Unless we act to reconceptualize and rebuild the social contract on new bases, postindustrial trends might break it down. Intellectuals who work in the academia should have a special role in this respect. Environmentally, socially, humanely, and symbolically disempowering and destructive policies are being imposed in conjunction with financial interests propelled by the myth of productivity. Civil rights are being replaced by surveillance and control. This appalling situation legitimates new reflections on education in order to envision what could and should be done. The old logic of Right and Left inherited from the French Revolution must be altered into a politics of the human if we are to address the risks that financial monopolies have created. The demonstration in this article is that education – and academic work in particular – must be reconceptualized in a transdisciplinary way that helps solve the destructive problems that humanity faces. The essay reflects on the notion of caring and the development of non-foundational foundations with such core values as biocosmopolitanism and deliberate «décroissance» (postdevelopmental powerdown), in the search for integrated wisdom and science with a conscience.

**Keywords:** moral education, teacherhood, Cartesian divide, biocosmopolitanism, cosmopolitanism, social justice, postdevelopment, world education, Descartes

**Assigning a moral role to academic work**

Since the era of Greek civilization, science has become more and more fragmented and the sense of wisdom in its unity has been lost (Gusdorf, 1963; Nussbaum, 2006). The perception of this loss may arise, it is true, as an aspect of current cosmopolitan nostalgia. In contrast to the uni-
versalist imaginaries of the Middle Ages, when attendance at a university meant attaining a universal vision, the epistemic clash that characterizes modern thought has divided the sciences from the arts, the different disciplines and branches of learning. Attempts are currently being made to reunite the sciences and the arts (Zembylas, 2002), make research participatory (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), assign a different role to the university (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006), and reconceptualize democracy and social justice across the disciplines (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Santora, 2006). However, the conditions of academic work rarely seem to allow relative freedom neither in the formatting nor in the contents of published reflections, a situation which could be understood as a manifestation of what Pierre Bourdieu designated as academic reproduction, an aspect that he re-emphasized in his 2002 self-analysis, which was posthumously published. Indeed, «academic capitalism» and the «knowledge factory» now define the constraints of the academic job in a growing number of countries (Aronowitz, 2000; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Instrumentalism has replaced prudence and wisdom.

Truth telling is required if we want to change the direction of the world’s events. This essay is an attempt at such truth telling. Parrhesia – as Foucault (2001) defined it – authorizes thinkers to argue on truths that challenge the status quo. «Parrhesiastic verbalizations» (Zembylas & Fendler, 2007) re-conceptualize academic discourse into potentials for action.

The academic world has been cut from its moral role. A large part of what is being published in academic journals seems in denial of the world situation. Firstly, some of the leading countries of the planet are committing crimes against humanity and nature (Cohen, 2001). Criminologists such as Ruggiero (2001: 172) note that «the millions of deaths produced by states and governments make the 20th century “unnameable”, a century far more lethal than all previous “pre-civil” epochs». Governing bodies periodically wage war for profit (Chatterjee, 2004; Chomsky, 2006; Perkins, 2007): this may have been endurable in the time of small nation-states, when humans fought with swords; it is so no longer and has huge consequences. Secondly, international corporations can legally act irresponsibly without being indicted for their destructive behavior worldwide (Korten, 2010). Many don’t pay taxes, and taxpayers are left responsible for repairing devastated lands and polluted landscapes or paying for the errors of bankers (De Rivero, 2001). Thirdly, the intelligence community is in the main out of sight of the lawmakers and thus constitutes anarchistic governance within the governments. On April 28, 1997, United States Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen explained that military, worldwide, are engaging in an eco-type of research «whereby they can alter the climate, set off earthquakes, volcanoes remotely through the use of electromagnetic waves». This statement was made at a conference on Terrorism, Weapons of Mass Destruction and US Strategy in his official capacity as the US Secretary of Defense; thus, this is an official position. He added: «It’s real, and that’s the reason why we have to intensify our efforts» (US Department of Defense, 1997: ¶ 19). Fourthly, black economies, computer control platforms across banking systems and advanced technologies benefit self-appointed world masters and an
international elite but do not benefit collectivities, hence the protests around the planet of those who belong in the ‘99%. And fifth, environmentalists tell us that the climate will be out of control within ten years because of our behavior and neglect. The list goes on with the earthquake of Fukushima, BP oil spill disaster, and the recent war with Libya leading to the assassination of a foreign head of state having decided to give the benefits of oil to the citizens of his country.

A large part of the power of the Wall Street Occupy movement and of climate action movements emerges from a moral message: It is wrong to wreck the world, the health and future of others. Kathleen Moore (2011a: ¶ 1), Philosophy Professor at Oregon State University, notes that

An economic system that forces most of the people to bear the impacts of the recklessness of a few powerful profiteers, to assume the burdens of others’ privilege, and to pay the real costs of destructive industries in the currency of their health and the hopes of their children – that system is immoral. And when, to enrich a powerful few, that system threatens to disrupt forever the great planetary cycles that support all the lives on Earth? This is moral monstrosity on a cosmic scale.

