

## ”EL SUEÑO DE RAZÓN PRODUCE MONSTRUOS”, OR DECONSTRUCTING THE CURRICULUM OF PHILOSOPHY<sup>1</sup>

In one of his best-known works, the eighteenth century Spanish painter Francisco de Goya y Lucientes portrays a humanistic scholar who has fallen asleep over the desk, beside him a blank sheet of paper and a pen that has slipped from his hand.<sup>2</sup> All around him the creatures of the night begin to gather as the sleep of this man of letters gives them a chance to overcome the otherwise vigilant Reason. The picture can be seen as an Enlightenment painter’s way of metaphorically warning us of the dangers of irrationality. The lapse of Reason gives room for sleep, emotions, instincts, and other such states of mind that can bring forth unconscious and uncontrollable forces. The only way to stay safe is by strengthening our vigilance and our ability to practice our rational faculty. This is what the usual English translation of the name of the picture tells us: *the sleep of reason produces monsters*. Thus it has often been used as a pictorial testimony of the need to defend the rational spirit of Enlightenment today.<sup>3</sup>

The original Spanish name of the etching, however, opens up a possibility for a different translation. In the phrase *El sueño de razón produce monstruos*, the word ”sueño” means not only ”sleep” but also ”dream.” Thus there is a chance of reading it as ”the *dream* of reason produces monsters.”

1. Originally published in *The Internationalization of Curriculum Studies*. Edited by Donna Trueit, William E. Doll Jr., Honguy Wang & William Pinar. New York: Peter Lang, 2003, 337–357.
2. The etching is *Caprichos 43*. It is commonly thought that the man pictured is Goya himself.
3. For instance, the etching is used quite frequently in book covers to deliver this idea or to represent the dangers of irrationality. A case in point is an anthology published by the New York Academy of Sciences and called *The Flight from Science and Reason* (1996). The anthology is written mainly by scientific realists, and it is aimed against the ”postmodern relativists” in order to ”defend science from its irrational critics”. Within such academic battlefields today, as in the so called ”Sokal-affair,” the debate on the value and meaning of rationality and the threat of irrationality and relativism seems to be very much alive.

Having seen some of the monstrous things that can be produced by the most rigorous use of reason and the rational design of utopian societies, we might now be more willing to consider this alternative translation and interpretation. The dreams of rational control and planning, of scientific and technological progress that would be accompanied by moral advancement, all promises of the Enlightenment Reason, may now in part seem like a bad dream, after the havoc of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Reason was not able to deliver the dream nor redeem the reality. Furthermore, we cannot even say that this happened just because reason lost to irrationality at decisive points in history. Reason, logic, and sciences, as means or instruments, were very much part of the destruction, in fact, a fundamentally important part, regarding the scope and measure of the devastation.<sup>5</sup>

### THE CULT OF REASON AND DUALISMS IN PHILOSOPHY

This is not to say that rational planning, design and utopia are inevitably and inherently always wrong. In fact, it is impossible to maintain the modern society, with the huge complexity of its institutions and the mass of its citizens, without the benefits of rational, bureaucratic planning, and it would be a bare and hapless world where utopia in the form of hope in transcending the present institutions would not exist. The point is, rather, that the modes of rationality in the Western intellectual history have tended to be more one-sided and less neutral, universal, and objective than were commonly thought.

The horrible material violence that the twentieth century witnessed is partly intertwined with the symbolic violence embedded in certain aspects of the modern modes of rationality. In this case, it is particularly the tendency to construct meanings through binary dynamics that I have in mind. The modern dream of Reason, not only the cultivation of rationality but at times the cult of rationality, is deeply attached to many dualisms within the Western thought, apart from the obvious one of Reason set against its Other,

4. As the Swedish historian Peter Englund (1999) notes in the introduction of his book, we have just witnessed a century during which more than 180 million people were killed because of the actions of other human beings – more than during all the previous centuries of humanity put together.
5. A forceful testimony of this is Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963/1994), where she, through reporting the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel, analyses the bureaucratic and thoroughly rational mindset behind the Holocaust.

non-reason or irrationality. These dualisms go back much further than just the last 400–500 years of so-called modernity, or the 250 years of the Enlightenment, although these have certainly manifested some of the most rigid binary thinking in European intellectual history.

We can express many of these dualisms through the problematics of the mind and body. René Descartes, the thinker who laid the foundations of modern philosophy with his answer to another French skeptic, Michel de Montaigne (as the famous version by Vincent Descombes has it)<sup>6</sup>, is well known for his strict formulation of the mind/body dichotomy. Descartes wanted to ensure the possibility of absolute truth and knowledge. Because of this, he had to draw pure rational thinking strictly apart, on the one hand from the senses, the testimony of which is always suspect, and on the other hand from all the irrational forces and emotions capable of distorting rational, deductive proceedings. He did this by linking epistemology to metaphysics, that is, by suggesting that soul (*res cogitans*) alone was to be purely rational whereas body (*res extensa*) was the source of irrationality, including senses and sentiments. Mind/soul is the cause of itself; it is self-identical and self-present. Even more, it is I, it is my Self, the one I ultimately am. Body is of its own substance, of course, but as far as the Self is concerned, its being and meaning are secondary. It is not really I; it is something I have, something I happen to own although the case could be otherwise. Mind/soul is essential, body accidental.

