Spiritual Exercise as Techne:
Philosophy as a Way of Liberating Education

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Abstract. The study of education systems as social phenomena has led scholars to question the role of education in modern society. The question of how to improve education naturally leads to concerns about what is wrong with the present education system. If education is meant to elevate the next generation, how can it meet the goal of ensuring a meaningful existence for those being educated? Scholars have demonstrated that education has been reduced to a process of the construction of objects, where curriculum as techne commodifies students into products with market value. We propose that the tendency of interpreting techne as technology is a perspective of the modern age, and the rules of modern education are based on the rules of modern technology, under the guidance of the paradigm of productivity. We will introduce a broader interpretation of techne which frames it as the cultivation of virtue, i.e., virtue-techne. On this basis, education could be viewed as techne in the sense of praxis (practice, exercise), rather than as fabrication in the sense of production. We highlight the rising rate of student suicides in Taiwan in recent years, where we determine the education system lacks a focus on praxis. This article investigates alternative praxis-oriented notions of education, from Aristotle's cultivation of virtue to Hadot's "spiritual exercises," to advocate for a shift away from the production paradigm. Indebted to Heidegger, we clarify his "techne as revealing" by emphasizing two frameworks for education: The first, modern education being valued by its adherence to metrics based in the paradigm of production. The second, education as a process wherein its value is derived from the life context of the participating individual. Finally, as a comparative study, we explore the current state of education in Russia and Taiwan, and present the case of one high school in Taiwan which has adopted the practice of spiritual exercises in its curriculum, including a required hike to the peak of Taiwan's tallest mountain, to cultivate a sense of (and value for) the liberated life before its students graduate.

Keywords: philosophy of education, techne, eudaimonia, virtue, spiritual exercise, praxis, life, nature, Hadot, Heidegger, Aristotle

I. Reflections on a Problem in Modern Education

In November 2020, there were six cases of college students jumping off their buildings to commit suicide in Taiwan. Three cases occurred at the country's most prestigious university. Undoubtedly, this sad news had an impact on many people, including their educators. The Minister of Education of Taiwan, when questioned by the Legislative Council, stated that in 2019 there were 59 incidences of college students killing themselves. According to the statistics conducted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, in 2020 76 students from colleges and all levels of schools took their lives. Another dimension of the statistics reveals that the number of suicides among youths ages 15—24 increased from 193 in 2017 to 257 in 2020. These figures indicate that over the past decade the death rate has been climbing annually, reaching its peak in 2020. In the process of attempting to reduce the number of suicides, psychological counseling services in colleges and all levels of schools have become overloaded and strained. Could psychological counseling help decrease the rate of suicide among youths? Should we reflect on what might be wrong with the education system? Can philosophy do anything for education?

Camus writes, "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy" [1. P. VIII]. Like Camus, Dewar also is concerned with this crisis and finds a role in education. We also believe that judging whether life is or is not worth living still amounts to answering the fundamental question of not only philosophy but also of education [1. P. VIII]. Dewar cites Madeline Levine's book *The Price of Privilege*, which observes that despite living in a society with material abundance, people are inwardly impoverished. The problem is not the privilege of the first world, but the lack of something more significant and universal: the need for a meaningful existence. Levine asks, "Why are the most advantaged kids in this country running into unprecedented levels of mental illness and emotional distress?" She concludes that "the problem lies in how we are 'overly concerned with 'the bottom line,' with how our children 'do' rather than with who our children 'are'" [1. P. XVI]. The same is true in Taiwan. Due to the existing school and university admission system, students who study in top universities are mostly from middle-class families. It is from this same social class that students choose to give up their lives. What prevents them from searching for meaning in their lives? Why is it some eventually lose them? As Sandel observes, the implicit belief underneath our decisions is "that all our behavior, however remote from material concerns, can be explained and predicted as a rational calculus

of costs and benefits" [2. P. 50]. The implicit belief identifies "being" with "having," and that we live in such a situation in which the notion of "I want to make everybody and everything, including myself, my property" exists [2. P. 21]. Meaning, of course, is not a thing but a sense that life is worth living, which motivates Frankl to write about how, in unprecedented ways, our capitalist culture has "the means to live, but no meaning to live for" [3. P. 1]. It is the symptom of modern capitalist society and differs from the thought of the ancients.