Most academic researchers deliberately ignore the problem in their work or even benefit from the situation. This essay therefore works through a series of hypotheses to reinvent the role of academia from an ethical viewpoint. If it happens to use here and there the discursive design of a future-oriented life, this is not to fabricate a fiction but to gather conceptual energies and direct them towards new, necessary struggles.

A more critical approach to contemporary cultural phenomena would support a new role for education within the global context. Globalist discourse has indeed stimulated «a radicalization of educational orientations» (Papastephanou, 2005: 533); Marianna Papastephanou states that «mistaken identifications of the Is with the Ought» in the definition of globalization «leads to naive and ethnocentric glorifications» of its potentials (ibidem). Within this perspective, the present proposal is intended to address social abuse, the frequent political lack of ethics, and the need to take stronger, moral stands within the academia. To counteract the economic vision propelled by globalists, «a more cosmopolitically sensitive education» is being proposed.

Possible origins of the scientific and educational divide will be discussed. Scientific signs have been taken for objects independently from the impacts of scientific concepts and discoveries on the subjects that we are and our environment. The process of rethinking our connection to earth and to the world necessarily entails a revisiting of our relations to and with otherness (Bigelow & Peterson, 2002; Tochon & Karaman, 2009). The social contract must reflect the needs of those beyond the sphere of the wealthy and the powerful. It must be taught in schools if it is to change the current culture of violence. The dimension of caring constitutes one core value of education to the world, since bridging the perceptual and conceptual distance that separates us from others is one major step towards world reconstruction. Criticisms again social reconstructionism – be it Deweyan, Brameldian, Habermasian or Freirian – emphasize that reconstruction is a political goal
while education should be apolitical. But from a consequentialist ethic, teaching how to prevent problems proceeds from a moral rather than a political assumption (Page, 2008).

This raises difficult questions for education. How can we redefine the social contract?

Can we avoid reductive interpretations of the terms? Self-criticism is one important path towards valuing other possible views, however criticism is but one step in the process of change. At a time when disillusion is almost universal, we need reconstructive imaginaries to direct action towards counterbalancing intransigent dogmas: the reign of extremisms and the parallel resurgence of fascism; the unethical omnipotence of wealth and abuse perpetuated by bankers and international corporations – to cite but a few of the current concerns worldwide. And how to avoid re-essentialization? We need a dialectic that reconciles foundation and anti-foundation (Derrida, 1998). Indeed philosophy has not always been integrative.

The current definition of science and the Cartesian divide

The current definition of science is inherited from the split between objects and subjects that originates in Cartesian philosophy. Reconciling subject and object is a requirement if we are to change the academia. This is related to how we conceive science and conceptualize it, which breaches with earlier understandings of how science could be meshed with wisdom. This problem is in large part epistemic and has been central to much harm done in the course of the process of modernization (Gusdorf, 1963). In his _Protrepticus: An Introduction to Philosophy_, Aristotle contends that we exist to learn and exercise theoretical wisdom (Greek _σοφία_ [sophia]). This process is first expressed through the body then the soul (ψυχή [psychê]), which is raised by virtues towards wisdom. For Aristotle, the soul’s government and practical understanding or prudence (φρόνησις [phrónêsis]) are the primary tools for reaching the ultimate good, which is a good in itself rather than a good for anything else. In this process, deliberative reasoning is key and is related to an ethic of action consisting of a sense of appropriate action for specific goals that lead to the development of virtues. Deliberative reasoning considers each potential action and the extent to which it can contribute to achieving appropriate goals by making deliberate choices while performing the action (_Nicomachean Ethics_, Book III, 3). The acquisition of intellectual virtues and the development of wisdom, science (ἐπιστήμη [epistêmê]), intuitive understanding (Νους [noûs]), practical understanding, and expertise in craft (Τεχνη [technê]) rely upon the exercise of that understanding. In this light, education can be understood as the development of virtues, and educators can be defined as humans having the clear goals of developing both practical and theoretical wisdom within this ethical framework.

For Aristotle, practical and theoretical wisdom as expressions of understanding are the goals of human life. The most worthwhile, honorable thoughts are those directed not towards usefulness but towards pure contemplation of the Whole that will lead to wisdom and wise action. Such
thought is argued to constitute the distinction between humans and animals. As contemplation of the Whole, philosophy is understood to be the supreme good to which humans should aspire. Exercising wisdom is a worthwhile choice in life, Aristotle says, because it is not possible to live without it. Useful goods are important; yet things loved for themselves and in themselves are superior to useful goods and deserve to be targeted as such. These are among the highest goals. Wisdom produces happiness by being a part of virtue (1144a3-6).

