

Modern pedagogy from traditional perspective

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Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2023

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Filozofski fakultet**

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-09-04**



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UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PEDAGOGY

**MODERN PEDAGOGY FROM TRADITIONAL
PERSPECTIVE**

Master's Thesis

Ivan Ladavac

Zagreb, 2023.

University of Zagreb
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Pedagogy

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Moderna pedagogija iz perspektive tradicije

Sažetak

Svrha teze je ponuditi uvide tradicionalne perspektive na trenutnu krizu u pedagogiji i obrazovanju. Započinjemo s pedagogijom i aspektima njene krize, zatim podižemo perspektivu fokusirajući se na krizu modernog svijeta, uzimajući u obzir mnoga zapažanja i kritike iz različitih perspektiva, socioloških, filozofsko-političkih i filozofskih. S obzirom na to da su navedena gledišta nikla i oblikovana u istom modernom svijetu, potražili smo pomoć i vodstvo iz „drugoga svijeta“. Zato smo odlučili istražiti naše probleme kroz tradicionalnu perspektivu – koja ima pojam 'intelektualne intuicije' i autentičnu metafiziku. Iz tradicionalnog gledišta, moderan svijet i moderna pedagogija, kada bi se povezali s metafizikom, mogu se transformirati. Naš zadatak je opisati put i izgraditi most prema mogućem rješenju, kako bi buduća istraživanja mogla ići u tom smjeru.

Ključne riječi: pedagogija, tradicija, kriza, metafizika, racionalno

Modern pedagogy from traditional perspective

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to provide insights from a traditional perspective to the current crisis in pedagogy and education. We begin by describing the current state of pedagogy and the aspects of its crisis, then we shift our view to the crises of the modern world as a whole, taking into consideration many observations and arguments from various perspectives, including the sociological, philosophical-political and philosophical perspectives. Since all of these points of view are nested in and shaped by the modern world itself, we needed “another world” to provide us with guidance and a potential solution. That’s why we decided to ultimately examine these problems from the point of view of tradition – which included the notion of ‘intellectual intuition’ and veritable metaphysics. From the traditional perspective, the modern world and, by extension, modern pedagogy, if connected to metaphysics, can be transformed. Our task was to describe the way of doing this, and to build the bridge to possible solution, so that future studies can be done in that direction.

Key words: pedagogy, tradition, crisis, metaphysics, rational

“(...) ‘To gather what is scattered’ is the same thing as ‘to find the lost Word’, for in reality and in its most profound sense this ‘lost Word’ is nothing other than the true name of the ‘Great Architect of the Universe’.” (Guénon, 2004b, 292)

“Path which man, as person, wants to head cannot be walked without love; because without love for spiritual essence, in which values are anchored, there is no exaltation of life; without love for spiritual being, to which the call of ideal requests is addressed, there is no ennoblement of being; and finally without love for persons, to whom and in connection with whom person at last is able to find and define himself, there is no fulfillment of life.” (Vuk-Pavlović, 1932, 125, t.m.)

“And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke;
The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:
And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Acts, 2:19-21)

Thanks to my mentor, for I can properly conclude my very best university experience.

Thanks to my family and friends, for they were always around.

And many thanks to René Guénon, for showing the way.

1. Introduction

“In respect to the world of the intellect I was never interested in small, specialized studies. I think they tend to dehumanize you.” (Campbell, 2003, 35)

During our university years, as students, we were introduced to many studies, philosophical perspectives and theories, but none caught our attention more than the critical analysis of the modern state; often equated with consumerism, capitalism, culture industry and alienation, mostly via Marcuse and Adorno. It seemed that all supposed historical progress that people believe happened in the material, technological and (supposedly) moral sphere had serious drawbacks, so much so that the whole idea of ‘progress’ became questionable. The modern education and society seem to be in crisis, it is *the problem* which occupied us. Reading further on to what we were introduced to in university, which is the conclusion that the idea of progress was a fabrication,¹ and that in many ways humanity is regressing² was unavoidable, and opened many questions, such as *if the world is regressing and heading in a bad direction – what is the good direction, i.e., the solution? How do we successfully implement such a solution? Is it even possible to correct any of it on a larger scale?* Here, as pedagogues, we will focus on the crisis of education and its theoretical and practical solution, but we will also travel further to a social, (meta)political, philosophical and metaphysical dimension, to possibly find the common source of these crises. The thesis is divided into five main parts:

- 1) The crisis of modern pedagogy: the thesis starts by exploring the current state of pedagogy and education (Vuk-Pavlović, 1932; Jurčević, 2019, 2020; Komar,

¹ Fabrication literally as a lie, false idea (or rather collective suggestion) of ‘developing humanity which builds better future for all’. Technically speaking, progress did happen in material production, but hardly anywhere else.

² Examples and explanations are given in the chapter ‘The crisis of the modern world’ of this thesis. This primarily refers to a regression in the intellectual-spiritual sense, and furthermore in every quality (like strength, beauty, goodness, and even concentration, discipline etc.).

2016; Liessmann, 2005; Hersh & Merrow, 2005; English, 2013; Palekčić, 2015), defining pedagogy and its crisis.

- 2) The crisis of the modern world – this section shows criticisms of the present state and arguments for the fact of regression or decline of humanity from various perspectives, such as critics from the Frankfurt school (Marxism/New Left) represented by Marcuse (1968, 1978, 1982) and Adorno (1992), the New Right (Sunić, 2011); postmodern perspective represented by Baudrillard (2001), which also thematically includes Marxist theorist Debord (1995), due to the nature of his particular referenced work; what we dubbed the ‘cyclical perspective’, represented by Spengler (1991) and Glubb (1976), penetrating to the underlying dimension of myth (Campbell, 2003 & 2008); and finally the traditional/perennial perspective represented by René Guénon (2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e), Coomaraswamy (2004) and Schuon (1993). The point is to “hit the target from multiple angles”, offering diverse views with the same common problem – the reality of the system we live in, what caused it to be as it is and where it is headed.
- 3) Traditional world – following Guénon, we introduce the traditional perspective. Now, being outside it, there is a proper basis needed to fully criticize the modern world and to simultaneously have the ability to offer an alternative. We focus on the main aspects of traditional world/perspective, such as metaphysics and symbolism, and the point of contention between the rational and supra-rational. The problem here is that the traditional world is in essence ‘supra rational’, meaning that we need to make a sound argument for pedagogical and academic consideration of the supra-rational, and what it can be viewed as, since scientific methodology and rationality as such is lacking necessary quality and perspective.
- 4) Pedagogy from a traditional perspective – after going through the crisis of education/pedagogy, the overarching crisis of the modern world and the foundations of traditional world, together with the problem of rationalism, we bring the perspective back again to the level of pedagogy, education and

upbringing and examine it from a traditional point of view. Through such a perspective, we look at modern pedagogy and pedagogy in its etymological meaning, offering a synthesis.

- 5) Conclusion – encompassing all that has been written, where to go next? What does the traditional perspective ultimately claim, are solutions possible, and if they are, how does one reach them?

René Guénon (1886 – 1951) constitutes the center of this thesis, as a representative of the traditional point of view or perennial philosophy,³ to which Coomaraswamy and Schuon will attest to a lesser degree in this thesis. It is important to note that traditional wisdom⁴ is above the forms used to write this thesis; only a fraction are mentioned here, and it will be made as to fit academic format, focusing on its philosophical and critical side (not in any way initiatic, doctrinal or esoteric point of view, which is the proper level for the study, and on which one should mainly understand Guénon’s work⁵). We do not take perennialism in a sense of ‘educational philosophy’, as some authors⁶ have it. This is explained later on, as we do the proper ground-work first. Guénon’s words have primacy in every case in which any confusion might arise due to possible multiplicity of meanings or definitions (for example what is ‘traditional’).

Regarding the contents and chapters of this thesis: It goes from local and pedagogical, to global and philosophical (and also from modern perspectives to traditional

³ Sanātana Dharma – somewhat similar to *Philosophia Perennis* of the Scholastics (although it is more a question of *sophia*), sanātana as ‘cyclical’, ‘perpetual’, ‘stable’, and dharma as ‘law’ or ‘norm’ for particular cycle. Its (perennial philosophy’s) chief characteristic is the claim of transcendent unity of all religions. This is in this thesis synonymous with the traditional point of view. For more: Guénon, R. (2004). *Studies in Hinduism*. Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis

⁴ Wisdom or knowledge, especially metaphysical knowledge (knowledge par excellence, the principle of all other knowledge, knowledge of principles of higher order, knowledge of the universal), known via intellectual intuition (*Buddhi*). In the modern world the assimilation of the subject and the object, the knower and the known, lacks meaning (has an illusory or a highly relative one). It had full meaning in traditional civilizations, as there existed (initiatic) ways for metaphysical realization. Doctrines had theory but also included, corresponding inner realization, which is entirely lacking in the modern world.

⁵ Moderns hold that rational knowledge, reason, is the pinnacle of man’s capacity to know, while according to tradition it was only an inferior mode of knowing (more limited and incapable of assimilating truths of higher order), it was considered reflected (discursive) and not direct (‘intuitive’) knowledge.

⁶ Ornstein (1990, 2018) and Mosier (1951), which we refer to in the fifth chapter.

perspective), and then back to local and pedagogical to make a synthesis with the traditional. Hence, at the end, pedagogy is transported to an entirely different world, so as to offer the solution to its crisis. This makes the perspective and scope of this thesis extremely wide – it is about grand lines, the ‘meta problem’ and a proposed solution for pedagogy.

Here are a few other brief considerations/reservations: When translating Croatian text to English, we mark the citation with ‘t.m.’ meaning ‘translation mine’; the traditional world and perspective cannot be understood from ‘the outside’ (takes a lot of reading and adapting to an entirely different qualitative perspective, somewhat analogous to emic field research of a different culture), so our task is to explain where it essentially diverges from the modern world/perspective; we use the term ‘system’ (the system) as the combination of all the social, economic, ideological and political systems that we live in (as the institutional structure of the modern state); the notion of ‘tradition’ is always used in the sense, explained throughout this thesis, as perennialists use it,⁷ and never in its popular usage; the notion of ‘modern’ is used in multiple ways, often in the popular sense as ‘the state of affair nowadays’, but sometimes it is also defined in a specific way by some of the cited authors (for example, Sunić in the third chapter of this thesis), but ultimately (after the third chapter) as ‘anti-traditional’, as that is how perennial philosophers use it – the period of Western history from Renaissance until today, defined by the negation or ignorance of the supra-rational domain, and it is never used in this thesis to define a pre-postmodern period (as in arts or philosophy), but encompasses it; ‘postmodern’ in this thesis is a part of the ‘modern’, its more recent regression; ‘humanist’ and ‘humanistic’ are used interchangeably; my additions or explanations inside other author’s citations are always in [square brackets]; three dots inside a parentheses – “(…)” – are always used to continue the citation while excluding a part that is not in the focus of current interests; we use the ‘Herlihy, 2009’ citation format, but in actuality it is always ‘Guénon, according to Herlihy, 2009’, since Herlihy is the editor of a book which is an assembly and mixture of Guénon’s writings.

⁷ Transmission of knowledge and influence of supra-human order (principal, metaphysical, universal).

2. The crisis of modern pedagogy

“No longer talk at all about the kind of man that a good man ought to be, but be such.”
(Aurelius 10:16, 2020, 130)

Pedagogy is a concept which consists of upbringing, education and self-education. It is not something just reserved for children and teenagers, but for people of all ages, all backgrounds, all races and creeds. Everyone grows and changes in multiple ways, and pedagogy is about that conscious, willing and deliberate aspect, which guides the seed (growing impulse) in certain positive direction. Vuk-Pavlović (1932) thought of pedagogy (upbringing [Croatian ‘odgoj’], as opposed to ‘politics’) as something formative and higher (qualitative), going hand in hand with notions such as ‘personality’, ‘community’, ‘love’, ‘future’ and ‘culture’, respectively opposed to material and lower (quantitative) terms ‘individual’, ‘collective’, ‘power’, ‘past’ and ‘nature’.⁸ For him the distinction of upbringing-pedagogy and philosophy was based in the fact that the former is about experience, while the latter is about cognition and understanding, hence they are perfectly complementary (ibid). Furthermore, Humboldt’s definition of education-pedagogy is “encouraging of all the strengths of man that they could through appropriation of the world in mutual intertwining and limiting harmoniously – equally be developed and completed in self-determining individuality or personality which in its ideality and uniqueness enriches humanity” (Hentig, 2008, 30, t.m.). Here it is personality, fulfillment and self-actualization that act as a final peak of pedagogical action, and ‘harmonizing with reality’, as one is in a dialectical tension with all of the ‘outside world’, and needs to have harmony with it, which also presupposes reflection.

⁸ Here we can make a connection with Guénon (2004e), as he presented traditional teaching which understands dualities of highest orders (every other is just a derivative) and that manifestation proceeds from qualitative pole to quantitative. Note how we used word ‘notion’ [Croatian ‘pojam’] and word ‘term’ [Croatian ‘termin’] deliberately in different cases (not to say that ‘nature’ is properly a term, or ‘past’ or ‘power,’ but it seems to be in Vuk-Pavlović’s system of dualities – ‘term’ as more ‘terminated’ notion, of less qualitative nature).

Here the focus moves to the humanistic notion of the educational ideal, that in which university is about self-positioning of an individual, via interaction and transformation, following the formula thesis – antithesis – synthesis⁹ (Jurčević, 2019). It is the state of learning and growing, where one (rational being) experiences (reads, meets) some ‘other’, reflects upon it and explains it with their (own) words, embodying it and transforming themselves to a new state. That was an ideal of university, which is a part of education in general, and which is quickly declining due to neoliberal doctrine. Liessmann (2008) noted that educational goals of enlightenment were autonomy, self-awareness and spiritual permeation of the world, followed by reform pedagogy with vitality, the joy of learning and social competencies. Finally, in recent times, as stated by neoliberal educational politicians¹⁰ the educational goals are flexibility, mobility and employability. According to Jurčević (2020) the goal of the neoliberal university is to make a semi-educated individual who can perfectly fit into the labor market and not the well-being of society and the individual. This is the crux of neoliberalism – the belief that a higher GDP, higher standard of living, more jobs, and more competitiveness all equals to a happier and better society and individuals. It is disproportionately focused on the dimension of money, economy, and the subsequently higher quantity of money as the solution for humanity’s problems. Nietzsche (1991, 301, t.m.) clearly stated that we cannot talk about pedagogy in this case: “each nurture, which as its goal has one’s future salary or profession, is not nurture for education, as we understand it, but only an instruction, with which one is saving and protecting his subject on his way for survival.” On the other hand, humanistic ideals, such as the notions of freedom, autonomy, critical thinking, emancipation and knowledge of classics are all diminishing. Hence today, when considering education in general, we can talk about humanistic (pedagogical, non-economic) and neoliberal (economic) functions or tendencies.

⁹ Fichte’s notion (applicable as we just did, following previous Humboldt’s (Hentig, 2008) definition of education). Somewhat similar to the nuclear unit of the monomyth: *separation – initiation – return*, as in rites of passage (Campbell, 2003 & 2008), which has more than just pedagogical/educational significance.

¹⁰ Educational politician is an interesting term, in obvious contrast to the pedagogue.

On this tension between ideals and economy, recent research (Jurčević, 2019 & 2020) shows not only the growing inclination of economism and reduction of humanism, but the fact that students came to see freedom, independence and self-fulfillment as being a productive cog in the neoliberal machine, to have purchasing power, and it is all considered ‘objective’, ‘normal’ and ‘non-ideological’. Humanities are not needed for self-fulfillment, only money is. We would assert that it is not the case that humanistic values have died out per se, but that they have been reduced and merged with the subordinate, economic notions (we will explain this observation later on via Marcuse and Guénon). This is not entirely surprising, since the educational and developmental strategies and reforms of the European Union such as the Sorbonne and Bologna declarations, Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 strategy and Rethinking Education initiative all follow the same pattern of a non-existent pedagogical foundation and focus on an outside goal (Komar, 2016).

