice to two different perspectives, even though the arguments presented are very conventional. In fact, the debate appears to be closely based on a medieval social practice which was believed to have flourished in twelfth-century France, namely the courts of love, during which issues connected with amorous behaviour were raised by knights and settled by a panel of ladies.

Examples of the questions discussed are recorded in Andreas Capellanus's treatise entitled *The Art of Courtly Love*. Instigated by Countess Marie, the daughter of Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, and aimed at presenting the customs of Eleanor's court at Poitiers, Capellanus's book contains

eight dialogues between men and women, who debate on the issues of love. One of the central questions raised is whether love can exist between spouses. The judgement on this question is provided by Marie, the Countess of Champagne, and is as follows: "We declare and hold as firmly established that love cannot exert its powers between two people who are married to each other. For lovers give each other everything freely, under no compulsion of necessity, but married people are in duty bound to give in to each other's desires and deny themselves to each other in nothing" (Capellanus, 1969, pp. 106–107). It comes as no surprise that this verdict, as well as the remaining reasons provided to justify it, finds no equivalent in *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*.

In other respects, the debate between the Knight of La Tour-Landry and his wife corresponds to the last dialogue reported by Capellanus, i.e. one in which a man of higher nobility speaks with a woman of the same class. Indeed, this dialogue seems to contain all the main ideas expressed by the girls' parents in *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*, starting with the man's conviction that the lady's favour is "the cause and origin of everything good" (Capellanus, 1969, p. 108) and the lady's response that "to show love is gravely to offend God and to prepare for many the perils of death" (Capellanus, 1969, pp. 109–110), through the thought that love "seems quite contrary to maidenly modesty", for lovers "may be deceitful and may be plotting to disgrace the service of Love" (Capellanus, 1969, p. 119), to the strong suggestion that the lady "ought not assent immediately to the desire of a suitor", but should place him on a "long-continued probation" (Capellanus, 1969, p. 120). Similarly, the advice that the knight's wife gives to their daughters is not to disclose their feelings too readily, but rather to "behave simply and cleanly", for "many a one who shows herself too amorous and too open in beholding and in giving fair countenance loses her marriage" (Vitto, 2003, p. 109). Therefore, it is most prudent to test the purity of the knight's intentions first.

By instructing the young girls on how to behave in the company of men, especially their potential suitors, and by failing to address one of the central precepts of courtly love, namely the belief that love cannot exist between the spouses, the girls' parents strive to reconcile the two

concepts that were seen as mutually exclusive in medieval culture, namely those of courtly love and marriage. Pointing their daughters towards "worship and honor" in love (Vitto, 2003, p. 110), the knight and his wife simultaneously underline the existence of two kinds of love: honourable love within the bounds of wedlock, and evil love, which is outside such bounds. They may, in fact, be drawing upon the distinction between pure and mixed love, which finds its expression in Capellanus's treatise. The former "binds together the hearts of two lovers with every feeling of delight", without imperilling the lady's reputation (Capellanus, 1969, p. 122). In the words of Capellanus, "[t]his love is distinguished by being of such virtue that from it arises all excellence of character, and no injury comes from it, and God sees very little offense in it. No maiden can be corrupted by such love, nor can a widow or a wife receive any harm or suffer any injury to her reputation" (Capellanus, 1969, p. 122). Mixed love, on the other hand, "gets its effect from every delight of the flesh and culminates in the final act of Venus" (Capellanus, 1969, p. 122). Importantly, Capellanus does not condemn mixed love; on the contrary, he states that this kind of love is also praiseworthy and can be seen as "the source of all good things" (Capellanus, 1969, p. 123), thereby leaving the choice to the reader's own discretion.

By establishing a dialogic relation in his discussion of love and marriage, the knight also seems to promote interpretative freedom, encouraging a personal response from his daughters and complicating it by assuming different guises or personalities. Having introduced his book as a romance, the father-narrator suggests that its true milieu is not the contemporary world but an imaginary garden of pleasure with a fountain of love, from which the lovers drink. Soon, however, he goes beyond the trappings of romance and back to reality, condemning those who speak of love in the hope of seducing innocent girls, even though he himself uses a seductive technique, trying to win his daughters over to his argument by assuming the role of a courtly lover and poet. As soon as his role of love's advocate is finished, however, he turns into a strict moraliser who speaks decidedly against amorous fiction, warning his daughters of the danger of reading romances. It seems that the Knight of La Tour-Landry

uses a self-contradictory tactic so as not to appear biased and one-sided to his young audience. In promoting interpretative freedom, he also seems to promote the freedom to experience all kinds of behaviour, including the freedom to taste the flavour of what is prohibited.

This brings us to the third stage in the process of education, as outlined by St Augustine, which is to trigger the movement from knowledge to action. To *know* how to behave in the full sense of the word means to behave in accordance with this knowledge, for, according to St Augustine: "Knowledge and action are inextricably linked, and to say that someone knows something means that this knowledge informs the way she or he acts" (Williams, 2014, p. 53). How then does the father-narrator try to persuade his daughters to act on his advice? First of all, by evoking his favourite proverb – "He that hunteth and taketh not is like him that heareth and understandeth not" (Chapter XII, p. 17, ll. 31–33) – and secondly by telling another *exemplum*, the story of Cato, a Roman philosopher. Lying on his deathbed, he calls his son to his side and gives him three teachings. Young Catonet learns that he should never hold office at the emperor's court if he has enough money to live on, that he should spare no one justly condemned to death and that he should test his wife to see if she can keep his secrets. Soon after his father's death, Catonet agrees to serve in the emperor's court and decides to save a thief from the gallows. Having ignored the first two teachings of his father, he decides to obey the third and invents a test for his wife. In a fake confession, he reveals his evil deed to her and asks her to keep it secret. Appalled by the outrageous nature of the deed – Catonet claims to have killed the emperor's son, torn away his heart from his body, preserved it in jelly and served it to his parents – the lady soon reveals her husband's secret, imperilling his life. Consequently, Catonet is conveyed to the gallows, but since the hangman is nowhere to be found, the man whom Catonet had saved from death offers to hang him instead. Because his charge was based on a false confession, aimed at testing his wife, Catonet escapes death by arranging for the return of the emperor's son, safe and sound.

Even though the central purpose of this *exemplum* is to enjoin obedience to parental authority, the story of Cato and his son in fact serves

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a twofold purpose, for it also alerts parents to the importance of listening to their children's advice. In the story evoked by the knight, the young prince speaks against the dangers of hasty judgement, addressing his father, the emperor, who condemned Catonet to death without a formal trial and pre-trial investigation. In this way, the father-narrator reverses the traditional teacher-learner roles, giving credit to children's wise judgement and undermining parental authority in the hope that his daughters will be encouraged to place confidence in the power of their own minds rather than blindly follow the dictates of others, including authority figures.

This attitude is the final manifestation of the father-narrator's self-contradictory pedagogical technique, for it opens a gap between theory and practice, a gap which seems characteristic of the medieval as much as the modern educational reality. Quoting the example of Catonet, who failed to listen to his father's advice, the Knight of La Tour-Landry appears to give silent consent to his daughters' misbehaviour and disobedience. Thus, the very last words that the knight addresses to his daughters, which contain an incitement to obedience and which were most certainly prompted by the father's hope for his daughters' commonsensical response, may also be seen as an acknowledgement of the fact that making mistakes is inscribed in the decision-making processes and is a normative part of the learning experience. For, as Cindy Vitto observes, "[i]f medieval women were indeed as obedient as the knight urges them to be, there would be no need for such detailed instruction" (Vitto, 2003, p. 99).

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The Seduction of the Word. The Biblical Humanism of Hipólita de Jesús in the Spanish Golden Age

Abstract: In this study, I deal with the case of a most unusual nun, whose life mission was to spread the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures in vernacular languages during the Counter Reformation period. This nun, Hipólita de Jesús, was born in Catalonia (Spain) in 1551 and spent all her life in a Dominican monastery in Barcelona, where she died in 1624. As is well known, the *Index librorum prohibitorum* did not allow the reading of the Bible in any form except for the Latin version of Saint Jerome. Despite this prohibition, she wrote more than twenty treatises. In them, she constructed a discourse about the Bible, and its spiritual and moral contents. Her method of teaching and living Christianity, based on direct contact with the sources of the Catholic faith as well as on Pauline thinking, made her one of the most outstanding cases of biblical Humanism of the Golden Age. However, until now, she has remained almost unknown.

Keywords: Counter Reformation, Bible, spirituality, humanism, education, women.

Introduction

Sor Hipólita de Jesús was a most unusual figure. Indeed, one does not often find, in a Dominican convent in Barcelona around the turn of the seventeenth century, a nun who knew Latin perfectly and wrote more

than twenty large spiritual treatises to spread the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. This remarkable fact is brought even further into relief if we take into account the historical context of great hostility towards the Scriptures in Spain; as we know, after the Lutheran schism, it was forbidden to read the Holy Scriptures in any language other than Latin.[1] The response of the Catholic Church, through the Council of Trent, was essentially to encourage the holy texts to be read only by those who knew Latin, that is to say, clerics and prelates, in an attempt to 'control' readings or interpretations that might fall outside the teachings of the Catholic Church. This severe, extreme position, taken in response to the Lutheran challenge, was questioned by many intellectuals, Hebrew scholars, biblicists and eminent prelates within the Church. Some, such as Fray Luis de Granada,[2] were shocked, while others, like Fray Luis de León,[3] were indignant, but these critical voices soon faded away and had no effect. However, perhaps direct evidence of the enormous importance attached to controlling the Gospel in the Spain of the *Siglo de Oro* or Golden Age can be found in one of the bitterest inquisitorial cases of the sixteenth century, that of the unfortunate archbishop of Toledo, another Dominican, Bartolomé de Carranza. In his *Catechismo Christiano*, thinking above all of those parts that were not subject to interpretational dilemmas, this great theologist argued that the prohibition of the Gospel should be relaxed somewhat. His treatise, which contains more than 2,000 biblical citations and was printed in Antwerp in 1558, was also his death sentence.[4] In 1559, the Inquisition

[1] The Spanish Index of 1551 condemned translations of the Bible into "Castilian Romance or any other vulgar language", a prohibition repeated in Gaspar de Quiroga's Catalogue of 1583. For further information on this controversial subject, see: Fernández López, S. (2003). *Lectura y prohibición de la Biblia en lengua vulgar. Defensores y detractores*. León: Universidad de León.

[2] Huerga A. (1950). Fray Luis de Granada en Escalaceli. Nuevos datos para el conocimiento histórico y espiritual de su vida. *Hispania*, X, 328–331.

[3] León, Luis de. (1991). "De los nombres de Cristo". *Obras completas castellanas de Fray Luis de León*, Madrid: BAC, 403.

[4] Giordano M. L. (2018). La reforma católica que no pudo ser: los *Comentarios al Catechismo Christiano* de Bartolomé de Carranza. In Boeglin M., Kahn D., Terricabras I. *Reforma y disidencia religiosa*. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez.

accused Carranza of Lutheranism, and the Dominican died in Rome soon after receiving an ambiguous sentence absolving him at the end of a seventeen-year inquisitorial trial. The *Catechismo Christiano* was never read in Spain, although it was finally approved by the Council of Trent.[5]

The thought control apparatus, censorship and the Holy Office continued to prohibit not only the Bible in the vernacular, but also any book that included a direct reference to biblical passages, quashing any opposition to this programme in the process.

It is in this context that we must view the intellectual activity and missionary attitude of Sor Hipólita de Jesús. Little by way of biographical details has come down to us. We know that she was born in Girona in 1551,[6] into an aristocratic Catalan family, the illegitimate daughter of Viscount Francesc de Rocabertí.

As an illegitimate daughter,[7] her fate could not be anything other than the convent. Everything occurred according to the customs of the time: in 1561, Isabel took the habit, and in 1569, at the age of eighteen, she took her vows at the Dominican convent of Nostra Senyora dels Àngels in Barcelona (at that time located outside the city itself).[8] On entering the convent, she took the name of Sor Hipólita de Jesús. She received the habit from her aunt, Sor Jerónima de Rocabertí. Jerónima, who had become prioress there at the age of just nineteen, made Els Àngels an enclosed convent and transferred it to within the city walls of Barcelona,[9] where its remains, recently restored, can still be admired. Sor Jerónima

[5] Tellechea Idígoras J. I. (1987). La aprobación del Catecismo de Carranza en Trento con noticias sobre la comisión del Índex (1563), *Scriptorium Victoriense*, 34, 348–402.

[6] This detail contradicts her biographer, Antonio Lorea, who claimed that she was born in Barcelona. Cf. *La venerable madre Hipólita de Jesús y Rocabertí*, in Valencia por Vicente Cabrera, Impressor de la Ciudad, en Plaça de la Seo, MDCLXXIX, p. 21.

[7] Only her father's name has come down to us; her mother's identity is unknown.

[8] Ahumada L. Hipólita de Jesús (2013). Biografía y Bibliografía. In Alabrús R. M. *La vida cotidiana y la sociabilidad de los dominicos*. San Cugat: Arpegio.

[9] Galmés P (2002). *Monestir de Nostra Senyora dels Àngels y Peu de la Creu*. Sant Cugat del Vallés.

was prioress for forty-four years, so a large segment of Hipólita's life took place under her aunt's 'reign'. And it was there, on 6 August 1624, that Sor Hipólita died, in the odour of sanctity, at the age of seventy-three.

Hipólita's work comprises around twenty-six volumes, all enriched by numerous biblical excerpts, which she glossed according to the teachings of the most eminent spiritual guides: Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, the most beloved, and, less frequently, Saint Jerome, Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, Saint Thomas and Saint Dominic, among others. As her hagiographer, the Dominican Antonio Lorea notes, her works "are Holy Scripture, or the Holy Scripture composes all her works".[10] No more and no less than a simple equation.

Her education as a Latinist and her enormous knowledge of the Scriptures is as yet completely unexplained. All the signs would indicate that she was self-taught or that, after her entry into the convent at an early age, she had the kind of teacher that her aristocratic origins would permit. As a Dominican, Sor Hipólita de Jesús was well aware of the pedagogical value of preaching and of the potentialities of the Bible as a tool at the service of educating novices. We find the proof of this in her treatises, written in colloquial language, which reveal her attachment to the oral register and the style of the sermon or Bible lesson.

Great daring *versus* absolute prohibition

"The devil places many impediments against saying or knowing the Word of God", wrote Hipólita in one of her treatises,[11] thinking of all those who are charged with the mission of instructing the Christian flock in God's ways, basically teaching the Scriptures, but failing to discharge this duty. For their refusal to undertake this task, so essential for the life of

[10] Antonio Lorea, *La venerable madre Hipólita de Iesús y Rocabertí*, en Valencia por Vicente Cabrera, impressor de la Ciudad, en la Plaça de la Seo, año MDCLXXIX, s.p.

[11] Hipólita de Jesús, *Tomo octavo de los estados, dividido en cinco libros*, Valencia, Vicente Cabrera, 1682, in Biblioteca Universidad de Barcelona, Sign. R. XVII, 4361, p. 187.

a Christian, she condemned them to hell and to answer for their actions before divine justice.[12] Hipólita herself, however, not only avoided any "impediments" but wrote "so many good books", with the purpose that:

> …he who wishes to know God and to love Him, should do these things: hear and read the word of God often. How great is our guilt if we do not, for there are so many good books.[13]

This declaration instructed the reader as to how to fulfil their duty of knowing the source of their faith: they should read "so many good books". Indirectly, then, Hipólita took on the mission of teaching the Holy Scriptures through her books, works that she, of course, would place among the "good" ones that she mentions. In her works, biblical citations appeared in Latin, and through this expository style, Hipólita showed her obedience of the prohibition of spreading the Scripture in the vernacular. However, she then provided a translation and gloss of the text in Spanish. Moreover, at times, almost as if it were an oversight, she gave the biblical text directly in Spanish.

The educational value of the Scriptures in the teachings of Sor Hipólita de Jesús is manifested in the very structure of her works: as Teresa of Ávila also so often did, Sor Hipólita spoke through writing, or wrote by speaking. In other words, the way in which she writes reveals an oral mental genesis: her writing is characterised by a functionality that is closely linked to the oral register. The spiritual architecture of her long treatises constantly repeats the same structure: a citation is translated before becoming the

[12] Hipólita de Jesús, *Tratado del redimiento del tiempo perdido*, Valencia, Francisco Mestre, 1680, in Biblioteca de la Universidad de Barcelona, Sign. R. 84/3/23, p. 64. Hipólita wrote an even more energetic reprimand directed at the clergy and the bishops for neglecting their pastoral duties than that cited here. In an earlier treatise (*El tomo octavo de los estados*, p. 29), citing the words of the Prophet Ezekiel, Hipólita described a situation that had reached a degree of severity identical to the time when, according to the prophet, God, observing his shepherds' failure to care for His sheep, revoked their leadership of the flock and replaced them with others.

[13] *Ibidem*, p.112.

subject of a long commentary, an explanation nearly always based on experience rather than doctrine or theology. The teachings of Paul and Augustine provided a permanent, solid foundation, while other authors and fathers of the Church were relegated to a secondary position. All the Dominican nun's treatises have the appearance of written sermons which circulated around the convent in ways that we still do not know. Perhaps copies were made of her treatises, or perhaps Hipólita herself transcribed her lessons so as not to forget them or so that others could learn from them.

All this leads us to recognise one of the categorical imperatives, summarised in the maxim of Saint Jerome: *Ignoratio Scripturarum Ignoratio Christi est*.[14] Jerome is among the authors that the nun mentions as teachers of the Scriptures who were particularly concerned with the education of women; Saint Jerome invites, exhorts and cries out not only to men, but also to women:

> Read the divine Scriptures frequently; rather, may your hands never set the Holy Book down.[15]

The extraordinary work that Hipólita performed as an author, and her imperturbable faith in the evangelist mission, lead us to conclude that the Dominican nun must have caused a veritable pedagogical revolution in the training of novices. This educational reform, based on something that was lacking, prohibited and 'forgotten',[16] could only be introduced through a narrative, whether oral or written, in which a third party acted as a mediator. Since the Holy Word was God itself, according to Hipólita, she – of her own accord – would perform the task of leading people *towards the divine*. In consequence, the role she played was one

[14] Comm. Is., Prolog. CCSL 73, p. 1; PL 24, col. 17.

[15] Hipólita de Jesús, *Tomo octavo de los estados*, pp.168–169: "Mirad hijas que nunca se os caíga de las manos el libro de la santa y divina Escritura".

[16] "There is for the others, neither a book nor a thing in the world more forgotten than the Divine and Holy Scripture" ("*No hay para los demás, libro, ni cosa en el mundo más olvidada, que la Divina y Santa Escritura*"): Hipólita de Jesús, *Tomo octavo de los estados* (1682), Valencia, p. 168.

of interpreting a constant, seductive dynamic into which she could insert the divine word encapsulated in a colloquial narrative, one liberally scattered with anecdotes and exemplary and edifying stories.

None of the treatises that Hipólita wrote were published in her lifetime, for the simple reason that they would have been banned by the censor. However, just as the prohibition of the Bible did not deter her from forging on with her educational project, nor did the impossibility of introducing her books to the wider world outside the convent discourage Hipólita from her tireless, solitary work as a writer.

The liberation of time

In her last work, Hipólita bequeathed to us one of her most heartfelt spiritual lessons. Indeed, this final treatise can well be considered her spiritual 'last will and testament'. In it, we find a passionate conviction in the educational value of time; it is a ceaseless teaching *by* God *about* God, a practically infinite 'work in progress' on the wonders of the Christian God.

In *Tratado del redimiento de tiempo perdido* (*Treatise on the Redemption of Time Lost*), her last work, presumably written in around 1622, Sor Hipólita proposed a reorganisation of monastic time. The theme running through this final treatise was the ambitious goal of 'redeeming' time; a new place needed to be found for the Scriptures within time devoted to God, as time in the convent was. Hipólita did not choose the verb 'to redeem' by chance: monastic time was 'sequestered' by things that were unnecessary for a good, healthy Christian life. Here, then, is the Dominican nun's pedagogical proposal: that the organisation of time in the convent should provide for reading the Holy Scriptures, not only collectively, but also individually. In her call for the increasing of Bible reading in monastic time, she found support in Saint Jerome, who recommended it, as we have seen, both for lay and ordained women.[17] She also cited

[17] *Ibidem*, pp. 168–169.

Saint Paul, who was the first to speak of the 'redemption' of the Christian's time.[18]

From Latin to Castilian Spanish, the obscurity of the Latin used in the Vulgate would make anyone who read it, and the novices who heard it read to them, wonder about the meaning that was locked away in the biblical words. That is why a movement began to 'redeem' them from the darkness in which these words were shrouded, incomprehensible to most in Latin, and to make it possible to understand them through the translation and explanation of the Bible text. Hipólita undertook both these tasks in her classes for novices, as well as in her spiritual treatises. The pages of her works are filled with thousands of excerpts from biblical passages, which she translated, summarised and commented upon. It would be impossible to count them all: in the twenty-six tomes that she wrote, Hipólita produced a titanic work, teaching Bible stories and creating a careful catechism based on the Scriptures.

The Bible gives useful instructions for moral life and conduct, as it provides models of human behaviour, such as the Prophetess Anna,[19] the widow Judith,[20] and, above all, King David[21] – all are examples due to their faith in God and their virtues.