Thus science (epistêmê) should lead to both practical and theoretical wisdom. The etymological root of the word «science» is the Latin verb «scire», which means «to know». In the Greek and Roman traditions, science consisted of a dynamic, integrated sense of what can be of maximum benefit to humans. It was related to philosophy and wisdom itself. Even when Plato expresses his vision of Ideas being separated from the human world, as in the allegory of the cave, the concepts of integration and friendship for wisdom (philo-sophia) are still in view. The Greek philosophers described principles for a politics of the mind. They were motivated by a powerful ideal of the higher good. These imaginaries were suited to small societies and were swept aside as the ambitions of heads of states grew and populations increased.

Nevertheless, the rise of the problem of dualism that split the Western mind can be traced back to the advent of René Descartes’s (1632/1991) research method: his definition of Science and his cogito ergo sum («I think, therefore I am»). For him, ideas of objects «represent» the world. This contemplation of reality has various consequences: ideas are different from objects and ideas do not resemble the world; ideas can give a false representation of objects or represent existing objects that do not exist. This representational model of the relation between ideas and the world places the subject at a distance. First, Descartes creates a split between the perception of matter and the mind (thinking thing): since they can exist separately, they must be distinct. Second, he splits the perception of the subject, which can be divided and take itself as an object. Thus the famous cogito ergo sum. Third, he divides reality between the infinite – which is beyond our reach and comes increasingly to be viewed as not worth investigating – and the finite – which science (as defined) leads us to view as the seat of the highest good for humankind and the direction that investigation ought to take. The finite is cut off from the infinite. That done, he reifies both subject and object, essentializing them as if they were givens, not constructs.

Descartes proposed to dissect reality into its constituents in order to understand the whole objectively – a view that gestaltists and associationists later found highly limiting; yet he guided Western peoples towards the pursuit of the objective accumulation of technical and industrial craft independently from its impacts on humans. Descartes distinguished the body from the soul:

And although we suppose that God united a body to a soul so closely that it was impossible to form a more intimate union, and thus made a composite whole, the two substances would remain really distinct, notwithstanding this union. (Descartes, 1644/1983: Part I, §60, I, 213)
Descartes divided the soul from the body, and awareness from its objects, in a way that helped all subsequent proponents of the scientific method to develop objective «knowledge» – and new objects – independently of their impact on the subjects that we are and of wisdom as an expression of conscience. This division represents a clear breach with Aristotle’s conception, for whom the soul-body unity was not to be questioned:

It is not necessary to ask whether soul and body are one, just as it is not necessary to ask whether the wax and its shape are one, nor generally whether the matter of each thing and that of which it is the matter are one. (Trans. 1993 ii 1: 412b6-9)

**Wisdom and praxis as ways to transcend the limitations of instrumental thinking**

The consequences of the Cartesian divide have been huge. Interestingly enough, other cultures have not chosen to follow this path. While the Western world has been attractive to immigration for economic reasons, Native-Americans, African, East Asian, and South Asian cultures, as well as a large part of the Muslim world¹, have retained a sense of the relation between the symbolic aspects of life that ground the world’s representations and creation on one hand and wisdom on the other hand. In disregard of these conceptions, which have been considered «primitive», the Western representation of the ultimate good has been most often defined in terms of objective accumulation of goods, appearance, and greed and consumerism under the veil of reason and enlightenment. Without discarding other crucial dimensions emerging from the history of Western mentality and their consequence, it can be briefly stated that the direction was to «have» (or appear to have) rather than to «be». This has led to the development of scientific and economic systems disconnected from their impact on the environment and human beings. Cartesianism impacted how disciplines are learned (Gardner, 2006): students move from object to object and rarely do they approach in some depth their own subjectivity or the subjective aspects of the discipline taught. The recognition of the humanness of science is the ground for compelling claims on the resistance of normal science to scientific revolutions. The pervasive myth of reductionism has been accepted as the only systematic way of understanding. It derives from instrumental reason and has uprooted the understanding of science from its epistemology. The argument that the analysis of the parts may equate the analysis of the whole lies upon the assumption that the demonstration is reversible. A simple animal analogy would show the lack of reversibility of the analysis by reduction: two half-horses do not equal one horse. Not only does the horse lose its life, scientists lose the possibility of understanding how it functions and mapping its organizing. Instrumentation without a prior analysis of practice leads us – scientists – to believe that we study

---

¹ Muslim culture and Sufi wisdom must be distinguished from the political expressions of extremism.
horses or students, cultures, or languages, etc., when we study horse parts. We work on the living as if it were dead. There are moral implications to this limitation.