Going back to higher education, Hersh & Merrow (2005) listed plenty of problems with higher education in the United States of America, but we will mention only some which we believe are more general and can be also applied outside the American context. Sperber (Hersh & Merrow, 2005, 4) writes: “A non-aggression pact exists between many faculty members and students: because the former believe that they must spend most of their time doing research, and the latter often prefer to pass their time having fun” – which can be generalized to a point, as our lived experience argues, and the effects of this are – “a mutual nonaggression pact occurs with each side agreeing not to impinge on the other. The glue that keeps the pact intact is grade inflation: easy As for merely acceptable work and Bs for mediocre work.” Students read less than ever, campuses are full of alcohol and to get to Harvard, Yale or Princeton is the aim in itself (ibid). Throughout the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century mistakes amassed as ‘slip-sliding’ into a too narrow conception of education (as ‘job preparation’), hardly differentiating between ‘information’ and ‘learning’ (ibid). This is so because universities, education and pedagogy failed to answer to the challenges of the new age, which Gregorian defines as (Hersh & Merrow, 2005) an information challenge (endless fragmentation with no synthesis/general picture), seeing the technical and preprofessional challenge as ‘the curriculum crisis’ (extension of

what was previously mentioned, making balanced curriculums, not losing the ethical and social context to technical training, as there is a great need of specialization and, generalization, which provides context to the new advances), the commercialization of research (industry and businesses pulling minds away from the orbit of free inquiry with research contracts), the part-time faculty challenge (translates to the erosion of quality, universities cannot easily separate economic security from academic freedom and autonomy, as the number of part-timers grow), the challenge of mediocrity (increasing enrollment quotas, often for the revenue, by lowering the standards for admission and graduation, resulting in lower quality of graduates, which may lead to degree inflation) and the challenge of new technology (the role of the universities and colleges in the cyber age).

The notion of *knowledge* also suffers from the same force of entropy.¹¹ The best example is found in, what Liessmann (2008) considers, the cultural phenomenon *par excellence* of the early 21st century, the TV show *Who wants to be a Millionaire*. It is a multiple-choice quiz where knowledge is reduced to the subject of a mere questionnaire; it has nothing to do with understanding or synthesis (ibid). There is no notion of quality whatsoever, everything is equal – questions about classical literature or newest pop-star gossip (ibid). Liessmann (ibid) contrasted his notion of *uneducation* and Adorno's *half-education*; starting from the humanistic concept of education ('real' or 'full' education according to the author), which is the ancient ideal of self-education, forming and developing one's body, soul and spirit, talents, that which would bring an individual to a degree of a developed person in the full sense of the term. Adorno's *half-education* reigns in the 20th century – all the notions of classical ideals and its literature still exist, but it is alienated from the existing, lived experience (ibid). Pupils would memorize the knowledge, but they could not realize and embody it, and he considered that "half-understood and half-experienced is not a degree leading up to education but its mortal enemy" (Adorno,

¹¹ Lyotard (2005, 4, t.m.) wrote: "Old notion which says that acquiring knowledge is inseparable from education (bildung) of spirit, and even person, is getting older and it will be forgotten." and "Knowledge is and it will be produced so it could be sold, it is and will be used so it could be valued in some other production, in both cases for it to be exchanged. It stops being end in itself, it loses its own "usable value"." (ibid)

according to Liessmann, 2008, 58). Hence the elements of education are, at least, still there. But nowadays the state of education is best described by the term *uneducation* – the idea of education lost all of its normative and regulatory power. There is no *understanding* anymore – skills, flexibility and teamwork (usually for the goal of globalization, profit etc.) are becoming dominant key terms in educational institutions. There is no question of truth, cognition, insight; there are managers of knowledge, concerned with efficiency and best practice. In *half-education*, the truth could not be realized due to objective reasons, but education (during the *half-education* period) at least had its normative and regulative function, while today it has none; it is a self-conscious absence of education, hence *uneducation* (ibid, 62).

Finally, according to English (2013), the notion of *discontinuity in learning* (for Herbart only essential in moral education, for Dewey essential for all realms of learning), which happens when we come to a state of ‘in between’, “an opening between *our encounter with the new that interrupts us and our newly acquired understanding of the new in experience*” (ibid, 55), ‘inner struggle’, ‘break with oneself’, ‘experience of limitation’, ‘negative’, a form of ‘self-alienation’ in the face of otherness, unfamiliar, strange and/or unexpected; which is required for learning, ‘an experimental space for one to learn about oneself (one’s limits and capacities) and about the world’ (ibid, 152) needs to be preserved in education (theory, research and practice). Without it, there is only memorizing, gathering information, with no learning or transformation – and if through dry, instructive, fast, positivist methods which ignore or avoid the *negative* at all costs, someone were to become ‘transformed’ (or rather ‘changed’ superficially) in any way, it happens so unwillingly, resembling a machine being programmed, without any free choice (the subject is passive), and then there is no talk of pedagogy or education whatsoever, only its parody.

The picture seems clear: In the last few decades (at least) pedagogy is stuck between being a tool for producing efficient, faceless and well-adapted workforce units, and ‘returning to its proper theoretical foundation’ (Palekčić, 2015). The first option makes

pedagogy¹² a ‘useful maid’ (Nietzsche, 1991), something standardized, one-dimensional, mechanized, measurable and easily quantified, that is to say – pedagogy is no more. The second option claims that, for one to be truly defined a return to fundamentals is needed. Palekčić (2015, 58) wrote: “Pedagogy is mainly understood as profession and as applied, “practical discipline” and poses a problem of and a search for pedagogical theoretical foundation, that is pedagogical scientific perspective, *differentia specifica*”.

In other words, the crisis of pedagogy is simply in the fact that the notion of knowledge and quality education is either disappearing or transforming itself to its lowest, quantitative, unrecognizable forms; the meaning of both is measured by how well they serve the current (economic) system. Knowledge is not a goal in and of itself anymore, something which enriches one’s life just by having it, what elevates and ennobles a being, but it is something to be exchanged for money and status. And ‘money and status’ prefer a certain type of knowledge, skill or information, and that is certainly not, for example, the knowledge of classics, or the knowledge which is its own purpose. Hence, the problems of pedagogy today can be traced back to its weak or nonexistent theoretical foundation, which by its own weakness or nonexistence gives way for it [pedagogy] to be a servant to any system or ideology in question. Jurčević (2019, 144, t.m.) closed her doctoral dissertation with the following “The question remains whether the university, in its current state, has the possibilities and bravery for such a thing [to assert itself as independent, critical media in solving the problems of the modern world and being a spearhead for social change]?” We will try to answer a similar question, extended to pedagogy/education in a broader sense – can it be transformed out of its current crisis and returned to the domain of quality, to be a generative/positive force in the world?

(Not to forget: In essence, to have good people is to be a good person in the first place, leading by example, being, does not need thousands of pages to justify itself. Pedagogy today is all about making a system in which pupils will

¹² Again, we use the notion ‘pedagogy’ broadly, as teaching or directing someone, it can be university education, mentorship, teaching in school etc. We say this because Nietzsche here was referring to universities specifically.

supposedly flourish, managing it as a pedagogue-manager. Is it really working?
And what would an ancient stoic, like Marcus Aurelius, think of it?)

3. The crisis of the modern world

*“Brothers shall fight each other,
And sisters’ sons shall kinship stain;
Hard is it on earth, with mighty whoredom;
Ax-time, sword-time, shields are sundered,
Wind-time, wolf-time, ere the world falls;
Nor ever shall men each other spare.”*

(*Voluspa*, according to Campbell, 2008, 324)

We outlined the crisis of pedagogy and education – based on the neoliberal doctrine, economic primacy, information challenge, and (capitalist) system using people as means to an end of ‘more products – more spending’. Pedagogy, at least without its theoretical foundation and/or strong philosophical base, seems to be easily shaped by society (zeitgeist, technology, economic ideology) at large, and since pedagogy and education are largely submerged¹³ in zeitgeist and said society, to see the biggest influences we will apply sociological and philosophical perspectives on the present state, divided in four sub-chapters, presenting criticisms of the modern world from the politico-philosophical perspectives, postmodern perspective, “cyclical perspective” and traditional perspective. Campbell (2003, 2008) will be a bridge between the latter two points of view. We will outline some of the author’s proposed solutions to the modern crisis, and later compare them to the solution offered by the perennialist perspective.

¹³ Not to say that pedagogy and education in theory or even in praxis are entirely submerged in the ever-changing current of political or cultural sphere. We also do not imply that there is direct hierarchical relationship between pedagogy and sociology.

3.1. Politico-philosophical perspectives critical of the modern time

“(…) even the most absurd calculations begin to make sense: it is preferred to destroy five million than ten million, twenty million etc. There is no need to prove that civilization, which excuses its moves with such calculations, proclaims its own end.” (Marcuse, 1968, 64, t.m.)

Let us begin with what we’ve already mentioned a few times previously, the capitalist (neoliberal) system itself, which means that we also live in an age of *consumerism* (Sunić, 2011); obsession with money and what it can buy. Indeed, Fromm (Sergejev, 1986) described the ideal of the modern man whose view of heaven is a giant shopping mall in which he can buy endlessly. Buying of goods is not meaningless, by buying goods people satisfy their needs, for which they supposedly longed throughout their entire history (ibid). Capitalism, by its endless hunger for profit, multiplies man’s needs to make those needs met with a product – it is a devious cycle doomed to fail. It has its own supporting ‘myths’, primarily that of freedom and free choice, to which Marcuse (1968, 26-27, t.m.) replies: “Free choice of wide options of goods and services does not signify freedom, if these goods and services support social control over work and stress, – i.e. if they support alienation. Spontaneous reproduction of needs forced on man does not equal autonomy; it is just a witness of efficacy of control.”

It is not that the system only makes up new needs, but commodifies existing ones too. Adorno (1992) explains how when old youth went off camping as a protest to bourgeois lifestyle and customs, the system adopted it for its own monetary goals and commodified it. The camping industry emerged, it became a standardized hobby, standardized annual leave choice or lifestyle, and there are now campgrounds for tourists *en masse*, with facilities and products, nothing which escapes the system.¹⁴ Another example given to us when we were students was how certain subcultures want to rebel against the system and signify it with their style (of clothing), for instance by ripping their own jeans.

¹⁴ So much so that new consumer lifestyle-camping option named “glamping” emerged, which is ‘luxurious camping’.

Not long after the very system they were opposing began to produce and sell ripped jeans. Nowadays all the youth rebels of the rock, punk & metal era ('goth', 'punk', 'emo' etc.) form a perfect part of the system, buying preferred music, shirts, posters etc., losing all the 'negative' factor. That is the key to the present enslavement – the loss of the negative, rebellious factor, one which can make a dialogue or open a dialectical relationship with the system. That was the central thesis of Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* (1968, 139): "Dialectical logic sees contradictions as "necessity" which is essential part of the "nature of thought" (...) hence, existing reality is against the logic of contradiction – it favors those modes of thought which support existing forms of life and those modes of behavior which reproduce and perfect them. Given reality has its own logic and its own truth. The effort to understand them as they are and the effort to transcend them presupposes different logic, truth which contradicts it (...)." (t.m.) It is clear that material prison comes second to a mental prison.¹⁵ This *one-dimensionality*, this prison for the mind, has more aspects, according to Komar (2012, 37, t.m.): "symbol of mass culture is one which in itself holds no power to transcend reality, because all mass symbols are symbols which in return mark reality itself, without any conflict. In that case mass culture as symbol manifests as "enchanted" reality, aesthetic-symbolic encirclement of existing." Symbols are often reduced to logos of products and companies, and while the meaning of symbols was always to transcend the corporeal, today they are mostly just a 'reflection' of the same shallow thing – entirely one-dimensional, in total opposition of what symbols are (or more so *were* in traditional societies¹⁶).

Marcuse (1968) also introduced the idea of repressive desublimation, which is interesting in this context. 'Sublimation' means the transformation of our urge to a more socially acceptable format – artists sublime many impulses through their art, keeping them

¹⁵ "World's course is towards becoming a material of total control which absorbs even controllers themselves. Tissue of domination became tissue of mind itself, and this society is fatefully entangled in it. From said it follows that thought which really transcends existing – transcends the mind itself." (Marcuse, 1968, 161, t.m.)

¹⁶ Symbols were used as to transcend the common world, physical world around us. Due to their synthetic nature they are not limited as words are. The greater 'part' of them is always inexpressible and beyond discursive, rational mind. Interestingly, many (but not most) logo-symbols do have some occult meaning (but this is yet another quality), which is a study in itself, but it does indicate that class of people which owns/is-a-part-of such companies/groups has deeper understanding of the nature of our reality, and communicates it.

‘still there’ and available for a social critique or change. We all have energies repressed by the system, which can in turn oppose the system – if not for desublimation. Hence the system represses with desublimation – an artist must make a commodity of their art, to sell it, to survive. Or to use a very recent example, men, alienated and atomized, cannot find a spouse or fulfilling relationship, their energies are depleted, among other things, by pornography, excess commercial erotization and nudity in media.¹⁷ Repressive desublimation finds its effectiveness in permissiveness, in ‘flattening-out’ of our life-energies, precisely what one would expect under the banner of the loss of negative thinking.

All of these modern ills have many of their roots in industrialization, where the logic of the conveyor belt dominated. Things ought to be standardized and measurable; it did not take long until schools adopted the same ways, which entrenched itself as a form and frame many of our contemporaries cannot think outside of (and, for them, there is no obvious incentive to do so). But industrialization did not come to be with the introduction of factories, it “came from measuring work. That is, when work can be measured, when man can be taken to service, when you can put yoke on him and measure the results of his work, expressed in quantity, and pay him, per quantity or per hour – you get the modern industrialization” (Daniel Bell, according to Marcuse, 1968, 44, t.m.). Such factories were born from the idea of mechanization, of a need to multiply products, a materialist notion which expects happiness and well-being of such action as an end-result. And such mechanization was an effect of positivism, of technological science, which removed all the qualitative aspects from nature, reducing it to that which can be quantified. Theories which dominate the mind of the scientific elite also dominate the form of society itself, as Horkheimer & Adorno (according to Marcuse, 1968, 151, t.m.) confirm: “on the basis of

¹⁷ To make a connection with Baudrillard (2001): sex does not disappear in sublimate, in repression, in celibacy... but in pornography, in its hyper-real excess. And to refer to Marcuse (1968) again – mechanization stops libido from realizing itself, it de-erotizes dimension of human activity and passivity. The result is localization and contraction of libido, reduction of erotic experience and satisfying with only sexual. Examples he gives are comparisons between making love in meadow and or a car, going on a romantic walk with your lover outside the city or in its big streets. In first cases, libido extends to natural surroundings, that is (non-repressive) sublimation, compared to that of mechanized, urban, man-made surroundings without a sense of beauty, it seems it blocks that self-transcendence of libido. Since mechanization and all its supporting logic is *the system*, we talk of institutionalized desublimation.

rationalization of work the elimination of quality¹⁸ is transported from science to the world of everyday experience.” Further, Komar (2012, 35, t.m.) explains: “technological science is at the same time the most powerful instrument, the engine of reproduction and multiplication of capital, and its ideology in sense of rational, objective establishment and guiding survival in its totality (theory, praxis, production, public, private, working hours, free time, media, information, entertainment etc.). But, science at the same time has no access to ‘autonomous absolute truth’ but specifically scientific rationality with its unquestioned assumptions in technical, operational, functional, instrumental mind.” Hence, all the technology and modern modus operandi we employ is a consequence of presuppositions done by scientists and philosophers centuries ago. And since, as we said, it took quality out of the picture because it couldn’t have been measured and quantified (used for control and domination¹⁹), it logically follows that a world built and framed in such a way ‘produces’ people who are unable to develop (higher) quality, as they are a priori limited by the mentality and materiality of such surroundings. They cannot escape it, on the contrary, they by nature identify themselves with society they are part of, which Marcuse (1968) called *mimesis*.

Before mentioning a few proposed solutions, there is one more perspective critical of modern times that we will include. Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier, key figures of the French New Right, defined modernity as follows (Sunić, 2011, 209):

“[Modernity] designates the political and philosophical movement of the last three centuries of Western history. It is characterized primarily by five converging processes: *individualisation*, through the destruction of old forms of communal life; *massification*, through the adoption of standardized behavior and lifestyles; *desacralisation*, through the displacement of the great religious

¹⁸ More on diminishing quality, Marcuse (1968, 151) wrote: “While science freed nature from its inherent goals and taken from matter all of its qualities except ones which can be quantified, society freed people from “natural” hierarchy of personal dependence and led them to mutual relationship in line with quantifying qualities – i.e. as individuals of abstract work force calculable in time units.”