It is interesting how this original division into reason and non-reason starts to attract other kinds of dualisms. We can focus on sexual difference as an example of this process. In the version by Descartes, the soul is sexless, of course, and sexuality and sexual difference belong to the material world and take place in the body. This should have meant that there was no essential difference between rational abilities of the sexes, and thus gender should make no difference in our acceptance as participants in the public use of reason. However, as we all know, this has not been the case.

Obviously, there has always been a strong tendency to equate rationality with maleness and irrationality and passions with femaleness all along the history of philosophy (e.g., the Pythagoreans, Plato, early Christian thought, Bacon, Hegel). However, as Genevieve Lloyd has pointed out, even the arguments like the one by Descartes, which point to the sexlessness of the soul and reason, have time and again ended up reproducing and strengthening the ideology of their maleness (e.g. Aristotle, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas before Descartes).<sup>7</sup>

6. Descombes 1980.

7. Lloyd 1993.

This is due to at least two different reasons. First, real differences in social positions and very different chances for the public use of reason have existed in history and still exist in present societies; therefore, these create gendered expectations on the role of reason and passions (and public and private spheres) in the lives of real women and men. Secondly, because the sexlessness and pure ethereality of the soul are set against the material and natural sexuality of the body, which has throughout our Western history of ideas been associated with female symbolism:

“The idea of the sexless soul coexists with the maleness of reason, despite the appearance of tension. For the sexlessness of the soul is set over against the sexual difference which belongs with body – the material aspects of being human which have often been conceptualized as feminine. In the complex configuration of sexual symbolism with the ideas of reason, which has been a feature of western philosophy, the sexless soul takes on a shadowy maleness, in opposition to female sex difference.”<sup>8</sup>

This would be a pressing issue even if reason had something to do only with our abilities and dispositions in reasoning and rationality. As we know, there is more to it:

“There is more at stake in assessing our ideals of Reason than questions of objectivity or relativity of truth. Reason has figured in western culture not only in the assessment of beliefs, but also in the assessment of character. It is incorporated not just into our criteria of truth, but also into our understanding of what it is to be a person at all, of the requirements that must be met to be a good person, and of the proper relations between our status as knowers [as choosers, as decision-makers, also in the ethical perspective] and the rest of our lives.”<sup>9</sup>

This normative function of the dualisms becomes very clear with the Pythagorean table of opposites (from the sixth century BCE): “limit/unlimited, odd/even, one/many, right/left, male/female, rest/motion, straight/curved, light/dark, good/bad, square/oblong.”<sup>10</sup>

Because the sexual difference functions here only as an example of a problematics with a larger scope, I present the following chains of signifiers to exemplify the discursive field within which the rational subject and potentially autonomous ethical agency has often been given meaning, through a binary mechanism of exclusion that produces dualisms.

8. Lloyd 1993, xi.

9. Lloyd 1993, xviii.

10. Lloyd 1993, 3.

On one side we have:

On the other we have:

Reason Soul (Mind) Form Self, Identity Culture Virtues Sexlessness Universal, Eternal Free Public Norm, Normal (Western, European, male, mature)	Irrationality Body Matter Alterity, Difference Nature Passions, Vices Sexuality Contextual, Temporal Bound Private Anomaly, Abnormal (non-Western, foreign, female, immature)
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My point is obvious: it is this discursive field with the dualistic motives behind it that must be deconstructed if we are to avoid the symbolic violence inherent in many modern conceptualizations of rationality. And this is a task that is tied to the question of the curriculum and instruction of philosophy of being either empowering and transformative or repressive and reproductive.

- systematic scholasticism (Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham) and excludes Medieval mystics (Meister Eckhart, Angelus Silesius, Teresa of Ávila)
- modern rationalists and empiricists (Descartes, Hobbes, Locke) and excludes renaissance humanists and skeptics (Erasmus, Vives, Montaigne).

### THE CURRICULUM AND THE CANON OF PHILOSOPHY

What is at stake here, for me, is that sometimes, as a teacher of philosophy and as a lecturer to future teachers of philosophy, I feel like the divide described above is what the curricula and textbooks expect me to teach. With this, I am referring to the circumstance that "philosophy" as a cultural institution, a social practice, and a guide to individual "critical and reflective thinking" has presented itself as firmly standing within the first of these two signifying chains. Saying so, we have to be careful. I am by no means claiming that *all philosophy* embodies these dualisms and engenders similar inclusions and exclusions. The point is that the canon of the "classics" in the history of philosophy often does so, and this canon is almost hegemonic in the standard curriculum. Moreover, decisions on "what philosophy is" are often guided by this canon.