The Cartesian definition of science alienates the mind through the endless pursuit of objects, confining individuals within more and more restrictions, constructing an inescapable web of mandatory duties that impose the iron collar of time on what remains of humanity. Humans, prisoners of a system that has become nonsensical from the perspective of life’s meaningfulness, have been diverted from our pursuit of wisdom. Our perceptions seem to have been split, twisted and perverted. The whole situation may sound quite sad. The way science is conceived, designed and organized appears detrimental to society. At such a time, we need a powerful counterweight to such nonsense. We need to rebuild meaning, recreate positive imaginaries and ideals. This may lead to the recovery of philosophy. Not philosophy as in neglected books on dusty shelves: philosophy alive, philosophy as the quest of science as wisdom and of science with a conscience. We need this century to be the century of a deep, philosophical recovery: it would be the century of deep education. Such teacherhood is an attempt at defining the global stewardship role we teachers and professors can play (Hansen, 2001; Biesta & Miedema, 2002; Cummings, Harlow, & Maddux, 2007; Karaman & Tochon, 2007).

The solution does not lie in what could become a «one moral party for all». Habermas (2003) has clearly demonstrated why a plurality of parties and a strong voice for opposition and debate are necessary for real democracy. When Morin (1965) indicated that the interests of the official Left and the official Right are contaminated by corruption under the threat of the military-pharmaco-oil cartels – and activism may always be recuperated to make money out of it –, then he wondered: «Shouldn’t we posit that the true militants of politics for the human won’t be those who distribute tracts, lessons or strikes but those who live another way?» (p. 64). The anthro-politic movement defers action to the citizens: «It is politics that must become subservient» to humans (ibidem: 108).

While Beck (2006) claims that globalization can’t happen in a democratic way, many authors posit, on the contrary, that valuing a plurality of views and a new type of citizenship may impose to the powers-that-were a direction that can solve issues of poverty, mass starvation, desertification, lack of water, and free energy (Cavanagh, 2004; Fotopoulos, 2002; Habermas, 2003; Korten, 2010; Latouche, 2007; Laszlo, 2001; Ulrich, 2001).

Thus, this moral approach to wisdom is not de-politicized but institutes another form of political action that does not emerge from an undisputable and absolute truth – above and beyond worldly politics – but from a multiplicity of local and relative understandings which – in the process of sharing – get a status of constantly re-negotiated, relative rules of conduct. Moral policies can emerge from shared relative deontologies, with a special care on how regulations articulate – and don’t betray – moral applications of the law. Inter-subjectivities in dialogue articulate what the local communities wish for and what they can’t tolerate anymore. Such action is less based upon moral quasi-universals than shared and relative moral perceptions. From this standpoint, deep
educators aim at developing wisdom in action and social integration through the revival of the public sphere (Tochon, 2010).

**Global education and the dynamics of caring**

In a global, interconnected world, deep education requires better access to otherness from the integrative perspective and dynamics of caring (Eaker-Rich & Van Galen, 1996; Noddings, 2003). Let us consider the role of teachers and professors vis-à-vis global understanding and sensitivity to diversity. Here globalization and the struggle against ethnocentrisms are addressed from a non-colonialist perspective. Let us explore, on the basis of Appiah’s account, how cosmopolitanism can contribute to a deeper sense of the academic work.

In *Cosmopolitanism*, Appiah (2006) surveys two trends. The first can be discerned in the French «Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen» of 1789 as well as Kant’s conception of a «league of nations». It shares the Rousseauist ideal of a social contract that would express the obligations humans have towards each other. As Hannah Arendt observed, the philosophy of the natural right to further one’s individual interests reversed this trend by making the social contract explicit. This individualist approach has been criticized since the nineteenth century, but no one has really succeeded so far in proposing a trans-individual type of collective agreement.

The second trend Appiah discusses emerges from the recognition that others may have their own way of doing and being and are entitled to do so, and that these ways of doing should be learned and known and their diversity valued: we humans must make significant efforts to value the lives of others and understand «those with whom we share the planet», as Voltaire put it (*ibidem*: xv). Indeed, a cosmopolitan education should help us identify with those who are different from us (Jollimore & Barrios, 2006). Appiah (*ibidem*) surveys the partiality of nationalisms, the moral irrelevance of national boundaries and what Tolstoy called the «stupidity of patriotism». But he also indicates the potential risk of cosmopolitan misanthropy and the rejection of the provincial. It is an important point because localism and regionalisms are better placed to develop a stronger sense of social contract, which can morally bind individuals with common goals. Partial cosmopolitanism is a midway attitude similar to Eliot’s *Deronda* positioning: «I want to be an Englishman, but I want to understand other points of view. And I want to get rid of a merely English attitude in studies» (Eliot, 1876/1995: 745).