As we have seen, then, for Hipólita, the Bible was both method and content in learning Christianity. This aspect of the Dominican nun's teaching method, based on what we might call an integrist approach as regards the source of the Christian faith, confirms the fact that she was not willing to negotiate with the censor.[22]

The idea that teaching the faith was a way of redeeming time wasted and of giving meaning to present time in itself reveals the great importance that Hipólita attributed to the Bible as a tool for educating and forming the

[18] Hipólita de Jesús, *Tratado del rendimiento del tiempo perdido*, p. 62–64.

[19] Hipolita de Jesús, *Tomo octavo de los estados*, 105–106.

[20] *Ibidem*, 183–188.

[21] Hipólita de Jesús, *Tratado del rendimiento del tiempo perdido*, *passim*.

[22] Giordano M. L. (2013). I salici sterili della religione esteriore. Sor Hipólita de Jesús e la Controriforma (1551–1699). *Quaderni Storici*, 144/3, 857–888.

individual. In short, knowledge of God gave meaning to time both past and present because it 'rescued' this time from the darkness of ignorance, that breeding ground for sin. Hipólita's narrative also fostered an experience in which studying the Bible and knowing oneself become fused into a single reality, apparently a reality that was most attractive to the human spirit.

Hipólita was aware that her proposal for reforming time at the convent, in accordance with her idea of making knowledge of the Scriptures central to the training given to novices, was revolutionary in her time. Her struggle reminds us of that of Don Quixote. Cervantes' book was published just two decades before Hipólita wrote her *Tratado del redimiento del tiempo perdido*. The battles that Don Quixote charged into, nearly always lost causes in the name of ideas outdated in those pragmatic, arid times, are similar in a certain way to the battle that Hipólita fought. The nun's ideas were similarly outdated, since the instrument of her catechesis was a book sequestered in the hands of an intransigent orthodoxy whose critics were many in Spain and included leading personalities from the Church, as we have mentioned. To get around this prohibition without infringing it, Hipólita had to intermediate between the literal nature of the Holy Scripture, enclosed in its 'captivity' of incomprehensibility, and its complete understanding in the light of Paul's teachings about Christ's grace.

In her *Tratado del redimiento del tiempo perdido*, Hipólita noted the difficulties of those "harsh times" within the context of her attempt to "rescue a captive Bible". In her own lifetime, she made this rescue possible among her novices and later, some fifty years after her death, her mission came to fuller fruition when her books were finally published during the closing two decades of the seventeenth century. Her entire work was included in the Index of Prohibited Books[23] from 1687 to 1693. This was despite the fact that her nephew, the Dominican monk Fray Juan Tomás de Rocabertí, who managed and paid for the publication of all of Hipólita's books, was archbishop of Valencia and, after 1695, Inquisitor General.

[23] To view in full the works by Hipólita included in the Index, see Callado E. (2007). *Por Dios y por el Rey. El inquisidor general fray Juan Tomás de Rocabertí*. Institució Alfons el Magnànim: Valencia, p. 350, note 833.

Rocabertí was a highly scrupulous, prudent man who had persuaded censors to sing her praises in their prologues to her works, which were printed with the authorisation of the Inquisition.[24] The gravity of the affair can also be gauged by its consequences: the process of the canonisation of the Dominican nun, promoted by her illustrious nephew, was frustrated, despite the support of the Catalan clergy.

It was not until the eighteenth century that Hipólita gained some recognition, one of the few historiographic rehabilitations of a certain significance for her work as a biblicist to date. An enlightened canon, the Valencian Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva, mentioned Sor Hipólita in his most important work, which was published in Valencia in 1791. This Spanish clergyman, who fought all his life to teach the Bible in Spanish, named the Dominican nun as the only woman among such exalted figures as Juan of Ávila, Fray Bartolomé de Carranza and Fray Luis de Granada as the authors that he considered to have championed the cause of spreading the word of the Bible in the vernacular.[25]

Words and silences

In this complex, two-fold work as both a writer and a teacher of novices, we can glimpse the continuity between knowledge of the Scriptures and the mysticism of mental prayer.[26] This is because, for Hipólita, both were

[24] Poutrin has shown that Hipólita's nephew, Fray Tomás de Rocabertí, took pains to secure, through a "large apparatus of approvals and censorship", the introduction to the outside world of his aunt's monumental body of work. Cf. Putrin I. (2015). Censuras y elogios. Los paratextos de las obras de Sor Hipólita de Jesús (1679–1683). *Criticon*, 125, 107–119 and Zaragoza Gómez V (2016). Censura y edición póstuma de la obra de Hipólita de Rocabertí: a propósito de unos poemas manipulados. *Scripta*, 8, 194–223.

[25] Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva, De la lección de la sagrada Escritura en lenguas vulgares, Valencia: Oficina de D. Benito Montfort, MCLLXCI, ff. LXXXVII-LXXXIX.

[26] I discuss this aspect of Hipólita's religiosity in Giordano, M. L. (2011). La Contrarreforma y sus críticos. Biblia y oración mental en Hipólita de Rocabertí. In Alabrus, R. M. (ed.), Tradición y modernidad. El pensamiento de los dominicos en la Corona de Aragón en los siglos XVII y XVIII. Madrid: Sílex.

direct paths to the divine. Mental prayer takes us back to silence as inner space, as this is quiet prayer, silent, as ordained by Saint Teresa of Ávila.

Here, too, we observe an interesting sign of her feminine authority, which returned visionary experiences or profound communication with God to the sealed space of intimacy, in this way preserving the unutterable nature of such events. One of her models, Teresa of Ávila, maintained very much the same modesty. Accordingly, the divine, like all experiences of extreme pain or pleasure, was "a failure of language".[27] Anyone who read Hipólita's work carefully would intuit that she had mystic contacts, perhaps daily, a gift of her nearness to God. However, precisely because of this frequency, her contacts were not imbued with heroic or exceptional overtones. As a result, they were often protected by the silence of a relationship of ineffable love.

For her, the word was the beating heart of the active life, the way in which the mystic entered the outside world. On the other hand, silence was the time for contemplation, mystery, denoted by seclusion and the ineffable nature of the *unio Dei*.

This alternation between word and silence, between the active and the contemplative life, found its material form in the pages intentionally left blank that abruptly interrupt her extensive *Tratado del redimiento del tiempo perdido*. Like a musical score, communication with God was enriched by this alternation, in which silence and word are both vital elements in the relationship with God.

By a strange twist of fate, Hipólita experienced this alternation between words and silence in her own life, and to an extreme degree. Take, for instance, the mysterious, contradictory fact of her enormous output as a writer and the fact that not one of her many works was published in her lifetime. This cannot fail to disconcert us, as it directly questions the ultimate significance of her activity as the author of a voluminous body of work.

Of course, it must also have been personally very frustrating for her to write so much and never to be read, at least during her lifetime.

[27] Le Breton, D. (1999). *Antropología del dolor*. Barcelona: Seix Barral.

Nevertheless, writing for a select audience must surely have mitigated this frustration. She was not interested in 'saving' lost souls, but rather in leading to God those that had already decided that this was their goal: her readers were "the children of the light".[28] In order to devote herself to her work as a teacher, she renounced the post of prioress at the convent; she knew what such a position involved and, perhaps, feared that its duties would take away time from her activities as a writer and a teacher of novices, missions that she pursued for thirty years *sicut aquila provocans ad volandum pullos suos*.[29]

Hipólita believed in the highly formative value of the Bible, in a moral and spiritual sense, as well as in its curative, almost thaumaturgical value for the health of the soul.[30] Accordingly, although she wrote with enormous regret that, in the midst of "this Babylon" and "exiled" from the "instruments" of the word of God, she had renounced touching those instruments,[31] the truth is that she never truly gave them up. On the contrary, she included the Bible as part of the nun's education. We see this in her *Tratado del redimiento del tiempo perdido*, in which she organises the preaching of the word according to the days of the week. This order is abruptly altered when we come to a series of blank pages, which correspond to a certain number of days devoted to meditation. During that period, it was silence that wrote in its invisible ink. Hipólita was keen to record those moments, detailing the days and their duration. Her decision to leave her pages blank in order to denote the time for contemplation is highly instructive, giving physical shape to the alternation between silence and writing, listening and speaking that, according to the Dominican nun, characterised prayer and the relation with God.

[28] Hipolita de Jesús,*Tratado del redimiento del tiempo perdido*, p. 102.

[29] "As an eagle pushes its chicks to fly". Antonio Lorea, *La venerable madre*… p. 30.

[30] Antonio Lorea, *La venerable madre*… p. 30.

[31] *Ibidem*, p.11.

Conclusions

Hipólita de Jesús was one of the greatest religious writers in the Counter Reformation period. This is the conclusion we reach from the overwhelming evidence: a huge body of work and an impressive educational and evangelical mission. Her greatness is magnified by the constant challenges that governed her life and the peaceful, orderly way in which she built up a didactic canon based on the Bible at a time when the sources of Christianity were forcibly silenced.

Apart from the existence of the publication prohibition, an impassable frontier that, in itself, suffices to explain why Hipólita's works were not published in her lifetime, we should also take into account an environmental factor. It would appear that the day-to-day work of studying the Scriptures – learning Christianity through its sources – may not have been looked on with approval from outside the world of the convent and the Catalan clergy, which was, generally speaking, less strict and controlling than in other parts of Spain. The fear that this disapproval inspired might well have paralysed any move to get her books known in the outside world. Her greatest act of daring was, perhaps, to create a didactic method for the Bible that coincided perfectly with the didactic method for religion,[32] and all this during the historic period in the late sixteenth century when biblical wisdom was treated as suspect and considered a sign of identity of the Protestant religion. We can also form an idea of the effectiveness of Hipólita's teaching method: learning the Bible enabled the pupil to understand the Christian faith better. Doubtless, Hipólita tested and consolidated this method with the novices at the Convent of Nostra Senyora dels Àngels and, with the Augustinians, at another Barcelona convent that she reformed, writing a new rule for the purpose.[33]

[32] Giordano, M. L. (2013)."La «Redención» del tiempo perdido. La dominica Sor Hipólita de Jesús y la Enseñanza de la Biblia en tiempos de la Contrarreforma". In Alabrús R. M. (ed.), *La vida cotidiana y sociabilidad de los dominicos*, San Cugat: Arpegio, 149–166.

[33] Hipólita de Jesús, *Libro tercero de las obras espirituales de la venerable madre Hipólita de Jesús […] Contiene la explicación de la Regla de San Agustín*, in Valencia, Gerónimo Vilasagra in La calle de los barcos, 1660.

The authority that Hipólita exercised was that of knowledge, knowledge which was not cognitive but experiential, the result of her experience of the divine word, which brought together salvation and Scripture once more. Hipólita wanted to cause a "fire in the mind"[34] and the deliverance of the heart, that is to say, a faith that illuminates like the light from heaven that struck Paul blind.[35] Given her constant references to light as a metaphor for God's love and grace, we might perhaps dare to describe her Christian faith as a 'theology of life'. As a teacher, she proposed a balanced formula based on human and mental integrity and wholesomeness, a unison of heart and mind typical of the exemplary Bible characters in which she found the structure of humanity to imitate – those of Paul, Isaiah, King David and so on, though the main figure that we should follow is Christ.

Although accounts of visions and raptures are present in some of her narratives, Hipólita does not overload these experiences with resonance. Strangely enough, those that did revel in such phenomena were, rather, her biographers, who sought to demonstrate that her life and works were in accordance with the canons for sanctity in the Baroque period; this goal is also at the heart of Lorea's insistent cultivation of the monochord register of bodily mortification, an expression of afflictive, weeping, insecure religiosity attracted by the tangible and ostentatious. Hipólita, however, occupies different ground due to her disagreement with the approaches to religion in the seventeenth century. In fact, she wrote ironically that: "Not all is weeping".

It is possible that Hipólita was not the only author at the time who was engaged in this line of Christian humanism, closely linked to the sources of the faith. In fact, it seems that her concerns were shared by others in the city of Barcelona itself. She was aware of the presence there of Diego Pérez de Valdivia, around 1580–1589, a disciple of Juan of Ávila

[34] "Incendio de la mente". Cfr., Hipólita de Jesús, *Libro primero de su admirable vida y doctrina*, in Valencia, por Francisco Mestre, impresor del santo tribunal de la Inquisición, junto al molino de Rovella, 1679, p. 19.

[35] Hipólita de Jesús, *Tratado del Redimiento del tiempo perdido*, Part I.

and Professor of Holy Scripture at the University of Barcelona, as well as the author of several spiritual treatises. This is an initial finding which opens up a new line of research, one that promises fresh information and which, for the moment, only serves to confirm the singular nature of the human and intellectual figure of Sor Hipólita de Jesús.

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Failed Attempt: The Foreign Country of Adolescence in *The Go-Between* by L.P. Hartley[1]

Abstract: Featured in compulsory reading lists, L.P. Hartley's famous book *The Go-Between* (1953) seems a good novel for a discussion on relational teaching. The wide acclaim of both the novel and the film are proof of its timeless topicality. The present article offers an analysis of the literary rendition of the process of maturation and the meaning of interpersonal relations in adolescence. Due attention is paid to failed communication processes in private and public spheres.

Keywords: adolescence, process of maturation, symbolical thinking, morality, relational teaching

Introduction

Published in 1953, *The Go-Between* is probably the most famous novel by L. P. Hartley. It immediately won the acclaim of the wider public and in 1971 the book was adapted for the screen by Harold Pinter and Joseph Losey, the screenplay author and the director, respectively. The film proved "[a] tremendous success" (Wright, 2001, p. 254) and it won

[1] The phrase "foreign country" is a quotation from the first sentence of the novel which has become proverbial: "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there" (Hartley, 2000, p. 5)

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the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival (Wright, 2001, p. 295). Staged as a musical and an opera, the novel was filmed again in 2015 for television. For many years, *The Go-Between* has featured in reading lists for school children in Great Britain (Abbey, 2016). A contributor to the *Guardian* claims that the novel still teases readers: "A combination of knowing and not-knowing is this novel's driving force" (Smith, 2011, par. 3).

Any discussion of the novel might focus on various issues: war and peace, since the Boer war serves as a background for the plot set in the summer of 1900; social considerations, because class tensions between the world of aristocracy and country people often fall into the spotlight; the image of Edwardian England just before it disintegrated in the aftermath of WWI; and, finally, a love triangle, or tragic love story, between an upper-class woman, Marian, and a tenant farmer, Ted Burgess, overshadowed by Marian's official engagement to Lord Trimmingham. This last issue is the starting point for the present paper as it indirectly involves the first-person protagonist, Leo (Leonard)[2] Colston. Leo, a twelve-year-old half-orphan, is invited by an upper-class friend, Marcus (Marian's brother), to a posh country house where he undergoes an abrupt process of maturation: an innocent child at the beginning of the memorable holiday, Leo suffers from a mental breakdown and amnesia by its end. His tender psyche is scarred for his lifetime: as a sixty-year-old man, Leonard admits to having been too afraid of life to live (Hartley, 1991, p. 245f). This statement seems to indicate a failed process of maturation.

Critical point: adolescence

It is well known that children on the brink of adolescence remain an emotional puzzle even to their immediate family. In their attempts to explain the unceasing mood swings and account for the uncertainties felt

[2] To avoid confusion, since both the boy, Leo, as well as the elderly man, Leonard, voice their thoughts in the novel, I will henceforth refer to the boy as Leo and to the adult as Leonard.

by young people, developmental psychologists have examined this life stage from various angles (Elkind, 1995, p. 145f, p. 188f; cf. Erikson, 1963, p. 277f; Roeser et al. 2008, p. 74f). Among the many sources of adolescent uncertainty, scholars indicate changes in thinking patterns. In childhood, such patterns are concrete owing to the basic referential function of language and cognition, whereas in adolescence they become more abstract and less tangible (Shelton, 1991, p. 6f). As Natov (2018, p. 2) puts it, "children tend to the black and white of things", while the reality of a maturing adolescent calls for an addition of various shades of grey. Prone to frustration, the hypersensitive mind of a young person becomes barely comprehensible to his or her guardians.

In this paper I would like to explore the failure of Leo's mental development represented in *The Go-Between*. My aim is to trace the course "of the speaker's mind creating the work before us rather than narrating a finished story" (Weinbrot, 1990, p. 173). In *The Go-Between* the protagonist is just about to turn thirteen and I will therefore constantly refer to the complexities of adolescence. It is well known that the beginning of this stage is critical for later development. Moshman asserts (2005, p. XX):

> Children undergo a variety of interrelated changes between ages 10 and 13. Physically, there are changes associated with puberty. Cognitively (…) there are fundamental changes in intellectual competence. Socially, there are a variety of changes associated with the transition to an increasingly peer-focused orientation. Educationally, there is the move from elementary to secondary education. Although developmental changes are gradual and occur at variable ages, it does seem that most children show sufficiently dramatic change between ages 10 and 13 (…).

The Go-Between is a novel which exposes the danger of a violent interruption of the developmental process at the beginning of adolescence, a stage whose beginning is also difficult to determine (Shelton, 1991, p.2). The diverse indicators of change listed above become visible as one analyses the language spoken by Leo in addition to the reports of his actions.

The narrative alternates between the perspectives of child and adult: in retrospect, the story is bound to be inaccurate and subjective, yet it prompts attentive readers to various hypotheses about the psychological problems of human development.

Psychological development and linguistic sensitivity

The language of Leo's narrative reflects the rapid growth which takes place in his twelve-year-old mind. At the very beginning of his summer holiday, Leo is still a child: a shy boy who feels awkward in the company of adults, is often uncertain of his judgement and does not know how to answer their questions. One focus of his report is on his sensory experience of the external world: the excessive heat of the season, the coldness of water in the lake, the sensation of his fingers on his elegant diary in which he records his experiences. Attention is directed to his senses and the excessive heat of the scorching sun is recorded by exact temperatures in his diary. This sensitivity to sensations seems typical of children: "[the] sensory experience and impressionistic language (…) [represents] the almost pre-verbal thoughts of children as they begin to establish their identities in relation to objects and each other" (Parsons, 2000, p. VIII). However, the ironic remarks uttered by Marian and her company are a puzzle to Leo: he takes them literally, detecting no additional meaning as yet. This reveals the childish innocence of his mind: rhetorical ornaments of adult speech, such as irony or allusion, betoken the secretive world of adults. Still, in Leo's eyes, they acquire special importance: they transform the real world into something with secret meanings which he craves to discover.

As the days pass, new experiences challenge Leo's comprehension. In the description of the bathing party at the lake, which takes place after a week-long stay, one notices a certain shift in the child's sensitivity which is reflected in the language of the novel. Still dependent on his senses, Leo's mind is nevertheless opened to the non-literal meanings of the sentences uttered by the bathers. He becomes aware of some mystery connected

with (semi-) nakedness. On the one hand, Leo is childly responsive to the alluring pleasant coldness of shade and water; at the same time, however, he registers the beauty of the human body, both male and female. The language he uses does not yet show that he understands his feelings in this regard, but he is visibly stirred. He now notices that his vocabulary falls short of expressing his emotions. This moment seems a critical point: the boy's mental changes start to become visible to the readers.

The process of growing up now begins. The change in Leo's interests is reflected in a shift from literal to allusive meanings. He becomes aware that there is something significant in the secretive language that the adults around him use in their conversations. Indeed, he has now become a messenger – a 'go-between' – in the clandestined relationship between Marian, the upper-class lady, and Ted Burgess, the tenant farmer. Still a child psychologically, he does not see anything improper in the task of a go-between, the less so as Marian asks him to be a gentleman and return her a favour. Attentive readers will be aware of the way Marian manipulates the child by means of arousing a sense of obligation in him: Leo is innocent and Marian exploits it. In this way, language becomes a means of exerting power over the inexperienced mind of a child.

School environment and normative ethics

In this regard, the key protagonist in the illicit love affair – the go-between – is not an immoral teenager. On the contrary, Leo's moral standards are based on a school discipline which he tries to apply to the new situation. Unfortunately, the Edwardian public school that Leo has attended proves no ideal preparation; leaving aside its elitism, it has various shortcomings in the standards that it offers. Certainly, it meets high educational expectations insofar as the curriculum is concerned, but it fails with regard to the successful moral formation of its pupils. As Kohlberg maintains: "there is a measure of congruence between [moral development] and psychological development" (Laurence, 1997, p. 464). Educational institutions are expected to form students not only in terms of

academic instruction but also with regard to moral formation. The plot of *The Go-Between* reveals a poor realization of this proposition; the educational system implants in Leo a mistrust of his guardians in personal matters, the teachers in his school appear to be mere instruments of academic instruction and not effective moral custodians of their pupils. History knows cases of both excellent teachers who have become life-long mentors to their pupils, and incompetent teachers who have impeded their pupils' successful course to adulthood. To illustrate the former, one may mention Albert Camus' letter of gratitude to his schoolmaster, Louis Germain, which reads: "Without you (…) none of this would have happened".[3] Unfortunately, in *The Go-Between* no teacher seems to be genuinely interested in the children in their care.

The Go-Between makes clear what happens if relational teaching, which aims at establishing a personal relation between teacher and student, is abandoned. Leo's conduct outside school still abides by school norms. He is faithful to the code of behaviour of the school environment: not to 'sneak' on others, to be secretive and to pass over confidential matters in silence. Such an attitude is encapsulated in the words: "we were all sworn to secrecy" (Hartley, 1997, p. 76). Having never disclosed his confidences with schoolfellows to school authorities, Leo also keeps quiet about the letters he helps to pass between Marian and Ted. Thus, he transfers the values governing the institutional role of a school student to the more humanly complex world of an adolescent's entry into real life. The adolescent Leo is certain he behaves morally as a go-between, the more so because he is still in the dark about the sexual nature of the affair. Marian assures him that the letters cover some business matters and the boy willingly accepts this cover-up, not as an excuse but as a fact. This slippage between knowing and guessing characterizes the whole narrative. Such patterns of behaviour also comply with the findings of psychology. As Shelton claims (1991, p. 3), "on a conscious level, moral rules are known [to the adolescent], but on an experiential level, uncertainties, fears, and

[3] I would like to thank Francisco Esteban Bara, PhD, University of Barcelona, for this inspiration.

insecurities blend (…)". Since Leo's system of values is based on weak foundations, he is unable to distinguish the rightness from the wrongness of the actions he is expected to perform.