¹⁹ Traditional (perennial) philosophers popularly say that “man cut himself from heaven to dominate the earth”

narratives by a scientific interpretation of the world; *rationalisation*, through the dominion of instrumental reason, the free market, and technical efficiency; and *universalisation*, through a planetary extension of a model of society postulated implicitly as the only rational possibility and thus as superior.”

Rationalisation was greatly developed from multiple used sources, as was *massification* and *individualization*. On the process of *universalization*, Marcuse (1978) also wrote, as supporting the fight of third world people, considered as proletarians, against new forms of capitalist colonization, which could potentially bring crisis of the system, and then it could be finally overthrown. On the topic of *desacralisation* we will just recognize it as a fact, without opening questions to which there is a contention between the New Right and the New Left.

Furthermore, Sunić (2011, 181) has clear picture where existing tendencies will lead our society:

“Totalitarianism is an inevitable outcome of contemporary social and political atomisation, followed by the individualisation and rationalisation of economic production, which in turn breeds alienation and reciprocal social resentment. Totalitarianism is not the despotism of a few but despotism of all against all at every moment. This form of tyranny developed in Communist countries, although it is already incipient in liberalism. Totalitarian systems are not constructed from the top of society but from the *bottom* of society. It is a terror of a myriad of Communist *kolektivi*, or democratic ‘checks and balances’, whereby everybody controls everybody. A totalitarian system is not the apogee of the omnipotent state but rather the beginning of a huge impersonal society. Finally, a totalitarian system is fully operational only when it replaces physical violence with an ‘aseptic’, bloodless and ‘cool’ totalitarian ideology, such as consumerism, the cult of money, and the end of the political – goals actively sought in both liberal and socialist democracies.”

To avoid such a fate, some proposed aspects of the solution from the metapolitical position of the New Right are (from the essay “Manifesto for a European Renaissance”): free expression of ideas, building communities and cities on a human scale (local communities), local production and diversification of food sources, against productivism and for the new form of labor (economy for the service of the people), recognition of uniqueness and difference (right to difference, strong identities), against unbridled technology, against racism and sexism etc. (Sunić, 2011). De Benoist (ibid, 212), as representing the perspective of the New Right with Champetier, writes:

“(…) modernity will not be transcended with a *grand soir* (a secular version of the Second Coming of Christ), but with the appearance of thousand auroras, i.e., the birth of sovereign spaces liberated from the domination of the modern. Modernity will not be transcended by returning to the past, but by means of certain pre-modern values in a decisively postmodern dimension.”

On the other hand, Marcuse (1978) thought that it is less important how distant the revolt is to its ideals, but what matters, in all the different people and their struggles, is the depth of their *rejection*. The depth of rejection is precisely the ability to contradict the system, to be able to ‘think negatively’, to have more than one dimension. Human *needs* need to change,²⁰ it is not about the golden rule anymore, but “how can one satisfy his own needs and that he does not hurt himself in the process, that he does not reproduce – with his affinities and satisfactions – his dependence of exploiting apparatus, which, satisfying his needs, perpetuates his oppression?” (ibid, 136, t.m.) Furthermore (1982, 65, t.m.): “Our world manifests not only in clear forms of time and space, but at the same time also as totality of all sensible qualities – as an object not only of the eye (synopsis), but all human senses (hearing, smell, touch, taste). Exactly this qualitative, elementary, unconscious – or more accurately: preconscious – constitution of experienced world, primary experience itself must radically change, for social change to be radical, qualitative change.” Here we

²⁰ Similarly, Hentig (2008, 25, t.m.) said: “Our biggest problems are not created by having insufficient life remedies, but having meaningless life, life duties, life qualities; we should get real notion about them, find a right way for them; and it is entirely possible that it is about reducing of expectations and wants, in accepting of less things (...)”

approach notion of a new man, akin to the Nietzschean (2019) cry for *superman*.²¹ Visions of the future from Marxist thought imagine a technological benefit for the masses, and hold great belief in historical, materialistic and moral progress (Marcuse, 1968; 1978). They believe that the past was about constant oppression, exploitation and class warfare; that freedom is dependent on technological progress and advancement of science;²² that liberation will be achieved when the people (proletarian mass) take the means of production from oppressors (capitalists) and use it for the benefit of all (socialism) – Marcuse (1968, 38, t.m.) clearly states: “(...) technological rationality, freed from irrational limits and destruction, subsists and completes itself in a new society.” But Marcuse (1982) also notices a tendency to revolt against the mind itself among radicals (anti-intellectualism), and radicalism which is only based on the revolt of the senses and is not accompanied with the revolt of the mind is doomed to fail. Hence, proposed solutions and predictions vary, Sunić (2011) sees inevitable totalitarianism coming (or just developing further), which will be transcended with many, free, small communities (having pre-modern values, hence qualitatively different than current mass-man); while the many will inevitably go wherever the totalitarian system leads them. Marcuse (1968, 1978, 1982), on the other hand, seems to hold a hardly believable notion of the whole society qualitatively transforming (which is consistent with the Marxist/communist worldview²³).

²¹ The idea is that something new must be born from the ashes of current godless system, but Nietzsche's notion of *superman* is very different than notion of a new man coming from the domain of the Left, as he is about hierarchy and being a rule unto himself.

²² Also: “Process of civilizational development disseminates myth (that is almost the definition of progress)...” (Marcuse, 1968, 178, t.m.), which is in contrast to Campbell's notion of *myth*.

²³ This is why we paraphrased Marcuse before how he realized that among radicals (some subset of people holding his ideas) there is a revolt against the mind itself, which is a regression from (the depth of) his position (resulting in a deformation). Hence, even in this small example we see qualitative difference between two groups (people in which emotion dominates and people in which mind dominates). Then, if qualitative change ever happens, how can one be sure that it will happen within all people? It is a question of (in)equality, which is very easily answerable if one is not pinned to a Marxist position.

3.2. Criticism from a postmodern perspective

“Every one being allowed to learn to read, ruineth in the long run not only writing but also thinking.” (Nietzsche, 2019, 26)

Postmodernism is where all the metanarratives came to an end (Lyotard, 2005), the condition of relativity, illusion, nihilism and speculation, which grew immensely with the advent of the post-WW2 world. Until now, we traced back our downfall to rationalisation (instrumental, technical reason), quantification and technological science (Komar 2012, Sunić 2011, Marcuse 1968), and now we will return to the state of things today, take postmodernist arguments and notions to list more facts to strengthen the argument for societal and human decline of our advancing history, i.e., the qualitatively regressed state of the modern world, and claim that many meta solutions, such as the one proposed at the end of the previous chapter, towards the deep transformation of the modern world, when seen from a postmodern perspective, are impossible to yield any positive outcomes.²⁴

In our age, commercials and digital media – *images* – are so powerful that in the abundance of entertainment mainstream media, social media and virtual games, it all become merged with our life and we cannot imagine living without it or even question the value it actually adds to our lives. Adorno (1992, 56), commenting on Orson Welles’ *Invasion of Mars* broadcast in 1938, wrote: “the elimination of the distinction between image and reality has already advanced to the point of a collective sickness, that the reduction of the work of art to empirical reason is already capable of turning into overt lunacy at any moment (...).”²⁵ Baudrillard (2001) argued that images are simulacrum; they

²⁴ Logically, any solution which is not philosophically grounded (theologically and metaphysically even more so), as popular ones among the masses are, i.e. any mainstream political solution (weak or nonexistent philosophical base), which we can frankly consider 'false oppositions' of the same one-dimensional system – “forces in counterbalance do not include those forces which are opposed to the whole system” (Marcuse, 1968, 63, t.m.) – is not worth mentioning as such (serious solution to the crisis).

²⁵ This collective sickness nowadays grew exponentially. Media compares real life politicians to cinema's bad guys to make masses emotionally responsive, interestingly implying, or rather bringing to light the fact, that the masses live in the *image world* of Hollywood and are emotionally responsive to it more than real-life news (which, on the other hand, are actually also *image-constructions*). Masses on their own copy what is projected on them from the *cinema-image* world, having Handmaiden's Tale –style protests, dressing up as

do not represent some real object that ontologically, chronologically and logically precedes it, as many may believe. On the contrary, “image precedes reality in the amount in which it inverts logical, casual sequence of the real and its reproduction” (ibid, 155). Images are entirely ‘flat’ and there is no dialectic relationship with them, and we are so hopelessly naïve that we always think that we will use them pedagogically, morally or meaningfully, even as the image itself rebels against such a use, it is a medium of negating meaning, of events, history, memory etc. (ibid, 157). In our dystopian, falsified, mass society “it is not the question of belief or disbelief in images that pass by our own eyes. We indifferently mirror reality and signs not believing in them” (ibid, 232). We are in an ‘after orgy’ state and “live infinitely reproducing ideals, phantasms, pictures, dreams which are further behind us, and which, all things considered, we must anew again produce in some kind of fatal indifference” (ibid, 164). What Baudrillard wrote decades ago exponentially grew in its obviousness and density with the advent of video games, ‘smart’ phones, cinemas and streaming services (just to name a few things). Truly, life of man is akin to living in a pod and being amused with virtual reality, and in some cases is becoming quickly literally such.

In this environment, everything becomes extinct via its own excess, saturation and fractal dispersion – the social²⁶ destroyed itself in masses, the masses are more social than social, and the masses merged with all the negative, dialectical forces of the antisocial (ibid). When it (social, communal) reaches its ecstasy, it reverses its purpose, becomes inert and extinct – there cannot be a better example for this than a summer festival for the youth, mass of people drunk, drugged, in a trance, surrounded with deafening sounds. Moreover “in the focus of information history is obsessed with its own disappearance. In the focus of *hi-fi* music is chased by its own disappearance. In the focus of experiment, science might lose its object. In the focus of pornography, sexuality is about to disappear” (ibid, 216). And politics is a form without value.²⁷ Also a *look*, according to Baudrillard, is not

Batman or Joker during protests, or casually dressing, acting or comparing themselves and others as/to characters from movies and TV shows.

²⁶ Social as originally something 'qualitative', more communal and with close relations/companionships

²⁷ Great example is to consider how 1950s were years in which consumerism really took off (that is, material existence devoid of any higher meaning); and president of the USA in the 1980s, Ronald Reagan, made references to that period as when America was great, hence the slogan 'Make America Great Again' was born;

fashion,²⁸ is not impressive, it is not even narcissistic, it is a flat, insignificant difference people make up, it is a play on difference without believing in it (ibid). Hence – everything that did not transcend itself has a right to a revival without end (ibid).

Baudrillard paints a clear picture – every field lost its specific significance, became contaminated, merged, meaningless, banal, flat, as they (economic, social, political, cultural, educational, sport, entertainment field) entered the viral process of indistinguishability, which is the main event of our time (ibid). There is no truth; ‘truth’ is based on money, with its sheer quantity you can buy off media and scientific research, as Lyotard eloquently put: “there is no truth without money. Games of scientific language will become games of the rich, or the richest will have the most possibilities for being right. It comes to equalization of wealth, efficiency and truth” (Lyotard, 2005, 65, t.m.). In a world which lost all the notions of quality, where quantity reigns, “global capitalism proved to be the only winner and real prodigy of postmodern condition” (ibid, 107, t.m.).

Regarding the state of affairs we find ourselves in today, Debord²⁹ (1995) calls it *the spectacle* – which is the sum of all weaknesses, or a logical conclusion, of Western philosophy which gave rise to technical rationality, “it is the world of the commodity ruling over all lived experience” (ibid, 26). Simply, “the spectacle is not just the servant of *pseudo-use* – it is already, in itself, the pseudo-use of life” (ibid, 33). What it does is replace the real, primary human needs for pseudo-needs, materialistic needs which increase according to the logic of economy of boundless development, which is an autonomous force, only looking after its own survival. Humans thought that they evolved past the mere fight for survival, but in reality, it seems that the present system made such falsifications of

and in 2016 election to-be POTUS Donald Trump also used the same slogan, being nostalgic to Reagan era, ‘when America was great’. Even more, considering Baudrillard's notion of image, referring to any past period as to re-live it or revive it is pure simulacrum, and here we have copy of that simulacrum. Additionally, nowadays, after the last ‘democratic election’, where Joe Biden has been ‘elected’ POTUS, many yearn to go back to when ‘America was great’ and prices cheap, that is to the Trump era, which was, at least in the aspect now considered, a copy of a simulacrum.

²⁸ And what would fashion be? According to Guénon (2004e, 255) it has symbolic meaning: “an essentially modern invention, is in its real significance something not entirely devoid of importance: it represents unceasing and aimless change, in contrast to the stability and order that reign in traditional civilizations.”

²⁹ While Debord is a Marxist philosopher, the referenced work *The Society of the Spectacle*, thematically, if not as a whole, then at least as for our choices of citations, fits better into this than the previous sub-chapter.

the past as to define the fight for survival as a natural state, and made it the rule of consumer society – the ruthless fight for pseudo-needs.³⁰ It cannot transcend poverty, because it defines consumers’ present state as that of need of more products, as an eternal poverty. It “is a permanent opium war waged to make it impossible to distinguish goods from commodities” (ibid, 30). Baudrillard (2001) also recognized this, as he defined the trilogy of value, starting from a natural stage of use value,³¹ over a market stage of exchange value, and finally the structural stage of value-sign.

Debord (1995) in his *Thesis 17* explains that under the present system the downgrade from *being* to *having* has gone further down to *appearing*, “all effective “having” must now derive both its immediate prestige and its ultimate raison d’être from appearances” (ibid, 17). The examples we can give are plenty – with the use of social media networks such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, people transported their energies to appear happy (or cool, tough, successful, beautiful etc.) there, virtually and online, which makes them often even more unhappy since they cannot live up to their own photo ideal³² (often taken wearing make-up, from a right angle and heavily edited later). What was decades ago reserved for celebrities like actors, sportsmen or musicians is now a widespread social illness of influencers – people who became popular by any means and are celebrated as pure simulacrum, living off advertisements and product placement.³³ And even more people want to ‘succeed in life’ as their evermore flat idols, where success is defined as having more likes, followers or subscribers, which equals getting more money and attention.³⁴ This craving for attention (and reaction) is a sign of inner emptiness, power loss and the alienation one feels, “[...] the individual, though condemned to the passive acceptance of an alien everyday reality, is thus driven into a form of madness in which, by

³⁰ Present system defends itself with the myth that it pacified and elevated existence beyond mere survival, and on the other hand reproduces that primal fight on the economic field. In actuality men never lived for mere survival, it is a simulacrum, image, falsification made out of the consumerist mind “blessed” with shopping malls, unable to grasp any notion of living outside of such frames. Further down we will explain how traditional man lived.

³¹ According to traditional philosophers the true first stage is when things had usable and symbolic/ritualistic value together, as one (Coomaraswamy, 2004; Guénon, 2004b)

³² Here only asserted as it is my observation, example of the point of Thesis 17.

³³ Personally observed current reality, as for the example for Thesis 17.

³⁴ Further observations which give credit to the abovementioned Thesis 17.

resorting to magical devices, he entertains the illusion that he is reacting to his fate” (ibid, 153). Gabel, according to Debord (ibid, 153), said “the abnormal need for representation here compensates for a torturing feeling of being at the margin of existence.” No one truly lives anymore; everything is just a representation, a society where all interaction is mediated by images³⁵ (ibid).