This deeper way of seeing and acting, which is in marked contrast with what has been seen as the academic mindset, is engaged rather than detached and creative rather than reactive. Teaching situations become spaces of wisdom. They manifest the acting mind within Lefebvre’s (1991) conception of third space, a space where things get connected, where subject and object merge. The perspective is then different from the Kantian ruling of reason. It is logical yet it is connectionist
and can be intuitive. In this light, the few people with power and passive people without it might all be products of shallow teaching and learning.

Pacific coexistence is a real adventure, since so many people are used to controlling the lives of others or being controlled; to subjecting others, or being subjected, to intimidation and conformity. Cosmopolitan tolerance may be interpreted as a lack of leadership, whereas in fact it implies respect for human diversity. Tolerance and active listening are forms of «secular Humanism» (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994): every human deserves unconditional positive regard. The dynamic of caring defines an integrative attitude that unites science with conscience, as Morin (1982) and Morin and Kern (1999) proposed. Caring for others expresses «the fundamental sense of the relationality of life» (Heidegger, 2001: 74). If education is to develop a sense of care and wisdom, this goal should take shape in activities that involve the relationality of life, grounding inclinations that develop a proclivity to care for others in respect for their differences. In contrast, distance vis-à-vis others is a phenomenon related to the constant hierarchical organizing of information into more and less meaningful situations, events, statuses, etc. The issue is to give meaning to this distance in a way that will value it in terms of caring.

The distance is not simply eradicated; indeed it exists in the very Being of the relation of care. But in life it is transported into dispersion. It arises, and is encountered, where proclivity lives, in the world and specifically in its «sense» as a mode of meaningfulness. The character of distance is present insofar as life mis-measures itself in its care for meaningful things, expands them, and is, in its proclivity, intent on a calculation and distillation within the meaningful world: intent on rank, success, position in life (position in the world), superiority. (Heidegger, 2001: 77)

Academia has inherited a tradition of distance rather than caring. Despite early works of Cushing (1884/1999), Boas (1911/2010), and Malinowski (1929) on the value of participant research, it is only recently that it re-gained some legitimacy in social sciences. Bridging the distance vis-à-vis the other has important implications for how the Self perceives itself vis-à-vis the other. The vision that intellectuals are disconnected from the effects of their work on social life because they focus on the contents of their disciplines is potentially immoral. Specialists can’t reject

---

2 Some readers might find referring to Heidegger in this context of moral demonstration objectionable. In April 1933 (prior to his rectorship), Martin Heidegger informed Edmund Husserl that this one could no longer use the Library — there is no evidence of any involvement by him in the decision-making process —, but it is often forgotten that Heidegger had protected Hannah Arendt and Elizabeth Blochman, helping them leave Germany right before the war and resuming contact with them afterwards. After Bourdieu’s (1988) disturbing analysis of how Heidegger’s philosophical discourse was partly framed within his political convictions, such criticisms must be addressed. First, readers should consider that the work being referenced is from the young Heidegger while he was lecturing in Freiburg. Second, historical analysis does not confirm any role played by Heidegger in Husserl’s eviction from academia. Third, Heidegger left the party in 1938. Fourth, there is his behavior in helping Jewish friends to cross the border and escape; the fact that Hannah Arendt joined him after the war, as well as these other points, plead the case for taking the moral emphasis on the role of caring in Heidegger’s work seriously.
their responsibility in having created the dissociated world of today. Like Nicolescu (2002) sug-
gests, a transdisciplinary revolution is required. Abolishing distance while living a life of caring can
build a sense of the relationality. A balance must be maintained in this process. The goal is not for
academic life to be appropriated by the proclivity to care for others. A sense of difference should
be retained, without hurting the move towards caring, in the perception of life itself as the Being
of difference: not difference in a distancing or hierarchical way, but difference in the appreciative
perception of life as a caring move, within the multiplicity of possibilities. «Being to me» [-Mir-Sein]
(ibidem: 103) changes when it opens up to what I would call «Being to the other» [-Dir-Sein].

Introducing philosophical reflection within the disciplines should create the necessary inner
intersubjectivity for developing a sense of caring for the social and environmental impacts of sci-
entific developments. This project was described in the Manifesto of Trandisciplinarity (Nicolescu,
2002). It is very practical and some universities have started reshaping their programs to make
sure transdisciplinarity is being developed. Accordingly, there should be in each discipline an
overarching goal for social justice, planetary improvement, outreach, and free global communica-
tion. The understanding of cultures and languages can also be a worthwhile component of wisdom.
It defines the path towards the new moral role of the academia through regular international
exchanges. The imaginary of reconstruction re-defines the role of educators in the search for a
cross-symbolic system of understanding.