Leo's behaviour is based on maintaining the unbridgeable communicative abyss separating the world of children and the world of their guardians, which mainly involves remaining loyal to one's friends without question. Psychologists define this phenomenon as the "tyranny of the peer group" (Shelton, 1991, p. 9). While at school, the two worlds remain separated by the artificial institutional roles of teacher and student. The teaching of non-institutional moral relations is not promoted in the school. With such a formative background, Leo is hardly aware of other possible ways of successful child-adult communication. *The Go-Between* highlights the lack of wise adult guidance in such matters as the source of the final catastrophe in the novel. Leo's accelerated process of maturing never becomes an object of serious consideration or concern to those charged with his care. The child is abandoned to his uncertainties in solitude. The sole exception is arguably the attempt of Ted to have a serious talk with him. However, this seems undermined by a lack of proper preparation.

Role models: symbolical thinking

Lost in confusion, bored and uncared for by his hosts, Leo is in search for a role model for his new experiences. As Shelton (1991, p. 11) observes: "With the shedding of simplistic childhood notions, the adolescent often begins a critical examination of adults." Since his progress to adult maturity has only entered its initial phase, Leo's criticism of his hosts is not harsh. On the contrary, Leo idealistically attributes moral characteristics to his new acquaintances. This trio – Marian, Ted and Hugh (Lord Trimmingham) – temporarily occupy the empty place of his absent parent as role models. This projection conforms to the findings of psychologists: "Adult role models become alternative ego-ideal objects (…)" (Shelton 1991, p. 58), which the boy hopes to resemble one day. Other scholars extend the range of potential sources of such influence. They assert that

the search for an idealized role model may take a spiritual turn. Roeser et al. define "*spiritual ideals"* as follows: "subjective conceptions of that which is divine, sacred, or of ultimate purpose and value in life" (2008, p. 81). In their endorsement of William James' findings (1902), the scholars argue that such spiritual ideals may "motivate individuals to realize a more satisfying experience" (p. 81). Unfortunately, this is not the case in *The Go-Between*.

According to Shelton, this personal need for morally ideal adult exemplars is further reinforced by adolescent inclination to symbolical thinking:

> Adolescence can be a time of psychic stress and investment in thought or symbolic or representational imagery (…) can provide a sort of safe attachment, a shield from deeply felt emotional needs. (Shelton, 1991, p. 8)

This proneness of the twelve-year-old Leo to symbolical representation begins to dominate his outlook. To be sure, the trigger for symbolically magical thinking appears to be the moment at which Lord Trimmingham playfully calls the boy 'Mercury' (Hartley, 1997, p. 83). The result is that the boy accepts his role of god-like messenger and thereby interprets this role as special and virtuous. This idealization is mercilessly exploited by Marian who, in Leo's eyes, becomes a virtuous lady in distress. She is idealised as the Virgo of the Zodiac: ironically, as a chaste beauty[4] whose demeanour bestows a positive connotation on the task to be performed. Her secret farmer lover, Ted, behaves far more decently since he is less willing to delude Leo and tries to treat him as an "almost adult" helper – which the boy considers flattering. Leo is overcome by confusion as to whom he should remain loyal to: the hosts, Marian's

[4] According to a dictionary of symbols, the Virgo of the Zodiac is usually visualized as a beautiful young woman associated with the earth (and harvest). Her planet is Mercury and her counter-element is water. The novel follows this symbolism: the former is the messenger, Leo, the latter is the Sagittarius, Ted (Kopaliński, 2006, p. 76).

mother and father, or her fiancé, Lord Trimmingham – or perhaps the colluding couple, Marian and Ted. However, symbolism triumphs over realism. The vicious circle of symbol, myth and allusion entraps the child. In hindsight, the elderly Leonard admits:

> (…) in the realm of imagination I was not [tough]. Marian inhabited the realm, she was indeed its chiefest ornament, the virgin of the Zodiac (…); she was as real to my contemplation as she was to my experience – more real. (Hartley, 1997, p. 155)

In this way, symbols encoded in language reign supreme: in Leo's eyes they transform reality and the boy behaves in accordance with these falsely idealised expectations. In Leo's eyes, the adults involved in this symbolic encoding undergo a transformation: they are hardly real people any more, and Marian in particular becomes an idol inspiring near-religious worship. Leo is obedient to her wishes even at the price of deceiving her parents. In case such idolization seems difficult to account for, psychology furnishes some explanation in the form of "compartmentalizing" theory (Spitzer, Barnow, Freyberger, Grabe, 2006). According to this theory, adolescents are able to perform divergent roleplays when interacting with peers, parents or role models due to their lack of established self-identity: an incomplete mental picture of one's self leaves much space for imaginative experimentation (Shelton, 1991, 10f; Fowler, Keen, 1978, p. 61) or safeguarding against potential psychological trauma (Putnam, 1997, p. 71; Weingartner, Putnam, George, Ragan, 1995). While Leo's adoration of Marian reminds one of a goddess and her worshipper, the same boy remains a boy in his games with his friend, Marcus, or a well-behaved child with Mrs. Maudsley, Marian's mother.

Hindsight: dissociation

It is only when analyzing the events from the perspective of a 60-year-old that Leonard remonstrates himself: "You wouldn't admit

that they [Marian and Ted] had injured you, you wouldn't think of them as enemies. You insisted on thinking of them as angels even if they were fallen angels" (Hartley, 1997, p. 17). Putnam (1997, p. 71) calls this adolescent or other difficulty of passing a harsh judgement on one's friends or family, a defensive function of dissociation (Spitzer et al., 2006): a person refuses to accept the hard facts about his life in order to protect himself, at least in his self-evaluation. This mechanism is well exposed in *The Go-Between:* the young Leo's refusal to face reality is called deception by his later and older self. With hindsight, the elderly Leonard locates the source of his juvenile illusions in a misplaced symbolism that governed his language and imagination during his early adolescence. He admits that a misplaced moral paradigm, whose roots were deeply symbolical and mythical, was the cause of his later troubles. This is clearly stated in the Epilogue of the novel:

> It did not occur to me that they [Marian and Ted] had treated me badly. I did not know how to draw up an indictment against a grown-up person. (…) I saw myself entering Ted's life, an unknown small boy, a visitant from afar (…) the supernatural powers I had invoked had punished my presumption (…) I had tried to set the Zodiac against itself. In my eyes the actors in my drama [Marian, Ted and Hugh, Lord Trimmingham] had been immortals, inheritors of the summer and the coming glory of the twentieth century. (Hartley, 1997, p. 246)

Since Leo admired Marian and her lover, Ted, as well as Marian's fiancé, Lord Trimmingham, they all became symbolic figures of the Zodiac – though the real people fell short of their ideal selves. Half a century after the events, Leo still wonders at this symbolical reading; symbolism becomes the pivot of the plot and its central significance is indicated from the first mention of the Zodiac in the Prologue to the story (Hartley, 1991, p. 7). The Epilogue is full of disillusionment: the innocent child, forced to betray the way to the lovers' hiding place and to witness their embraces in the outhouse, suffers a nervous breakdown followed by temporary

amnesia. The aftermath of this drama is painful: Leonard admits, "This time I had failed: it was I who was vanquished, and for ever" (Hartley, 1997, p. 246). Leonard also lays the blame on himself: nobody can rescue him because "a persistent picture of him [Ted] cleaning his gun" (Hartley 1997, p. 246) to shoot himself continues to haunt the boy into adulthood. Leo has changed forever: the course of maturation, violently subverted, ends abruptly with a failure to mature as he should. The last sentence of the elderly Leonard's reflections reads: "I shrank into myself" (Hartley 1997, p. 246). The damage appears quite irreversible.

Failed communication

Hypothetically, it may be wondered whether the tragedy could have been averted. The novel offers a hint that it might have been so if the child had had an open relationship with his mother or some other responsible adult. In short, a lack of communication seems to be the major cause of the educational failure described in *The Go-Between*. As Shelton (1997, p. 9) suggests: "A basic rule of thumb is that the more important the issue is to the adolescent's life, the more apt he or she is to seek guidance of parents or other trusted adults." This "trusted adult" would need to have been a wise guardian or a teacher. From this viewpoint, the novel constitutes a literary exploration of the need for such a relation of trust for sound mental and moral development. Unfortunately, in this case, the confused adolescent had nobody to advise him, not even his own mother. Just before the final catastrophe, having come to suspect the immoral nature of the relationship between Marian and Ted, Leo writes a desperate letter to his mother as a last resort. In the letter he asks her to bring him back to her and shorten his stay at Brandham Hall. This might have worked if communication between the parent and child had been open and sincere. Unfortunately, afraid of a negative reaction from his mother, Leo communicates half-truths, which are misunderstood and, in consequence, to no avail. The mother judges the son harshly and thinks that Leo simply wants to avoid obligation and gratitude to the hosts. Neither

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mother nor son manages to voice their opinions openly. The outcome of this failed communication proves disastrous and tragic.

Conclusions

The Go-Between is not a recent novel. One might therefore ask the point of bringing a literary treatment of fictional events of the Edwardian era to the notice of the contemporary youth or into modern discussions of child development. Following Hillis Miller, however, I would argue that a close reading of past fiction can offer much insight into enduring problems of the human psychological and moral condition. Hillis Miller (2012, p. XI f.) focused on problems other than adolescent development, but his explorations of the value of George Eliot's novels for contemporary issues and problems provides much encouragement for examining other works of fiction in this way:

> Though it is a fictional construct, however, the story is still validated by its truth of correspondence to historical, social, and human reality. This reality is assumed to exist outside language. (Hillis Miller, 2012, p. 12)

In my opinion, *The Go-Between* is such a story; though set in past times and depicting past events it nevertheless addresses universal issues of enduring human significance. While some of the social or historical circumstances of the narrative are now outdated, the central concern of the novel of negotiating a safe course to adult maturity is still of concern to contemporary teenagers, to their parents and teachers, as well as to professional scholars. As Leo's story shows, the implications of a traumatic interruption of this process may extend well into adult life.

The novel's strength seems to lie in its focus on the significance of human communication within the family and in the educational process. This suggestion is at one with the findings of educational theorists who have placed much value on the relational, personal and moral dimensions

of teaching, including higher education (Esteban Bara, 2014). If such relationships are crucial for the proper formation of higher education or university students (Esteban Bara, 2014, p. 748), it must be even more so for children or adolescents. Even though it was published half a century ago, Hartley's novel shows that open and trustful communication is vital for sound mental development at any stage of development; whereas a child focuses on literal aspects of the world and language, the adolescent needs to grasp the more elusive and allusive meanings and pragmatics of adult discourse. The teenager is in need of wise adult assistance to develop properly and safely. Since the child or teenager also spends much time in school, the assistance of involved teachers is also indispensable. Wise guidance is needed to lead the inexperienced mind in the right maturational direction so that it may learn to cope in the more morally dubious circumstances beyond school. To paraphrase Camus (in Bara, 2014, p. 747), without "the hand of affection (…) held out to the (…) child" in distress, few may succeed.

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Tradition and Education in *The Awakening of Miss Prim*

Abstract: *The Awakening of Miss Prim* is a novel that tells the story of Prudencia Prim in the small town of San Ireneo de Arnois. In the novel, Prudencia is surprised by the way of life of the irenites, who seem to despise the modern world. The novel serves as a framework for ideas that go far beyond the plot. It is a reflection on the values of truth, good and beauty and how they are crystallized in Western civilization. Moreover, this paper will try to show how the whole novel revolves around the notion that there is a truth and that it is beautiful, and what role that truth has in human life.

Keywords: Miss Prim, tradition, education, classics, beauty, rebellion, humanities, Western civilization

Introduction

The Awakening of Miss Prim is the first novel by the Spanish journalist Natalia Sanmartín and was published in 2013. The most relevant thing about it is not its great narrative quality – which it does indeed have – or the originality of its plot, but the ideas that are developed in it.

This paper aims to analyze the novel and relate the main ideas that shape it in the light of the thoughts of some of the literary Inklings of the University of Oxford, especially Tolkien, Lewis and Chesterton.

It is a novel about truth, good and beauty; it tells the story of the clash between two ways of understanding the world, the traditional and

the modern, represented by the inhabitants of the small town of San Ireneo de Arnois and Miss Prim, respectively. The book begins with the arrival in San Ireneo of Prudencia Prim, who is a librarian who holds many academic titles and who comes in response to the demand for employment by a gentleman who needs help organizing his books and who is called 'The Man in the Wing Chair' throughout the novel.

Prudencia soon discovers that San Ireneo de Arnois is not only an idyllic little village, but a colony of exiles from the modern world who have voluntarily left their demons and ideologies behind. The novel narrates the dialogue between the irenites and Miss Prim, between the reason, illuminated by faith, of the Man in the Wing Chair and the sentimentality of the librarian. Prudencia is scandalized by the life of the irenites: they are tremendously educated people who live in a small community where everyone knows each other, and they educate their children in their own homes.

The problem of realism

Although, with this brief summary, it is easy to think that this is a utopia, it would be wrong to attribute this label to it. *The Awakening of Miss Prim* is not a utopia because it does not make a real proposal of how the lives or education of children should be. It is not a realistic novel either. The world of San Ireneo does not exist and it does not seem like the author is proposing it as a possible way of life. According to Sanmartín, we are facing a novel or a story – a means of transmitting the truth – which allows us to intensify the importance of some ideas without having to give reasons for the feasibility of each aspect of the plot. San Ireneo, in this sense, is no more real than a stage, in which truth, good and beauty are proclaimed. According to this idea, for example, life cannot be a continuous walk through the countryside or a permanent intellectual discussion, but this novel recalls the importance of both things in human life.

That is the value of *The Awakening of Miss Prim*, as stated above: not the great elaboration of the novel itself, but the principles and the

ideas that are relevant in it and that reveal the shortcomings of post-modern life.

This notion that narrative can be an effective tool for transmitting the truth is widely recognized. Joseph Pierce has spoken extensively in this regard, especially when commenting on the works of Tolkien and Lewis. Although Pierce expressly refers to mythology and fairy tales, and in *The Awakening of Miss Prim* there is no fantastic element, the idea that narrative can be granted the license of not always attending to what is feasible in order to give greater relevance to other aspects is still valid. Pierce states that in *The Lord of the Rings* there is a whole philosophy of myth, according to which:

> mythology [is] a means of conveying certain transcendent truths which are almost inexpressible within the factual confines of a "realistic" novel. In order to understand Tolkien's "philosophy of myth" it is useful to commence with a maxim of G.K. Chesterton: "not facts first, truth first." Tolkien and Chesterton were both intent on differentiating between facts, which are purely physical, and truth, which is metaphysical. Thus a myth or a fairy story can convey love and hate, selfishness and self-sacrifice, loyalty and betrayal, good and evil – all of which are metaphysical realities, that is, true, even if conveyed in a mythological or fairyland setting. (Pierce, 2001)

Pierce gives the example of the parables of the Gospel and of fairy tales, which also appears in a conversation between Miss Prim and the nephews of the Man in the Wing Chair. They explain to her that the Gospel is a real fairy tale because the truth it conveys about man is the same that fairy tales later conveyed in a way that is more pleasant and more apprehensible. It is the real fairy tale not because it resembles fairy tales, but because fairy tales resemble it. Christ himself, says Pearce, transmitted the purest, most metaphysical truth through parables and stories. It does not matter that the prodigal son did not exist in history and it does not matter that San Ireneo de Arnois is not possible. In both cases, they are

representations; they are the means to convey a truth, which is, in fact, the protagonist.

Progress and rebellion

In view of this, it seems clear that *The Awakening of Miss Prim* is a work whose value lies in transmitting a truth about man, and revealing that truth is the aim of this paper. Nonetheless, this novel covers many dimensions of human life and only some of them can be faced in this paper. Issues such as the political dimension of the San Ireneo community or the role of women and feminism in the novel will remain unwritten for now. This paper will deal with the rebellion against the modern world of the inhabitants of San Ireneo de Arnois, how the education of children is the main weapon used in this rebellion and, finally, the role of truth and beauty in that small community.

The inhabitants of San Ireneo define themselves as a colony of exiles from the modern world. It is a voluntary and not absolute exile, in the sense that they do not reject modernity itself, nor the advances it has made and that, certainly, make the life of man more bearable. What they reject is what, in modernity, predisposes man to live against his nature.

The irenites are not like the Amish, frozen in time, nor are they like the community in the film *The Village* (2004), directed by M. Night Shyamalan. They wear conventional clothes, go to the city, and use electricity and cars, but they do not follow the current proposal of a public life aimed at professional success and a private life aimed at rudimentary pleasure.

Facing a technological world that separates us from the tangible and human reality, which forces us to live too fast, where the family is indefinable and almost non-existent, where the person is an anonymous shadow among an emaciated mass that has stopped contemplating good and beauty, where there is a real inability to converse and to love, and where Aristotle's 'good life' has been changed by a drunkenness of narcissism, the inhabitants of San Ireneo rebel. And they rebel in a scandalous way for today's world: looking back to the past, to tradition.

We are used to rebellion being the destruction of the present in order to build the future; modernity has convinced us that progress is destroying the heritage of the past and building something new. But this is not true and has not always happened. The West was largely built with a sight on the past; for example, civil law was consolidated looking at Roman law, and philosophy and thought have looked back at Aristotle. Modernity, in this as in so many things, took a radical turn and despised tradition, like Descartes in front of his stove. It despised the wisdom that has been acquired, matured and transmitted throughout history.

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis addresses this issue and states that progress often means going back: "We all want progress… [but] if you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man" (2015, p. 29).

In a similar sense, Chesterton says that civilization does not equate to progress, which is:

> nothing as horrible as a trend or an evolution… Civilization is not a development. It's a choice. It is the decisive people who have become civilised; it is the indecisive, otherwise called the higher sceptics, or the idealistic doubters, who have remained barbarians. (Chesterton, 1912, p. 314)

In Sanmartín's novel, this is the idea that touches the heart of an old monk and the Man in the Wing Chair and leads them to found their colony of exiles in San Ireneo. Around the abbey, a series of characters, who see that Western civilization has the sun behind and the darkness ahead, come together. That is why they order their lives by rescuing those things that made a truly human life possible in the West, although many of them have remained in the past for the majority.

Education and children in San Ireneo

What first calls the attention of Miss Prim is the irenites' rejection of the educational system. She is scandalized when she discovers that the children of San Ireneo are mainly educated at home, either by their parents or by other members of the community who excel in some subject. Accustomed to the fact that children are entrusted to the educational system from when they are babies, today's people can also be surprised by homeschooling. However, nothing is more consistent with human nature than the fact that those who have given physical life to a child also give him intellectual and spiritual life. We forget that compulsory attendance at school is a phenomenon of the late nineteenth century, and that before then children were educated and instructed by their mothers at the kitchen table. That is how the great geniuses of history learned how to read, how to write, and how to think.

Again, this may seem a utopia or an anachronism, but beyond the weighing of the different educational styles that, in the end, should be freely chosen by the parents, *The Awakening of Miss Prim* reminds us that parents have an obligation and also a right to educate their children. The school has to be a support to what, essentially, is done at home.

The education received by the children of San Ireneo has two main characteristics: it is not regulated and it is based on the classics.

Regarding the first characteristic, one of the things that was lost with the establishment of an official educational system is the possibility of letting children discover reality, marvel at it and assimilate it at their own pace. We have regulated the learning process, we have classified what a child has to know at this or that age, and what should be read at every moment, and as a result, on many occasions, we are depriving children of beautiful treasures that could have been within their reach long before. The reader of this novel inevitably wonders if the children who appear in it are real, if it is possible that there are children who read Shakespeare and medieval romances. It is intriguing that the same world that robs innocence from childhood in so many things strives to maintain those same children in ignorance of the true and the beautiful. The words that Lewis

puts in the mouth of the Devil when speaking of regulated education resonate here: "the brilliant student remains democratically chained to his age group throughout the school period. A boy capable of reading Aeschylus or Dante remains seated listening to the attempts of his peers to spell *The cat is sitting on the doormat*" (2013, p. 211).

The nephews of the Man in the Wing Chair are children who have been exposed to the beauty of the world and tradition, and they have assimilated it naturally since they were young. They are children raised with fairy tales, which inspire their games and lead them to create their own stories. In the houses of San Ireneo, there is no minimum age to approach the truth and beauty of the classic works, which are always there, within reach of their sticky and tiny hands.

This is the second characteristic of the education that the children of San Ireneo receive: it is based on a deep respect and love for the classics, which contain the treasures of the Western tradition. Prudencia also appreciates the classics, but as the current academy appreciates them: as something that has to be analyzed, dismembered and commented upon with an absolutely technical language. This is what Inger Enkvist calls the 'desacralization of great works'. Enkvist says that today:

> instead of reading, enjoying and admiring the great works of the past, quite uneducated students use a terminology that they apply mechanically to texts that they often do not know in order to produce their own texts that look scientific by the presence of certain technicalities. They continue to ignore the great literature, but believe themselves capable of criticizing it. (Enkvist, 2006, p. 96)[1]

In San Ireneo, the opposite occurs. Literature is savored, there is a space for it in the soul and it is allowed to transform it. Children are exposed to the beauty and the truth contained in the classics. Somehow, they are amazed by the truth, they are beaten by beauty and in that fall, like Saint Paul, they discover their humanity.