The degradation of humanity via new technologies and applications³⁶ is a rich subject we will not go into, as ultimately they follow the same logic of further entropy, atomization, and reducing everything to quantity and appearance. But what is an interest for us is the effect of media, as a medium, on the inner structure of man, especially when it has gotten to such a point that we have virtual reality helmets. McLuhan (according to Komar, 2018) considered the media broadly, as any extension of man, any tool and any product that changes the ratios of a person’s faculties and thereby structure of their inner self. The danger here is that certain extensions can amplify certain faculties of man and other faculties, not may, but will lack development and possibly be extinguished entirely. Obviously, this has a pedagogical dimension, as we do not want to reduce one’s inner possibilities, but try to harmonize them, that one might experience and grow (develop) them according to their will. But, as of now, we are not interested in that aspect, but pose a question – what is the inner structure of man which looks at red, yellow and green lights, stuck en masse in predefined cemented paths, which watches and listens to the same

³⁵ To quote Debord’s (1995, 23) Thesis 30 in full: “The spectator’s alienation from and submission to the contemplated object (which is the outcome of his unthinking activity) works like this: the more he contemplates, the less he lives; the more readily he recognizes his own needs in the images of need proposed by the dominant system, the less he understands his own existence and his own desires. The spectacle’s externality with respect to the acting subject is demonstrated by the fact that the individual’s own gestures are no longer his own, but rather those of someone else who represents them to him. The spectator feels at home nowhere, for the spectacle is everywhere.”

³⁶ Among previously mentioned examples we can add OnlyFans, site which pornographies common users, usually women and girls, to make money off of alienated men. This is not just self-reducing to sexual objects, but sexual simulacrum. Of course, the word ‘sexual’ here lost every meaning too, hence to be more precise it is about being a ‘simulacrum for instant self-gratification’, the new low both men (by paying for it) and women are reduced to. More generally speaking, as of today it is common knowledge how internet, with fast-paced videos, pornography and scrolling walls of apps with indefinite amount of photos, memes and vain writings, reduces one’s ability to concentrate, focus on the long-term goals (which long-term goal is legitimate in civilization such as ours, anyway?), disharmonizes proper function of dopamine receptors by promoting instant gratification etc.

television, radio station or news media as everybody else, has the same sources of entertainment (only differs stylistically), lives in massive ant-hills of buildings, graduates from same system of education, shops in the same aisles and is focused on the same numbers – those of economy, as everything has price mark upon itself? Certainly, to get to this stage, a stage of materiality and security, it does look like people lost a lot of their inner qualities, advancing only one or few of their capabilities, and they now look like a tree that focused all of its energies to its one tiny branch, while everything else rots. In other words, does it not seem that humans have been lost in the details, forgetting the bigger picture and what is essential?

In postmodern times³⁷ forces of entropy are so strong that we do not believe any half-measure can help us fight it. Everything that can just be identified politically³⁸ is a half-measure, and every philosophical view adds more to the chaos than to the solution – this is why postmodernists are ‘right’ in their diagnosis and pessimism, as opposed to New Left’s (or New Right’s, if so expressed and acted) fight for the grand solution or transformation. But, in theory, there is plenty that is right from all of these perspectives – who can deny that, Marcuse’s (1968, 1978, 1982) re-forming of sensibilities to defeat the system based on manipulation and fake needs, New Right’s (Sunić, 2011) integral ecology & cities on a human scale, Nietzsche’s (2019) opposition between *superman* and the *last man*, or Sergejev’s (1986, 182, t.m.) quote “power loss which individual feels more and more intensively, can’t be anything else than emptiness in himself that he will fill up with stronger social engagement. That’s the individual basis for a birth of a new civilization”, just to name few examples, are not all generally true or very likely to be a part of a future change? But the point is not that everybody had some or many details right, but that nobody finished the mosaic, not even to an extent where one could see the bigger picture forming

³⁷ Reminder: our time here is alluded to as postmodernism, which we consider just part of modernism.

³⁸ Politics and journalism de-generated as much as other fields (social, educational) in our time, David Shaw (Hersh & Merrow, 2005) wrote: “Even the coverage of politics, once regarded as a matter of gravitas, has been rendered the stuff of amusement. Look at Jay Leno, David Letterman, Dennis Miller, Jon Stewart, Al Franken, and Bill Maher – comedians all. And now they are America’s experts when it comes to politics – commanding audiences far larger than those who provide serious punditry.” Hence, such democratic dystopianism was fully present in 2004, when comedy shows started to be the prime source of political information for the masses.

and waiting to be rediscovered. Hence, unfortunately, everything was reduced to systems, half-measures and, ultimately, even simulacrum.³⁹

3.3. *Criticism from a cyclical perspective*

“If any man is able to convince me that I do not think or act right, I will gladly change; for I seek the truth, by which no man was ever injured. But he is injured who abides by his error and his ignorance.” (Aurelius 6:21, 2020, 66)

We will now take a bird’s eye point of view on civilizational cycles, while up until now we mostly referred to perspectives which were invested politically and ideologically in the current streams of society. We will introduce this perspective by discussing different aspects of our global crisis, as presented by three authors, starting with the cut-and-dry historic and rationalistic approach by Glubb (1976), through the philosophy and history of Spengler (1991), ending with the comparative mythology of Campbell (2003, 2008).

Glubb (1976) hypothesized that empires⁴⁰ last about 10 generations or 250 years, that this average did not change in the last three millennia, and that their life cycles can be divided into six Ages: of Pioneers (Outburst), of Conquest, of Commerce, of Affluence, of Intellect and of Decadence. In the first age, it is natural to be self-sacrificing and brave, while the last age is characterized by cowardice and belief that all the problems of the world are solvable by our brains – “unsophisticated self-dedication of the hero,” from the early stages, “is more essential than the sarcasms of the clever” (ibid, 12). Decadence is marked by the weakening of religion, defensiveness, materialism, feminism, influx of foreigners, the welfare state and frivolity, endless talking with no action, and it is all due to internal factors such as selfishness, too long of a period of wealth and power, love of money and a loss of sense of duty⁴¹ (ibid). The interesting fact is that such decadence is a

³⁹ In Baudrillard's (2011) sense, as hyperreal, illusionary notion where original cannot even be referred to. Just a made-up 'truth.'

⁴⁰ Meaning superpowers, great nations, time of 'national greatness' as Assyria (859-612 B.C.), Arab Empire (634-880), Ottoman Empire (1320-1570), Britain (1700-1950)... (Glubb, 1976)

⁴¹ Observation such as the fact that there is a correlation between decadent state of an empire and expanding role of women in public life, welfare state and influx of foreigners does not mean we take correlation for causation, and we do not confuse cause and symptoms. For us, none of this is political, as we take perspective

spiritual, moral and mental deterioration or disease – “the citizens of such a nation will no longer make an effort to save themselves, because they are not convinced that anything in life is worth saving” (ibid, 20), and those transported outside of such surroundings do adopt the ways of their new country or surrounding. Glubb notes that the greatest saints lived in an era of frivolity, hence the seeds of (religious) revival are quietly sown, and a new era sets in (ibid).

Spengler (1991), on the other hand, saw civilizations as organisms, with their seasons, their conception, rise, stagnation and fall. The distinction he made was between Culture and Civilization – “the living body of a soul and the mummy of it” (ibid, 181), two successive periods of the same society. Culture, sublimated life essence, an early period, is populated by true-type people, folk, born and grown from the soil, which live “inwards”. There are many cultures, not one is the same, as there are many sculptures, paintings, aspects of mathematics, physics... they all have their limited duration, they blossom, have their special type of growth, and then decline, like fruit (ibid). Spengler sees world-history as “a picture of endless formations and transformations, of the marvelous waxing and waning of organic forms. The professional historian, on the contrary, sees it as a sort of tapeworm industriously adding onto itself one epoch after another” (ibid, 17-18).

Civilization, a late period, is populated by cynical, clever, unfruitful, completely non-metaphysical, parasitical city-dwellers, religionless, traditionless, utterly matter-of-fact mob of mass men which live “outwards”, in space and among bodies and “facts” (ibid, 25, 181). This state is futureless, the final exhaustion of forms that have become dead and inorganic.

which is beyond merely political (what we really think, if it is of any importance here, can be found at the conclusion of our Appendix 1). However, we do not wish to self-censor ourselves with our sources (which are academically valid, and where our aim was exactly to diversify them), we believe that is not constructive towards realizing the societal health.

Spengler calls our civilization⁴² *Faustian*,⁴³ it was born around 1000 A.D. in gothic monasteries, where a world-picture of mechanism was born, and “to reduce Nature, presupposes a *dogma*”⁴⁴ (ibid, 190). Here we came to a different root cause of our present fall, a cultural seed which had its own life cycle and now comes to its destined end. Let us entertain this new depth, as Spengler writes: “(...) true system of thoughts emphatically cannot exist, for no sign can replace actuality. Profound and honest thinkers are always brought to the conclusion that all cognition is conditioned a priori by its own form and can never reach that which the words mean (...)”⁴⁵ (ibid, 261). For him, there is eternal world of Nature, of Become (*zoological* field), in which Cultures (*world-historical* field), the Becoming, i.e., mentalities as specific seeds – march towards self-fulfillment. Because “life has an aim, it is the fulfillment of that which was ordained at its conception”⁴⁶ (ibid, 243).

We are the ones which made up (and continually make up, more unconsciously than consciously) our own forms, so as to explain, or rather construct, the world around us.⁴⁷

⁴² Term used in its usual sense. The break from Culture to Civilization in Spenglerian sense, for the West, happened around year 1800 (Spengler, 1991).

⁴³ On Faustian soul: “(...) the inner relationship between atom-theory and ethic goes further. It has been shown how the Faustian soul – whose being consists in the overcoming of the visible, whose feeling is loneliness and whose yearning is infinity – puts its need of solitude, distance and abstraction into all its actualities, into its public life, its spiritual and its artistic form-world alike.” (Spengler, 1991, 193) and the difference between Faustian and Classical man: “the forest stirrings and the forest solitude, the tempest and the surf, which completely dominated the nature of Faustian man (even that of pre-Faustian Celts and Teutons) and imparted to their mythology its peculiar character, left Classical man unmoved. Only concretes – hearth and door, the coppice and the plot-field, this particular river and that particular hill – condensed into Being for him.” (ibid, 203)

⁴⁴ “There is no science that is without unconscious presupposition of this kind, over which the researcher has no control and which can be traced back to the earliest days of the awakening Culture. *There is no Natural science without a precedent Religion.*” (Spengler, 1991, 190)

⁴⁵ This thought is essential, taken in its extreme or absolute form, and none of previous authors and philosophers, including Spengler, did justice in answering its problem – the problem of mind and thoughts in themselves, since they are structures, ‘glasses’ we identify ourselves with, rendering all reality a mystery, in other words they close us in the world of illusion. Tradition always knew the answer, to which we will come to.

⁴⁶ This quote could have a strong pedagogical meaning too.

⁴⁷ “Every “Age of Enlightenment” proceeds from an unlimited optimism of the reason – always associated with the type of the megalopolitan – to an equally unqualified skepticism. The sovereign waking-consciousness, cut off by walls and artificialities from living nature and the land about it and under it, cognizes nothing outside itself. It applies criticism to its imaginary world, which it has cleared of everyday sense-experience, and continues to do so till it has found the last and subtlest result, the form of the form – itself: namely, nothing.” (Spengler, 1991, 347-348) & “And they indicate the paths that our science is pursuing – on the one hand, towards the discovery that its logical and numerical results are identical with the

And Faustian man “created the *idea of the machine* as a small cosmos obeying the will of man alone” (ibid, 411). But this subversion, this illusion of power in which the microcosm asserted itself over macrocosm (ibid), cannot last long:

“(…) for that very reason Faustian man has become *the slave of his creation*.⁴⁸ The machine has forcibly increased his numbers and changed his habits in a direction from which there is no return. The peasant, the hand-worker, even the merchant, appear suddenly as inessential in comparison with the *three great figures that the Machine has bred and trained up in the cause of its development: the entrepreneur, the engineer and the factory-worker*. Out of a quite small branch of manual work there has grown up (*in this one Culture alone*) a mighty tree that casts its shadow over all the other vocations – namely, *the economy of the machine –industry*. It forces the entrepreneur not less than the workman for obedience. *Both* become slaves, and not masters, of the machine, which now for the first time develops its devilish and occult power. Not merely the importance but the very existence of industry depends upon existence of the hundred thousand talented, rigorously schooled brains that command the technique and develop it onward and onward. The quiet engineer it is who is the machine’s master and destiny.” (ibid, 412)

A parallel can be made with Marcuse (1979), i.e., Rudi Dutschke’s strategy of *the long march through the institutions*, which combined infiltration, subversion, holding space and positions while learning how computers are used, how to use mass media, organization of production etc. That was an attempt, of the radical left, to take over the Machine,⁴⁹ especially the class of people which are crucial, as engineers were (those who hold

structure of the reason itself, and, on the other, towards the revelation that the whole theory which clothes these numbers merely represents the symbolic expression of Faustian life.” (Spengler, 1991, 223)

⁴⁸ Same was obvious to Guénon (2004e, 194): “Man ‘mechanized’ everything and ended at last by mechanizing himself, falling little by little into the condition of numerical units, parodying unity, yet lost in the uniformity and indistinction of the ‘masses’, that is, in pure multiplicity and nothing else. Surely that is the most complete triumph of quantity over quality that can be imagined.”

⁴⁹ Their success was seemingly great, but it just added to tyranny, chaos and entropy more so. Every ideological ‘solution’ is destined to have such an impact. More than everything the Left merged with the Machine just colored its cogs in rainbow colors.

knowledge of operating the means of production). For Spengler, such actions, and the mass of people supporting it from the background, were the embodiment of the very ethic of the Faustian soul, Ethical Socialism – will to power,⁵⁰ do as I want – “is neither more or less than the sentiment of action-at-a-distance, the moral pathos of the third dimension; and the root feeling of Care – care for those who are with us, and for those who are to follow – pervades the atmosphere of our time.” (Spengler, 1991, 178) On the other hand, Spengler thought that the Machine would, as was the case of every Civilization, die of its own, as people crucial for its survival would be overwhelmed by its growing sense of Satanism (ibid). Marcuse’s (1982) *qualitative leap*, what man needs to change in himself for him to be able to change the world around him, will not come through some ideological or philosophical action, but naturally for some at the end of the civilizational life cycle.

Considering the possible causes of the modern fall that we are seeking; we arrived at instrumental reason, which takes out, from the world-picture (reality), qualities (faculties) which cannot be reduced to units (numbers) to be measured (Marcuse, 1968; Komar, 2016; Baudrillard, 2001; Debord, 1995). Komar (2012) called it a subject-object distinction, where the other subject, for example nature in its entirety, is reduced to an inorganic object one can manipulate with. Spengler thought of it as the cultural impulse, destiny of our very Faustian souls, which gave birth to the Machine. All of these are very similar, if not exactly the same. Spengler, in some places and in certain aspects, may have gone a bit deeper, as we quoted him about the nature of thought and mind itself; on that very note:

“(…) let the reader conceive of the motion within a physical system as aging of that system (as in fact it is, as lived-experience of the observer), and he will feel at once and distinctly the fatefulness immanent in, the unconquerably organic content of, the word “motion” and all its derivative ideas. But Mechanics, having nothing to do with aging, should have nothing to do with motion either,

⁵⁰ “In spite of foreground appearances, ethical socialism is not a system of compassion, humanity, peace and kindly care, but one of will-to-power. Any other reading of it is illusory. The Stoic takes the world as he finds it, but the Socialist wants to organize and recast it in form and substance, to fill it with *his own* spirit. The Stoic adapts himself, the Socialist commands.” (Spengler, 1991, 186)

and consequently, since no scientific system is conceivable without a motion-problem in it, a complete and self-contained mechanics is an impossibility. Somewhere or other there is always an organic starting-point in the system where immediate Life enters it – an umbilical cord that connects the mind-child with life-mother, the thoughts with the thinker” (1991, 195).

Modern science can make and measure things, but has no explanatory power,⁵¹ its supposed authority to tell us what is true and what is not might be the greatest illusion of our time. To quote Spengler (ibid, 224) again:

“But, as we have seen, number is one of the most primary symbols of every Culture: and consequently the way to pure number is the return of the waking-consciousness to its own secret, the revelation of its own formal necessity. The goal reached, the vast and evermore meaningless and threadbare fabric woven around natural science falls apart. It was, after all, nothing but the “world-bound” structure of the “Reason”, the grammar by which it believed it could overcome the Visible and extract therefrom the True. But what appears under the fabric is once again the earliest and deepest, the Myth, the immediate Becoming, Life itself. The less anthropomorphic science believes itself to be, the more anthropomorphic it is.”