Earth as a reconceptualized cosmopolitan grounding

Along these lines of thought, academic biocosmopolitanism must first integrate the paradox of
non-foundational foundations and ethics as its core value (Derrida, 1998). The horrors that come
from extremisms and doctrinal beliefs must be discussed. Violence is often perpetrated in the
name of ideals. Appiah quotes Sir Richard Francis Burton, a Victorian world traveler: «All Faith is
false, all Faith is true» (2006: 5). He reflects on the limits of local beliefs and the dualistic require-
ment for respecting these beliefs but setting limits to behaviors that infringe universal principles.
These reflections exemplify the subtlety with which this sensitive debate should be conducted. At
times Appiah’s position echoes John Rawls’ (2001) attempts at the putative legislating of universal
principles; yet he grounds his thinking in meaning and human situations, with their paradoxes,
and his understanding that there are dangers in laying down the law too soon. Believers without
borders, he writes, «would never go to war for a country; but they will enlist in a campaign against
any nation that gets in the way of universal justice» (p. 137), including their own. Universal con-
cepts have been under heavy criticism, yet we may agree on a relative and evolving sense of what
quasi-universal principles of a moral nature are. Cosmopolitan educators have core values, yet
may not restrict their beliefs to material representations of the ineffable.
Citizens of the world often take pantheist stands: respect for ecology and creation are part of their deep values. They may not believe in the restrictions imposed in their local communities, yet they feel close to many and approach their human companions with care, with the Golden Rule of doing unto others what they wish to have done to themselves, while remaining aware of cultural relativity and the fallibility of their viewpoint. Pantheism is a very ancient philosophy that can be traced back to Heraclites. It integrates mind, body and nature in the act of creation (Deleuze, 2003), thus reuniting the parts that had been split in the Cartesian divide. Scientific pantheists such as Albert Einstein, Carl Sagan or Stephen Hawkins lay no claim to worldly power. They contend that humans have freedom in the ability to think otherwise (Harrison, 2004; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006). This sense of harmony is in accordance with the etymology of the word «science» as a level of deep understanding:

I am convinced that a vivid consciousness of the primary importance of moral principles for the betterment and ennoblement of life does not need the idea of a law-giver, especially a law-giver who works on the basis of reward and punishment. (Einstein Archive 59-215, Letter to M. Berkowitz, October 25, 1950)

This stand, closer to Appiah than Rawls, extends limited trust to the legislating of rules of conduct, but from an ethical and personal standpoint, the standpoint of human conscience. It supports another vision of academic work. Accomplished cosmopolitanism is the fruit of a radical criticism of dualistic modes of thinking and the institutionalization of beliefs. It implies a rejection of the split of humanity into classes, such as the «social engineers» and the «inmates of closed institutions» (Habermas, 1985). All can be involved in the recognition of humanity as dynamic unity. Then both philosophy and science can lead to a recognition of the biosphere as one of the major current social imaginaries (Taylor, 2004). Nonetheless, retaining a sense of the partial success of the effort at defining cosmopolitanism and a sense of the incompleteness of the academic work may be a good way to verify the underlying governmentality of such a proposal – to use Foucault’s term (1991) – as any concept can be distorted for the purpose of domination.

**Biocosmopolitan education as moral education**

The demonstration in this article is that education – and academic work in particular – must be reconceptualized to solve the destructive problems that humanity faces. Reframing otherness, caring in the sense of developing integrative understanding of difference, of discursive otherness, and of other languages and cultures: these constitute the social part of the equation. Caring for the Earth and biodiversity constitutes the ecological part, that is our relation to our shared habitat. As well, we need to rethink our direction, which is the focus of this section.

Critical discourse analysis has generated a number of healthy analyses, shedding light on dis-
cursive abuse, political lies and, more simply, the way discourse or any textual utterances create signs that operate as technologies in the fabrication of inclusions and exclusion and the construction of the citizen. While the cosmopolitan can be ironically described as «the agential individual who is talked about as empowered, having a voice, and self-responsible in producing innovation in the processes of change» (Popkewitz, Olsson, & Petersson, 2006: 434), this individual inherits the norms, values and historical scaffolding of the Enlightenment, which have been used to press citizens into the Kantian mold of reason. This phenomenon is the object of significant critique and deconstruction.

Thinkers who reject realism encounter similar paradoxical challenges. Foucault used discursive technologies to decipher social metaphors (Baker, 2007). Uncovering the arbitrariness of metaphorical nests and social signs may appear to most Foucaultians as one major goal of their intellectual, moral and social activity. Such analyses indeed usefully interrupt discursive practices and shine the light on litanies that – for example – we use to construct futures and design social anticipations and solutions to problems that have been enminded through persuasive texts. Such critiques clearly play a healthy oppositional role in the emergence of any new ideology. Nonetheless, they themselves contribute to creating a new self-governmentality.