[1] My translation.

This astonishment at the beauty of reality is, according to classical thought, the beginning of the cognitive process. Catherine L'Ecuyer reminds us that Plato and Aristotle identified the origin of philosophy with amazement. Wonder, for L'Ecuyer, is "the desire to know the unknown, as well as the already known. […] Wonder is precisely what allows us to be conscious of the surrounding reality, through humility and gratitude. Wonder is a sort of reality-based consciousness" (2014, p. 764–765).

As mentioned above, *The Awakening of Miss Prim* aims to demonstrate the lack of humanity of the postmodern world and proposes to heal that by returning to the truth of human nature, expressed in the religious, philosophical and artistic traditions of Europe. It is convenient to talk about another of the things that shocked Prudencia about education in San Ireneo. Irenite children learn the Latin language from a young age and recite Virgil flawlessly. Although it may seem like a snobby caprice from the Man in the Wing Chair or an extravagant expression of nostalgia for the past, let us dare to say it has nothing to do with this. The Spanish writer and journalist Juan Manuel de Prada states that the exile of Latin from schools was the most effective way to destroy the traditional world because it was built in the language of Rome. De Prada argues that

> everything that makes us inside, all our moral and intellectual heritage – our truest and inalienable heritage – has been formulated in Latin… The literary genres and the artistic modalities were formulated in Latin; the concepts of person and family, tradition and common good were formulated in Latin; the notions of power and authority, of love and wisdom were formulated in Latin; planets and metals, vices and virtues, dogmas and precepts, contracts and testaments were formulated in Latin. Even our joy and our tears, our compliments and our invectives were formulated in Latin; and today we cry and laugh, we embrace and we get angry because Latin shaped our passions and feelings. Latin is the original principle and the nutritious milk of all the divine and human realities that make up our life; and, to disintegrate such realities, there was only the expulsion of Latin from our life…

> The blood of the Latin language flowed through the veins and arteries of our words and our thoughts. It encouraged our whole life, it was properly our soul; so there is nothing more grotesque than to call it a "dead language". We are the ones who are completely dead, for letting them snatch it from us. (De Prada, 2016)[2]

This text perfectly illustrates why the irenites strive to teach the classic languages to their children: because they are the natural transmitters of the Western soul, of the truth about humans, that were reflected later in the great works of literature. Therefore, true education cannot ignore them, because the goal of education is to accompany the child in the perfection of his humanity. And when the child is exposed to that which manifests mankind in a formidable way – that is, the Latin language – he is being educated.

Beauty will save the world

Another notion that stands out in the novel is that when literature – and all art in general – manifests the truth and beauty of nature, it moves the soul and is humanizing and educational. The restrained Prudencia Prim never experienced this commotion of the soul and therefore lives in anger, frustrated because the world does not satisfy her desires. In a passage of the novel, old Mrs. Thiberville tells her that she will not be happy until she is "wounded by beauty". It is a very revealing expression of the effect of the beautiful on the human soul: it hurts our hardness, it humbles us, it excites us, it dazzles us and it transforms us. But the modern world has told us that art is relative, that beauty is an opinion, that a toilet in a museum is as valuable as a painting by Velázquez.[3] The modern man is blind

[2] My translation

[3] Aesthetic relativism was founded by Kant. It is a "sort of relativism [that] holds that a given aesthetic judgement has different truth-values relative to different aesthetic standards. Maria Baghramian calls this strong *alethic relativism*" (Young 2014, p. 13; my emphasis).

and deaf to true beauty. When Mrs. Thiberville tells Prudencia that she needs to be wounded by beauty, she means that she has to face the message contained in the works of art and let herself be snatched away by it. The vital concern of Miss Prim to reach the beautiful inevitably leads her to travel to Italy, the place *par excellence* where art is splurged in every church, in every street. And there, Prudencia *awakens* when, seeking the beauty created by men, like Saint Augustine, she ends up finding the infinite beauty of the Creator of the universe.

The Awakening of Miss Prim is also a story of conversion and of the celebration of all the paths that lead to God. There are two conversions in the novel, one through philosophy and the dialogue with reason, and another through the beauty expressed in art. Regarding the latter, Pope John Paul II, in his *Letter to Artists*, said that "every authentic form of art is, in its way, a way of access to the deeper reality of man and the world. For that reason, it constitutes a very valid approach to the horizon of faith, where the human vicissitude finds its complete interpretation" (1999, n.16).

Conclusion

In my opinion, *The Awakening of Miss Prim* is not a nostalgic and novelettish song to a better past. It is a true proposal so that, in today's world, wherever we are, we live a truly human life, according to the truth transmitted to us in the religious, artistic and philosophical traditions of the West. The world needs to be dazzled by beauty to have hope and to be happy. This paper can only be concluded by remembering the last paragraphs of the aforementioned *Letter to Artists* by Pope John Paul II, which perfectly show how the inhabitants of San Ireneo de Arnois want to live:

> People of today and tomorrow need this enthusiasm [generated by beauty] if they are to meet and master the crucial challenges which stand before us. Thanks to this enthusiasm, humanity, every time it loses its way, will be able to lift itself up and set out

> again on the right path. In this sense it has been said with profound insight that *beauty will save the world*.
>
> Beauty is a key to the mystery and a call to transcendence. It is an invitation to savor life and to dream of the future. (John Paul II, 1999, n. 16)

The Awakening of Miss Prim is also an invitation to savor life, to let ourselves be amazed by beauty, to let ourselves be snatched by art, to learn about our humanity and to live according to it. There is no other way to be truly human, there is no other way to be happy.

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Terror and Resilience: One Day in the Life of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Abstract: During 2017 numerous events related to the centenary of the Russian Revolution took place. December 2018 also marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of one of the most relevant figures in the understanding of totalitarianism: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Placed between these two centenaries, this article provides a contribution to the understanding of the way in which the narrative, based on a biographical and autobiographical background, of Solzhenitsyn's works allows the phenomenon of terror to be faced.

Keywords: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, autobiographical narrative, totalitarianism, Russian Revolution

Introduction

Throughout 2017 numerous academic events commemorating the Russian Revolution took place. In Spain, for example, we can highlight three international congresses. The Center for International Historical Studies of the University of Barcelona organized the "Centennial of the Russian Revolution (1917–2017)" in October. The CEU Institute of Historical Studies at CEU San Pablo University in Madrid and the University of Granada organized two international congresses of the same title, "100 Years Since the Russian Revolution", in October and November respectively. This anniversary was also the occasion for the release and

re-release of many publications related to the Russian Revolution from different approaches and specialties.[1]

The contrast between the relevance given to the anniversary of the Revolution and the general institutional silence regarding its catastrophic results was notable, despite the praiseworthy efforts of many critics. Even more striking was the contrast between that centenary and that of one of the greatest critics the revolution ever encountered and the system that was born out of it: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, born December 11, 1918.

In this article, we present a number of aspects of the biography of the famous Russian writer, including elements of an autobiographical root within his literary productions, which contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon of terror.[2]

Childhood and youth

Aleksandr's father, who died when he was only six months old, served as a volunteer in the Grenadier Artillery Brigade. Aleksandr's childhood and early youth were thus spent with his maternal family in Rostov. The course of political events meant that they did not boast of the decorations received by his father for his services at the front during the war

[1] See for example: Andrade, J., Hernández Sánchez, F. (Eds.) (2017). *1917. La Revolución rusa cien años después.* Madrid: Akal. Courtois, S. (2017). *Lénine, l'inventeur du totalitarisme*. Paris: Perrin. Dell'Asta, A., Carletti, M., Parravicini, G. (2017). *1917. Russia. Il signo infranto di 'un mondo mai visto'.* Seriate, BG: La Casa di Matriona. Jevakhoff, A. (2017). *La guerre civile russe. 1917-1922*. Paris: Perrin. Lamsdorff, V (2017). *La herencia de la Revolución rusa (1917–2017)*. Barcelona: Digital Reasons. Milosevich, M. (2017). *Breve historia de la Revolución rusa.* Madrid: Galaxia Gutenberg. As an example of reissue of a classic work on the subject: Pipes, R. (2016). *La revolución rusa.* Barcelona: Debate [1990].

[2] The role of the intellectual in the face of Soviet terror has already been the object of our attention in an article about Vassili Grossman: Belmonte, M. Á. (2016). Libertad y vida intelectual en *Vida y destino* de Vassili Grossman. In Kazmierczak, M., Signes, M. T. (Eds.) *Lengua, literatura y práctica educativa. Reflexiones actuales sobre la palabra en la educación* (pp. 59–74). Vigo: Academia del Hispanismo.

before the Revolution. This is why one of Aleksandr's few memories of his father was the moment in which he helped his mother to bury his father's medals. At school in Rostov, the boy Aleksandr quickly integrated into the Pioneers and other usual activities of the new Soviet education system. Not very much was able to reach the youngest students regarding the controversies between the Bolsheviks and the Russian Teachers' Union. The Soviet educational system, with Lunacharski in charge, was advancing inexorably. The indoctrinating urgency of the Revolution, the need to build the new *Homo sovieticus* and its totalitarian character elevated school work and linked it with a massive cultural educational task. The Bolsheviks, experts in the field of mass indoctrination, based their actions on three fundamental points: political ideology; repression through the *cheka* and the *gulag*; and the absorption of intermediate societies – municipality, family and school – under political control.

> The government, under the direction of the Popular Commissariat of Instruction or Narkomprós (…) led by Anatoli Lunacharski, did not take long to start up different *agit-prop* initiatives (…) mass festivals, trains [with] library, cinematograph and information tables (…) they had political posters in their windows (…). In 1920, to commemorate the third anniversary, a great theatrical representation – *The taking of the Winter Palace* – was held, a show of the masses with six thousand participants – including professional actors, theater students, soldiers and workers – and an audience of more than one hundred thousand people who, at the culminating moment of the taking of the palace, joined the representation (…). As Lunacharski himself said (…), the masses must openly demonstrate and that is only possible when, in the words of Robespierre, they themselves become part of the show. (Ferré, 2017, p. 157)

Of course, not all educators shared the enthusiasm for indoctrination. In December 1917, some 4,000 members of the Russian Teachers' Union went on strike. Regarding them, Lunacharski himself wrote: "We are obliged

to banish forever from school activity these honorable gentlemen who, despite our appeal, prefer the role of right-handed politicians to the role of teachers" (Fitzpatrick, 1977, p. 55). The Union was definitively suppressed in the same month of December 1918 in which Solzhenitsyn was born.

When he was eleven years old, Aleksandr joined the Young Pioneers and gradually abandoned the religious influence of his family. For example, as a child he had prayed with his aunt Irina before icons and had received from her a confused but enduring notion of the connection between Russian history and the orthodox faith. With her, he also discovered the value of the great figures of Russian literature: he first read *War and Peace* at the age of ten. At 18, he conceived the idea of writing an epic work in which the theme was the history of the Revolution, inspired by the great work of Tolstoy. At primary school, his vocation as a writer began to flourish. However, at the time of choosing his higher studies, he opted for physical and mathematical sciences, in which he was also a brilliant student, due to the fact that in Rostov there were no adequate universities for literary studies. Thus, as the 1930s passed, with its great purges, Solzhenitsyn quietly delved into the study of Marxism and sketched drafts of his projected epic work.[3]

In April 1940 he married Natalia Reshetovskaya, without ceremony and behind his family's back. His biographer Joseph Pearce draws attention to the hierarchy of values that at that time moved Solzhenitsyn,

[3] During the exemplary trials, Soviet newspapers were full of mocking versions of the defendants' confessions and flattering praises from the secret police for their "perpetual vigilance". The press was plagued with insulting rhetoric against the "enemies of the people" and their continuing plots to undermine the party's work through "ideological and economic sabotage". Pavlik Morozov became an overnight hero for denouncing his father to the secret police and was set as an example to be imitated by the Soviet youth. Throughout the country, armies of party spokesmen were mobilized to explain to the nation's students why purges were necessary and to brainwash them so that they would accept their explanations (Pearce, 2007: 55). George Orwell perfectly captured the perversion of the totalitarianism that turned children against their parents, with their consent, in the character of Parsons. Cf. Belmonte, M. Á. (2013). La búsqueda fracasada de un modelo antropológico en *1984*. In Belmonte, M. Á. (Ed.) (2013). *El Gran Hermano te vigila*. Barcelona: Scire.

whose deepening Marxism was surprisingly a priority: "He must have been one of the few newlyweds in history that took *The Capital* to a honeymoon (and who read it). Waking up in the morning, Natalya used to find her husband already on the porch, with his head bowed over an annotated version of Marx's masterpiece" (Pearce, 2007, p. 73). According to Michael A. Nicholson (2017), the title that Solzhenitsyn was considering at that time for his great epic project was *Liubi Revolutsiyu*, that is, "Love the Revolution", which was inspired by the end of a typical Soviet novel titled *Marina*, written by Lavreniov in 1923, the last words of which were: "Love the Revolution, the rest – fame, money, women – is not worth it".

From the war to the gulag

In 1941, when the USSR entered the Second World War, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was initially assigned to the rear. However when the war became more prolonged, he was sent to the front in East Prussia, where he soon rose to the rank of captain and received various decorations. As an officer, he was a privileged witness of the horrors of looting, which were encouraged by the Soviet leaders themselves. In the poem *Prussian Nights*, he mixes fiction with real experiences of the inconceivable evils he observed at the beginning of 1945.

On February 9, 1945, while still serving in his military unit in Prussia, he was arrested. The reason was his criticism of Stalin in private correspondence sent to a friend from the front. Solzhenitsyn then began to discover a new life: the first transfers, the first cell, the first four-day interrogations… Everything was kept by the young idealist in his memory with the intention of incorporating his experiences into his future great epic work. The sentence he received, in application of the famous Article 58 against counterrevolutionary activities, was one of the mildest: eight years. It was enough to learn the main "transit prisons" of the gigantic prison system the Soviet Union had become. The first prison camps to which he was assigned, first in Rybinsk and then in Marfino, were of the type called the *sharashka*, which was the least harsh type of penitentiary

establishment; in them, the prisoners were engineers and highly qualified workers whose skills were used for the design and construction of canals, dams, etc. Years later, he collected these experiences in his novel *The First Circle*.[4] From 1950 he served his sentence in the "special field" of Ekibastuz in Kazakhstan. Between one field and another, during the endless transfers in freight trains, hidden from the eyes of the outside world, Solzhenitsyn was deep in conversations with prisoners of all types. Given the difficulty of getting hold of paper and the impossibility of keeping his writings in a lasting condition, he devoted himself to memorizing thousands of verses. Writing, memorizing, destroying. Such was the way in which his vocation as a writer was forced to develop during his prison years.

It was in Ekibastuz that he first conceived the idea of narrating an ordinary day of an ordinary prisoner in one of these "special fields".[5] Years later, the story *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* would become the key that would open the door to a tortuous writer's path.

The contact with prisoners who held religious beliefs was very important for his return to the faith he had abandoned so many years previously. However, the decisive event was the cancer he contracted while still in Ekibastuz. In January 1952 he was treated there for a tumor from which he unexpectedly recovered. The experiences of other patients and many of the conversations he had with them were brought years later to

[4] In the film *The Lives of Others* (Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006), set in the GDR of the 1980s, the playwright Georg Dreyman has a copy of *The First Circle* published in the FRG. During a search, a Stasi policeman asks him why he has "Western literature" and Dreyman replies that the book in question was a personal gift from Margot Honecker. This fictional anecdote is, however, representative of the way in which the communist authorities considered themselves capable of a certain level of self-criticism, provided that the extreme of a massive questioning of the system itself was not reached.

[5] "It was a normal day in the country, hard, as usual, and he was working. I helped carry a wheelbarrow full of cement when I thought that was the way to describe the world of work camps. I could have described the ten years I spent in them, of course; I could have told all the history of the camps in that way, but it was enough to gather everything in a single day, all the previous fragments ... and describe a single day in the life of a normal prisoner from morning to night" (Pearce, 2007: 192).

fiction through his novel *Cancer Ward*, which highlights conversations between patients about the transcendental issues of human life.

Already healed but still a prisoner, his religious conversion was a fact. Simultaneously, his project of a great epic work was advancing under one principal directive: to trace a genealogy as exhaustive and truthful as possible of the historical process that had led to the Revolution and the consequent development of the Soviet system.

At the beginning of 1953, Solzhenitsyn was released but was confined to internal and perpetual exile in a small town in Kazakhstan to work as a science teacher in a rural school. Three days after arriving at his new destination, the news of the death of Josif Stalin also arrived there, in the far reaches of distant Kazakhstan.

Thaw, rehabilitation and publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

The period known as the "thaw" brought about the quashing of numerous sentences, official rehabilitations and the revocation of permanent exiles. This included the case of Solzhenitsyn, who decided to travel to Moscow and meet with Natalia Reshetovskaya in Riazan.

Their relationship had been practically broken by the years of captivity. Natalia probably thought that Aleksandr was never going to return from captivity and, in fact, had lived as a couple with a fellow scientist. In spite of this, Aleksandr and Natalia tried to recover a married life that, with the passage of time, proved to be unfeasible. At the beginning of his return, he thought that his cancer, not fully cured, would prevent him from living for more than another few years. However, the great couple's estrangement came from the spiritual transformation of Solzhenitsyn, which made both see the little foundation on which his youthful and immature union had settled.

For several years, Solzhenitsyn continued to appear in public as a mere schoolteacher in the provinces, keeping his intense work as a writer secret. Only a few trusted friends were asked by him to read a manuscript from

time to time. Publishing in the Soviet Union was reserved for members of official associations controlled by the party. The excessive dissemination of manuscripts could easily ruin the rehabilitation he had been granted. His great epic work, dedicated to the Revolution, went ahead, but no longer with a title that exhorted to love the Revolution; instead, it took the title *The Red Wheel*. This is, in fact, the great epic work of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, although, incomprehensibly, it has only been partially translated and published in the West. Through this work, Solzhenitsyn clarifies what the Revolution was in itself and what its causes were.

As a separate branch of this project, the idea he had conceived in Ekibastuz of relating a day in the life of a prisoner came to life in May 1959. The title he assigned to the story was "S-854" and he wrote it in less than two months. With a title like this, the depersonalization of the concentration camps and the reification of their prisoners were underlined. Despite six years having passed since the death of Stalin, no work had yet been published whose theme was about life within the camps. Millions of Soviets had spent years in them, had worked to exhaustion in them. Those who had not died in them or were still there had been transplanted to a new life in which it was very difficult to integrate. However, no literary account that echoed their experiences had seen the light of publication. The tone of Solzhenitsyn's account was quite moderate compared to many of the real stories he had known years previously. Even so, the mere idea that "S-854" could be published through official channels was unthinkable. The manuscript was kept in a secret place with many others. In 1958, Boris Pasternak had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, but the Soviet authorities did not authorize him to collect the prize and, in addition, banned the publication of *Doctor Zhivago*. However, in 1961, the director of the literary magazine *Novyi Mir*, Aleksandr Tvardosky, addressed a speech to the XXII Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR, in which he called for the memories of the victims of the arbitrary power of the Stalin era to be remembered. Solzhenitsyn was strong enough to send him the manuscript of "S-854". Tvardosky was immediately enthusiastic about the story. As he knew of the difficulties involved in proposing the publication of such a work, he managed a few months

later to send a copy directly to Khrushchev himself, who was in the midst of the process of "de-Stalinization", including the removal of Stalin's embalmed body from the Red Square mausoleum. Khrushchev's direct and favorable intervention gave the authorization for *Novyi Mir* to publish, in November 1962, the story titled *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. A few days later, Khrushchev sent a copy to each attendee of the Plenary Session of the Central Committee. Tvardosky enjoyed the success of his discovery, convinced that Solzhenitsyn's work was linked to the best of the Russian literary tradition in terms of understanding the simple peasant soul. The work was received with great enthusiasm. Literary magazines were filled with letters sent from all over the Soviet Union by former prisoners or relatives who had found some consolation for their years of suffering in the publication of the story. Other writers were encouraged to discuss a taboo subject. The institutional support, nevertheless, was as ephemeral as it was unexpected.[6]

The effects of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*

It is understandable that the Soviet authorities backed down in their support of such a work. Despite the moderate tone that was perceived in its first reading, the realities to which the story refers resulted in a remarkable unmasking not only of Stalinism but also of a large part of the Soviet system. For example, in a casual conversation between prisoners, several characters talk about the official regulation of the hours and end

[6] Solomon Volkov remembers the sensations that he experienced, which were surely very common among the intellectuals of that time: "I was eighteen then, and I remember the general shock caused by *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, both because it had been published at all and for its enormous artistic power. Its first readers encountered narrative mastery, amazing in a literary debut: without melodrama or stress, with deliberate restraint it told the story of just 'one day', and far from the worst, in the life of one of the millions of Soviet prisoners, the peasant Ivan Shukhov, depicted through his peasant perceptions, his colorful but natural language, which elicited associations with Tolstoy's prose. This publication created in the intelligentsia a sense of unprecedented euphoria, which lasted, alas, just over a week." (Volkov, 2008: 205)

up concluding that even the sun obeys the Soviet regime. At another time, the prisoners compare the duration of their sentences and assume that it does not depend on the "crime" committed but on the date of the sentence. As for the tricks used by prisoners to simulate the productivity demanded in their tasks, it was obvious to everyone that analogous tricks were used throughout the Soviet production system. The memory of the way in which Ivan Denisovich Shukhov had been tried, including the interrogations, the false confession to avoid execution, etc., with the only real crime being having fallen into the hands of the Germans and having managed to escape to join his battalion, was familiar to many readers and called into question the prestige of the Soviet authorities in a matter as "sacred" as the "Great Patriotic War". Finally, the intention considered by Shukhov to dedicate himself, at the end of his sentence, to painting tapestries and leaving the *kolkhoz*, which was more a desire of his wife than his own initiative, was a lack of affection for the regime that was as patent as it was innocently manifested. In addition, Shukhov's last thoughts, at the end of his days, revealed the inconsistency of that intention. Shukhov knows that, after serving their sentence, the prisoner would be kept in exile. The last conversation of the story is with the prisoner Aliosha, a Baptist, who encourages Shukhov to ask God for spiritual goods. Shukhov adopts an ironic position in the face of such a suggestion, with a final mixture of despair and acceptance of his destiny that arouses a complex and bittersweet feeling in the reader. For all this, the work offered a portrait of Soviet terror under the guise of a casual and tender description of the everyday life of a naive prisoner, as well as the way in which the individual can cope, can resist without falling apart inside or rebelling outside.