A short look at the canon will serve for now. The answer to the question "who will count as very important philosophers" more often than not includes:

- the great Athenian rationalists (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) and excludes Roman rhetoricians (Cicero, Seneca)

The given picture of the established canon of philosophy can easily be verified by looking at any popular textbook, any general dictionary, or any concise history of philosophy. In all the cases above, the canon prefers those who build the core of philosophy stressing the rigid ideal of rationality instead of providing alternatives that would problematize the distinctness of reason from passions and sentiments. This dominance of the canon has thus streamlined the picture of philosophy overall, and by excluding certain styles, forms, and goals has further petrified the dichotomy between reason and non-reason with all the accompanying polarizations.

In defense of the traditional canon of philosophy it can be argued that these dualisms, and the different ways of describing reason and philosophical thought with dualistic motives, many times take place only in the margins of philosophical works. Thus they are not essential in understanding the basic arguments or philosophical conceptions in question. In addition, it has been claimed that the other dualisms (like male/female) derive from the particular contemporary social and cultural matrix within which the philosophers live, and from which they cannot detach themselves. However, these arguments, appealing to the irrelevancy of certain ideologically loaded conceptions or to the "unfortunate" effects of social and historical contexts on philosophy, in no way undermine the fact that these

conceptions have had a strong influence on how the ideas of skillful and rational thinking, ethical deliberation, virtuous person, and good life, etc., have been constructed in our culture. Neither do the arguments remove the fact that the curriculum of philosophy still carries the same dualisms and in- and exclusions within itself.

Of course these dualisms are often also metaphorical, as has been pointed out, but this does not make them any more trivial or ineffective. This is exactly what the poststructuralist and postmodern theory intends to make us less naive about. Even our philosophical convictions are necessarily constructed in a metaphorical language, and to believe that we are somehow able to overcome this obstacle by purifying our language is only apt to fool us and to bury us once more under the same binary dynamics discussed above. For this reason, we should perhaps be more interested in rhetoric than logic, more willing to look at the consequences than the origins. The curriculum of philosophy should be analyzed discursively, as an ideologically bound cultural and linguistic construction that will always lean towards either the reproduction or the transformation of society. Even when the intentions are good, we should keep in mind that the outcomes matter in the end.

#### CURRICULUM STUDY AS DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Philosophy has always been one of the prestigious subjects in European upper secondary school curricula. In some of the most prominent EU countries – especially France, Germany, Italy, and Spain – philosophy enjoys a high esteem both in the culture generally, and in school curricula particularly. In addition, philosophy has a significant influence on the broader curriculum due to the fact that it is closely connected to the curriculum and instruction in the so-called critical thinking skills, ethics, and the history of ideas (seen to be an important part of learning the European "cultural heritage"). In many European schools, the "critical thinking" skills are among the objectives both of ethics/religion and philosophy/human studies, while "the history of ideas" forms a part of the core content of the curricula of both history and philosophy. All of these are part of the curriculum's contribution to the formation of the students' character and their construction of a learned and refined "worldview," which is often seen as one of the most important general formative tasks the school has. Thus, in the curriculum framework of many school systems in Europe, the teaching of ethics, philosophy, the history of (Western) ideas,

and the basic skills of critical thinking form a kind of "curricular cluster" both in form and content.

My starting point is the situation in Finland. Philosophy has traditionally been studied at the universities and art colleges where one or two courses are compulsory for most students. Big change occurred during the 1990s when philosophy became one of the compulsory subjects in the senior secondary school (high school/college) and in vocational polytechnic curricula of certain fields. In addition, European philosophy dominates the curriculum of ethics (or "philosophy of life", as it is sometimes called), which is a compulsory subject for all those primary and secondary school students who do not take courses in religion. This gives philosophy a wider audience and greater importance than its curricular status as a separate subject matter might suggest.

In Finland, institutions and teachers have the possibility of designing the curriculum fairly freely, but a normative national framework curriculum is still provided (the latest in 1994)<sup>11</sup>. Although the framework does not define teaching methods and is quite open regarding the contents (and is in this sense decentralized and progressive as is stated in the framework itself), it still defines a certain overall range of basic values, content areas, and general aims (a bit like the German *Rahmenplan* although in much lighter form). The National Board of Education framework sets the content range for the very important national matriculation exam. Thus it definitely weighs upon and guides teachers' curricular deliberation. More interestingly, however, I would claim that the objectives and the standards included in the NBE framework curriculum are a representative model of the established curriculum of philosophy almost everywhere that European philosophy is taught. Thus we have a plausible picture of what is considered philosophy or the basics of philosophical thought more generally in the Western culture and school system.