There is a risk of circularity in constant critique. Part of critical governmentality seems directed by discourse supremacists. A new Foucaultian status quo must in turn be challenged. All events are not discursive. Some events are not created by discourse but by people’s inaction vis-à-vis situations, of which meaning has been disowned. If something is hot and I burn my skin, it may be interesting to decipher the pathways to my representation of danger, but it is safe to take a stand to change the situation. While there are good reasons to express admiration toward demonstrations that uncover the limits of psychological appropriations of schooling, it is nonetheless important to unveil the processes through which action is delayed and denial occurs: critical discourses share responsibility in the co-construction of denial. Denial may prevent needed action.

Politically, in many countries the logics of both the progressive Left and the conservative Right have been invested with corrupted party lines. In 1965, Edgar Morin demonstrated that the old logic of the Right and the Left inherited from the French Revolution must be drastically altered into a politics of the human. The view that governmentality should adapt to everlasting change and citizens should be made self-controlling and locally disciplined, with the prospect of a happy future, sounds like conservative progressivism. It may not change the way industrial realities function as a trend to the enslavement of human life. It may not modify the prevailing attraction of objects within the Cartesian divide. But it may decentralize struggle and prevent citizens from being empowered to transform the root structures of their alienation.

Proposals that uncover the hidden governmentality within the «unfinished cosmopolitan» (Popkewitz, Olsson, & Petersson, 2006) – while deciphering the strategies of subtle persuasion that blind citizens to the normative function of the proposed global community – do little to artic-
ulate what could be the new social contract. No solution can be found in either a conservative, neoliberal trend, which has proven to be devastating, or in a progressive nostalgia that bases change on local agencies and empowered citizens who have no say in the structures and discourses that normalize their behavior. The target cannot be further change, nor can it be reason as conceived during the Age of the Enlightenment.

Yet we can retain Kant’s idea that, to overcome an opposition, you need a third element. Earth and the ecology could form the third element in relation to the current social contract, reminding us of Michel Serres’s (1995) natural contract. Ecology can be the third party line that will subsume conservative and progressive efforts into a goal comprising the rebalancing of the Earth, the reduction of entropy, the struggle against moral and physical pollution. It will reverse nostalgia: indeed the future is certainly not the glorified past. Nor is it everlasting progress and change. The logic of ever-increasing industrial growth is a nonsense that justifies war as the best way to solve waste. Therefore, Nozick’s (1974) entitlement theory requires drastic revision: Earth, wildlife, flora, and fauna are entitled to some ownership. They must be part of the new social contract.

Most biocosmopolitans work for *décroissance* (or bioeconomic powerdown – Georgescu-Roegen, 1999; Mayumi, 2001): they do not want the upcoming decades to be marked by economic collapse, wars and environmental catastrophes, and they emphasize the urgent need to develop alternative energies, distribute resources more evenly, and reduce the world population voluntarily and humanely through birth control rather than through war, which the Western elites excel at perpetuating for their own benefit (Heinberg, 2004).

The danger of seeing the techno-scientific delirium take over wisdom must not be underestimated. With their projects for a «transhumanity», the fanatics of convergence and nanotechnologies – with some realism – are planning to engineer a new species able to survive in a degraded environment… In such geopolitical vision, the elites feel necessary to bring the world population back to 600 million inhabitants, which size is compatible both with the survival of the biosphere and the sustainability of their privileges. These points are very seriously discussed within the Bilderberg organization, a semi-secret society of the planetary elites. (Latouche, 2006: 52-53, my translation)

As mentioned Fotopoulos (2002), reflecting on Democracy today without radically questioning how the system works in which power (hence politics) is kept in the hands of the «new world masters» is, at best, hollow, vain gossip and, at worst, a form of complicity with the creeping totalitarianism of economic globalization. «To talk about the equal sharing of political power, without conditioning it on the equal sharing of economic power, is at best meaningless and at worse deceptive» (*ibidem*: 206). Who doesn’t see that, behind the political scene and the electoral hoax, lobbies largely rule?

It is certainly not acceptable for life and commonalities such as water to be patented and privatized (Beck, 2006). It is not acceptable for humans – and their food and clothing – to be tagged,
like pets, with tracking devices for radio frequency identification. Academic researchers play a role in this new form of oppression. It is not acceptable for academic research to collaborate in oppression in creating «smart dust», carbon-based GPS nanochips that people will breathe when sprayed during political demonstrations. It is not acceptable for cell phones, and cars, and passports, and ID cards, bank cards, and bank notes, etc., to be equipped with GPS microchips for the powers-to-be to locate anybody at will at any time. Like physicians and psychologists who now sign professional agreements not to participate in torture, scientists have a moral responsibility in how their findings are used. Mass dissemination of fabricated viruses is unacceptable for people who call themselves humans. A sense of human solidarity must develop. Moral contracts must be introduced in academia. It is not acceptable for our air, our water, our Earth to be sprayed with life-threatening chemicals, depleted uranium, and the agents of biowarfare. Why is such surveillance and warfare abhorrent at a time many people accept increased control because of terrorism? Simply because our governments have not proven being enlightened to the point they could behave ethically, with wisdom, in many events they have masterminded so far. Enlightenment must be revisited from a moral standpoint. Many more people have been killed by the «war on terror» than by terrorists themselves, in a ratio of maybe hundred for one, to the point that the definition of terrorism should be questioned: who is at the source of terror around the planet?