Since the *Myth* is the foundation of philosophy and science, considered as the essential reality beneath the made up structures of reason, we shall briefly introduce Campbell’s position. Campbell (2003, 2008) saw in myths⁵² the archetypal, the ideas, and interplay of elemental forces, something we are all derived from. He called the typical heroic path *monomyth*, found in many diverse cultures, which followed the same general steps (separation, initiation, return) and which was about finding the center of being, truth,

⁵¹ Something that Guénon (2004, 2004b, 2004c, 2004e) tirelessly points to.

⁵² On the difference between myth and religion: “Humor is the touchstone of the truly mythological as distinct from the more literal-minded and sentimental theological mood. The gods as icons are not ends in themselves. Their entertaining myths transport the mind and spirit, not *up to*, but *past* them, into the yonder void; from which perspective the more heavily freighted theological dogmas then appear to have been only pedagogical lures (...)” (Campbell, 2008, 154-155)

god, meaning, higher knowledge, strength, love and/or power and, upon “returning”, sharing it with all the people (Campbell, 2008). It is the structure of every heroic story and narrative, which we all instinctively and deeply believe in (or rather know its essential truth), and watch (read, listen, play) the same stories over and over again, nowadays mostly in film and TV⁵³ And to answer to Marcuse’s assertion (Footnote 22), that science disseminates the Myth and how that is precisely the definition of progress, from Campbell and Spengler’s perspective, ironically, Marcuse himself believes in the ‘myth’⁵⁴ of progress and constructs the past from his own, reductive, point of view, making his own simulacrum. Coomaraswamy (2004, 60) wrote: “our mortal part can survive “by bread alone”, but it is by the Myth that our Inner Man is fed; or, if we substitute for the true myths the propagandist myths of “race”, “uplift”, “progress”, and “civilizing mission”, the Inner Man starves” (ibid).

Campbell, surrounded by timeless themes and myths, came to deeper insights from a traditional perspective, not having to deal with the self-imposed rationalistic barriers so

⁵³ Campbell, with his comparative mythology and story-telling, had a great impact on Hollywood (Campbell, 2003), popularly on George Lucas (*Star Wars* trilogy director) and more recently Zack Snyder (*Man of Steel* director). He must have had some influence on Christopher Nolan too, going just by the quote from *The Dark Knight* “you either die a hero, or you live long enough to see yourself become a villain” is eerily similar to “the hero of yesterday becomes the tyrant of tomorrow, unless he crucifies *himself* today” (Campbell, 2008, 303). There are many movies, usually based on books, which perfectly told the heroic archetypal stories and myths, such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*. At last we shall mention one more, as it is heavily based on Baudrillard’s philosophy (in addition with esoteric and occult symbolism), *The Matrix*, the original trilogy and the relatively recent, fourth movie. The newest installment is a great continuation of Matrix’s posed philosophical problems, entirely self-conscious of its imprisonment in matrix itself, also in a sense of Adorno’s (1992) culture industry, Spengler’s (1991) the Machine and Marcuse’s (1968) one-dimensionality, not to mention its more profound expression of Baudrillard’s philosophy (personally the best way to look at it is to see how the matrix evolved in ~20 year time, from the first movie to the forth one, having 1:1 parallel with our present system). To make a connection with question posed by Glubb (1976, 19) – “When the whole human race has reached the stage of decadence, where will new energetic conquering races be found?” and Jurčević (end of second chapter), the movie’s message is ‘how come that we tell ourselves always the same liberating stories but live in chains? How come we always hopelessly see them as shadows in Plato’s cave instead of as God’s path to follow? Will we ever wake up and liberate ourselves?’ Campbell (2008, 188-189) wrote: “How teach again, however, what has been taught correctly and incorrectly learned a thousand times, throughout the millennia of mankind’s prudent folly? That is the hero’s ultimate difficult task. How render back into light-world language the speech defying pronouncements of the dark? How represent on a two-dimensional surface a three-dimensional form, or in a three-dimensional image a multi-dimensional meaning? How translate into terms of “yes” and “no” revelations that shatter into meaninglessness every attempt to define the pairs of opposites? How communicate to people who insist on the exclusive evidence of their senses the message of the all-generating void?”

⁵⁴ This time the word is used in its derogatory sense, as falsehood.

much, as modern-day philosophers, thinkers and academics do. To once again draw a parallel, with Komar's (2012) cause of the present fall and the birth of the system, defined as subject-object distinction, Campbell (2008, 333) might explain it as such:

“The aim is not to *see*, but to realize that one *is*, that essence; then one is free to wander as that essence in the world. Furthermore: the world too is of that essence. The essence of oneself and the essence of the world: these two are one. Hence separateness, withdrawal, is no longer necessary. Wherever the hero may wander, whatever he might do, he is ever in the presence of his own essence – for he has the perfected eye to see. There is no separateness. Thus, just as the way of social participation may lead in the end to a realization of the All in the individual, so that of exile brings the hero to the Self in all.”

3.4. Criticism from traditional perspective

“Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” (Joshua 1:9)

The traditional perspective has an entirely different foundation in comparison to our modern perspective, life and philosophy, which we will explain in the upcoming chapter. Here we will list criticisms that perennial philosophers have of our contemporary world, as a logical continuation of previous ones. Quite simply, everything emanates from the fact that the modern world is not based upon metaphysics (the knowledge of the universal and eternal, which is the only thing that offers stability and *raison d'être* of every being), thenceforth we can add to the list the fact that religion lost its inner core, was pushed to the margins, the elites became vain and decadent, *quality* is diminishing to *quantity* at every level, negation of hierarchy, human essence comes second to profit with modern inverted work ethics etc. (Guénon 2004, 2004c, 2004e; Herlihy 2009; Coomaraswamy 2004; Schuon 1993).

Losing sight of the Principle, the Absolute, metaphysics, or God, made a hole in the center of our society which cannot be truly filled with lesser notions, rationalistic, sensual

or sentimental, which we are left with (Guénon 2004, 2004c, 2004e; Herlihy 2009; Coomaraswamy 2004; Schuon 1993); it seems that our system dominantly bases itself on the survival-economic notion/instinct, as we explained before. Without principle, there is no pole (*unmoved mover*) society needs to revolve around⁵⁵. The latest example we had of this on a large scale in the West was Christendom during the Middle Ages (Guénon 2004e; Herlihy 2009; Coomaraswamy 2004; Schuon 1993). Modern civilization has nothing of the kind, and it seems to be mostly fueled by the love of power, status, profit and the material, serving idols and ideologies inside the *current of forms* (ever-changing, chaotic, relative, individual, nihilistic). Guénon (2004, 27) argues that modern idols, ‘lay religions’, such as Science, Progress, Justice, Right and Liberty are high-sounding words, better left undefined for their own sake; they are not even ideas, but the personification of more or less vague sentimental aspirations, used as a collective suggestion, behind which there is nothing, or at best something insignificant:

“(…) the anti-traditional spirit showed itself at once by the proclaiming of ‘free inquiry’, or in other words, the absence in the doctrinal order of any principle higher than individual opinions. The inevitable result was intellectual anarchy; hence the indefinite multiplicity of religious and pseudo-religious sects, philosophic systems aiming above all at originality, and scientific theories as pretentious as they are ephemeral, in short, unbelievable chaos (...)” (ibid, 28).

The system justifies itself mostly with technological-material progression (high-sounding words of modern lay religion), choice of products and security. It totally lacks the answer to “the meaning crisis” (due to the ‘death of god’, the loss of the previously mentioned pole), the question of life’s meaning is left unanswered, and it is up to an atomized individual to find an answer for themselves, which is in actuality not something “freeing”, but wholly *nihilistic*, as it is proven by the times we live in.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Hence there is no support and reference point, just 'change', and change without its principle in the unchanged and unchangeable can only be chaos.

⁵⁶ Personal assertion/opinion based on experience and observation. Life has a meaning (*raison d'être*) or it doesn't, it's not up for an individual to ‘make the answer up’ for ‘himself’ (that means there is no meaning).

Since in past societies religions and doctrines held the primary role, the fall started in parallel with the loss of a ‘divine connection’ (explained further down), the breakdown of its inner core, which was esoteric and initiatic (Guénon 2004c, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009; Schuon, 1993; Coomaraswamy, 2004). Modern religion is only a husk of its former self, naturally pushed from the center to the margins of society. Nowadays society has many different dimensions we see as mostly separate, such as political, social, educational, religious, economic etc. In traditional societies, what was considered religion (or what in our times de-generated to the state of modern religion) was social, political, educational – it was the principle of all the other (personal/societal) dimensions or interests and it gave them their value and reason to be. In modern society, nothing unifies such fields, they are just parts of the economic system that defines them and distorts them (*uniforms* them). It controls and devalues them, and there is no unity and synergy between them. Hence, *the economic* is the middle around which everything else is forced to revolve, and *the economic* is the domain in which *quantity* reigns over *quality* (and is characterized by constant warfare). In other words, one aspect of the topic of ‘Man’s fall from the Garden’ is, according to tradition, the gradual loss of the *qualitative* (higher faculties and higher knowledge) in favor of the *quantitative*⁵⁷ (Guénon, 2004c, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009).

The same logic applies to the loss of spiritual elites, as they held the central position in traditional societies as the class which transmits tradition in its integrality, and they de facto were the esoteric core, as Brahmins/priests (or equivalents in other religions/doctrines⁵⁸). Loss of the class of people who can transmit and embody traditional doctrine is the loss of the doctrine, and it creates a vacuum. Hence, nowadays, an entirely different class of people holds that central position, and, drawing another parallel to what we wrote before, it is the capitalist class, the rich. Modern society has a class of people with no higher knowledge as an ‘elite’, its character might be only marginally different than that

⁵⁷ Which is synonymous with gradual distancing from God, Life Source, Metaphysics, Essence.

⁵⁸ As a disclaimer, we here speak of late traditional civilizations, known by historians. We can't tell how exactly earlier ones were structured, since there is very little data. The point is that no traditional structure is fixed, it varies (as adopting principles is different in different conditions), but it is not properly traditional if it does not adhere to metaphysics.

of the common man, but, essentially, they are one and the same, with the elite just having more of quantity (money, popularity – the only thing, rational and quantitative, modern man/masses believe in), which equals to power and status. It is not surprising that here we have a correlation with the previous conclusion of the ‘idea-plane’, where economy is central, and in the societal dimension, where the rich dominate.⁵⁹

Connected to all of the above is the loss of the sense of hierarchy, and the growth of a sense of equality, which goes hand in hand with the diminishing of quality.⁶⁰ It is present in all fields, but let us give one example; concerning truth/knowledge and its popularization, Guénon notices:

“[truth, any knowledge] the pretension of putting it ‘within everyone’s grasp’, of making it accessible to all without distinction, necessarily involves diminishing and deforming it, for it is impossible to admit that all men are equally capable of understanding anything. It is not a question of greater or lesser extent of education, it is a question of ‘intellectual horizon’, and that is something which cannot be modified, which is inherent in very nature of human individual. The chimerical prejudice of ‘equality’ goes against all the best established facts, in the intellectual order as well as in the physical order; it is the negation of all natural hierarchy, and it is the debasement of all knowledge to the level of limited understanding of the masses. People will no longer admit anything that passes common comprehension, and, in fact, the scientific and philosophical conceptions of our epoch are, all told, most lamentably mediocre (...) (2004, 40)

⁵⁹ There is a difference between the materially rich nowadays and in the previous centuries – as today among the rich there is no *class* whatsoever, anybody can be rich no matter the background, think of influencers, video game players (which can make few million dollars per year, not even having 18 years), so-called *e-girls*, entertainers, scammers etc. 'Be careful what you wish for' – and this is the ultimate reach of equality, which at this stage translates to chaos and nihilism.

⁶⁰ Negating or arguing hierarchy is synonymous with negating or arguing quality, lowering everything and everyone to the lowest common denominator – the ideal of equality, if not in theory, always represent in praxis.

From personal lived experience, the work-ethic of modern times bases itself in a belief that any work is good because it stimulates the economy, keeps us busy and helps society. As there is no unity in our society; everything is fragmented, so is work divorced from culture, to quote Coomaraswamy (2004, 117): “We have gone so far as to divorce work from culture, and to think of culture as something to be acquired in hours of leisure; but there can be only a hothouse and unreal culture where work itself is not its means; if culture does not show itself in all we make we are not cultured.” Work is for survival (“bread alone”), and we are all in the same pot working for our survival, security and status in an increasingly alienated world. It is a defeatist stance that people hold, falling back on the fact that “everybody must work”, and that only a few actually do what they truly want or like, that is just reality, and “how things are”. Coomaraswamy (2004, 125) wrote: “We need hardly say that from traditional point of view there could hardly be found a stronger condemnation of the present social order than in the fact that the man at work is no longer doing what he likes best, but rather what he must, and in the general belief that man can only be really happy when he “gets away” and is at play.”

To sum it all up, from the perspective of tradition, modern civilization has no recognition of higher knowledge (metaphysical knowledge), no intellectual (spiritual) elite; religions and doctrines – which give value and meaning to everything – are just shells of the former selves on the margins of the society; people work as to satisfy the need for survival and the false need for more products, not according to their nature (what they are best at and like best); the focus is entirely on the earthly existence and the whole system is losing all quality at an accelerated rate with each passing year (Coomaraswamy, 2004; Guénon 2004, 2004c, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009). In the next chapter, we will give some rational arguments for a traditional outlook on life and then the explain main aspects of the traditional world.

4. Traditional world

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” (St. Matthew 7:7-8)

We will not dwell into the vast world that once was – all traditional societies⁶¹ our history remembers, the way principle(s) manifested in their particularity, their holy scriptures and societal structure, hierarchy, laws and so on (for instance key terms such as *initiation, initiate, art, artisan, caste, cycle, metaphysical realization, traditional science* are excluded or barely included). For us in this thesis, the crucial point is to extract the fundamental difference between our civilization (and paradigm our pedagogy is under) and the traditional. Such a difference is *ideal*,⁶² and we will sketch it to sufficiently establish it in this (academic) format, so that we can carry on with our synthesis (a solution to the problem that is the modern world itself) and conclusion, in which will may ultimately ‘leave the door open’ for further potential academic work.

So what is the crucial, fundamental difference between modern, i.e., anti-traditional (or even ‘counter traditional’, see Guénon, 2004e), and traditional civilization, man and perspective? Simply put, it is the (non)recognition of the supra-rational (supra-individual) domain (which ‘extends further’ to metaphysics). Hence, in this chapter, we will firstly define ‘the rational’ and show its inadequacies, limits and consequences, and then the solution for such idolization of the rational (making of it a dogma and pseudo-principle), while also introducing the notion of the supra-rational. After that we will provide a sketch of traditional (true) metaphysics, and examples of symbolic usage; as the former was the reference point and the latter preferred contemplative mode (as what is the highest is

⁶¹ Herein lies the central argument of perennial philosophers – one which understands the essence sees how different traditional societies expressed the same essence (universal truths of highest order, we will not list and comment on all of the possible implications in this thesis). And today, due to accelerated decline of quality in the world, we search for answers, namely the beginning of the deviation (and start noticing that the trend is ‘decline’ and not ‘progress’, and that it was always like that), and solution to it. It’s a search for the roots, for the truth, and ultimately for salvation.

⁶² Morphological and metaphysical, beyond and more than a merely historical opposition.

inexpressible), of each and every traditional civilization (Guénon, 2004, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009; Schuon, 1993; Coomaraswamy, 2004).

The three notions are inseparable – *metaphysics*, *supra-rational* and *tradition* – traditional ‘proceeds directly from’ metaphysics (transmits it), which is knowable via the supra-rational faculty *intellectual intuition* (Guénon, 2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009; Schuon, 1993; Coomaraswamy, 2004). To clarify further, ‘tradition’⁶³ etymologically means ‘transmission’, as we explained in Footnote 7; it is, usually oral, and refers to the doctrine, metaphysical truth/knowledge and the subsequent inner realization (Guénon, 2004a).