It is also essential to note how European philosophy has spread out all over the world in formal schooling, even more effectively, in fact, than Judeo-Christian religious ideas, for instance. A couple of years ago UNESCO conducted a survey to examine the state of teaching philosophy in its member countries and found out that almost everywhere Western philosophy and philosophers had surpassed the local traditions of thought in the formal school system.<sup>12</sup> When asked to list the most important philosophers in the curriculum, the compiled result of all the answers was tellingly unanimous: Plato (72 entries), Aristotle (71), Kant (68), Descartes (66), Hegel (64),

11. National Board of Education 1994.

12. Droit 1995.

and so on.<sup>13</sup> This creates a real need to critically question the established form of the canon and the curriculum of philosophy.

My approach could roughly be described as "discourse analysis," although I do not claim to be reporting empirical research but, rather, presenting some preliminary observations of a phenomenon that, in my opinion, deserves closer analysis. My intention is not to take part in or try to resolve any debates around the general value of philosophy in curriculum or the value of rationality in philosophy. My goal, a metaphilosophical one, is to question the effects of the established and canonized philosophical discourse in school curriculum. I see this approach as compatible with notions derived from the so-called "reconceptualization" of curriculum theory: "...from curriculum as exclusively school materials to curriculum as symbolic representation. [...] We can say that the effort to understand curriculum as symbolic representation defines, to a considerable extent, the contemporary field."<sup>14</sup> I understand discourse analysis as an attempt to closely read documents that function as "speech acts" within some particular discursive field and to describe the functions, contexts, discursive prerequisites, and effects of these. It becomes deconstructive if special attention is paid to the gaps and inconsistencies that may lead these linguistic and social practices to say and produce something different from what they claim to be doing. Any written curriculum is not only a normatively binding projection into the future but also a testimony of the ways of thinking in the past and a symbolic representation of practices in the present.

Quotations from the Finnish curriculum for philosophy<sup>15</sup>, referring to the instruction of philosophy are:

"The instruction of philosophy in the senior secondary school helps students widen and clarify their conceptions of questions concerning the nature of reality, themselves, values, and the foundations of knowledge. [...] The instruction of philosophy... focuses on the nature and basic structure of knowledge and the world. It offers cognitive instruments with which students can build their own outlook, on the basis of their experiences and knowledge obtained through school subjects. [...] Knowledge and society, taste and culture, as well as man's relationship to nature change quickly and become more complex. For

this reason people need an intellectual link to their cultural inheritance offered by philosophy."

The purposes are stated as follows:

"The purpose of the study of philosophy is that students... (1) know how to use concepts precisely, and to give reasons for their opinions, (2) are able to conceptualize and assess knowledge-related, individual-ethical and social-ethical, as well as aesthetic problems, and their alternative solutions, and (3) have some knowledge of the basics of philosophical traditions."<sup>16</sup>

The description of the compulsory course:

"The course deals with the basic starting points of European philosophy, and an overview of the philosophical method of enquiry, and it gives and searches for answers to the following questions: What is philosophy? What is the nature of reality? What is man? What is truth? What is good? What is justice? What is beauty?"

On the nature of studies it says:

"[...] Students will obtain philosophical skills to support their thinking. [...] Philosophy works through its tradition even when it makes topical, even personal questions. The study of philosophy means getting to know tradition."

These quotes sound familiar probably to anyone who has ever studied philosophy – in any institution. They sound almost obvious and thus neutral in a way: What else could the instruction of philosophy be about? Yet this is just the question I propose needs to be asked more critically than usual. The curriculum justifies the status of philosophy as one of the compulsory subjects, basically by three arguments appealing to the effects that philosophy supposedly has on students:

- (1) philosophy enables and encourages students to think clearly, critically and reflectively;
- (2) philosophy helps in building a coherent and intelligible worldview;
- (3) philosophy as a cultural tradition of its own is a central part of our "Europeanness" and our

13. The list continues: Hume (39), Spinoza (33), Leibniz (31), Marx (30), Locke (29), Aquinas (29), Augustine (20), Wittgenstein (20), Rousseau (17), Sartre (14), Berkeley (14), Hobbes (11).

14. Pinar et. al. 1995, 15.

15. National Board of Education 1994.

16. It is worth pointing out that these quotes are from the official English version of the framework curriculum. It differs somewhat, perhaps tellingly, from the Finnish original. For example, the last quoted phrase in the original says: "manages the all-round educative basics of *the philosophical tradition*" (emphasis added).

cultural heritage and thus forms an essential aspect of the so-called "all-round education" (*all-gemeine Bildung*) of present-day Europeans.