A writer on a tightrope: persecution, exile and return

Since the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and thanks to both the initial support of Khrushchev and the work's quickly-achieved popularity, Tvardosky asked Solzhenitsyn to show him other writings. For Tvardosky, it was evident that someone capable of writing

that work had to have written many other pieces that were also of great literary value. Solzhenitsyn did not disclose all his projects, nor did he immediately show him all his secret productions. He chose as a second proposal *Matriona's House*, which was about a humble, generous, kind peasant of a sincere and demanding religiosity. So explicit was the portrait of the Christian virtues that Tvardosky himself hesitated long before promoting the publication, which took place alongside the publication of the story *An Incident at Krechetovka Station* in January 1963. "In many aspects *Matriona's House* is one of the most important works of Solzhenitsyn, a spiritual pump as much as *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was from the psychological point of view. According to the dissident historian Grigori Pomerants, Christianity began for millions of Russians with the reading of *Matriona's House*" (Pearce, 2007, p. 211).

Criticism of Solzhenitsyn from the regime's toughest sector, which at first had been offset by support, began to predominate. He was mainly accused of being a bad example to the youth, of losing sight of the objective of the communist paradise, and so on. Since 1964, the "thaw" had waned and Solzhenitsyn found it increasingly difficult to publish. Even his hardest manuscripts against Stalinism and against the Soviet regime in general were kept in secret places. The alternative to official publication was to circulate copies through a domestic copy system. However, that meant becoming a clandestine writer, with the risk that the rest of his productions would be found and destroyed. From 1968, the writer found his most faithful ally in his young collaborator Natalia Svetlova, whom he would later marry and have three children with. The tension between Solzhenitsyn and the Soviet authorities came to an end with the news of the Nobel Prize. At this point, the secret order to withdraw *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* from all libraries and bookstores was of little use. All official media – there were no other forms – unleashed a defamation campaign against Solzhenitsyn. In 1970, Tvardosky was dismissed from his position as director of *Novyi Mir*. The following year he died and Solzhenitsyn's attendance at the funeral caused quite a stir. Meanwhile, Solzhenitsyn's works were being translated into dozens of languages and disseminated abroad. The first volume of *The Gulag Archipelago* appeared

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in Paris in 1973. In February 1974, Solzhenitsyn was arrested, accused of high treason, dispossessed of his Soviet citizenship and forced to leave the country on a plane to an unknown destination. It landed in Frankfurt. The first years of his exile were spent in Switzerland and, later (1976–1994), in a small town in Vermont, USA. He was always accompanied by his wife and children, who were given a fully Russian education while remaining respectful of the Western cultures that had welcomed them.

Solzhenitsyn was always convinced that he would return to Russia before he died. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the return of Solzhenitsyn had a marked symbolic aspect. Logically, the political elites tried to attract his favor, but the writer maintained a very critical attitude regarding the way in which their reforms were carried out. The decades-long resistance to Soviet totalitarianism had hardened him enough to miss the frivolity with which his proposals for the reconstruction of Russia were received. However, he never looked for an ounce of "success" if it meant giving up an iota of his conviction.

Solzhenitsyn lived the last years of his life without any desire for protagonism but with special attention to the associations of relatives of old prisoners and other similar initiatives. He dared, even, to publish a work, *Two Hundred Years Together*, in which he analyzed in detail the role of the Jews in the last centuries of the history of Russia, aware that hardly any other authors would dare to tackle such a thorny subject.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the biography of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is the biography of an authentic vocation as a writer. A vocation that, faced with the challenge of tremendous circumstances and conditions, he did not succumb to but instead the writer was able to integrate all the experiences that he had lived to the point of becoming the voice of millions of anonymous prisoners. Solzhenitsyn's perseverance in his vocation as a writer became the best instrument of resistance against terror and totalitarian oppression.

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Academia between Utopia and Dystopia: Francis Bacon, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Alasdair MacIntyre

Abstract: The paper examines two visions of the relation between science and society through the utopian novel *New Atlantis,* by Francis Bacon, and the dystopian novella *New Atlantis,* by Ursula K. Le Guin. In Bacon's classic utopia scientists enjoy a high social status and have all imaginable resources at their disposal, whereas Le Guin's contemporary dystopia portrays heroic scientists in a totalitarian state, subjected to imprisonment, torture and constant surveillance for practicing ethical science. Taking a cue from these two texts, I employ MacIntyre's framework of internal and external goods of a practice to discuss the relationship between contemporary academia and the state. The internal goods of science (knowledge, 'light', discoveries and inventions) are what scientists contribute to society, whereas the external goods, such as material riches, prestige and power (or the opposites thereof) are what society supplies the scientists with. My conclusion is that values drawn from a religious tradition can help treat the external goods as the means, and the internal goods as the actual ends of academic practice.

Keywords: academia, utopia, Francis Bacon, Ursula K. Le Guin, Alasdair MacIntyre

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Introduction

The myth of the lost island of Atlantis was first mentioned by Plato (2008) in his two dialogues, *Timaeus* and the unfinished *Critias*. Although marginal in Plato's work, the myth of Atlantis proved to exert a great influence on the imaginations of later generations. The Renaissance, in particular, witnessed the revival of this theme, which was connected with the discovery of America by European sailors. The most famous works of that time that were inspired by the tale of the sunken land were Thomas More's *Utopia* (2002), which lent its name to the entire literary genre, and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1989), which expressly referred to the Platonic myth both in its title and in its narrative of the discovery of an unknown island called Bensalem. The prominent feature of Bacon's account of Bensalem is the description of the ideal institution of natural science called the House of Salomon. From the numerous later literary texts drawing on the Platonic myth I have selected Ursula K. Le Guin's *New Atlantis* (1975), because, apart from its identical title, it provides an interesting counterpoint to Bacon's narrative in its portrayal of the fate of the scientific community. These two contrasting accounts offer a convenient starting point for the discussion of the internal and external goods of academic life, in which I engage with MacIntyre's diagnosis of contemporary academia and its place in society.

Science in Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*

Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* is a seventeenth century story of European sailors who, on their voyage from Peru to China, accidently discover an island in the midst of the Pacific Ocean. It turns out to be inhabited by highly civilized people, who extend gracious hospitality to the strangers and gradually introduce them to their culture, their customs and the history of their island, which they call Bensalem. The history they tell the sailors contains the account of the destruction of the Atlanteans' land as punishment for their conquests of other nations motivated by *hubris* and

greed. In contrast, the Bensalemites enjoy prosperity, which is the fruit of their moral integrity. Bensalem's flourishing was safeguarded by the foundation of

> an Order or Society which we call Salomon's House, the noblest foundation (as we think) that ever was upon the earth and the lanthorn of this kingdom. It is dedicated to the study of the Works and Creatures of God. (Bacon, 1989, p. 58)

The description of the so-called House of Salomon, an institution devoted to cultivating science and producing new inventions, is the main feature of Bacon's utopian narrative. In Jerry Weinberger's words, "to study the *New Atlantis* is to study the coherence of the utopian promise of modern science" (1976: 866). But, at the same time, Salomon's House, which is also called the College of the Six Days' Works, is deeply rooted in ancient and religious wisdom, as it contains the Biblical reference to the work of Creation, as well as to King Solomon.

New Atlantis is the fictional embodiment of Bacon's concept of 'the great instauration'. Travis DeCook (2008: 111) points out that Bacon's key term 'instauration' echoes the same term used in the Vulgate for the foundation of Solomon's Temple, where the Ark of the Covenant was stored. The instauration in the Vulgate meant building and rebuilding, but also edification and re-edification (McKnight, 2006: 29).

According to McKnight (2005, 2006), the wise men of Salomon's House are devoted to interpreting both natural and supernatural events, aware that the use of nature should be regulated by a proper piety. In this interpretation, Salomon's House is seen as complementary to Solomon's Temple, and science (natural philosophy) is not meant to supersede worship, but to be integrated with it in a reverent attitude towards the Creator of nature. King Solomon, the founder of the Temple in Jerusalem, is presented in *New Atlantis* as the author of the *Natural History*, a compendium of the entire scientific knowledge available to the human race. The Fathers of Salomon's House emulate his example by searching for light, which has connotations both with natural philosophy and with religious knowledge.

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One of the island's officials, the governor of the House of Strangers, states that the quest for Light, that is, knowledge, 'the first creation of God', is the sole purpose of Salomon's House. This is why, apart from conducting their own research and experiments, some members of Salomon's House who are called Merchants of Light travel to other parts of the world in order to learn about the advances of science and technology and to avail themselves of this knowledge back at home.

Another item rich in Biblical symbolism is the ark, in which the Bible and the letter from Apostle Bartholomew reportedly arrived at Bensalem's shores, accompanied by a miraculous pillar of light. It is a reminder both of the ark of Noah and of the Ark of the Covenant. So is the whole island of Bensalem, for it alone was spared the destruction caused by a universal deluge (DeCook, 2008). The fact that the ark contained a complete text of the Bible, including books that had not yet been written at the time of its miraculous arrival, reflected Bacon's Protestant emphasis on the *sola Scriptura* as the basis of faith. It could also have been the expression of Bacon's longing for a peaceful and unproblematic Christian community, free from the theological disputes and controversies of the age of the Reformation. Therefore, as Travis DeCook (2008) points out, there is a stark contrast between the static, atemporal character of the divine Revelation in Bensalem with the dynamic, developmental aspect of natural knowledge, accumulated by Salomon's House.

As Stephen A. McKnight underscores, the activities of Salomon's House can be understood as a preservation of the original form of natural philosophy, which already existed in the past. Tradition features prominently in the structure of Salomon's House, in which knowledge and skills are passed from the masters to the apprentices in order to secure the continuity of natural philosophy and to build upon the previously amassed knowledge.

Science in Ursula K. Le Guin's *New Atlantis*

Le Guin's *New Atlantis* (1975) is a novella, one of the lesser known of her numerous works classified as fantasy or science fiction. In Le Guin's short story, twenty-first century America's West Coast is ruined by a totalitarian government, pollution, and the exhaustion of natural resources. This leads to a sharp decline in economic and technological standards, as exemplified by dilapidated buses breaking down regularly on the road, and constant power outages. This civilizational decline is accompanied by natural cataclysms, which bring to mind the fate of the original Atlantis. The collapsing American West Coast, including Portland, Oregon, where the Le Guins settled in 1958, is the antithesis of Bensalem, which survived natural disasters due to its moral, religious and scientific integrity.

The text is composed of six fragments of a Portland woman's journal, each of them followed by the collective voice of the mysterious inhabitants of the underwater land. Thus Le Guin adds a note of hope to her otherwise gloomy vision, as new continents are reported to be rising from both the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans to replace the present ones. In fact, the rising land is not new, but an ancient one. As Elizabeth Cummins put it:

> Le Guin has caught both the old and new existing for a moment. And in that juxtaposition she has acknowledged that there is a vision which endures from past to present even through the cataclysmic changes of the rise and fall of nations. (Cummins, 1993, p. 176)

The main protagonists of the 'terrestrial' sections of the novella are Belle, a violist and the author of the journal, and her husband Simon, a scientist. Upon returning to Portland from a trip to the Mount Hood Wilderness, Belle is surprised to find someone lying in her bed. The person turns out to be her emaciated husband, released from a detention camp. Simon is persecuted because he belongs to a group of researchers striving to construct a solar cell, 'the sun tap', to remedy the adverse effects of the constant power shortages. They pursue their project in secret, meeting

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in Belle and Simon's apartment. Belle plays the viola to drown out their conversations, as the apartment has been wiretapped by the FBI. The physicists' research is aimed at the well-being of all the citizens, but the oppressive state authorities do not allow it for fear of losing their monopoly on energy supplies. Through the viola music she plays, Belle manages somehow to get in touch with the mysterious inhabitants of the submarine land and to wake them back to life. Their voices, coming from the rising continent, are simultaneously the voices of the past and of the future, thus establishing the link between antiquity and the time to come. When the scientists finally succeed in constructing the solar cell, Simon proposes to use the enormous energy, which is now at their disposal, to accelerate the rising of the new continent. He is soon detained again by his oppressors, this time on the pretence of health issues. In view of the upcoming deluge Belle intends to put her journal into a bottle so that it could be carried away by the ocean and possibly read by people belonging to a civilization in the time to come.

Internal and external goods of science: academia and society

These contrasting images of Bacon's Bensalem and Le Guin's West Coast set the scene for my appraisal of certain aspects of contemporary academia and its relationship to society at large in general, and to state authorities in particular. For this purpose I employ the MacIntyrean framework of internal and external goods of a practice (2007). Internal goods are those that can only be achieved by engaging in a practice; they encompass both the skills and virtues of the practitioner, and the excellence of performance or products, such as a game of chess or a work of architecture. External goods – such as wealth and prestige – are not necessarily connected with a particular practice, and they depend on institutional arrangements. In the world of academia, internal goods of science might be construed as the scientists' contribution to the common good of society, whereas external goods may be viewed as rewards supplied to the scientists by society.

In Bacon's *New Atlantis* the search for Light is the primary internal good of the practice of natural philosophy, whose institutional framework is provided by Salomon's House. In terms of external goods, the Fathers of Salomon's House lead luxurious lives, and are abundant in wealth, power and prestige. Bacon's narrative clearly shows that science leads to prosperity. In this connection Katherine Bootle Attie (2013) makes a direct reference to the Second Book of Chronicles (1, 10-12), where King Solomon prayed for wisdom, and because of that was granted both wisdom and material prosperity. For Bootle Attie the very phrase 'merchants of light' represents the commodification of science, which marks the beginning of modernity. She reads *New Atlantis* as a protocapitalist manifesto, based on the assumption that there is no inherent opposition between self-interest and the common good. But so interpreted, Bacon's Merchants of Light act in an exploitative way, since the Bensalemites use other nations' research results, but keep their own knowledge to themselves. Howard White (1968) and Jerry Weinberger (1976), for example, therefore claim that the message of *New Atlantis* is in fact subversive and anti-Christian, and that it advocates material prosperity brought about by human rational endeavor as opposed to the Christian other-worldly spiritual quest.

The Finnish moral philosopher Timo Airaksinen (2011) adopts a slightly different perspective; he argues that Bacon divides knowledge into two spheres: exoteric and esoteric. In fact, only the Fathers of the House of Salomon have full access to the accumulated knowledge. The other inhabitants of Bensalem are admitted only to the exoteric store of knowledge – they enjoy the practical benefits of the inventions and discoveries. Even the ordinary laborers of science operate on the exoteric side of it. The power inherent in the possession of knowledge demands special moral qualifications from those who aspire to attain it. If knowledge is light, illumination is reserved for the few who satisfy the entrance criteria, and the Fathers of the House of Salomon are certainly qualified, intellectually and morally, to pursue this noble profession.

The teleological dimension of the project carried out by the physicists in Le Guin's *New Atlantis* corresponds to that of the enterprise of Salomon's House, but the circumstances in which they pursue their

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experiments are the exact opposite of those enjoyed by the Bensalemite researchers: they suffer imprisonment, torture, and destitution. They therefore need much more virtue to endure their plight than the wise men of Salomon's House. In Le Guin's novella, where the scientists lead lives of heroic self-sacrifice, there can be no suspicion of the materialistic and selfish motivation of the scientific work, and no risk of the corrupting influence of the institutions.

Conclusion

Let us now look at MacIntyre's idea of science as a practice, and the university as the institution which sustains it, to see how it relates to Bacon's and Le Guin's fictional accounts. As MacIntyre put it, "no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions" (2007: 194). First of all, it is obviously the case that in the former narrative science will flourish, whereas in the latter it will perish. Even if Simon and his friends succeed with their invention, their scientific community is doomed to destruction due to institutional persecution, not to mention the natural catastrophe which is about to begin. External goods are necessary means to achieve the internal goods as proper ends of practice. At the most fundamental level, MacIntyre claims that the necessary condition for moral enquiry and scientific deliberation is freedom from coercion and danger of death. That is how he argues for the validity of natural law in view of contemporary moral disagreements (2006: 78–80). This claim obviously translates into the relationship between academia and the state: the state should secure the proper environment for science and philosophy to flourish, and the scientists should work to improve the general well-being of society. This standard is met in Bensalem but violated in Le Guin's *New Atlantis*.

Looking at the relationship between internal and external goods of science from another angle, we may ask to what extent knowledge or a research result is a common good, and to what extent it is private property, which may be commodified, traded and marketed for individual

profit. A liberal perspective stresses the intellectual rights of the individual, whereas an Aristotelian standpoint underscores the good of the community which sponsors the research and provides the institutional framework for it. Thus, from an Aristotelian point of view, we should promote the culture of open access, and stress the exoteric moral competence of the lay persons, rather than the esoteric knowledge of professional experts.

Finally, we can see the affinity between Bacon's view of science based on religion as an enquiry into nature understood as the creation and work of God, and Newman's and MacIntyre's idea of theology as the integrative core of all the disciplines of science. MacIntyre nurtures an arguably utopian vision of the unity of science redeemed from compartmentalization and united on a theological and philosophical foundation (2009, 178). I subscribe to the view that such universalism and integration of knowledge can safeguard the proper relationship between the internal and external goods of academic practice, that is to say, a suitable order among means and ends of academic endeavor.

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MISCELLANEOUS

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Cognition, Metacognition and Learning

Abstract: This article presents a theoretical review of the difficulty that exists at the moment to understand and comprehend metacognition, given the problem that the construct itself involves. In addition, it is a complex concept to measure and apply to the educational world and the teaching-learning process. This article discusses the importance of cognition and metacognition, as it establishes a clear difference between the two. A theoretical review of metacognitive research is presented, differentiating the existing research studies on control and cognitive regulation from the research work that examines metacognition in the educational field. This article also reflects on the state of metacognitive measurements and the difficulties of capturing metacognitive magnitude and scale with regard to the capability of transferring these concepts to the educational world. It discusses viable ways to achieve a better development of the autonomy of students, being reflected in a 'learning to learn' action that transcends the school environment and is projected to all facets of meaningful learning.

Keywords: learning, educational process, cognition, metacognition, metacognitive measurement, learning strategies

Introduction

As is also the case with the concepts of intelligence and giftedness, there is no unanimity when defining the construct of 'metacognition'. Although metacognition has been widely defined by Flavell as "knowledge concerning its own cognitive processes and products, or anything related to them, such as active control and the consequent regulation and organization of these processes" (Flavell, 1976, p.231), there is currently some controversy as to what exactly should be defined as metacognition. For example, a certain object of simple knowledge (such as the knowledge of what strategy to use for a particular problem, or the knowledge of the strategies to use to remember something) can be called metacognition. Now, as Gentile (1997) explains, "if the knowledge of the circulatory system itself, of what affects it, and of what strategies to keep it in optimal functioning are considered as cognitive strategies … why should knowledge about self-learning and about one's own memory not also be considered as cognitive processes?" (p.124). In essence, this argument attempts to limit metacognition to active control, to conscious control, or to the executive regulation of mental processes. In any case, this line of discussion is fruitful, because metacognition seems to have undergone *a drag of the construct* at the time of coining a unanimous term, which is commonly accepted by the theorists of the topic (Booth and Hall, 1994; Burón, 2012; Cardelle-Elawar, 1995; Allal, 1998). Consequently, different authors have used this term to refer to everything related to the knowledge of strategies, with the executive control of the strategies, and with the self-control of the activity, in terms of aspects as varied as: the checking of solutions to linear equations, enumerating possible strategies to deal with a problem, detecting errors within a reading text, predicting degrees of knowledge, the knowledge of different sources of motivation and the self-correction of errors (Cámara, Monteagudo and Paz, 1996; Burón, 2012). Although it seems that all these processes are common when new constructs appear and generate considerable enthusiasm, it is necessary to reach a clear and objective conceptual definition about what metacognition is, even assuming the risk of everything involved in the

process of becoming metacognition (Ehrlich, Remond and Tardieu, 1999; Alluela, 2007), in which case the construct loses meaning. In reality, it is not easy to describe what makes certain thoughts or feelings metacognitive and not simply cognitive (Nelson and Narens, 1994; Narens, Graf and Nelson, 1996). The descriptions are difficult because metacognition, by its very nature, is a "diffuse concept" (Flavell, 1987, p. 23), which has been complicated still further by the little uniformity in the theoretical *corpus* of the different investigations on the subject. This is due to the fact that these come from very varied disciplines and to the objectives pursued, which are also very different (Yussen, 1985; Bransford, 2000).