4.1. Rational and supra-rational

“For the Neo-Platonists and Augustine, and again for Erigena, Eckhart and Dante, and for such as RUMI, Ibn ‘Arabī, Shankaracharya, and many others in Asia, religious and intellectual experience are too closely interwoven ever to be wholly divided.” (Coomaraswamy, 2004, 74)

Rational⁶⁴ for us is the synonymous with reason, there might be a difference of degree, but from traditional point of view, since it (ratio/reason) is cut off from its principle in the supra-rational (as we are about to explain), it has the same downward tendency towards the material, pragmatic and utilitarian (hence ‘instrumental reason’, ‘technical rationality’ etc.). According to perennial philosophers, there is a key notion, a fact, of the supra-rational domain (supra-individual, formless), that which is ‘above’ rational (Guénon 2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009, Schuon, 1993; Coomaraswamy, 2004). Let us consider it as, if anything, mere hypothetical, and rationally and logically argue for its existence. Firstly, all moderns accept the existence of the infra-rational, for

⁶³ It does not mean ‘custom’. It has nothing to do with psychology, sentimentalism, New Age or any *make-belief*.

⁶⁴ Rationality is a ‘distinctive characteristic’, what medieval logicians called *differentia animalis*, it defines man as such (man as ‘rational animal’ by Scholastics and Aristotle), as he alone has that (human) mode of thought. What amounts to the same, a characteristic of human individuality, is ‘mental’ faculty, the ‘internal sense’ which is in Sanskrit designated by the name *manas*, Latin *mens*, English *mind*. See Guénon, 2004, page 48-49, in *The Multiple States of the Being*, Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis.

example sentimentalism, but have a hard time conceiving, even as a possibility, something ‘above’ the rational, the supra-rational,⁶⁵ supra-individual, in which domain the *intellect* or *intellectual intuition*⁶⁶ (*Buddhi*) exists. It is a faculty used to directly obtain the knowledge of a higher order (metaphysical knowledge), to assimilate the subject with the object, knower and known (Guénon 2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009, Schuon, 1993; Coomaraswamy, 2004). Secondly, direct, immediate knowledge is the principle of all mediated, reflected, discursive knowledge.⁶⁷ To make a previous point in an inversed sense, rationalism does not have its principle in itself, as Guénon (2004b, 412) stated: “Reason, in fact, which is only a faculty of mediate knowledge, is the properly human mode of intelligence; intellectual intuition may be said to be supra-human since it is

⁶⁵ Here, we are arguing for its hypothetical possibility. But, if we were to use this argument for its de facto existence, one would argue that the existence of sentimentalism/emotive element is a proven fact, something easily demonstrable and within everyone, which is not the case with supra-rational, and that would be true from that point of view, but said point of view is lacking if it, on such basis, wants to negate the possibility of supra-rational. By definition, supra-rational is above form, and it cannot be found clothed in integral human individuality. What we find in men is rationalism, which is just expression or translation (due to certain conditions) of, when we transpose it universally, the notion of *Buddhi*, intellect, intellectual intuition, higher intellect, universal reason (all synonymous). Also let us note that the same tendency exists in psychology, where the existence of subconscious is a fact, but super-conscious is rarely discussed, for which we can attest to with personal experience (as experiencing supra-consciousness and witnessing endless talk of subconscious, but not of the correlative ‘supra-consciousness’).

⁶⁶ “(...) ‘universal reason’, understood in the sense of the Platonic and Alexandrian *Logos*, nonetheless surpass all assignable measure, the particular domain of individual reason, which is exclusively a faculty of distinctive and discursive knowledge, on which they impose themselves as givens of a transcendent order necessarily conditioning all mental activity. This is evident moreover from the moment one observes that these principles do not presuppose any particular existence but, on the contrary, are logically presupposed as the premises, at least implicit, of all true affirmations of a contingent order.” See Guénon, 2004, page 50-51, in *The Multiple States of the Being*, Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis. Also, see “Appendix 1” for more information.

⁶⁷ This is a logical necessity (see previous footnote), because lower proceeds from the higher. Less determined and less dependable is the principle of more determined and more dependable, and logically comes prior – “Discursive knowledge, as opposed to intuitive knowledge, is fundamentally synonymous with indirect and mediate knowledge; it is therefore only a very relative knowledge, gained in a way by reflection or by participation. By reason of this character of exteriority, which allows the duality of subject and object to subsist, it cannot find within itself the guarantee of its truth, but must receive it from principles that surpass it, and which are of order of intuitive knowledge, that is to say purely intellectual knowledge.” See Guénon, 2004, page 50-51, in *The Multiple States of the Being*, Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis. To ‘gather knowledge from the ground up’ is a modernist fallacy, because it will always lack theory (synthesis), it will be highly relative assemblage of information, able only to be falsely and shortly ‘unified’ under some ‘theory’ (that’s why traditional sciences always were application of metaphysical principles, never losing sight of them). Metaphysical knowledge is the universal knowledge (or knowledge of the universal, immutable, eternal), from which all other is derived – known directly through intellectual intuition. Hence, knowledge of the universal is the principle of the knowledge of the particular, and the particular is just a derivative of universal, which gives it its relative reality.

a direct participation in universal intelligence (...).” It is relative and individual. That is why, if something is rationally right for one individual, may not be for the other,⁶⁸ which is why there is an have endless production of philosophical and academic work, all in increasingly greater detail – how can one assert that the apex, the highest faculty, is something relative, unable to unify the field(s), unable to provide any certainty?⁶⁹ It only leads to dispersion, fragmentation, chaos and atomization (‘specialization’) – and more reduction (of quality), which is documented and accepted by all the authors and philosophers, from many sides (philosophical and political), we included in the third chapter (Marcuse, 1968; Baudrillard, 2001; Debord, 1995; Sunić, 2011, etc.). Thirdly, there is an almost indefinite evidence of supra-rational in history;⁷⁰ we find it in religions, doctrines, sacred or esoteric books, and mystery (initiatic) schools; and there is a clear distinction between *intellectual intuition* (supra-rational faculty) and the *mystical* and infra-rational (Guénon 2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009, Schuon, 1993; Coomaraswamy, 2004). Guénon explains:

“(...) supra-rational order, which does not in any way mean the irrational: metaphysics cannot contradict reason, but it stands above reason, which has no bearing here except as a secondary means for the formulation and external expression of truth that lie beyond its province and outside its scope. Metaphysical truths can only be conceived by the use of faculty that does not belong to the individual order, and that, by reason of the immediate character of its operation, may be called “intuitive”, but only on the strict condition that it is

⁶⁸ No amount of dialectics can help us here, for both positions are relative, and with dialectics we might come to the common ground, or at best figure out relative truth – but our point is to surpass relativity, not to endlessly bask in it.

⁶⁹ On top of that, by rational means we produce theories which are all 'rational' and 'established' – but often contradict one another.

⁷⁰ It is important to point out that Guénon in his magnum opus *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* (2004e) provided probably the best deconstruction of (philosophical and logical) mistakes modern and ancient scientist and philosophers made which made our civilization, and regressed it to the point we find ourselves nowadays.

not regarded as having anything in common with the faculty which certain contemporary philosophers call intuition⁷¹ (...)” (Herlihy, 2009, 102)

Rationality, without the Intellect, universal intelligence or intellectual intuition being its principle, has no valid recourse, only idols to be a servant of – such as ‘science’, ‘progress’, ‘nationalism’, ‘feminism’, ‘humanism’ (...), although it is often sentiment itself, as Guénon (2004, 28-29) explains:

“Of all the superstitions preached by those very people who profess that they never stop inveighing against ‘superstition’, that of ‘science’ and ‘reason’ is the only one which does not seem, at first sight, to be based on sentiment; but there is a kind of rationalism that is nothing more than sentimentalism disguised, as is shown only too well by the passion with which its champions uphold it, and by the hatred they evince for whatever goes against their inclinations or passes their comprehension.”⁷²

⁷¹ In other words: “(...) intellectual intuition through which such knowledge is arrived at has absolutely nothing in common with these infra-rational intuitions, be they of sentimental, instinctive, or purely sensible order, which are the only ones that come within the scope of present-day philosophy.” (Guénon, 2004, 108)

⁷² Since Guénon is not often read in academia, we are inclined to fully quote (from 1924) him on present topic which is of great importance for our thesis: “Now, taking the two chief tendencies of the modern mentality in turn to examine them better, and leaving for the moment sentimentalism to return to it later, we may ask ourselves this question: what exactly is this ‘science’ that the West is so infatuated with? A Hindu, summing up most concisely the opinion of all the Easterners [back when ‘eastern’ mentality was traditional] who have come across it, has said most justly: ‘Western science is ignorant knowledge.’ This explanation is in no way a contradiction in terms and this is what it means: it is, if one insists, a knowledge, ignorant of the essential, a knowledge which, like everything else that belongs in particular to Western civilization, lacks a principle. Science, as conceived by our contemporaries, is nothing more than the study of sensible phenomena, and this study is undertaken and followed out in such a way that it cannot, we insist, be attached to any principle of a higher order; it is true that by resolutely ignoring everything that lies beyond its scope, it makes itself fully independent in its own domain, but this vaunted independence is only made possible by the limitations of science itself. Not content with that, it goes even to the length of denying what it is ignorant of, because only in this way can it avoid admitting this ignorance: or, if it does not venture in so many words to deny the possible existence of what does not come within its range, it at least denies all possibility of knowing such things, which amounts to the same thing, and it has the pretension of comprising in itself everything that can be known. Starting often unconsciously from a false assumption, the ‘scientists’ imagine, as did Auguste Comte, that man has never aimed at knowing anything other than an explanation of natural phenomena; we say unconsciously, because they are evidently incapable of understanding that it is possible to go further, and it is not for this that we blame them, but only for their pretension of refusing to allow other the possession or the use of faculties which they themselves lack. They are like blind men who deny, if not light itself, at least the existence of sight, for the sole reason that they are without it. To declare that there is not only an unknown

We can finish our demonstration of the inadequacy of rationalism through Guénon's pen:

“(...) rationalism, being the denial of every principle superior to reason, brings with it as a ‘practical’ consequence the exclusive use of reason, but of reason blinded, so to speak, by the very fact that it has been isolated from the pure and transcendent intellect, of which, normally and legitimately, it can only reflect the light in the individual domain. As soon as it has lost all effective communication with the supra-individual intellect, reason cannot but tend more and more toward the lowest level, toward the inferior pole of existence, plunging ever more deeply into ‘materiality’; as this tendency grows, it gradually loses hold of the very idea of truth, and arrives at the point of seeking no goal other than that of making things as easy as possible for its own limited comprehension, and in this it finds an immediate satisfaction in the very fact that its own downward tendency leads it in the direction of the simplification and uniformization of all things; it submits all the more readily and speedily to

but also an ‘unknowable’ (to use Spencer’s word), and to turn an intellectual infirmity into a barrier which no one may pass – that is something whose like was never seen or heard before; and it is equally unheard of for men to turn a declaration of ignorance into a program of thought and a profession of faith, and quite openly to label a so-called doctrine with it under the name of ‘agnosticism’. And these men, be it noted, are not skeptics, and do not wish to be skeptics: if they were, there would be a certain logic in their attitude, which might make it excusable; but they are, on the contrary, the most enthusiastic believers in ‘science’, the most fervent admirers of ‘reason’. It might well be considered rather strange to put reason above everything, to profess a veritable worship for it, and to proclaim at the same time that it is essentially limited; that is, in fact, somewhat contradictory, and though we note it, we do not undertake to explain it; this attitude points to a mentality which is not in the least our own, and it is not for us to justify the contradictions that seem inherent in ‘relativism’ in all its forms. We, too, say that reason is limited and relative: but, far from making it the whole of intelligence, we look on it only as one of its inferior parts, and we see in intelligence other possibilities that go far beyond those of reason. It seems then that modern Europeans, or at least some of them, are very willing to acknowledge their ignorance, and the rationalists of today do so perhaps more readily than their predecessors, but it is only on condition that no one has the right to know what they themselves do not; the pretension of limiting what is, or just of limiting knowledge fundamentally, shows in either case the spirit of negation which is so characteristic of the modern world. This spirit is essentially a closed conception; and it has come to be identified with the spirit of philosophy itself, especially since Kant, who, wishing to shut up all knowledge within the bounds of relativity, ventured to declare in so many words that ‘philosophy is not a means of extending knowledge but a discipline for limiting it’, which amounts to saying that the chief function of philosophers is to impose on all the narrow limits of their own understanding. That is why modern philosophy ends by almost entirely substituting ‘criticism’ or the ‘theory of knowledge’ for knowledge itself (...)” (Guénon, 2004, 30-32)

this tendency because the results of this submission conform to its desires, and its ever more rapid descent cannot fail to lead at last to what has been called the ‘reign of quantity’. (2004e, 94-95)

And we propose that it can be considered academically as a hypothetical because, as we demonstrated, people of the past had such notion and faculty (1), and human perception (in the broadest sense) is being reduced and unused faculties atrophy over time (2); we can see this in historical data and current trends, which leads us deeper into crisis, to assert the *need* of such academic hypothetical (hypothetical because its qualitative nature goes beyond current academic or scientific methods and perspective), which can resolve the crisis.⁷³

Next we will provide a brief theoretical overview of traditional metaphysics, which stands for eternal principles outside of manifestation.

4.2. Metaphysics, symbolism & society

“Religions may and must be many, each being an “arrangement of God”, and stylistically differentiated, inasmuch as the thing known can only be in the knower according to the mode of the knower, and hence as we say in India, “He takes the forms that are imagined by His worshippers”, or as Eckhart expresses it, “I am the cause that God is God” (Coomaraswamy, 2004, 72)

Before venturing into a theoretical exemplar of metaphysics, a few words of reservation are offered in the footnotes.⁷⁴ Metaphysics is crucial for understanding

⁷³ The chief implication of our thesis is that universities should return to their original constitution and role, to return to their source, to be oriented 'upwards'. When the wheel stops turning, the reversal of the poles will happen.

⁷⁴ “Of course, the conception of metaphysical truths must be distinguished from their formulation, where discursive reason may intervene secondarily (on condition that it receives directly a reflection of pure and transcendent intellect) in order to express, as far as possible, these truths which lie far beyond its domain and its range, and of which, in view of their universality, no symbolic or verbal form can ever give anything but an incomplete, imperfect, and inadequate translation, such as is rather fitted to act as a support for the conception that to express effectively what is in itself, for the most part, inexpressible and incommunicable, and what cannot be ‘experienced’ except in a direct and personal way. Finally, let us mention once more that

tradition, which stands for eternal, immutable and universal principles outside of manifestation itself – “the knowledge of the universal principles on which all things necessarily depend, directly or indirectly”⁷⁵ (Guénon, 2004, 35).

It all ‘starts’ with the Infinite, the Absolute, the Whole, or Universal Possibility, Supreme Brahman, which has no determination, everything we employ for its explanation is insufficient (as we did, *naming ‘it’*), hence *via negativa* is the most appropriate way – as indeterminable, infinite, non-dual (Herlihy, 2009; Guénon, 2004d). Also, we use words as mere symbols for that which is above human comprehension, we approximate it, and it is not the point to rationalize these concepts, make systems or debate them; we are above time and space here, hence by rationalization we would only reduce them. We can say the Infinite has two aspects, Being (principle of manifestation, but outside of manifestation), also known as Metaphysical Unity (first self-determination), transcendent Unity, Supreme Unity, the principle, *T'ai I* (Great Unity), *T'ai Chi* (Great Extreme), which presupposes another principle – Non-Being, metaphysical Zero, (domain of the states of non-manifestation, together, Being and Non-Being, make the Infinite), *Wu Chi* (Guénon, 2004d; Herlihy, 2009). Being has two poles – the first duality of Universal Essence and Universal Substance, *Purusha* and *Prakriti* in the Hindu tradition and *T'ien* (Heaven) and *Ti* (Earth) in the Far-Eastern one (Guénon, 2004d; Herlihy, 2009). Everything is manifested between these two ultimate extremes, as they are poles of universal manifestation – “this principal polarization is refracted endlessly in the universe” (Schuon, 1993, 154), for instance *yang* for *Heaven* and *yin* for *Earth*, and the reason why scholastics differentiated *materia prima* and *materia secunda* (Herlihy, 2009). Manifestation, or Existence,⁷⁶ is the natural world or

if we cling to this term ‘metaphysics’, it is solely because it is the most suitable of all those that Western language offer.” (Guénon, 2004, 108-109)

⁷⁵ The quote continues: “(…);in the absence of metaphysics, any other knowledge, of whatever order it may be, is literally lacking in principle, and if by that it gains a little in independence (not as a right, but as a matter of fact), it loses much more in scope and depth” (Guénon, 2004, 35).