It is a paradox that the above "effects" are said to be what the curriculum and instruction of philosophy achieve, but the real effects of studying or teaching philosophy have never really been studied (empirically, psychologically, socially, etc.). It may even be questioned whether there is any way of studying the *real* effects. The curriculum may state that these effects take place, and teachers may believe it, but if we want to do rigorous curriculum study and analysis, these kinds of statements are exactly the kind that cannot be taken for granted. We should inquire more radically into the lived curriculum in order to determine what is really being taught and learned when *philosophy* is taught and to find out what the actual effects and curricular experiences are. In the space of this chapter I cannot venture into that, however. I am content in constructing a frame of critique towards the possible reproductive elements in the curriculum of philosophy in reference to their background in the dualistic tendencies of rationality and the canon of the history of philosophy.

#### ASPECTS OF CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL REPRODUCTION IN THE CURRICULUM OF PHILOSOPHY

To repeat and reformulate: the basic rhetorical argument that the Finnish curriculum (and the paradigmatic curriculum of philosophy anywhere) makes of the place and value of philosophy in school can be translated into a discursive bloc that links the different connotations together in the following way:

proper ethical conduct and social responsibility  
(require)  
human rationality and reflectivity (based on)  
critical thinking skills and philosophical thought  
(manifested in)  
the history of (European) philosophical thought  
(presented as)  
the canonized European history of ideas and  
philosophy

This leads us to ask whether it is possible to build a curriculum of philosophy and critical thinking without reproducing the ideologically biased view that critical, reflective thinking is an activity practiced mainly by European male population of a Caucasian ethnic background. I will later take a critical look at

the curriculum in order to play out other different and contradicting views on what the curriculum of philosophy might consist of. My objective is to ask:

- What are the forms of ideological or symbolic reproduction that might be (most often still unconsciously) at work in the curriculum of philosophy, and how are these bound to the fact that philosophy was born from and still often takes place within elitist, upper-class, male, European hegemony in culture and curriculum?<sup>17</sup>
- What are the alternatives we might turn to in search for transformation in the curriculum of philosophy?

Now the task is to specify some of the different ideological implications that may arise from the dualisms mentioned above. Although in the beginning I have used Genevieve Lloyd's feminist criticism of the history of philosophy to set the stage, this dynamic of dualisms has wider implications, as has been pointed out by many critiques of the conservative Western cultural and ideological hegemony, at least since the 1970s. Whether it is a question of patriarchal power structures, anthropocentric ecological negligence, national chauvinism, or cultural imperialism, all these main targets of criticism have for the most part yet to be accounted for in the curriculum of philosophy, and they are all bound to the dualisms discussed above.<sup>18</sup>

As an example of the totalizing and excluding tendencies present in the curriculum of philosophy, we can think of the established way to teach philosophy, ethics, and critical thinking skills through

17. In the above and in what follows, I do not intend to use the term "reproduction" in the overly rigid way that some of the Western Marxism in the 1970s did. I lean on Pierre Bourdieu's (1990) reservations concerning the concept and the phenomenon that the school system *contributes* to reproducing the structure of the distribution of cultural capital and, through it, the social structure, instead of "the ahistorical view that society reproduces itself mechanistically, identical to itself, without transformation or deformation, and by excluding all individual mobility." (Bourdieu 1990, vii). There are constant cultural struggles taking place, there is active resistance as well as active consensus-construction to keep real conflicts out of sight and the dominant system hegemonical (in Gramscian terminology). We will have to look for the place of school and curriculum in these struggles.

18. One of the most active strands of criticism bringing these different forms of domination under common analysis has since the late 1970s been the so-called ecological feminism, or ecofeminist theory (by Karen J. Warren, Alison M. Jaggard, Carolyn Merchant, Val Routley (Plumwood) and others).

the lens of the history of European philosophy as a single European tradition. In this case, we run the risks of: (1) concealing the complexities and breaks of European history (in concepts and language, in the systems of meaning and discourse); (2) forgetting the significance of the social, cultural, and political contexts of different philosophical eras, discourses, and thinkers (and thus depoliticizing philosophical practices); (3) unconsciously presenting higher thinking and argumentation as predominantly a male activity (by reproducing the decontextualized patriarchal canon of European philosophy); (4) setting the traditional upper-class European education as the principal model of building rational and ethic virtues (and thus excluding other cultural and intellectual traditions); and, (5) reducing thinking to an activity which has to do only with reason and cognition (thus excluding affects, emotions, sensibilities, etc.). It seems that we have to deal with the problem of reproduction in at least these five different areas mentioned.

#### THE CURRICULUM OF PHILOSOPHY AS THE REPRODUCTION OF HUMANISTIC, ANTHROPOCENTRIC, SUBJECT-CENTERED, AND INDIVIDUALISTIC ETHICS

Curricula are very often strongly attached to the tradition of European humanistic and liberal ethics based on individual rights and individual freedom. Some possible ways to form a criticism towards this would include:

- *Biocentric* thinking, where ethical priority is given to nature, to life, or to the planet as a whole (e.g., radical deep ecology).
- *Sentientistic* approach, where human beings are given no privileged ethical position compared with any other living creature that has the ability to feel pain and suffer (e.g., the approach popular in the animal rights movement).
- *Social* or *communal* ethics, where priority is given to some unit larger than a single individual. (Thus, when teaching ethics and philosophy, the ideal of a good community could be taken as a central objective, instead of having a good individual life or being a good person; analogically, we could stress co-operational learning and take a *group* of students participating in a course as a starting point, instead of isolated individual students).
- *Subject-critical* approach, where the supposedly monolithic and individual subject is seen as an

effect of power, desire, discourse, etc., and the supposedly autonomous agency is revealed as a construction of these. To take this approach seriously would radically change the field of relevant questions we must ask in teaching ethics.