Metacognitive research

What really distinguishes cognition from metacognition? Certainly, one of the most important distinctions to be made relates to the links that have been established between cognition and metacognition. According to Kagan and Lang (1978), cognition is a general term used to aggregate, globally, the processes that a person involves or implies in: (a) the extraction of information from the outside world; (b) the application of knowledge prior to the information recently received; (c) the integration of both to create new knowledge; (d) the storage of the information in the memory so that it can be retrieved and used later; and (e) the continuous evaluation of the quality and logical coherence of the mental processes and products of that person. In summary, cognition refers to the acquisition, application, creation, storage, transformation, evaluation, and utilization of information (Díaz and Fernández, 1998; Aragón, 2009). Cognition groups cognitive processes, i.e., "the internal mechanisms or protocols that a person uses to perceive, assimilate, store and retrieve information" (Antonijevich and Chadwick, 1982, p. 307–308). However, what are the differences that can be established between cognition and metacognition? An approximate answer has been provided by Haller, Child and Walberg (1988), which Acereda (2017) collects in the following table.

Table 1. Differences between Cognition and Metacognition (Acereda, 2017, based on the work of Haller, Child and Walberg, 1988)

COGNITION	METACOGNITION
Reference to processes or operations that are in progress	Supervision or vigilance, on the part of the apprentice, of the mental operations that are underway; that is to say, supervision of the cognitive processes that are activated during the accomplishment of some task or the coping of some problem whose solution raises some intellectual requirement
Processes or strategies that are activated by the apprentice in an effective way	Construct that refers to: 1. What a person knows of his cognitions 2. The person's ability to control their own cognitions

On the other hand, many researchers have coincided in pointing out that metacognition, based on their attempts at a definition, is a construct equivalent to concepts such as meta-attention, meta-memory, meta-comprehension, etc. From the perspective of Mayor, Suengas and González (1993), it could be considered that as many metacognitive modalities as cognitive processes exist, such as meta-representation, meta-memory, meta-language, meta-thought, meta-attention, meta-motivation, meta-perception, meta-learning, etc., which makes it difficult to study metacognition as a construct (Monereo and Castelló, 1997; Domenech, 2004).

Even so, and understanding the fundamental difference between metacognition and cognition, we have to go beyond the question of what it is and address the question of how metacognition has frequently been studied. Adopting a constructivist viewpoint, which is so prevalent in current education, one can come to argue that the realities we know reflect the ways in which we meet them (Negrete, 2007; Monereo, 1997). Regarding this, Glasersfeld has provided an additional elaboration of this argument: "The sense of experimentation creates the structure in the flow or sway of its experience; and this structure is what the conscious cognitive organisms experience as reality" (Glasersfeld, 1984; p. 38). Therefore, the knowledge that researchers have obtained from metacognition can be clarified more thoroughly if we look at the ways in which they have obtained it (Greeno, Collins and Resnick, 1996; Morín, 2001).

The majority of the first investigations in the field of metacognition were descriptive in nature, and in them the authors tried to describe and explain general models of development of the knowledge of children with regard to the processes of memory, particulary certain processes concerned with the conscious and deliberate storage and retrieval of information (Doly, 1996; Nicasio, 2008). However, as the studies changed from a descriptive approach to an empirical one, there came to be a growing need to expand the methodology being used, to increase the number of studies carried out, and to classify the growing literary compilation on the subject. Several classification designs have been used to group, analyze, and evaluate these studies (e.g. Cavanaugh and Perlmutter, 1992; Pascual-Castroviejo, 2002; Schoenfeld, 1987), and despite the fact that there are substantial differences between them, it can be noted that in these classification designs there are constantly three general categories, which have recently been joined by a new category (Osses and Jaramillo, 2008; Organista, 2005). We must analyze these four categories more closely.

1. Cognitive control studies

This first category includes the various studies carried out on cognitive control. These studies had, as their main objective, the examination of humans' knowledge of their own knowledge, their processes of thought, and how they can exactly control the current state of their knowledge and their thought processes (Kluwe, 1987; Schoenfeld, 1992). Many of these studies assessed the predictions of their performance; that is, the predictions of what knowledge is stored in memory, and the assignment of effort and attention; that is, the allocation of the study based on their own judgments on the knowledge that is or is not currently in the memory (Schneider, 1985; Pozo, 2003). Frequently, verbal reports that subjects performed during a memory task execution were used to determine what memory knowledge the subject contributed to the task (Cavanaugh and Perlmutter, 1992). In this regard, it should be noted that, in reality, the ability to control one's knowledge and thought processes is not a trivial matter in terms of education, since educators today have

a keen interest in self-regulating learning. "Theoreticians unanimously consider that the most effective apprentices are self-regulating" (Butler and Winne, 1995, p.245), and the key to effective self-regulation is the exact self-assessment of what is or is not known. Only when students know the state of their own knowledge can they effectively self-direct the learning of what they do not know (Mateos, 2001; Pena, 2003). Therefore, knowing if students can accurately control their knowledge and thought processes and if the memory control of complex tasks can be taught to younger children are the dominant concerns of the teachers, as well as of the researchers and theorists interested in encouraging the self-regulation of learning (Domínguez and Martínez, 1997; García, 1995). Basically, the results obtained from most of the studies of this first category in metacognitive research have shown that even kindergarten children can accurately control their knowledge. However, as age increases, subjects advance and progress not only in terms of their amount of knowledge and what they can store in their memory, but also in how they can accurately control their knowledge (Sáiz and Guijo, 2010; Rodríguez, Fernández and Escudero, 2002). But when it comes to judging the ability to control one's memory, it is important to consider other important aspects, rather than just age, such as the types of thought processes or knowledge that are being controlled (Carr and Borkowski, 1987). When memory control tasks are simple and do not overload the working memory (for example, simple remembrance or recognition tasks), there are few differences between young children and older children (Gourgey, 1998; Casajús, 2005). But as the complexity of the tasks gradually increases, such as in of the use of strategies to allocate a greater time of study to the most difficult items, it becomes more and more difficult to manage the processes of thought necessary in order to complete them (Trillo, Plata, Peña, Segura, Crespo and Labraña, 1996).

2. Studies on cognitive regulation

The second category of metacognitive research includes studies that have examined the "regulation of the own thinking processes to cope with the changes that demand different situations and circumstances"

(Kluwe, 1982, p.210). Many of the early studies in this category were focused on educatable mentally deficient children, such as the studies by Brown and Campione (1980) and Butterfield and Belmont (1980), among others. More recently, however, research studies have focused on a broader spectrum of children's representative capacities. In these studies, the subject was taught a strategy to complete a specific task. Once the subject had demonstrated the dominance of the strategy, he was provided with another task (i.e. the transfer task), different from the first one but structurally equivalent to it (Tardif and Merieu, 1996). The subject then had to decide whether to use the taught strategy, modify it, or abandon it in favor of a different strategy. Thus, as the subjects learned a strategy to facilitate performance in tasks of instruction, the researchers examined whether these subjects developed a metacognitive awareness of the usefulness and function of the strategy (Tardif, 1992), which is essential if they regulate the application and modification of strategies to solve new situational demands. The results of most of the studies carried out in this second category of metacognitive research coincide in pointing out that young children can be trained to control their behavior and strategic functioning, and that this training can improve the regulation of effective strategies (Yan, 1991; García, 2001; Gravini and Iriarte, 2008; Joseph, 2006). On the other hand, if subjects are taught to have metacognitive awareness as to the usefulness and function of a strategy while being taught that strategy, they are more likely to generalize it to new and diverse situations (Flavel, 1999; Georghiades, 2004).

3. Studies on cognitive control and regulation

This third category includes studies in which both the control and regulation of cognition are examined. In these research studies, the subject controls the information available during the course of his or her own thought, and then uses this information to regulate subsequent memory processes. Often, they all focus on how subjects are served by the strategies of organization or elaboration in memory, and how strategies can be used to improve performance (Schneider, 1985; Sternberg, 1998). The primary objective of these studies is to discover what and how much

people know about memory that is relevant to good performance in a particular memory task (Cavanaugh and Perlmutter, 1992). Furthermore, it should be noted that Paris and Winograd referred to this category of research as self-management studies, i.e. studies of "metacognition in action" that help "organize the various aspects of problem solving", and that include "the plans that apprentices make before they address a task", "the adjustments they are making as they work on it", and "the subsequent reviews they perform" (Paris and Winograd, 1990, p.18). According to Kluwe, these studies, together with the studies of the second category that we have already analyzed, show which "is the nucleus of metacognition" (Kluwe, 1982, p. 211). In many of these studies, students were instructed to scan strategies to facilitate remembrance; in others, students were observed regarding the spontaneous use of strategies (Sanmartí, Jorba and Ibáñez, 2000; Rodríguez, 2009). The importance and relevance of the relationships between the items to be remembered have been used as much as the importance and relevance of the relationships between the types of items and the knowledge base of the students (Doudin, Martin and Albanese, 1999). In some studies, metacognitive control and metacognitive regulation have been only inferred if subjects can verbalize how their memory was facilitated by using a classification strategy (Maki, 1997; Carr and Thompson, 1995).

4. Studies examining metacognition in the educational field

More recently, a fourth category of metacognitive research has emerged, given that the central focus of the theoretical aspects of metacognition, which has dominated metacognitive research since the 1960s, has lately generated an equally important nucleus in educational applications. Many researchers, convinced of the educational importance that metacognitive theory has for teachers and students, are shifting their attention from the theoretical framework to the applied field, from the laboratory to the school classroom. For example, Borkowski and Muthukrishna argue that metacognitive theory has "considerable potential to help teachers who strive to create a class environment focused on strategic learning that is both flexible and creative" (Borkowski and Muthukrishna, 1992, p. 479).

Paris (1991) and Paris and Winograd (1990) consider it essential that "students can improve and reinforce their learning through adequate knowledge of their own thinking, how they read, write, and solve problems at school. Teachers can promote this knowledge by directly informing students about effective problem-solving strategies and discussing with them the cognitive and motivational characteristics of thought" (Paris and Winograd, 1990, p.15). Hence, this fourth category of metacognitive research includes studies that have examined the various ways in which metacognitive theory can be applied to the educational field (Genick, 1996; Calderhead, 1996; Scheneider and Pressley, 1998; Sáiz and Guijo, 2010).

These research studies have focused on a fundamental question: can the instruction of metacognitive processes facilitate learning? The researchers who have contributed to this current trend in metacognitive research have responded to this question with a strong affirmation, and the proof of this is the various studies that have been carried out. For example, as Sáiz and Guijo (2010) explain, Davidson, Deuser and Sternberg have provided answers to the issue in the general domain of troubleshooting; Dominowski in the domain of the verbalization of cognitive processes; Vye, Schwartz, Bransford, Barron, Zech, and others in the domain of science; Barberà as well as Carr and Biddlecomb in the domain of mathematics; both Castelló and Sitko in the domain of writing; Solé, and Otero and Hacker in the domain of reading; Maki in the domain of the prediction of the tests; Winne and Hadwin in the study domain; Monereo in the domain of taking notes, and Dunlosky and Hertzog in the domain of problem solving (Sáiz and Guijo, 2010, p. 87–88). All of these researchers are most likely to agree that, in order to reinforce learning more fully, students need to get to know each other and be self-aware as auto-regulatory bodies that can achieve specific goals consciously and deliberately. This is because, in general, metacognitive theories focus on: (a) the role of the conscious and executive management of their own thinking; (b) individual differences in self-assessment and management of their cognitive and learning development; (c) the knowledge and executive capacities developed through experience; and (d) constructive and strategic thinking (Acereda, 2017). Consequently, the promise of metacognitive theory is

that it focuses precisely on those characteristics of thought that can contribute to the understanding and awareness of students to be self-regulating organisms, i.e. to be agents of their own thought (Tamayo, 2006; Silva, 2004). At this point it is necessary to raise another essential question: what are the most frequently used *measures* to carry out metacognitive research? In the same way, and derived from this question, is it possible to probe what the *problems* that scholars usually encounter are when they confront this complex construct?

The state of the metacognitive measure

Without a doubt, the concept of metacognition has emerged as an important construct in two main fields: psychology and education (Brown, 1987; Campione, 1987; Brown and Campione, 1996). There is growing empirical evidence regarding the fact that metacognition is an important component of intelligence and cognition (Meier, 1994). Similarly, this evidence suggests that metacognition exerts an important influence on academic success (Borkowski, 1985; Sternberg, 1984). However, as Meichenbaum, Burland, Gruson and Cameron (1985) indicate, few research studies have examined whether the techniques commonly used to measure metacognition are adequate and sufficient, although much of the success of most research efforts depends on a reliable and valid measuring base (Ward and Traweek, 1993). Based on the enthusiastic support of researchers who consider metacognition as a key ingredient in the advancement of education in the promotion of independent learning (Spring, 1985; Tei and Stewart, 1985), and also on the basis of the 'lamentations' of Lloyd and Loper (1986) concerning the lack of a normative and standardized tool to be used by educational professionals, it is particularly important to identify a series of psychometric measures that are reliable, sound and appropriate (Meier, 1994), so that professors and psychologists can use them to control and solve the metacognitive problems of their students. Regarding this, for Mayor, Suengas and González (1993) and for McClendon (1994), there is no doubt that one of the major

problems facing research and professional practice in treating metacognition is how to detect, isolate and manipulate it. The problem arises from the intrinsic difficulty that exists in operationalizing metacognitive activity, since it does not translate directly into observable responses. In turn, they point out that "evaluating metacognition is a meta-metacognitive activity" (Mayor, Suengas and González, 1993, p. 145), an observation that helps to differentiate between evaluating cognition (cognitive activity) and evaluating metacognition (meta-metacognitive activity). On the basis of the above, we will now explain the main existing instruments used to date to evaluate metacognition. However, for the purposes of this article we will only focus on the analysis of the measures of general metacognition and self-regulating measures. Therefore, let us now turn to what the most significant instruments are for evaluating metacognition.

1) General metacognition measures

As has been pointed out throughout this article, general metacognition is commonly described as the highest-order cognitive functioning, covering such determinant aspects as control, prediction, verification of reality, and/or coordination of cognitive functioning, or awareness of the knowledge and ability to understand, control, and manipulate individual cognitive processes. In this regard, different ways of operating have been proposed to constitute significant measures of general metacognition, based on three main categories: retrospective self-reports (questionnaires), retrospective self-reports (interviews), and behavioral observations. The main instruments used to evaluate general metacognition are:

1. The Metacognitive Questionnaire (MQ) (Howard-Rose and Winne, 1993).
2. Metacognitive Inventory in Multiple Contexts (MMCI) (Allen and Armour-Thomas, 1993).
3. The Metacognitive Questionnaire (Swanson, 1990;1992).
4. The Dynamic Evaluation of Metacognition (DAM) (Clements and Nastasi, 1990).
5. Interview Methodology

6. The Metacognitive Questionnaire (Mayor, Suengas and González, 1993).
7. Learning and Study Strategies Inventori (LASSI) (Weinstein, Schulte and Palmer, 1987).
8. ACRA. Abbreviated for Students (De la Fuente and Justicia, 2003).
9. Evaluation Questionnaire of the Learning Strategies of University Students (CEVEAPEU) (Gargallo, Suárez and Pérez, 2009).

2) Self-regulating measures

This area of metacognition is the one with the fewest instruments of evaluation, either because it is the least investigated area, or because the researchers focus primarily on the use of the technique called the task of the "Tower of Hanoi" (Welsh, 1991). From our perspective, we believe that self-regulation involves planning, controlling, and adjusting cognition to achieve a goal or goals set beforehand. However, within the measures of self-regulation we can find techniques such as retrospective self-reports and behavioral self-reports. The main instruments for evaluating self-regulation are:

1. Motivated Strategies Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich, Smith, García and McKeachie, 1993).
2. State of Metacognition (O'Neil and Abedi, 1996).
3. The Structured Interview (Zimmerman and Pons, 1986).
4. The Task of the Tower of Hanoi (Welsh, 1991).
5. Regulated Learning Questionnaire (Torre, 2007).

With regard to the *problems* to be noted as to the complexity of seizing the difficult construct that metacognition implies, according to Baker (1989), the main source of evidence for a person's metacognitive skills is constituted by the verbal reports that the person provides regarding post-experimental interview items or interrogations. However, both the interview and the post-experimental questioning techniques have been questioned, depending on the possibility of providing misleading information (Afflerbach, 1995). With regard to the interview, it is often the case that there is

no correspondence between what students say they would do and what they actually do. What should be done to overcome these deficiencies? It is recommended to collect data that do not only rely on verbal self-reports; it is possible, for example, to videorecord the execution and base the interview on relevant aspects observed in the recording (e.g. contrast behavioral evidence with verbal evidence, facial expressions and gestures).

The *verbal reports* referred to by Baker (1989) are constructed using the thought-aloud technique, which consists of making a person describe his thinking while he is thinking, inviting him to speak aloud as he resolves a certain problem; it is thought that when a person tries to describe what is going on in his head when he is thinking, more thoughts are raised in it. The basic purpose pursued in using this technique is to establish the degree of consciousness that the person has about his or her own thinking, that is, the strategies he or she uses to plan, monitor and evaluate their execution through the expressions that are emitted during the task's execution. Another way to collect metacognitive information is through the *stimulated memory*: in this case a 'retrospective questionnaire' is used (Rios, 1990), the purpose of which is to record the intellectual processes that the subject is aware of during the accomplishment of the task. By means of this questionnaire, the subjects answer a set of questions immediately after the task is completed. This instrument can be used to complement immediate introspection, that is, what the subject is aware of and expresses during the execution of the task, information that is obtained using the thought-aloud technique (Mateos, 2000; Recamán, 2006). Obviously, the different systems of evaluation, on their own, lack sufficient reliability to be considered absolute instruments based on the problems presented *per se* (Maturano, Soliveres and Macías, 2002). As a result, and as some authors indicate, when evaluating metacognition it would be convenient and advisable to use several methods that do not share the same sources of error (for example, responses to an interview and evaluation of an execution of a task). The data of the execution may or may not corroborate the verbal manifesto, and this can give us an idea of both the knowledge and the practice of the strategy that the person has used (Mayor, Suengas and González, 1993; Pozo, 2003; Martínez and Useche, 2006).

Highlighting limitations in the study of metacognition implies emphasizing that cognitive activity occurs in the mind but may not imply open and observable behaviors. Observable behavior represents the product but not the processes involved in the generation of that product (Van Zile-Tamsen, 1996). Despite the fact that self-reports are widely used methods to evaluate metacognitive activity, they have serious limitations, such as: (a) students may add issues that they interpret as desirable, regardless of whether they actually connect with cognitive activity; (b) students can interpret items in a variety of ways, so comparing their responses becomes very difficult; and (c) students may be engaged in metacognitive activities that are not being evaluated in self-reports, so our understanding of metacognitive processes is limited to the activities or tasks that are captured in the inventory (Pintrich, Smith, García and McKeachie, 1991). In addition to self-reports, however, the most frequently used methods of gathering such information are interviews and verbal reports (e.g. thought-aloud protocols) and, while not having the self-reports' limitations set out above, there is an issue that worries different scholars in the field: subjects may not be aware of their mental processes and/or may not be able to explain these processes to the investigator. In addition, verbalization may interfere with the process (Miranda-Casas, Acosta-Escareño, Tárraga-Mínguez, Fernández and Rosel-Remírez, 2005). Accordingly, and although there is currently no ideal method for evaluating metacognition (Livingston, 1996; Lopera, 2011), many researchers use a combination of the various methods in order to overcome the limitations that each one of them, individually, presents (Tobias and Everson, 1996).

Some closing thoughts

It should be noted that, while it is evident that metacognition emerges in the mainstream fields of education and cognitive psychology (Bruning, Schraw and Ronning, 1995; Rodríguez, 2009; Lopera, 2011), there are various topics that are raising more doubts within the research

community today, including the measure of metacognition and the definition of the construct, among others. There is a general agreement that they all need to be investigated more deeply, while not forgetting that, as investigators, the measure is the basis for all activity. Various authors, such as Tobias (1994) and Reder and Schunn (1996), consider that the measure of the construct is the weakest aspect of metacognitive research at present. In reality, this deficiency arises from two main problems: a poorly defined construct and excessive confidence in the measures of the self-report. Because the construct is poorly defined, innovative operations of metacognition can only be conjectured (Forrest-Pressley and Waller, 1984; Schraw, 1998). Specifically, the measures of metacognition in terms of a correct enumeration of a certain number of problem-solving strategies can measure the memory of a discussion and may have nothing to do with the cognition of the student in relation to actually solving problems (Schanenflugel, Moore and Carr, 1997). In addition, many studies that attempt to do more than measure knowledge have tried to do innovative metacognitive operations, such as asking students to verbalize their cognition while they are trying to perform a task, and codify the metacognition (for example, a student who says something like "Ah… this is where I was wrong last time" would be annotated as a metacognitive response). Unfortunately, the measures of the self-reports on cognition are remarkably problematic, since they assume that students (often young students) are aware of their cognition and their metacognition; they also assume that they are accurate and impartial observers of their own cognition and metacognition, and that they can point out their observations exactly (Van Biljon, Tolmie and du Plessis, 1999). Clearly, few subjects would validate these three premises, especially in the case of younger children, and in the case of self-reports of the use of previous strategies there are still more problems, since they are more difficult to prove. A research path that needs to be fully investigated is how to measure or evaluate the metacognitive activity of one or more valid forms (Biggs and Moore, 1999; Weinert and Rainer, 1987). As we do this, we also need to promote the development of metacognition, forming students who are more conscious and autonomous in their learning, more self-regulated in their

awareness of apprentices, and more motivated by that learning that constitutes the basis of life. We also need to form more students who are able to develop learning strategies, both cognitive and metacognitive. In doing so, we cannot forget the fundamental role that the teacher has in the process of 'teaching to learn' for his/her students, guiding them to an autonomy that leads them to 'learn to learn' (Pozo, 2003; Pozo and Postigo, 2000; Lopera, 2011) and encourages the transfer of their learning to their daily life.