Methods of action can’t be reduced to recipes, they require «strategy, initiatives, invention, art» (Morin, 1982: 314). Dealing with complexity necessitates constant re-creation and intellectual reconceptualizing. «There is no pure science» (ibidem: 319). Science is enacted within a culture, a history, a political perspective and – possibly – a deontology. The notion of progress as inscribed in the project of modern sciences must be revisited to verify in what way it may have been partly misleading and misguided. Progress must be redefined within ethical terms, terms that sustain life and humanity, rather than business and technocrats. If scientists are to help in reconstructing a better situation for humanity, they must change their focus for goals that can sustain life, and engage themselves in some form of agreement equivalent to the code of deontology of healthcare professionals: their new Charter implies the primacy of peoples’ welfare, autonomy, and social justice. From these stem commitments such as professional competence, honesty, quality, improvement, just distribution of finite resources, trust by managing conflicts of interest and professional responsibilities.

Ethics committees and scientific institutional review boards tend to have a major concern to protect their institutions from being sued; the emphasis should rather be back to caring for human subjects and life-supporting measures. But even such measures may seem pathetic if the executive boards on top of scientific associations are not restrained from their tendency to enter into obedience with political and financial networks that control the curricula of various professions to make them sources of benefits, whatever the impacts on humans. Here again the rule of law must apply, which requires a separation of powers within the Nation-State as well as at supra-national levels.
Therefore the role of international organizations must eventually be questioned, as they are at what may seem to be the top of a pyramid of corruption, systematically favoring particular economic interests rather than supporting life on the planet through decisions that could solve issues such as hunger and poverty – for an estimated cost equivalent to what Americans spend annually for their pets: 13 billion dollars. Economy must be re-defined in terms of the real, long-term costs of business and industry to the quality of life on Earth (Latouche, 2005). There is some hope that this revolution in the planetary mindset could happen without a major disruption. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to anticipate that the only way to cut the dark wings of the warmongers will be to reboot the financial system for a strict application of the Basel banking agreements, which will forbid those that Farrell (2010) named the «banksters» to develop their own money power out of thin air and thus create new masses of slave workers.

Conclusion

This essay was framed within a non-dualistic view of the acting mind. Aristotle philosophized that we exist to learn and exercise wisdom. Wisdom takes shape in action. It comes with the exercise of ethics in practice. Within this framework, wisdom, understanding, and science are integrated with conscience as the principles of human life. This non-nostalgic vision is based on action in the present. It can be experimented. It is a valid framework for a deeper academia, an academia that is respectful of others and the Earth, our shared habitat. We witness the impact of such action on main street: the youth movements around the planet are now connecting the dots on a wide map of unethical practices and injustice.

Climate change. Toxic neighborhoods. Financial recklessness. Jobs despair. Concentrated wealth. Pointless war. The dots all connect to one central social pathology, which is funding (one might say, buying and selling) of elections (and of the elected) by powerful centers of wealth – mostly corporations, mostly destructive and extractive corporations. Our erstwhile democracy has now developed a futures market in politicians. This has created a situation where the government is fundamentally controlled by those who would risk or wreck the (name your favorite: economy, environment, children’s futures) for their own short-term gain. (Moore, 2011a: ¶ 3)

Biocosmopolitan ethics can federate the convictions that we must work collaboratively on the ecology and impose peace on this planet as a holistic and collective act of self-defense. No doubt the issue is extremely complex. Its details cannot be explored within the space of an essay. Nonetheless some solutions have been developed in the field of education. Education helps us at living in society. I posit that education will be a determining factor in the continuation of our species, failing a dramatic mutation. Biocosmopolitan educators can support this process and help develop a caring attitude vis-à-vis others because we nurture the sense of the relationality of life.
A vibrant social contract can promote a creative society. At a time when politicians express periodically their readiness to trigger what could become a new world war, educational philosophy may have to recover the integrative role it played in the past in the politics of the mind. It appears judicious to reflect on the possible reintegration of science with conscience as an instrument for peace and wisdom.

Acknowledgements: I am thankful to Bernadette Baker for her help in restructing an earlier version of this article.

Correspondence: Department of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 225 North Mills Street, Madison, WI 53706 USA.
E-mail: ftochon@education.wisc.edu

References