- *Holistic* thinking that would draw from the same sources of critique mentioned above but would try to construct positive ethical alternatives to subject-centeredness.

One possible common denominator for many of the dualisms listed earlier is the metaphysics of subjectivity (of thinking and willing subject) in European philosophy. The critique of this subject-centeredness points to alternative approaches in teaching philosophy as well. For instance, we could stress the need to learn to understand and experience ourselves as parts of the whole and always dependent of something other than ourselves. This is not just to say that "we need other people" or that "we can develop our human capacities only in human societies," both of which are true but also obvious, but instead something much more radical: that the "subjective inside" and the "objective outside" cannot be drawn apart in any dualistic manner. In this sense, the search for truth from "within" would make no sense. We would have to be seen as made up of the textures of physical matter and biological processes, of the socio-cultural and historical textures of signs, meanings, actions, gestures, speech, stories, and so on. These textures expand without boundaries all around us, and for our own being (*that* we are, *what* we are, and *how* we are) we should be grateful to this whole. I think this is why Heidegger, following medieval mystics, wrote that "thinking" (*denken*), in its authentic mode, has been and should still be, "thanking" (*danken*). How about a course in philosophy that would take as its objective "learning to thank" instead of "learning to think?"

#### THE CURRICULUM OF PHILOSOPHY AS THE REPRODUCTION OF EUROPEAN ETHNOCENTRISM AND CULTURAL NEOCOLONIALISM

The Finnish curriculum takes for granted that all students belong to one and unitary cultural "tradition," the so called "European culture" (the words "European cultural tradition" or "European cultural heritage" are mentioned several times in the Finnish framework curriculum). I assume the case is the same in many other European countries. Some possible criticisms of this:

- There is a single continuous, unitary tradition "behind us" only insofar as we continue to reproduce the historical picture that there is such a thing. Philosophy itself is not a single tradition, the cultural practices that have been given the name "philosophy" during the past 2500 years have been many and varied. There have been insurmountable differences in approaches, contents, objects, and styles, and there have been several historical discontinuities of philosophical discourse. Because of this, we should rather aim at affirming and celebrating this historical plurality of "tradition" and "discipline."
- The students today, even in Finland, which has been one of the most ethnically homogenous nations in Europe, no longer all share any single common cultural background. Their lifeworlds are not filled only with phenomena and practices that could be easily associated with some elementary "Europeanness". Instead of emphasizing common ground, we should try to figure out how the curriculum of philosophy could encourage the affirmation of the present plurality of forms of life, cultures and subcultures, ethnic and national backgrounds.

When critical and reflective thinking becomes associated with the traditionally interpreted canon of the European philosophical tradition, other forms of critical thought and other moral traditions stay absent as if there were none. Against this, teaching philosophy could lead to the recognition and affirmation of the existence of other forms of reflective thinking and other ethical traditions.

#### THE CURRICULUM OF PHILOSOPHY AS THE REPRODUCTION OF PHALLOCENTRISM AND PATRIARCHY TYPICAL OF THE "PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION"

This problem typically intensifies when the curriculum of philosophy emphasizes the importance of the history of philosophy without problematizing the established historical interpretations of the canon. Probably everyone who has studied philosophy knows that the curriculum easily becomes a parade of the "great philosophers," battling along with their great "isms," always detached from their social and political contexts.<sup>19</sup> In this case, "critical and reflective thinking" also becomes a curiously male activity. After all this, it is no wonder that so few women continue their studies in philosophy or end up teaching philosophy.<sup>20</sup> The critical analysis of

19. See Rée 1991.

20. School curriculum is strongly influenced by academic

this structural problem has been pushed to the margins of philosophy by maintaining that the universal and perennial questions must be "first-order" topics in philosophy, obviously at the expense of more contextual and time-bound ones. As a result, philosophical anthropology (e.g., problematics of "being human") remains in a central place whereas issues of more social, political, empirical or feminist interest (e.g., the problematics of "gender") do not. This should be countered by attempts at contextualizing philosophical curriculum and discourse on all levels. Attempts at contextualization could include:

- Microhistorical and genealogical discussions on sociohistorical conditions of individual philosophers, philosophical practices, and intellectual discourses of different times, and the forms through which power functions in them.
- Historiographic discussions on how the history of philosophy has been written, for what reasons, and by whom.<sup>21</sup>
- Discourse-critical discussions on power relations in the present philosophical discourses and institutions.