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Haramaya University

The Causes of Re-exam and Its Role in Improving Academic Achievement of Low Scoring Students at Haramaya University

Abstract: Re-exam is a form of supplementary assessment designed to provide a second opportunity for students who scored final course marks between 30 and 40. This study employed a survey design that involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Questionnaires, interviews and document analyses for collecting data from both primary and secondary sources were designed and executed. 315 students and 15 instructors were incorporated as a sample using stratified random and purposive sampling techniques respectively. The available sampling techniques were utilized to add 10 cluster registrar heads and 18 registrar data managers as a sample. The findings of the study showed that students' poor academic background, health problems at the time of the exam and deliberately scoring an FX grade were the main causes that exposed students to scoring FX grades. Additionally, it was found that the majority of students scored FX grades in cross-departmental courses rather than home-based courses. The findings further indicated that re-exams play a great role in helping low achieving students to improve their academic achievement, as 43% of the students who scored an FX grade in their first assessment scored C or above after a re-exam. The relationship between study year level and the number of students who scored FX grades ($r = -0.92$, $p < 0.05$) is negative and significant. The computed t-test result ($t(971) = 1.0$, $p > 0.05$) indicated that males and females do not differ significantly in their achievements in re-exams.

Keywords: academic achievement, FX grade, re-exam

1. Introduction

Assessment is a systematic practice of gathering information on the progress of students' learning by using various tools like observations, formal tests, homework, laboratory work, portfolios, field reports, exams, oral presentations and the like in order to make judgments about the extent of students' achievement (Brown & Peter, 2004; Arega et al., 2014; Haramaya University, 2015; Griffith University, 2017).

According to Haramaya University (2013) and Griffith University (2017), a grade is the result that students received on a course through a process of aggregating the marks achieved in individual assessment tasks, signifying the overall performance of the student on that specific course.

Nowadays, universities are using different grading nomenclature in order to record their students' achievements. For instance, Curtin University, Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and the University of Iceland use numeric grading systems. However, there is variation among these institutions in the point scales used. For example, Griffith University, QUT and Curtin University use a 7-point scale to certify their students (QUT, 2013; Curtin University, 2015; Griffith University, 2017). In a slightly different manner, the University of Iceland has been using an 11-point scale to record students' results (University of Iceland, 2008). But, in the grading systems of all these institutions, the highest numbers indicate honors or distinctions while the lowest numbers indicate failures. Appendix 1 summarizes the scales of each university in detail.

On the other hand, universities like Aalto, McGill, Pittsburgh, North Carolina, Louisiana State, Auckland, Alberta, and Victoria use letter grading systems to record their students' achievements. However, they are still different from the perspective of grading scales. For example, McGill University uses a 9-point scale while the University of Victoria, universities in Pakistan, and the University of Alberta use a more extended grading system which has an 11-point scale. Moreover, a 12-point scale is used by National Taiwan University, Auckland University and Aalto University. Furthermore, Louisiana State University and Trinity Western University (TWU)

use the most extensive grading system, which has a 13-point scale. Table 1 below summarizes the letter grading systems of these universities.

Table 1. Summary of letter grading systems and their numeric values in different universities

Aalto University			Louisiana State and Trinity Western Universities			National Taiwan University		Pakistan universities		McGill University		Victoria University			Alberta University		
A	4	Excellent	A+	4.3	Distinguished	A+	4.3	A	4	A	4	A+	9	Superior	A+	4	Excellent
A-	3.7		A	4		A	4	A-	3.7	A-	3.7	A	8		A	4	
B+	3.3	Good	A-	3.7		A-	3.7	B+	3.3	B+	3.3	A-	7		A-	3.7	
B	3		B+	3.3	Good	B+	3.3	B	3	B	3	B+	6	Good	B+	3.3	Good
B-	2.7		B	3		B	3	B-	2.7	B-	2.7	B	5		B	3	
C+	2.3	Satisfactory	B-	2.7		B-	2.7	C+	3.3	C+	2.3	B-	4		B-	2.7	Satisfactory
C	2		C+	2.3	Acceptable	C+	2.3	C	2	C	2	C+	3	Adequate	C+	2.3	
C-	1.7		C	2		C	2	C-	1.7	D	1	C	2		C	2	
D+	1.3	Unsatisfactory	C-	1.7		C-	1.7	D+	1.3	F	0	D	1	Minimum	C-	1.7	Failure
D	1		D+	1.3	Minimal	D	1	D	1			F	0	Failure	D+	1.3	
D-	0.7		D	1		E	0	F	0			E	0	Re-exam	D	1	
F	0.0	Fail	D-	0.7		X	0								F		
			F	0.0	Failure												

Like the University of Alberta and National Taiwan University in Table 1 above, Ethiopian universities have started to use a 12-point scale letter grading system since the curriculum of higher institutions was harmonized at a national level (MoE, 2012). Nevertheless, the Ethiopian grading system is highly similar to that of National Taiwan University except in two ways. Firstly, the E and X grades of National Taiwan University are replaced by F and FX grades in Ethiopian universities. Secondly, although National Taiwan University and Ethiopian universities use very

similar letters for grading, the numbers that represent the actual letter grade are slightly different. For instance: A+, B+ and C+ stand for 4.3, 3.3 and 2.3 at National Taiwan University. But the same grades have the respective values of 4, 3.5 and 2.5 in Ethiopian universities. Likewise, A-, B- and C- represent 3.7, 2.7 and 1.7 at National Taiwan University while they are 3.75, 2.75 and 1.75 in Ethiopian universities.

Moreover, FX is one of the grades offered to students if their final course result falls between 30 and 40. Appendix 2 has more details about the grading scales of Ethiopian higher education institutions' undergraduate programs. According to MoE (2012) and Haramaya University (2013), any students who scored an FX grade in any course is eligible to take a re-exam after attending 16 hours of tutorials within the first two weeks of a new semester. In a slightly similar way, a student who received a final course result between 45% and 49% inclusive can be eligible for a re-exam in universities such as Victoria, Notre Dame and Australian National University (University of Notre Dame, 2006; Victoria University, 2015; Australian National University, 2016).

The rule of offering a re-exam at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) is slightly different from the above universities. At QUT a student is eligible to apply for a re-exam when she/he scores a mark between 40-49% inclusive. Meanwhile, any student who scored marks either near to the pass mark or the failure mark is allowed to take a supplementary assessment at McGill University (McGill University, 2011).

Though the implementation of a re-exam seems common in many higher educational institutions, the existing literature on the area of re-exams is highly scarce. The literature that has a very slight relation to the present study has been conducted on the effectiveness of remedial education in general, and the provision of tutorial in particular, and has indicated that both tutorial and remedial education, like after school study and summer school, increased the academic achievement of students. For instance, Grave (2010) found out that devoting time to attending tutorials is positively associated with the grades of females and high ability students in both social and natural sciences but is negatively correlated with the grades of students in natural sciences if the ability of the student

is below average. Another study done by Fouche (2007) showed that attending tutorials on at least ten occasions, in addition to regular lectures, has little effect on students' academic literacy marks, but it does seem to have an influence on students' writing ability. Similarly, Jacob and Lefgren (2002), Lavy and Schlosser (2005), and Battistin et al. (2010) found out that both remedial exams and remedial education increased the academic achievement of students.

Collectively, these studies evidenced the effectiveness of remedial education, but also showed firstly that they are unable to address the causes that expose students to remedial education except for their poor academic achievement in the mainstream curriculum, and secondly, these pieces of research are limited to primary and secondary levels in scope and are not powerful enough to tell us about the situation in tertiary education.

Furthermore, the practice of re-exam has been resulting in additional burdens on instructors as well as registrars, data managers and heads. It is also becoming an administrative concern for department heads. Hence, this study was conducted to deal with the following research questions and to test hypotheses:

1. What are the major causes that expose students to an FX grade?
2. In which courses do students often score FX grades (home-based courses vs. cross-departmental courses)?
3. What is the implication of a re-exam on improving the academic achievement of students?

Hypotheses

H_o = There is no significant association between students' study year level and an FX grade.

H_1 = There is a significant association between students' study year level and an FX grade.

H_o = There is no statistically significant mean difference between male and female students in their achievements in re-exams.

H_1 = There is a statistically significant mean difference between male and female students in their achievements in re-exams.

2. Research methods

2.1. Description of the study area

The study area, Haramaya University, is located in the eastern part of Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. It is about 510 km from the capital city of the country, Addis Ababa. Formerly, it was named Alemaya College of Agriculture and was founded in 1954. On May 27, 1985 it was upgraded to university status, and due to the opening of the Faculty of Forestry in 1987 it was renamed Alemaya University of Agriculture. In 1995/96 the university launched the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Health Sciences, further diversifying the existing programs and enabling the institution to become a fully-fledged university under its new name of Alemaya University. Moreover, the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Business and Economics were launched in 2002. In 2003 and 2004 respectively, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and the Faculty of Technology were opened. Later, the institution was renamed Haramaya University in February 2006. Currently, the former faculties are organized into colleges; the university has nine colleges, one institute and one academy with a total of 289 programs of which 108 are undergraduate, 159 are postgraduate and 22 are PhD level. Hence, this study included students from all regular undergraduate programs of the 2016/17 academic year (second semester).

2.2. Research design

The main purpose of this study was to examine the role of the re-exam in improving the academic achievement of low scoring students at Haramaya University. Hence, this study employed a survey design that involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

2.3. Sources of data

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used in order to collect the required information. The primary data were collected from students, registrar office data managers, registrar heads and course instructors. Secondary data sources such as Haramaya University senate legislation (Haramaya University, 2013), Haramaya University student assessment guidelines

(Haramaya University, 2015), modularization guidelines (MoE, 2012), and department council minutes were consulted. Additionally, research articles and reports produced by the Vice President for Academic Affairs were utilized.

2.4. Sample size and sampling sechnique

The total number of students who scored FX grades in the second semester of 2009 (2016/17) was 1746. To determine an appropriate sample size, the following formula (after Krejie and Morgan 1970) was utilized:

$$S = \frac{\chi^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1)+\chi^2 P(1-P)} \qquad \chi^2=3.841$$

where **S** is the sample size, χ^2 is desired confidence, **N** is population size, **P** is population proportion (assumed to be .50), **d** is degree of accuracy (0.05).

Accordingly, the calculated size of the sample was 315. Therefore, the researcher selected 315 students as a sample by using a stratified random sampling technique. 15 instructors that offered different courses in which a higher number of students scored FX grades were also included as a sample using a purposive sampling technique. Moreover, 10 registrar heads and 18 registrar data managers were selected by using the available sampling technique. The summary of sample sizes and sampling techniques is indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of sample sizes and sampling techniques

S.N.	Respondents	Total no.	Sample size	Percent sampled	Sampling technique
1	Students	1746	315	18	Stratified random
2	Instructors	48	15	31.25	Purposive
3	Registrar heads	10	10	100	Available
4	Registrar data managers	18	18	100	Available

2.5. Tools of data collection

Questionnaires, interviews, and document analyses, described below, were the main data collecting tools used in this study.

The questionnaire, which had eight items that emphasized the causes of re-exams, was primarily adopted from existing studies (Yalew, 2003; Daniel, 2004; Belay, 2007; Myers and Grosvenor, 2011) and a pilot test was conducted to ensure its validity. A semi-structured interview was undertaken with key informants in order to supplement the data collected through the questionnaires and document reviews. It was prepared in a way that provoked participants to elicit responses regarding the role of re-exams in improving their achievement and the main causes that exposed students to FX grades.

Document analysis was the third data collecting instrument in this study. Hence, documents like summary papers prepared by the cluster registrar office of each college, which comprised the list of students who scored FX grades in the second semester of the 2009 E.C. academic year, and grades submitted by all instructors after the completion of the re-exams were reviewed. In doing this, a document reviewing data sheet was prepared in a way that shows the number of students who scored FX in each department across all colleges, and whether the re-exam helped the students to improve their academic achievement or not. Additionally, it emphasized the type of course (home-based course vs. cross-department course) in which students were often exposed to re-exams. In the data collecting sheet, variables like department, study year level, sex, ID number, academic year, semester, CGPA and grade changes were included.

2.6. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics, particularly percentiles, were used to analyze the data collected through questionnaires. Correlation was used to witness if a significant relationship exists between the year level and the number of students who scored an FX grade. A t-test was also computed to see whether males and females differed significantly in their achievements in re-exams. Data collected through interviews were transcribed accordingly in a way that contained all the detailed information given by participants. Afterwards, the data reduction took place by using codes that signified the themes drawn from the interviews and document analysis.

2.7. Ethical issues and procedure of data collection

Before proceeding to the actual data collection, crucial ethical principles were followed to guarantee the participants of the study were treated with respect and consideration. First, a letter that requested the support of participants was sought from the Department of Adult Education and Community Development. Afterwards, deans of all colleges were contacted to request permission and direct the researcher to participants for the study such as students, registrar heads and registrar data managers. After that, participants were informed about the nature of the research and maximum effort was also made to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, such as removing names that might disclose the identity of the individual.

3. Results and discussion

1. Major causes that expose students to FX grades

Table 3: Reported reasons for scoring FX grades

It No.	Reported Reason	Frequency	Percent
1	The student purposely or knowingly scored FX	40	12.7
2	Poor academic background of the student	128	40.6
3	Health problem at the time of the exam (mid, test or final) and unsatisfactory health services for the student to recover	68	21.6
4	Invigilator signed on the student's exam sheet that they were cheating	30	9.5
5	Poor cafeteria services	9	2.9
6	Being placed in a department that the student was not interested in	11	3.5
7	Inappropriate utilization of the allocated time and traditional teaching approach used by the course instructor	17	5.4
8	Unsuitable assessment method and test items used by the course instructor	12	3.8
	Total	315	100

As depicted in Table 3 above, the most frequently reported reasons for scoring FX grade in the study area were the poor academic backgrounds of the students (40.6%) and health problems at the time of the exam (21.6%). Confirming this, most of the students at the time of their interview believed that they scored FX grades as they were still unable to understand the course, even after reading for many hours, because of their poor academic background. Another group of students admitted that they were unable to score the pass mark due to health problems they faced at the time of the exam (mid, test or final) and the unsatisfactory health service offered by the university clinic to restore them to health. Unexpectedly, 12.7% of the students replied that they intentionally scored FX grades in different courses. Regarding this, one of the interviewees who received an FX grade from CAES expressed that:

> *Due to violence in our campus, I found that it was difficult for me to understand all the courses in short time and score good grade. As a result, I calculated the total marks that I earned in continuous assessment of all my courses and decided to score FX in one of my courses so that I will get sufficient time to read other courses and prepare myself well. (S_{12})*

The other student from CHMS also reported that:

> *If your CGPA of basic or core courses are below C, you will not graduate at the end. Therefore, if I score low in mid exams of basic courses and feel that my final grade will be C or even less, I always guess my total scores of continuous assessment and work to score FX in that particular course. (S_7)*

In support of the above interviewees, another irritated instructor also complained:

> *I don't agree with FX policy as it encourages students to be negligent in their reading and add burden on both the course instructor*

and registrar data managers. If students score low in either of the assessment result due to their negligence or whatever reasons and think that they will not score pass mark in that specific course, they purposely reject that course (score FX) and work hard on the remaining courses. (I_3)

Exactly the same response was forwarded by a second instructor:

Amazingly, some students write only their names, ID number and work on very few questions leaving some questions empty and score FX grade. This indicates that, students are purposely scoring FX as they earn good grades after the re-exam. (I_8)

In addition to the above reasons, 9.5% of students replied that the main reason for scoring FX grades was due to cheating at the time of the exam. Here are some of the excerpts taken directly from participants that support this finding:

My total score of continuous assessment was 35 out of 50. In final exam, the invigilator signed on my exam sheet while I was coping answers from my colleague. Once, if you get signature on exam paper, your result will be zero for that exam. As a result my total score of that course become 35 out of 100 and my final grade is unquestionably FX.

Similarly, the other interviewee from CEBS believed:

I had short note locally known as ATRERA in my pocket. While hidden seeing, the invigilator immediately caught me and signed on my exam paper. Hence, I scored zero out of 40 and my total assessment result became 38. As a result I scored FX grade.

In all the above cases, there is enough evidence to say that the poor academic background of the students themselves, cheating during the exam, deliberately scoring FX grades and health problems at the time of the exam were the major causes that exposed students to FX grades. In addition to these, a small number of participants responded that the poor cafeteria service (2.9%), being placed in a department that they were not interested in (3.5%), inappropriate utilization of the allocated time and traditional teaching approach used by the course instructor (5.4%), and unsuitable assessment methods and test items used by the course instructor (3.8%) were contributing factors to scoring FX grades. In support of these findings, Yalew (2003) found out that psychological (anxiety, fear of survival in college, lack of motivation and concentration), educational (difficulty of courses, high school or college curriculum incompatibilities), institutional (poor health services, lack of reference materials), environmental (hot weather, malaria) and financial problems were the main causes for student attrition at Bahir Dar University. In addition to the above factors, informants raised the issues of the absence of additional support in the form of tutorials, unsuitable dormitories, and a lack of information (guidance service) as other additional factors that contributed towards their low achievement (FX grades).

2. Courses in which students often score FX grades

Home-based courses (HBCs) are courses offered to students by instructors of that particular department, while cross-departmental courses (CDCs) refers to courses offered by instructors invited from other sister departments of the same college or other colleges. Table 4 below shows a detailed summary of the number of courses across all colleges of Haramaya University.

Table 4: Summary of courses in which FX grades were observed

College	No. of courses where FX grades were observed			No. of students who scored FX grades	
	HBCs	CDCs	Total	HBCs	CDCs
CAES	24	20	44	90	138
HiT	42	44	86	183	338
CCI	15	10	25	135	46
CBE	17	8	25	162	112
CNCS	9	11	20	35	88
CoL	7	1	8	22	14
CEBS	1	2	3	2	20
CVM	4	0	4	12	0
CHMS	6	16	22	29	74
CSSH	24	5	29	77	84
Sub total	149	117		751	850

Source: Cluster registrars

As indicated in Table 4 above, the total number of HBCs (149) in which students scored FX grades is greater than in CDCs (117). However, the number of students who scored FX grades in HBCs (751) is fewer than in CDCs (850). This indicates that higher numbers of students are exposed to FX grades in CDCs when compared with HBCs, even if the number of CDCs is fewer than the number of HBCs in almost all programs. Appendix 3 has details about the courses in which a majority of students scored FX grades. To find out the reason(s) why a majority of students scored FX grades in CDCs, interviews were conducted with students and they informed us that instructors offering CDCs were less willing to use continuous assessment relative to instructors offering HBCs. The second reason noted by students was the time utilization of the instructors. Here is an excerpt taken from one of the student's interviews: "Some departments change the course instructors over and over;

as a result the newly assigned instructor lately starts the course and rush to finish it within the allocated time". Thirdly, the attention of students towards CDCs and HBCs is not balanced, meaning that most of the students emphasize and spend more time on reading for HBCs than CDCs. The reason for this, according to the students, was that if the CGPA of their core course is below 2, they will not graduate at the completion of their study; since most of the CDCs are either minor or supportive, they will have little or no effect on the students' final graduation, even if they score D or C – in such courses.

3. Implication of re-exams on improving the academic achievement of low scoring students

Table 5: Summary of grade changes after re-exam

	Grade before re-exam (FX)	Grade after re-exam											
		F	FX	D	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+
Frequency	1553	239	159	170	314	401	123	64	45	17	13	6	2
Percent	100	15.4	10.2	10.9	20.2	25.8	7.9	4.1	2.9	1.1	0.84	0.39	0.13
		Failure mark				Pass mark							
		882/56.8%				671/43.2%							

As shown in Table 5 above, 882 (56.8%) of the students who sat for a re-exam were unable to score the pass mark while the remaining 671 (43.2%) scored a pass mark (grade C and above) after a re-exam. This indicates that the re-exam offers a good opportunity and plays a great role in helping students to improve their academic achievement. Additionally, students who scored a pass mark at the time of their interview reported that re-exams are very important for saving time, as the alternative is repeating the course. That means, if there was no re-exam, 43.2% of students who scored a pass mark in their re-exam would have been expected to repeat the course with other groups of students and lag behind relative

to their batch. Similarly, one of the students who scored a failure mark in their re-exam complained:

> *Re-exam is really good and it helped many students to improve their academic achievement without taking the course for the second time. The problem is that, some instructors do not provide tutorials as intended by the university. Due to this, many students are still scoring non passing marks on re-exam and I am the one who failed for the second time.*

Another student who scored a pass mark in their re-exam gave exactly the same response:

> *Thanks to re-exam, it was very difficult for me to score the current mark if there was no such principle. When I sit for the final exam on the course I scored FX, I was not in a good mood. As a result, I knowingly scored FX as it will help me to get sufficient time for further preparation.*

Another instructor who was disappointed with the principle of the re-exam informed us of the following:

> *Re-exam is burden for instructors including me. Amazingly, some students write only their names, ID number and work on very few questions leaving some questions empty and score FX grade at the end. This indicates that, re-exam is highly benefiting such students as they earn good grades at the end.*

In sum, from the data above we can say that the re-exam is becoming a good opportunity for students to improve their academic achievement, as additional tutorials and sufficient time for further reading and preparation accompany its implementation. In supporting the idea that the re-exam is helping students to improve their academic achievement, and unlike the present research finding in which more than 50% of students

who sat for a re-exam were unable to score a pass mark, Belay (2007) concluded that poorly achieving students with a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of less than 2 obtained passing grades while higher achieving students (those with a CGPA of 2 and above) received better grades than the passing grades after instructors regarded the originally submitted grades.