⁷⁶ “In order to establish a clear distinction between Being and Existence, we must, as we have already said, consider Being strictly as the very principle of manifestation; universal Existence will then be the integral manifestation of the ensemble of possibilities that Being compromises, and which moreover are all the possibilities of manifestation, implying the effective development of those possibilities in a conditioned mode. Being thus envelops Existence, and is metaphysically more than the latter since it is its principle; Existence is thus not identical with Being, for the latter corresponds to a lesser degree of determination, and consequently

physics,⁷⁷ the 'ten thousand beings' from Far-Eastern tradition (Guénon, 2004d). Schuon, using more religious notions, expresses the same: “The root of all polarization of the real into subject and object is situated in Being; not in the pure Absolute, Beyond-Being, but in its first self-determination. The divine *Māyā* is the “confrontation,” if one may say so, of God as Subject or Consciousness and God as Object or Being; it is the knowledge that God has of Himself, of His Perfection and of His Possibilities.” (1993, 154). And if we speak of the natural world (manifestation), we can divide it into the formless domain (beyond form, supra-individual, supra-rational, domain of angels and archetypes) and the formal domain (individual, rational), of course these extensions go in each direction indefinitely, as the higher ones are less determined and less contingent, while the lower, as our formal and corporeal world, is more determined/conditioned, more contingent and more relative (an ‘accident’). This is so from the metaphysical perspective, while from the human rational perspective, everything is inverted, what is sensible and around them is the ‘most real’ or ‘only real’ (Coomaraswamy, 2004; Guénon, 2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009; Schuon, 1993).

Using geometrical symbolism as support, we can envisage the first ternary as a triangle with its base at the bottom. Starting from the top we have the Principle, while in the left and right angles we have Heaven and Earth, respectively (Guénon, 2004d). Going further, another principle manifests itself, a resultant of the two opposites above it, envisaging it again as a new triangle, which has its base on top, with Heaven in the left angle of the triangle's base and Earth in the right angle, and the resultant in its inversed apex (third angle) below. That resultant is Man, the intermediary between Heaven and

to a higher degree of universality. (Footnote: Let us recall again that to “exist”, in the etymological sense of the word (from Latin *ex-tare*), is properly speaking to be dependent or conditioned; it is then, finally, not to possess in oneself one's own principle or sufficient reason, which is indeed true of manifestation (...)) (Herlihy, 2009, 125)

⁷⁷ “For Aristotle, physics was only ‘second’ in its relation to metaphysics – in other words, it was dependent on metaphysics and was really only an application to the province of nature of principles that stand above nature and are reflected in its laws; and one can say the same for the Medieval cosmology. The modern conception on the contrary claims to make various sciences independent, denying everything that transcends them, or at least declaring it to be ‘unknowable’ and refusing to take it into account, which in practice comes to the same thing. This negation existed de facto long before it was erected into a systematic theory under such names as ‘positivism’ or ‘agnosticism’, and it may truly be said to be the real starting-point of all modern science.” (Guénon, 2004c, 45)

Earth, or Son born of a Father and Mother.⁷⁸ It is not the case of any or every man, which 'comes later' (i.e. is applicable, in a relative sense and by participation to every man), but of a 'true man', centered man, the primordial man (Guénon, 2004d). That is the second ternary, called the Great Triad by Far-Eastern tradition (ibid). Combining the two, the quaternary is formed – having two triangles, one with its apex above and other with the apex below, merging their base since as they are of the same terms, on this newly-formed 4-angled figure we would have the Supreme Unity at the top, then at merged bases of the opposite triangles – Heaven and Earth would again be taking the left and right angles respectively, while at the bottom, symmetrical to the Supreme Unity and a resultant of the opposite/complimentary forces, would be Man – made in the image of God (ibid).

What we wrote is theoretical and rational (reflected) knowledge (using certain geometrical symbolism as support), which has its purpose, in the late traditional world it was a preparatory stage to obtaining higher knowledge, but only through the intellect (intellectual intuition) can it be effectively realized, become embodied in the individual (Coomaraswamy, 2004; Guénon, 2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009; Schuon, 1993). If one sufficiently grasps the meaning of traditional metaphysics and its central position in a society,⁷⁹ the whole *lost world* will make sense and it will be obvious how the critical component is missing in our, modern, world. And our modern order/society is truly a system,⁸⁰ but traditional society was not a system, as Coomaraswamy (2004, 228) explained:

⁷⁸ There are more ternaries in traditional world and esoteric domain, and not every is analogous. For instance, other than already mentioned two different ones (which formed quaternary above), we could also mention Holy Trinity (God, Son, Holy Spirit in Christian tradition), Hindu *Tribhuvana* (*Bhū*, *Bhuvas* and *Svar*, which are Earth, Air and Heaven, the 'three worlds' of manifestation in its totality, i.e. three fundamental degrees, respectively the domain of gross, subtle and supra-formal manifestation), Spirit-Soul-Body in Far-Eastern tradition (*spiritus*, *anima*, *corpus* – distinction unanimously accepted by all traditional doctrines of the West), among Pythagoreans universal Spirit, universal Soul and primordial *hyle*, and alchemical Sulphur, Mercury and Salt (Guénon, 2004d).

⁷⁹ It is about recognizing first causes, the Principle, Absolute, Metaphysics, and *to do below, as it is above*.

⁸⁰ On the problem of systems Guénon (2004e, 76) wrote: "(...) Leibnitz said that 'every system is true in what it affirms and false in what it denies', and this means that it contains an amount of truth proportional to the amount of positive reality included in it, and an amount of error corresponding to the reality excluded; it is important to add that it is precisely the negatives and limitative side of a 'system' that constitutes it as such."

“(...) difference [traditional and modern social order] is to be found in the fact that the order that is imposed on individual from without in any form of proletarian government is a *systemic* order, not a “form” but a cut and dried “formula,” and generally speaking a pattern of life that has being conceived by a single individual or some school of academic thinkers (“Marxists,” for example); while the pattern to which the traditional society is conformed by its own nature, being a metaphysical pattern, is a consistent but not a systematic form, and can therefore provide for the realization of many more possibilities and for the functioning of many more kinds of individual character than can be included within the limits of any system.”

On the topic of systems, while moving our focus from society to doctrine, Guénon (2004, 91) wrote:

“(...) traditional doctrines are beyond all systems, those purely human inventions in the narrowest sense of the word human, invented, that is, by an individual reason, which, failing to understand its limitations, believes itself capable of embracing all the Universe or of reconstructing it at its fancy’s whim, and which on ‘principle’ – to crown all – absolutely denies everything that goes beyond it. This amounts to denying metaphysical knowledge, which is supra-rational, and which is pure intellectual knowledge [synonym with ‘intellectual intuition’], knowledge at its highest. Modern philosophy cannot admit the existence of true metaphysics without destroying itself, and as for ‘pseudo-metaphysics’, which it incorporates, it is more or less a clever assemblage of exclusively rational hypothesis (...)”

The traditional social order was self-imposed as “fate lies in created causes themselves” (Coomaraswamy, 2004, 227), conformed to the Being, God, metaphysical pattern, and having the biggest potential for self-realization; “that is, the possibility of transcending the limitation of individuality (...) it is, in fact, for the sake of such self-realization that the tradition itself is perpetuated. It is here, as Jules Romains has said, that

we find “the richest possible variety of individual states of consciousness, in harmony made valuable by its richness and density” (...)” (ibid, 227).

In conclusion, according to perennial philosophers, the traditional world had no system; it was not invented by (rational or irrational) individuals, but followed a metaphysical (universal, eternal) pattern; it applied in its social domain the higher principles (*to do below as it is above*). Truly, it was a ‘metaphysical organism’ more than anything else.

5. Pedagogy from traditional perspective

“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (St. Matthew, 24:13)

After presenting both criticisms of the modern world: from modern perspectives in chapter 3. (subchapters 3.1.,3.2. and 3.3.), and the traditional perspective in subchapter 3.4.; and briefly introducing the foundation of the traditional world in chapter 4., we can deduce the criticisms of the present-day educational system and modern pedagogy from the traditional perspective (1), and make a connection between tradition and pedagogy in its etymological meaning (2). But before that, we will explicitly dismiss any considerations of perennialism as an ‘educational theory’, as in Ornstein (1990, 2018) and Mosier (1951). According to Ornstein (1990, 2018) perennialism (based in ‘major philosophy’ of realism) is one of four educational philosophies (or theories, which individual educator might have), together with essentialism (based in idealism, realism), progressivism (based in pragmatism) and reconstructionism (based in pragmatism). Perennialism as an educational theory, according to Ornstein (1990, 105), has the instructional objective “to educate the rational person; to cultivate the intellect”; in the domain of knowledge, it is focused on “past and permanent studies; mastery of facts and timeless knowledge”; the teacher: “helps students think rationally; based on Socratic method oral exposition; explicit teachings of traditional values”; while the curriculum focuses on “Classical subjects; literary analysis; constant curriculum”. According to Mosier (1951), a new variety of perennialism arose in educational (and other) circles, during the first decades of the 20th century, which “had a recourse to ancient principles of Plato and Aristotle, of Augustine and Aquinas, which had begun to take on new meaning in the stream of cultural conflict (...)”, it was rivaled by progressivism, and they were a stark contrast in multiple domains: “ultimate certainty of the world” against “immediate uncertainty of the world”, “purposefulness of the world” against “lack of purposefulness of the world”, “(super)natural teleology” against “mechanism”, “reality is everywhere at every moment the same” against “reality is everywhere and at every moment different” etc. (ibid, 83). None of this is from the point of view of the traditional perspective we employ, they are all just modern interpretations, grounded in the

modern world and serving the modern system (grounded in modern philosophy, which is an assemblage of rationalistic systems). Metaphysics, according to Guénon, is a superior notion to anything we have nowadays, it cannot be placed meaningfully, logically or wholly within our lower terms, it simply cannot exist under the aegis of this world.⁸¹ While one can see the resemblance with some aspects of ‘perennialism’ and ‘essentialism’ such as educational philosophies with timelessness and changelessness of Guénon’s (traditional) metaphysics and *sophia*, it is shallow and out of context.⁸²

5.1. Modern pedagogy and tradition, or the problem with humanism

“*Ye shall know them by their fruits*” (St. Matthew 7:16)

From the perspective of tradition, *humanism* is when humanity made ‘man the center of all things’, instead of metaphysics. It is only natural then that all the doors for future (social, philosophical, political) anarchy/chaos were fully opened, and since then it was an accelerating downward spiral of reduction of quality, it led us unavoidably to our present state of crisis (Guénon 2004, 2004c, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009). For Guénon, humanism was a reduction of “(...) everything to purely human proportions, to eliminate every principle of a higher order, and, one might say, symbolically to turn away from the heavens under pretext of conquering the earth” (2004c, 17). He then continues:

“Humanism was the first form of what has subsequently become contemporary secularism; and, owing to its desire to reduce everything to the measure of man as an end in himself, modern civilization has sunk stage by stage until it has reached the level of the lowest elements in man and aims at little more than satisfying the needs inherent in the material side of his nature, an aim that is in any case quite illusory since it constantly creates more artificial needs than it can satisfy.” (ibid)

⁸¹ It can only as a simulacrum or deformation, because it is 'larger' than individualistic/rationalist boundaries. It stands 'above' and 'beyond' them. Something *eternal* and *universal* cannot be a 'part' of philosophy, defined or rationalized.

⁸² Because the depth and context is provided by the tradition, that is metaphysics, which needs to be in its proper place.

Hence, from a traditional perspective, pedagogy is considered ‘modern pedagogy’ since the Renaissance, and all the critiques of being contingent, relative and disintegrating apply to it. Therefore, true pedagogy cannot base itself on and orient itself by humanism, individualism or philosophy, which is sheer multiplicity and relativism, and expect to find a firm theoretical ground.

As we have written in the second chapter, we will examine the death of humanist values (Jurčević, 2019, 2020; Liessmann, 2008) via Marcuse and Guénon. Guénon (2004e) has the notion of *uniformity*, a parody or inversion of unity, which (unity) is entirely qualitative and has something higher (the principle) to unite and make a real synthesis, while uniformity is forced to desperately order vast multiplicity – *quantity*, to which our world is reducing itself to (naturally, this will take some tyrannical, systematic and reductive form). Marcuse (1968) has *one-dimensionality*, which is the loss of all the *negative*. Since any value presupposes quality (is qualitative), losing quality makes society/man impossible to hold onto any value (becoming flat, *one-dimensional*). Hence, humanist values diminish as any and every value diminishes under the processes and tendencies at play today – towards pure quantity or one-dimensionality. For Guénon (2004, 2004c, 2004e) there is no surprise here, as ‘humanist values’ were idols to begin with, destined to perish as they are not connected to any principle of higher order whatsoever.

Let us consider another fallacy when making humanism a foundation of pedagogy, as one can argue that, besides the dominant neoliberal doctrine (Jurčević, 2019, 2020), the humanist one is a permissible alternative (no real threat to, but wholly absorbed by the system and made sterile,⁸³ as for the aforementioned loss of quality); it is a formal part of the Western world (politically, ideologically, culturally, and educationally) especially, and more explicitly and ideologically, after the Second World War, encompassing notions such as ‘equality’, ‘human rights’ and ‘multiculturalism’, in which modern pedagogy largely tries to base itself. That means that *pedagogy is a slave to the ideological system*, to what is ‘good’ and ‘allowed’ in ever-changing circumstances of the fluid (post)modern world and it

⁸³ ‘Forces in counterbalance’ as part and parcel of the system itself, as we quoted Marcuse in the Footnote 24.

effectively cannot develop or work outside of the provided box. Let's take an example from just a few decades ago to prove our point, quoting the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Pedagogy (Franković et al., 1963, t.m.): “By basic class attitude we differentiate bourgeois’ and Marxist (socialistic) pedagogy. Today the most advanced and the most scientific is the latter one, because it is fixing the problems of the new society, because it uses scientific results of all the previous progression of pedagogy and because it studies upbringing with scientific methods.” Naturally, under a communist context (we quoted Yugoslavian authors) there is a division of pedagogy to ‘bad’ (*bourgeois*, western) and ‘good’ (*Marxist*, ‘our pedagogy’), and it is even bluntly stated that it is “the most advanced and the most scientific” (ibid). This tendency of the dominant ideology to assert itself as ‘the best’ is not lost nowadays, arguably, it has less power or certainty of a meta-narrative, hence there are multiple choices of which none contradicts the system – as the false opposition of humanist and neoliberal pedagogy. From another angle, modern pedagogy, as it is based on rationalism, which is a relative and reflective (indirect) mode of knowing, it must also reflect something, and what else it will dominantly reflect, under the circumstances, than the mainstream culture (dominant ideology) and the status quo?⁸⁴

Modern pedagogy, as any modern science (always most applicable to experimental sciences, which were or still are considered *the* science, and the methods of which were copied by social sciences to be validated⁸⁵), has a ‘method problem’ and an ‘analysis problem’. Guénon, on the exclusiveness of science wrote: “(...) they refuse to admit the existence of anything apart from them, and maintain that, to be valid, every speculation must be submitted to the methods that are peculiar to these same sciences, as if these methods, created for the study of certain fixed objects, were universally applicable (...)” (2004, 33), he continues “(...) these ‘scientists’ would be most astonished if told that, without even leaving this domain, there is a host of things which cannot be attained by their

⁸⁴ Similarly for philosophy (dominant philosophical ideas of the time), Guénon (2004e, 104) sees it as “‘representative’ of certain mentality (...)” and writes: “(...) how could a particular philosophical conception meet with the smallest success if it did not fit in with some of the predominant tendencies of the period in which it is formulated?” (2004e, 104)

⁸⁵ Demonstrated by Palekčić (2015), as he analyzed the state of pedagogy after the Second World War.

methods and which notwithstanding may be made the object of sciences quite different from the ones they know (...)" (ibid). The problem is that the object of science is always quite *qualitative*, and for modern 'science' to be 'scientific' it needs to measure, and for it to be able to measure it needs to 'quantify' its object, reduce it to what is measurable, and here certain methods are used – in the end resulting in very relative, highly questionable knowledge, especially since it is not connected to the principles in any way, which means that it only has a relative theoretical foundation – if any at all. This is similar or the same as the criticisms of Spengler (1991), Marcuse (1968), Sunić (2011) and Komar (2012, 2016), to name a few, which recognized this ever more limiting scientific rationality. On the other hand, the 'analysis' problem resides in the fact that scientific fields, lacking in principle, continually atomize themselves, never being able to reach any true synthesis, as Guénon points out:

“While scattering its energies among countless fragments of knowledge, and losing its way among the innumerable details of fact, it learns nothing about the true nature of things, which it declares to be inaccessible in order to justify its powerlessness in this respect (...). If there are sometimes attempts to unify this eminently analytical learning, they are purely artificial and are never based on anything but more or less wild suppositions; and they all collapse one after the other, until it seems that no scientific theory of any general bearing can last more than half a century at the most. Besides, the Western idea which would make synthesis a sort of result and conclusion of analysis is radically false. The truth is that a synthesis worthy of the name can never be reached by analysis, because one belongs to one order of things and the other to another. By its very nature, analysis may be carried out indefinitely, if its field of action is expansive enough, without one's having got any nearer to a general view over the whole field; it is still less surprising that it should be utterly ineffectual in establishing a connection with principles of higher order. The analytical

character of modern science is shown by the ceaseless growth in the number of ‘specialities’⁸⁶ (...)” (2004, 35)

To paraphrase Guénon further,⁸⁷ these divisions and subdivisions increase the amount of fragmentary knowledge, never being a real extension of the field or making a true synthesis (ibid, 36), which is: “starting from principles, partakes of their certainty; but it is of course true principles which must be the starting-point, and not mere philosophic assumptions” (ibid), contrary to false syntheses, which are “bent on extracting the superior from the inferior” (ibid), which is a logical fallacy (impossibility) and “can never be anything more than hypothetical”⁸⁸ (ibid). Hence, modern science “in disavowing the principles and in refusing to re-attach itself to them, robs itself both of the highest guarantee and of the surest direction that it could have, and as soon as it seeks to rise one degree higher, it becomes dubious and vacillating.” (ibid)

Modern pedagogy, which is, debatably, the whole of pedagogy nowadays with all of its problems and crisis, from a traditional perspective, as the whole of the modern world, is a flimsy concept, due its nature of not being connected to metaphysics. Humanist grounding will not save it, and analytical scientific tendencies combined with insufficient methodology and the direction our world is heading towards can only lead to a disaster. Then, another question arises – is it possible to have some kind of ‘traditional pedagogy’ in the modern world?

⁸⁶ We already paraphrased Baudrillard (2001) how 'everything that did not transcend itself has a right to a revival without end', which is very much the case with our science (with a reservation for the possibility of *singularity*, which would then signify qualitative shift, it would 'transcend itself').

⁸⁷ And to quote him some more, on the difference between traditional and modern science (2004e, 5): “(...) for whereas traditional science envisages essentially the higher of the corresponding terms and allows no more than a relative value to a lower term, and then only by virtue of its correspondence with the higher term, profane science on the other hand only takes account of the lower term, and being incapable of passing beyond the domain to which it is related, claims to reduce all reality to it.”

⁸⁸ Guénon’s view on analysis and synthesis in modern sciences and how he defines them is in full agreement with their etymological meanings.

5.2. The question of traditional pedagogy

“Could anyone really look on the paintings to be found at Ajanta and in countless Japanese or Tibetan temples and still believe that the impulse behind these things stemmed from a basic error? The same argument would apply to the art of the Christian and Islamic, as well as of countless tribal, traditions existing all over the world until recent times, to say nothing of Hindu art in all its exuberant glories. Contrariwise, the sheer ugliness of the modern civilization as displayed in its most typical products bespeaks an underlying error (...)” Marco Pallis (Coomaraswamy, 2004, 13)

We will briefly examine the question (possibility) of theoretical and practical traditional pedagogy in the modern world. First off, are we dealing with an oxymoron? Not in our case; ‘traditional pedagogy in the modern world’ would be an oxymoron if we were to try to base it in the modern world, to define it via terms of modern pedagogy/philosophy and make it an effective part of this world (for instance if we were to make it into educational philosophy, subjecting everything qualitative to the goal of producing future workers for the system), but we avoid making such errors. Secondly, we will briefly demonstrate its traditional possibility; pedagogues did exist in traditional societies, for example according to Franković et. al. (1963, 648, t.m.): “Pedagogue (“paidagogos,” *pais*, *paidos* – child, *ago* – I lead⁸⁹) was originally, in ancient Greece, a slave which had a duty to lead children of a slave-owner to school and manage them in home; similarly in Rome, it was usually a learned Greek slave, who was a teacher to sons of wealthy Romans.” Hence, pedagogy can be established under quite different circumstances than those of today.

⁸⁹ Komar (2016, 2017) further explains it as dialectic between *pais* (child), inner, spiritual, child-like state common to all men, and *agein* (to lead), movement towards the pure form as Aristotle’s *causa finalis*, man developing his own *ousia* (inner quality, essence, that which he is in himself, as ancients said ‘remember who you are’ and ‘become who you are’), which is something traditional perspective can easily adopt, even more so, as all of ancient notions of the unity of subject and object in knowledge and knowledge as remembering has definitive sense when realizing the existence of supra-rational domain and the faculty of intellectual intuition, compared to relative, if any, sense in modern conceptions. Guénon in *Miscellanea* (2004, Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis) writes: “(...) the teaching that awakens no personal resonance in the one who receives it cannot give any kind of knowledge. This is why Plato says that ‘everything that a man learns is already within him.’ All the experiences, all the external things that surround him, are only an occasion to help him become aware of what is within himself. This awakening he calls *anamnesis*, which signifies ‘recollection’.” (42-43) and “Aristotle has said: ‘the being is all that it knows,’ so much so that, where there is real knowledge, and not its appearance or its shadow, knowledge and being are one and the same thing.” (44)

The question of the possibility of theoretical and practical traditional pedagogy comes as secondary to the following question: ‘Is it possible to establish a traditional society?’ Which begs another questions – is it possible to have a totally independent society (community, tribe) in the modern world, that is, outside it? If the answer is positive, so is the possibility of theoretical and practical traditional pedagogy, without any of the problems that the modern world, science and education have. This would be a local solution, but what about a global solution? Guénon (2004c, 2004e) asked the same question, formulated as ‘is it possible for *the elite* (intellectual-spiritual), which effectively realized its supra-individual states, to be established in the center of the world’s religions’? That would mean a top-down transformation of all the institutions of the modern world.⁹⁰ On the other hand, from the perspective of this thesis we would ask – is it possible for increasingly reductionist social science to recognize its relativity and lack of explanatory power, and to seek the principle of its rational reasoning (since rationality does not have its sufficient reason in itself), which would, naturally, be part of supra-rational domain? More concretely, can the top echelons of pedagogical science recognize this in their field of study? At first, it might be just a consideration of a rational hypothesis presented in this thesis,⁹¹ but given some effort, and the courage to look at historical and esoteric⁹² data in its

⁹⁰ It is hard for moderns to understand this and not to be shocked, but after considering all the evidence, from traditional point of view, it is only logical that society is to be structured as some kind of a theocracy (as they were), which Guénon himself stated. But, it hardly translates to whatever meaning moderns attribute it to.

⁹¹ For more, look at Appendix 1.

⁹² Esoteric meaning ‘inner circle’, compared to ‘exoteric’, which is a husk (all western religion today). On the topic of esoteric data and its importance, ancient world has a lot to offer, which is not recognized today (sincerely it is due to intellectual decline). Guénon in *Miscellanea* (2004, Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis) writes: “Those who have studied ancient philosophers know well that these latter had two kinds of teaching, one exoteric and the other esoteric. What had been written down belonged only to the first. As for the second, it is impossible for us to know its precise nature, for on the one hand it was reserved for a few, and on the other hand it had a secret character. There would have been no reason for these two characteristics had there not existed something higher than mere philosophy. One may at least surmise that this esoteric teaching had a close and direct connection with wisdom, and that it did not only appeal to reason or to logic, as is the case with philosophy, which for this reason has been called rational knowledge – the philosophers on antiquity maintained that rational knowledge, that is, philosophy, is not the highest degree of knowledge, is not wisdom.” (40) Also: “The word ‘philosophy’ properly expresses the fact of loving Sophia, or wisdom, the aspiration toward it or the disposition required for acquiring it. This word has always been used to signify a preparation for this acquisition of wisdom, and especially such studies as could help the *philosophos*, or the man who felt some inclination toward wisdom, to become a *Sophos* – that is, a sage. So, just as the means cannot be taken as an end, the love of wisdom cannot constitute wisdom itself. And since wisdom in itself is identical with true inner knowledge, it can be said that philosophical knowledge is only a superficial and

reach, it could be transformed (changing its methods to the ones of a more qualitative nature, adopting new orientation) – which Spengler (1991) prophesized,⁹³ and would in effect be the *qualitative leap* of Marcuse (1982). Then, the transformation of pedagogical science globally from a modern to a traditional approach comes second to the establishment of the intellectual elite (which would be an *unmoved mover* in the center of the transformation, every other a derivative of it), together with a qualitative change of all sciences. Furthermore, theoretical traditional pedagogy could be established beforehand at high-level educational institutions, a topic which would require another study.

outward knowledge. Hence it does not have an independent value in itself or by itself; it constitutes only a first degree on the path of the superior and veritable knowledge which is wisdom.” (39)

⁹³ “Suppose that, in future generations, the most gifted minds were to find their soul’s health more important than all the powers of this world; suppose that, under the influence of the metaphysics and mysticism that is taking the place of rationalism today, the very elite of intellect that is now concerned with the machine comes to be overpowered by a growing sense of its Satanism (it is the step from Roger Bacon to Bernard of Clairvaux) – then nothing can hinder the end of this grand drama that has been a play of intellects, with hands as mere auxiliaries.” (Spengler, 1991, 412-413)

6. Conclusion

“*When everything seems lost, then it is that everything will be saved*” (Guénon, 2004e, 261)

After outlining many problems that veritably constitute the crisis of modern pedagogy, which can be summed up as having the *economic* as the central focus (Jurčević 2019, 2020; Hersh & Merrow, 2005; Liessmann, 2005; Nietzsche, 1991; Komar, 2016) and the subsequent reduction of quality (English, 2013), where knowledge has lost its meaning (Liessmann, 2008; Hersh & Merrow, 2005), we shifted our perspective to modern society as a whole, and saw that education only reflects the vast problems of our contemporary world – a consumer society where everything is commodified, where one’s needs are multiplied so that capital and profit expands (Adorno, 1992; Marcuse, 1968, 1978, 1982; Sergejev, 1986), industry, instrumental thinking, technological rationality, everything is bent on reduction to the material and quantitative (Marcuse, 1968; Komar, 2012; Sunić, 2011; Guénon, 2004c, 2004e); moreover, the virtual has taken over, society has become a world of masses where everything is merged into indistinguishability, has become flat, one-dimensional, a pseudo-world, *spectacle*, simulacrum, mental prison (Baudrillard, 2001; Debord, 1995; Adorno, 1992; Komar, 2018) where power and appearance is the only law (Lyotard, 2005); it seems to be the last days of a falling empire, a natural decline (death) of a civilization (Glubb, 1976; Spengler, 1991). But there once was a world significantly different than ours, one which recognized metaphysics, the supra-individual domain, was qualitative all throughout, a *traditional world* (Guénon 2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e; Herlihy, 2009, Schuon, 1993; Coomaraswamy, 2004). We took fundamental notions such as the supra-rational domain, faculty of intellectual intuition and metaphysics from perennial philosophers, which make up the traditional perspective, and through it examined our pedagogy, our world and our crisis.

Can the crisis of pedagogy be resolved? Raising another, *the* question: Can the crisis of the modern world be resolved? From a traditional perspective, the modern world is synonymous with *humanism-individualism-rationalism-materialism*, while the traditional world is synonymous with *metaphysics-suprarational-tradition*; the former is relative and

chaotic, the latter is absolute and orderly, the former is a historical deviation, the latter is the historical norm, the former tries to build something out of nothing ground-up, the latter just manifests higher truths in its lower domains, following a metaphysical pattern (Coomaraswamy, 2004; Schuon, 1993; Herlihy, 2009; Guénon, 2004, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e) – hence to resolve the crisis, according to said perspective, there is no other way than to readjust (to orient) everything to metaphysics, for *modern* to be *traditional* again. Herein lies the very optimistic answer: ‘Yes, the crisis of modern pedagogy and the world can be resolved’.⁹⁴ Perennialists are not the only ones who were led to the conclusion about the primacy of metaphysics, many moderns we included in our thesis had similar tendencies. Nietzsche⁹⁵ said that, if we want to guide one to the correct way of education, we must not disturb their initial, child-like and naïve, relationship with nature – “forest and rock, storm, hawk, individual flower, meadow, slope need to speak with their own language” (1991, 302, t.m.) for them to “unconsciously feel metaphysical oneness of all things” (ibid, t.m.), based on which they will be able to be and rest (ibid). It is not poeticism; it is one, instinctive and true understanding of nature (ibid). To truly live and be a man, one needs to be ‘transparent to transcendence’, as Durkheim wrote (Campbell, 2003), and that is living a myth, or ‘living metaphysically’, according to Campbell (2003, 2008). And, as previously noted, Spengler (1991) had the intuition that our world (in the age of the reign of the machine) might just end when our meaninglessness finds metaphysics.⁹⁶

The next question is can academia and universities rise above their self-imposed limitations of rationalistic thoughts and methods, which are individual, relative, contingent and reductive (leading to endless, increasingly meaningless analyses), and can it orient itself ‘upwards’?⁹⁷ This is the bottom line, the exact point of contention and where modern

⁹⁴ We would even say that it is only a matter of 'when' and exactly 'how' (not 'if').

⁹⁵ We are well aware that Nietzsche is out of his context here, but we still find value in his words from different perspective.

⁹⁶ Needless to clarify, Nietzsche and Spengler did not have the traditional notion of metaphysics Guénon, Coomaraswamy and Schuon had. Campbell, while a perennialist, is more myth-focused, modern and of the next generation to the three authors, hence we categorized him a bit differently (as a ‘bridge’).

⁹⁷ ‘Upwards’ as towards the real metaphysics, which reason can only reflect. And what was the purpose of the academia (teachings of Plato) and first universities (lat. *universitas* 'a whole')? Also note that we wrote ‘rise above’, hence anything from infra rational order is out of the question.

deviation began, and from where all the crises multiplied exponentially. After doing the research for this thesis, we do believe it can be done, as academia logically must start with the realization that it employs reductive methods and has had a downward orientation for a long time, and then consider higher ‘hypotheticals’ like intellectual intuition,⁹⁸ and not go further down to the infra-rational domain (emotion, subconsciousness, philosophical intuitionism etc.).

Finally, pedagogy: To re-state, from the traditional perspective, modern pedagogy is all the humanist and post-humanist (neoliberal, etc.) pedagogy, it is always reflecting something relative (if not illusory), and for it not to be a servant it needs not to be based upon contingent and the changing principles, but on eternal, metaphysical ones. Pedagogy has etymological and pre-modern historic grounding from which re-adaptation might come, or ultimately – the *telos* of pedagogy is of utmost importance for the human order, and the pedagogical field expands from instruction to initiation; in other words, pedagogy arguably has the most qualitative object and perspective out of all the modern sciences – it is easier for it to change its orientation to the qualitative pole of existence and adopt sufficient new methods. Etymologically, as stated before, tradition means transmission, particularly of metaphysical knowledge, the ways of realizing such knowledge and spiritual influences; and we always start from the individual human being as it is at a given moment (age, predisposition, talents, will etc.), and adjust our teachings accordingly – and this extends to any other, which is properly speaking ‘derived’, knowledge. Finally, from the traditional perspective – traditional pedagogy would use symbols, from modern perspective be considered ‘theistic’, not bothered by the economic, and would lead individuals from indefinite starting positions, through indefinite paths, all converging towards knowing metaphysics.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Needless to say, it was not a hypothetical to the traditional civilizations and it is not a hypothetical to men in which still exist such a capacity (but not a faculty when we speak of man as a man, see Appendix 1).

⁹⁹ The Great Architect of the Universe – God.

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