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curriculum and corresponding academic disciplines in all the academic subject matters (for several reasons, not least for the will to build and strengthen the academic image of the teaching profession and the professional concern to guard the criteria of recruiting new teachers). This means that the general disciplinary politics and social psychology that prevail on the professional level and in faculties often do so in school and undergraduate level as well. The following is a quote at *The Philosopher's Magazine's* (Issue 12, 2000, page 31) report from the largest general gathering of British philosophers (Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association): "Look more closely, though, and you'll notice some decidedly strange things about this crowd. First of all, astonishingly, there was not a single black or Asian face to be seen among the 150-odd delegates. This may not tell you anything in particular about the Joint Session, but it certainly says something very revealing about British philosophy. For whatever reason, the subject has continued to attract predominantly white Europeans and Americans while few black and minority ethnic students have made it through. Second, count the women. Among the delegates with academic affiliations, men out-numbered women by three to one. On the main programme, of the fifteen speakers, only two were women. Just two out of eight session chairs were women. Again, this reflects the state of the profession, which remains male-dominated, even among relatively young philosophers in their thirties and forties."

21. For instance, in the manner of Rorty's (1993) "The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres."

## THE CURRICULUM OF PHILOSOPHY AS THE REPRODUCTION OF COGNITIVISTIC AND RATIONALISTIC BIAS IN EDUCATION AND CHARACTER FORMATION

The Finnish curriculum framework sets as a goal that "the student learns to search, process, evaluate, and use knowledge," and it states that philosophy "enhances her/his capacity of constructing and maintaining a rational and coherent worldview." Here we could ask:

- Why does the curriculum not state as an objective that "the student learns to understand, evaluate, and develop the *passions* of hers/his?" What justifies the constant privileging of cognitions and knowledge in curriculum?
- Why does the curriculum not take into account that we live in an environment that is affective and emotional throughout, and that there are no clear-cut divisions into different faculties like reason and emotion within us, and that when and wherever we exist, we exist as whole persons?<sup>22</sup>

These questions should be asked as a central task for critically self-reflective curriculum practice in teaching philosophy. Otherwise, the curriculum will not recognize that overtly rationalistic and cognitivist approach not only has serious solipsistic overtones but that it also participates in reproducing the symbolic field of the modern dualistic conception of subject with all its corollaries.

## THE CURRICULUM OF PHILOSOPHY AS THE REPRODUCTION OF THE PRIMACY OF THE EPISTEMIC AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHER ASPECTS OF OUR PHILOSOPHICAL OUTLOOK ON LIFE

Even if we use the traditional division of philosophy into the theoretical and practical parts and, furthermore, the division of the former into ontology ("reality") and epistemology ("knowledge"), and the latter into ethics ("moral values") and aesthetics ("sense values"), we can notice that in itself, every proposition made in any of these areas carries implications of and for all the others. This is often forgotten when epistemology and transcendental analysis of our "capacity of knowing" is taken as the starting point for a philosophical or scientific inquiry, as has

22. See the criticism against Descartes' conception of mind in Antonio Damasio's (1994) *Descartes' Error*, and Mary Midgley's (1981) *Heart and Mind*.

usually been done at least since the 18th century in modern European philosophy. Alternatively:

- We could set *metaphysics* as the "first philosophy," as was done in Aristotle's system and in almost all of the pre-modern philosophy.
- We could follow Emmanuel Levinas in his dialogical ethos and the claim that *ethics* should always be seen as the "first philosophy."<sup>23</sup>
- We could yet go back with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and his inquiry into the preconceptual meaning of tragedy in Greek culture as an antecedent of the conceptual analysis in philosophy and admit *aesthetics* (or "arch-ethics") the authentic primacy in understanding our mode of being-in-the-world.<sup>24</sup>

An altogether different way of seeing the issue would be to undermine the whole notion of "primacy" in philosophy or the idea of "origins" in ideas and thinking. One way of doing this would be to try and follow Derridean deconstruction of notions like "original" or "primary". Another approach would be to see all theories and outlooks on life as ultimately ideological. In such case, we could ally with the materialistic critics of philosophy (e.g., Feuerbach, Marx, Lukács, Althusser) and begin to see philosophy either as always originating in "non-philosophy" or as epiphenomenal or superstructural to the material basis or social praxis.

As we can see, none of the reproductive tendencies above represents the whole picture as such. What is at stake is rather the whole dynamic of inclusions and exclusions, of the tendency to construct meanings through binaries that develop into structures of dominance, as Lloyd points out in the case of sexual difference: "Our ideas and ideals of maleness and femaleness have been formed within structures of dominance – of superiority and inferiority, 'norms' and 'difference,' 'positive' and 'negative,' the 'essential' and the 'complementary'."<sup>25</sup> In the end, the deconstruction of binaries around rationality and irrationality could lead to increased awareness of dualistic tendencies, highlighting the need to strive for the critique of this binary mechanism of exclusion and dominance in philosophy and the curriculum of philosophy.