4. Association between students' study year level and the FX grade

As shown in Table 6 below, the Sig value 0.029 is less than 0.05 which indicates that there is a significant correlation between the study year level and the number of students who scored an FX grade. Hence, the null hypothesis that states there is no significant association between study year level and the number of students that scored an FX grade was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Moreover, the Pearson correlation value r (1825) = -0.92, p< 0.05 indicates that there is a strong correlation between the two variables. The negative sign in this value indicates that both variables are inversely related. This means that, as the study year level of the students increased, the number of students who scored FX grade decreased and vice versa.

Table 6: Correlation between year level and number of students who scored FX grade

Correlation			
		Year level	Number of students
Year level	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.916*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.029	
	N	5	1827
Number of students	Pearson Correlation	-0.916*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.029	
	N	1827	1827

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5. Male and female students' achievements in re-exams

To determine whether there was a significant difference between genders in their achievements in re-exams, a t-test was computed. The results indicated in Table 7 below showed that $t(971) = 1.0$, $p > 0.05$, which indicates that there was no significant mean difference between male and female students' achievements in re-exams. Hence, the commonly held hypothesis – that there is no statistically significant mean difference in re-exam achievement between male and female students – was accepted.

Table 7: T-test result

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper	
Achievement	Equal variances assumed	2.833	0.093	1.030	971	0.303	0.13777	-0.12477		0.40031
	Equal variance not assumed			1.037	968.977	0.300	0.13777	12286		

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Factors ranging from those related to students (their poor academic background, cheating during exams, deliberately scoring FX), instructors (inability to use the allocated time effectively, following traditional teaching approaches, inappropriate assessment methods and items) and institutions (insufficient health services, cafeteria-related problems) were found to be the main causes for students scoring low grades (FX). Therefore, it would be better if the following suggestions are considered for the future:

1. Students that purposely score an FX grade ought to be identified, as more students might consider the advantages of scoring an FX grade and become negligent in their reading and exam preparation.
2. Instructors should provide tutorials before allowing their students to take a re-exam as per the guidelines of the university to enhance the pass rate of students in re-exams.
3. Instructors should be required to properly utilize the time granted for specific courses and apply other active learning approaches rather than fixing their instruction on traditional lecture methods.
4. Instructors should apply continuous assessment and follow the principles of test construction while preparing exam items.
5. The management body of the university should work further on ensuring the continuation of tutorials on selected courses for lower achievers from the beginning of the first semester.
6. The management body of the university should discuss and develop clear guidelines for the implementation of re-exams. The possible areas of discussion could be incentives for additional tasks (tutorials), the standard of items in re-exams, the exact time for offering re-exams and reporting grades.

Appendix 1: Point scales used to certify students' achievement in different higher education institutions

		Name of Institution		
		University of Iceland	QUT and Griffith University	Curtin University
Descriptions about scales	Total points used in the scale	11	7	7
	Numbers used in point scale	0-10	1-7	F, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
	Pass mark indicators	5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10	4,5,6 and 7	5-10
	Failure mark indicators	0, 1, 2, 3, and 4	1, 2, and 3	F
	Honors	7.25-8.99 – 1st class honors 6.0-7.24 – 2nd class honors	5.0-5.99 – 3rd class honors 6 – distinction 7 – high distinction	7 – distinction 8, 9, 10 – high distinction

Appendix 2: Grading scale of ethiopian higher education institutions' undergraduate programs

Raw mark interval	Corresponding number grade	Corresponding letter grade	Status description	Class description
[90, 100]	4.0	A+	Excellent	First class with high distinction
[85, 90)	4.0	A		
[80, 85)	3.75	A-		
[75, 80)	3.5	B+	Very good	First class with distinction
[70, 75)	3.0	B		
[65, 70)	2.75	B-	Good	First class
[60, 65)	2.5	C+		Second class
[50, 60)	2	C	Satisfactory	
[45, 50)	1.75	C-	Unsatisfactory	Lower class
[40, 45)	1	D	Very poor	
[30, 40)	0	FX	*Fail	Lowest class
<30	0	F	Fail	

Source: MoE (2012)

Appendix 3: Courses in which a majority of students scored FX grades

College	Course Code	Course Title	Dept. of Student	Dept. of the Owner of the Course	Year Level	No. of Students
CAES	EnLa2012, EnLa2014	Basic writing skills	Animal Science, REBD, Plant Science	English		28
	NaRM1023	Soil and water conservation	NaRM	NaRM		32
	EnSc2111	Environmental microbiology	Environmental Science	Environmental Science	2	13
	PLSC2061	Agroclimatology	Plant Science		1	13
	ABVM0322	Principles of accounting	ABVM	Accounting	1	13
CCI	Stat1012	Introduction to probability theory	Statistics	Statistics	1	28
	Stat2102	Time series analysis	Statistics	Statistics	2	20
CSSH	Phil102	Introduction to logic	English, Tourism, A/Oromo	History	1	42
	EnLa2012, EnLa1012	Basic writing skills	Journalism + NN	English	1	32
CBE	ACFN3202	Principles of accounting II	Accounting	Accounting	2	33
	Cact3111	Principles of accounting I	Cooperatives	Accounting	1	29
	COMP-M1043	Basic computer skills	Management	Computer Science	1	27
		Statistics for management	Management	Statistics	1	21
	AcFn3202	Principles of accounting II	Economics	Accounting	2	20
CHMS	NURS2071	Professional nursing ethics	Nursing	Nursing	1	12
CEBS	Phil102	Introduction to logic	SNIE	History	1	15
CoL						
CNCS						
HiT	Phil1031, Phil1013, Phil1041	Logic and reasoning skills				
SSA						

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REPORTS & REVIEWS

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María Rosa Lojo
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Más allá de las tumbas: los otros héroes de Ernesto Sábato. Reseña del libro de Marcin Kazmierczak: *El narcisismo y la resiliencia en la obra de Ernesto Sábato*, editado por Academia del hispanismo

"Obra abierta" como pocas, en el sentido de Umberto Eco, el denso corpus literario de Ernesto Sábato sigue estimulando la diversidad de lecturas en la nueva generación de críticos, a la que Marcin Kazmierczak realiza un importante aporte con este trabajo.

Aunque los lectores descubrirán sobradamente sus méritos por sí mismos, quisiera destacar algunos de ellos en estas palabras que pretenden ser, sobre todo, una bienvenida al núcleo de textos merecidamente antologables en el ya vastísimo corpus de la bibliografía sobre Sábato.

Kazmierczak apunta con sagacidad hacia una de las características de esa "obra abierta" sabatiana que la perspectiva del tiempo ha hecho evidente: la capacidad de anticiparse, en sus símbolos literarios y sus reflexiones ensayísticas, a fenómenos sociales y a corrientes de pensamiento en incipiente gestación que solo se mostrarían claramente años después.

Anticipatorio fue (como bien recuerda el autor de este libro), el diagnóstico que Sábato realiza en *Hombres y engranajes* (1952) sobre los pies de barro de la Modernidad occidental y sus ídolos, su crítica del mito del Progreso y de la deshumanización traída por la hipertrofia del paradigma cientificista y tecnolátrico. No es casual tampoco que algunos críticos (Norma Carricaburo, Karl Kohut) hayan visto en *Sobre héroes y tumbas* (1951) el germen de una sensibilidad ya alerta hacia el surgimiento de la

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postmodernidad. O que en *Abaddón, el Exterminador* (1974) la denuncia de un terrorismo de Estado que ya existía en la Argentina, durante el período de poder del Ministro José López Rega, termine proyectándose con intensa y múltiple irradiación simbólica hacia la devastadora tragedia que iba a vivirse en el inmediato porvenir, a partir de la instalación de la Dictadura militar en 1976. El análisis de la impotencia experimentada como culpa por el personaje escritor (alter ego del autor) en esta última novela, motiva una interesante reflexión de Kazmierczak, que, a través de la recurrente identificación simbólica de "Sabato" con la rata o el murciélago, encuentra allí el ícono kafkiano de una antropología degradada, en un contexto de envilecimiento y terror colectivos.

Los dos conceptos centrales del presente trabajo: "narcisismo" y "resiliencia" no fueron formulados nunca con esos nombres en la obra de Sábato. Pero resultan perfectamente legítimos desde la original lectura que realiza Kazmierczak. Si el de "narcisismo" (fundamental en el psicoanálisis freudiano) tiene una antigua historia, tanto filosófica como artística, el de "resiliencia" es, en cambio, de acuñación más reciente, y se traslada del campo de la física de los materiales a la llamada "psicología positiva": "al realizar su particular exploración artística de los personajes resilientes, [Sábato] se adelanta al desarrollo de la propia psiquiatría y la psicología, que empezarán a poner énfasis en las fuerzas positivas escondidas en la interioridad del ser humano solamente en las últimas décadas del siglo XX". Sin dejar de advertir y analizar los profundos vínculos de la obra de Sábato con el Existencialismo, con el Surrealismo, con el Romanticismo, en su exploración de los desgarramientos extremos de la condición humana, Kazmierczak encuentra asimismo otra línea (designada por algunos críticos anteriores, siguiendo al mismo Sábato, como la "metafísica de la esperanza"), encarnada por una serie de personajes caracterizables, según la nueva terminología, como "resilientes" o "resistentes" (término que sí aparece en la obra sabatiana, pero recién en su penúltimo libro de ensayo). Hortensia Paz, el camionero Bucich, Juancho Bassán, son, entre otros, ejemplos conspicuos de este "ejército resiliente", pacíficamente heroico, que neutraliza el mal y la crueldad de la vida desde una ética del cuidado y la solidaridad. "Maestros", "testigos",

"amigos" (también, en algún sentido, "padres" y "madres"), son roles que ellos asumen, permitiendo la metanoia, es decir, el cambio, el vuelco, hacia una nueva concepción y práctica vital por parte de los seres sufrientes y extraviados que se cruzan en su camino (como Martín del Castillo).

La existencia (y resistencia) de personajes semejantes balancea la teología trágica de las concepciones gnóstico-maniqueas, o la antropología (para Kazmierczak también trágica) del psicoanálisis, que permean la narrativa de Sábato a través de otros personajes, como Juan Pablo Castel, Fernando Vidal Olmos, o el "Sabato" de *Abaddón, el Exterminador*. Todos ellos atrapados en la cárcel del Yo, pendulares entre la "autoapoteosis" y la "autoaversión", incapaces de abrirse al prójimo como alteridad fecunda, como verdadero par e interlocutor. La fijación sobre el Yo, la exhibición/ocultamiento de ese Yo en las más variadas autofiguraciones y máscaras, es uno de los "temas de nuestro tiempo" (este tiempo de redes sociales como cadenas de espejos que ahora vivimos) al que la intuición narrativa de Sábato pareciera haberse adelantado.

Otro aporte notable de este estudio es el reconocimiento de *La sonata a Kreutzer*, de León Tolstoi, como un intertexto fundamental de *El túnel* (la comparación se establece en un fino y pormenorizado análisis), así como un necesario llamado de atención sobre la incidencia de la cosmovisión literaria eslava (y de la rusa, en particular) en la obra de Ernesto Sábato, lector y admirador del mencionado Tolstoi, de Pushkin, de Dostoyevski, de Chéjov, del filósofo Nicolás Berdiaev, entre otros. Como bien advierte Kazmierczak, el estudio de este nexo es aún una asignatura pendiente de la crítica especializada.

El presente libro se detiene también en textos tardíos de Sábato escasamente frecuentados por la crítica literaria (*Antes del fin*, *La resistencia*), que, sin embargo, tuvieron alto impacto en el público lector (sobre todo el más joven) y que tienden puentes hacia toda su obra anterior. Hasta cierto punto, como lo demuestra Kazmierczak, podría advertirse en ellos un giro evolutivo hacia un pensamiento cada vez más afín (aun con sus dudas y violentas tensiones) a la "metafísica de la esperanza", hacia la aceptación de una oscuridad que no es ya la infernal, sino la del misterio de la existencia.

El buceo en lo biográfico (sobre todo en la etapa final de la vida del autor), sin reducir el significado de los textos a este sustrato, contextualiza y esclarece las posturas del último Sábato, en una aproximación, basada en entrevistas y testimonios, que resulta luminosa. Desde este ángulo, la actividad del novelista como presidente de la CONADEP implicaría la asunción, en su propia vida, de la actitud del resiliente: aquel que acepta una plena responsabilidad, un arriesgado compromiso con el otro, aun dentro de las circunstancias más difíciles.

Así, *El narcisismo y la resiliencia en la obra de Ernesto Sábato* provee herramientas para pensar la obra de Sábato desde perspectivas menos frecuentadas. Crítico aún joven por su edad cronológica, pese a sus muchos pergaminos académicos, Marcin Kazmierczak sabe recoger el mensaje que el escritor quiso dirigir especialmente a la juventud. Quizá porque Sábato mismo nunca aceptó renunciar a cierta mirada insobornable e intensa que suele acompañar a esa edad inaugural, sin las "resignaciones" (o cobardías cínicas) que algunos asocian con la experiencia, con la adultez.

Desde esa mirada, sostenida en su ancianidad, elige otros héroes, capaces de superar las tumbas, la tierra arrasada de la Historia, con la (re)construcción cotidiana de los resilientes.

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María Rosa Lojo is an Argentinian writer and researcher. She directs two research projects and offers a doctoral seminar at the Universidad del Salvador. She is a longstanding contributor to the Literary Supplement of *La Nación* in Buenos Aires. In addition, she coordinated the international team of researchers that put together the critical edition of Ernesto Sabato's *Sobre héroes y tumbas* (*On Heroes and Tombs*) for the archival collection at UNESCO. She has been invited to represent Argentina at international fairs and congresses, and also serves as a juror in literary competitions.

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A Report of the International Scientific Conference "Word in Education. Central Role of Narration in the Educational Context", Barcelona, January 25–26, 2018

On January 25–26, 2018 in Barcelona, Spain, Abat Oliba CEU University hosted the 5th International Scientific Conference "Word in Education", whose main topic this year was the central role of narration in the educational context. International specialists from areas concerned with pedagogy, psychology, philosophy, philology, theory of literature, education and business studies took part in the discussions and round tables, which were divided into four research areas: philosophy, ethics and theory of education; literature and literacy in education; psychology in education; and narrative and biographical methods in education.

The conference has grown under the impulse of the "Family, Education and Inclusive School" (TRIVIUM) research group, created in 2011 and recognized since 2018 by the local government, the Generalitat de Catalunya, as a consolidated research group. Coordinated by Dr. Marcin Kazmierczak, the principal researcher, its members are full-time professors in Abat Oliba CEU University's Department of Education and Humanities and Department of Psychology: Dr. Amparo Acereda, Dr. Laura Amado, Dr. Maria Laura Giordano, Prof. Clara Guilera, Dr. María Teresa Signes and Prof. Cintia Carreira. The aim of TRIVIUM is to study the personal growth and education of human beings from different perspectives such as the philosophical, the literary, the educational and the psychological, amongst others.

The conference, sponsored by Santander Bank, was planned as the continuation of a series of conferences initiated at Abat Oliba CEU

University by Dr. Marcin Kazmierczak and other members of TRIVIUM. The previous conferences were held in Barcelona in 2012, 2013 and 2015 and in Krakow (Poland) in 2016. The 2015, 2016 and 2018 conferences involved the cooperation of the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, represented by the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Krzysztof Biel SJ, and the University of Namur (Belgium), represented by Dr. Evelyne Charlier, Head of the Department of Education and Technology.

Noticing the urgent need for good practice in our current times of crisis, the full scope of educational implications needed to be examined. For this reason, research has been done in order to look into questions regarding, for instance, new pedagogical insights into primary, secondary and university teaching, good teaching habits, literature and literacy as tools of self-knowledge and self-improvement, the awareness of the potential of narration in psychological practice and business enterprises, and moral upbringing through arts and literature. These are some of the ideas that have nourished the aforementioned series of conferences that have been held throughout the last seven years.

The first day of this year's conference was opened by the inaugural address of Dr. David Carr, Professor of Ethics and Pedagogy at the University of Birmingham and Professor Emeritus at the University of Edinburgh. He underlined the role of narrative, knowledge and moral character in art and literature, focusing his speech on the existence of proved moral stories than can and must easily serve as sources to access moral knowledge. His suggestions were extremely interesting and led to a debate among the participants in which many questions were asked of each other. It should be pointed out that Professor Carr was one of the promoters of the Knightly Virtues Programme, devised by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues and awarded with a John Templeton Foundation grant. The programme was aimed at enhancing virtue literacy in primary students through classical stories, such as Joan of Arc or Don Quixote, and it became so successful that some primary schools included it in their school curriculum after the implementation phase of the project was over.

Theoretical sessions regarding the philosophy of education were tackled by Dr. Conrad Vilanou, Dr. Marcin Baran, Dr. Dominika Ruiszkiewicz,

Dr. Sylwia Wojciechowska, Dr. Agustina Lacarte, Dr. Robin Galhac, Dr. Alberto Filipe Araújo, Prof. José Augusto Ribeiro and Prof. Lola Esteva, amongst others. They considered the development of man's modern era exemplified in novels by authors such as Sándor Márai or Daniel Defoe, the juxtaposition between narrative identity and contemplative identity from an educative context, some outlines on the ethical formation of teachers and some insights into didactic narration and narration as the main access to moral sources. All of them evidenced a thorough understanding of those issues, which were in all cases intricated with a practical dimension. This connection between theory and practice was one of the primary goals of the conference, which was successfully achieved due to the expertise and commitment of the researchers and participants. Besides, the audience was captivated by the stimulating network of presenters.

Moderated by Dr. Marcin Kazmierczak, Professors Dr. Marcin Baran, Dr. David Carr, Dr. Francisco Esteban and Dr. Marta Gràcia discussed "how to train strong and happy teachers who would be able to 'generate' strong and happy students capable of facing the challenges of the society in crisis" at a round table event. It was a great opportunity to stress the skills and competences which they had experienced in schools as well as some abilities teachers should possess. In addition, this comfortable atmosphere allowed the audience to take part once again in a great debate, mainly because of the assumption that was pointed out by Dr. Francisco Esteban: any good teacher must demonstrate high levels of style in his or her being, which should result in good teaching and therefore impact positively on his or her students.

Other sessions during the day underlined the profound potential of resilience and other virtues such as fortitude or temperance. From a classical standpoint that pursues a return to the classical notions of truth, goodness and beauty, a broad variety of literary examples were examined and shed new light on fairy tales and short stories meant to be read by children and adults. Not without reason, resilience is said to be one of the best assets to cope with challenges and adversity. Dr. María Teresa Signes, Dr. Miguel Ángel Belmonte, Dr. Mariano Bártoli, Prof. Ricardo Coronas, Dr. Jaime Vilarroig, Dr. Maria Turu, Dr. Liliane Machuca, Prof. Josep

Maria Giralt, Dr. José María Forment, Prof. Teresa Pueyo and Prof. María Jesús Ayuso were responsible for this upgrade and enticed one another as well as the audience to look at stories with different eyes so as to rediscover them.

On the second day of the conference, the morning sessions addressed questions related to the application of storytelling in family enterprises, which Dr. Alfonso Freire, Dr. Carmen Ruiz, Dr. Joaquín Solana, Prof. Federico Briozzo, Dr. Swen Seebach and Dr. Fernando Álvarez remarked upon by means of practical case studies. Furthermore, in terms of narrative and biographical methods in education, Dr. Amparo Acereda evoked the significant meaning of words in the updating of self-knowledge. This line was followed by Dr. Maria Laura Giordano, who suggested that words have always been a way of seduction, used even in religious traditions.

Likewise, the keynote speaker Dr. Marta Gràcia, Professor of Developmental Psychology at the University of Barcelona, and her research group presented their research findings on communicative and linguistic competence in initial teacher training and teacher decision making, which have been tested in a pilot study. Each of their papers delivered one key point in their assumptions, thus shaping as a whole a practical and useful instrument to assess linguistic interactions in the classroom. In the next session, enriched by psychologists and secondary teachers, there were debates on the role of visual narratives through the use of cameras when it comes to the overcoming of dramatic experiences, as Dr. Rebeca Pardo stressed, and the fostering of engagement in secondary students, upon which research was presented by Dr. Marta Oporto, Dr. María Salud Porras and Dr. Marina Fernández.

The Vice-Rector of Research and International Relations of Abat Oliba CEU University, Dr. Jesús Montes, conducted the closing ceremony greeting and thanked the participants who attended both days of the conference from French, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish universities. He expressed his gratitude to the Organizing Committee, emphasizing that within two days, in addition to the inaugural address, the keynote paper and the round table, more than thirty papers had been presented. Lastly,

he encouraged the Scientific Committee to continue broadening the leitmotiv of the conference, the word in education, into new and interdisciplinary research areas.

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Cintia Carreira Zafra is a PhD candidate in Humanities at CEU International Doctoral School and a Research Assistant in the Faculty of Education and Humanities at Abat Oliba CEU University. Her research areas are concerned with the relations between moral education, character education and virtue literacy. She also explores the notions of literary education and reading promotion, concretely analyzing the didactic applications of C.S. Lewis' fiction books.