23. Levinas 1981; 1985.

24. Lacoue-Labarthe 1993.

25. Lloyd 1993, 103.

There is nothing exactly new in my critique. The basic argument that the supposed universality of philosophical thought is primarily "white mythology" (written by the European male elite), was made by Jacques Derrida in an essay by the same name in *Marges de la philosophie* (1972/1982) and later gained credence and momentum through deconstructive projects of his and others during the past thirty years. What is remarkable from my perspective, however, is how little these critiques have actually affected the way we teach philosophy and how we conceptualize the curriculum of philosophy.

Yet it seems that pedagogy and philosophy are intertwined more deeply than the talk of curriculum and teaching philosophy might suggest. The history of philosophy is closely linked to the history of ideas in education and pedagogy. As one reminder of this, the faculties of philosophy and pedagogy still share close relations in many of the oldest universities in Europe: in Germany, Italy, Spain, and France. Western education and especially school pedagogy have been founded on philosophical concepts that serve as the main targets for the post-modern and deconstructive critique (such as "subject," "reason," "progress," even the search for "foundations" itself). Thus the whole issue of crisis in the modern conceptions of rational and knowing subject may affect teaching philosophy profoundly, not only because we can see it as a crisis within philosophy but because it is ultimately a crisis of predominant pedagogical ideology or philosophy of education as well. It should be pointed out that I don't mean to dramatize by using the word "crisis." Instead, I am referring to the word's etymological origin in Greek, meaning "turning point." However, such conservative practices as school and philosophy, which have so many traditional underpinnings and interests behind them, turn very slowly.

Jacques Derrida sees this theme as very important, and he states in an interview that "questions concerning the teaching of philosophy are inseparable from those concerning teaching and research in all disciplines at all levels."<sup>26</sup> He continues: "And these questions are indissociable from the great question of *democracy to come* (in Europe and elsewhere)."<sup>27</sup> I agree with the first claim, but the second claim, I think, is itself just another example of the illusions of omnipotence in European philosophy, stemming perhaps from the central place philosophy occupies in the French literary culture. I would be more willing to believe Richard Rorty when he admits that he

"doubts that philosophy is ever going to be very useful for politics"<sup>28</sup>. Politics can manage without philosophy, but philosophy should not try to manage without politics. Becoming more conscious of the different forms of potential ideological reproduction in philosophy necessarily means politicizing philosophy in one way or another. Philosophy, and the curriculum and instruction of philosophy, can never be politically innocent.

By politicizing the curriculum of philosophy I don't mean to make it party-political, radical, nor activist – unless the participants want to, of course. "Politicizing" here only refers to heightened social awareness and reflexivity, to curriculum as an object of common reflection, critique, and negotiation by the participants. Almost every written curriculum, either generally or in philosophy, contains a lot of talk on reflection and self-reflection. Yet school is a remarkably "nonreflexive" space. School, class, and curriculum practices are noted for their unwillingness to talk about themselves, to look at themselves. The curriculum of philosophy is no exception, for it does not question philosophy or problematize the concept of "philosophy," but takes the existence of a continuous and homogenous discipline of philosophy for granted. It does not interrogate the distinctions, inclusions, and exclusions that construct "philosophy." Neither does it question the existence of school or the possibility of teaching.

Obviously, in education and schooling, it is not enough just to problematize, question, and deconstruct. We need positive and reconstructive strategies as well. In order for philosophy to be relevant to students in the context of late modernity, teachers must be able to detach and distance themselves from the pre-set curricular boundaries (both written and hidden) and develop ways to support their students' and their own attempts to understand the flux of their lifeworld. Learning to be critical means also adopting a critical stance towards school curriculum and philosophy, including the established picture of "critical thinking" presented therein. In one of his last texts, Michel Foucault argued that the transcendental analysis of our ways of perceiving and thinking, which was the archetypal form of modern philosophy by Immanuel Kant, already has its counterpart in Kant's texts in a more timely meditation of present forms of life and the different prerequisites and possibilities they set on our ways of experiencing, thinking, and speaking about the world.<sup>29</sup> This latter sort of analysis is what Foucault calls the "historical ontology of ourselves." It could lead to relevant forms of philosophical thought and practice when

26. Derrida 1995.

27. Derrida 1995, 338.

28. Rorty 1996, 73.

29. Foucault 1984.

teaching philosophy in an increasingly ambivalent and contingent world. Furthermore, with his discussions on the role of passions in our lives, and his descriptions of the different historical "techniques of the self," Foucault could offer positive strategies for making sense, reconceptualizing, and taking the hold of the *currere* of our lives affectively as well.<sup>30</sup> At this point, these explorations must be left to another occasion.

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30. Foucault 1990; 1992.

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