Sloterdijk writes in *You Must Change Your Life*, "If one had to summarize the main difference between the modern and ancient worlds," it would have to be the following: the modern era is the one that brought about the greatest mobilization of human powers for the sake of work and production, while all those life forms in which the utmost mobilization took place in the name of practice and perfection are ancient [4. P. 211]. For Sloterdijk, modernity is defined by the channeling of human energies into productive activity and its different outcomes — works, products, or profits — antiquity, by contrast, is defined by an emphasis on activities that develop and enhance the sense of the goodness of the individual by performing a practice or an exercise [5. P. 275]. It is the performance of practices and exercises which achieve the sense of self-forming and fulfillment that is the goal of the search for the meaningfulness of one's life. In our contemporary view, the emphasis for activity is placed on productivity; what you make is valued above who you are. In the paradigm of productivity, a student's value is reduced to market value. When we superimpose market values on students, like a marketable set of "college and career-ready skills," we imply their value is economically conditional, rather than an unconditional feature of their being [1. P. XVII]. To achieve better manipulation, well-intentioned educators including parents and teachers prevent youths from the trial-and-error process for becoming healthy, autonomous human beings [1. P. XVII]. However, students who do not become healthy self-realized individuals fall into melancholy and long for annihilation, and may eventually choose to end their lives. Dewar proposes that it is "the privileging of epistemology over ontology in educational research and its ontological consequences" that lead to this because when the productivity-oriented system take over young people's decision-making processes to prevent them from failing, we risk affronting and interrupting the ontologically significant questions they are learning to ask and explore: What does my life mean? What kind of human being do I want to become? According to Heidegger, how to answer the questions individualize our distinct being from others [6. P. 279—382]. Dewar cites Slouka's writing, that it is "the increasing dominance […] of a certain way of seeing, of reckoning value" that drives "the quiet retooling of […] education into an adjunct of business, an instrument of production" [1. P. XVIII]. Dewar and Slouka share the appeal of wisdom, in the sense of illuminating and affirming the irreducible value of the human being, which is absent from the contemporary educational discourse. Dewar and Slouka both share the same idea with Sloterdijk and Hadot for reconsidering the ancient values with an emphasis on activities that develop and enhance the individual performing a practice or an exercise.

Smith suggests that the philosophy of education must activate wisdom instead of existing as a passive enabler of a decaying worldview, of which nihilism is symptomatic [7. P. 47]. He further indicates that loving wisdom is "a way of seeing the world more comprehensively, more wholly, indeed as holy, in a way of caring that is not naïve but wiser and more attuned to a deeper truth of things" [7. P. 46]. It also corresponds to Sloterdijk and Hadot's discussion of ancient philosophy. That is to say, the end of teaching and learning is to pursue a good life or well-being rather than to be satisfied with employment. Postman has insight into contemporary education and points out its problems lying in the presence of technology, referring to know-how and the absence of metaphysical thinking, referring to know-why; the former makes us pursue the most effective instructional methodology, the latter obstructs us from searching for a fundamental sense of meaning without which, "schooling" and more importantly lives, "do not work" [8. P. 3—4]. Nietzsche's famous aphorism is relevant here: "He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*" [8. P. 4]. This applies as much to learning as to the living. But how do we understand the relatedness between the *why* and the *how*? Regarding Aristotle, the *why* indicates what is for true life i.e., happiness, the *how* indicates the skills to deal with human affairs, which is practiced through experiences. The end of the skills is to constitute the possibilities of life instead of production for utility. Before we come back to Aristotle's point, we invoke Heidegger's assertion that we are misguided when we ask: what will we do with philosophy? Instead, we should ask: what will philosophy do with us? That is what philosophizing is for. In this way, it is ultimately up to the readers, no matter who they are, teachers or students, to determine if and how the philosophical perspectives translate into his or her own "practice." Thus, philosophizing is not only ontological but praxical in the sense of the Heideggerian. In this article we will rethink how philosophizing activates every existence and liberates education from the tendency to reduce being to a "thing," to quantifiable properties, which occludes the primitive ontological nature of education, that is the meaning of our being: our well-being.

II. The Significance of Techne in Education

From Sandel's "…make everybody and everything, including myself, my property…" analysis, to what Sloterdijk calls the modern era of work and production, Dewar's "the privileging of epistemology over ontology," to the conditions Slouka, Smith, and Postman observe which produce the problem in which contemporary education is set in the paradigm of technology, it seems that production or technology is the core problem within the modern educational phenomenon. On basis of it, Dewar highlights that education has been reduced to the curriculum as techne [1. P. 25]. It should be noted that it is Grundy who first connected the Aristotelian concept to curriculum [1. P. 26], and indicates the philosophical commitments of curriculum's "technical" interest originate from techne.

Below, we will examine if the concept of techne is interpreted as technical and whether regarding it as technology is adequate. First, we will argue the

interpretation perhaps can attribute to forfeit the metaphysical significance of techne in Aristotle's philosophy and attempt to discover the confrontation between theory and practice in the modern age, conditions which perhaps never confronted the ancient Greeks. Second, we assert that techne is not merely the theory of the practical arts; it is the practical arts themselves as an activity of reason, i.e., the logos in the techne rather than the logos of the techne [9. P. 176]. We will illustrate the logos in the techne is not separate from contemplation (thoria) or theory, and thus prevent techne from being relegated as a production, fabrication, or even manipulation. Instead, we identify techne as the realization of an idea (eidos) that led to happiness in Aristotle's thought. Third, we will invoke Heidegger's reflection on technology in the modern age and his reinterpretation of techne, poiesis, and phusis (nature) to indicate well-being is dwelling with the fourfold (heaven, earth, mortals, and gods, i.e., nature as a whole). Finally, for those who attribute the modern civilization of technologization to techne, praxis seems to be the remedy for our utilitarian society because it is the activity for its own sake, we will propose a broader significance of techne, which is the liberal arts in the sense of praxis i.e., virtue-techne instead.

Broadly conceived, the Greek word "techne," which means art, craft, and skill is a form of knowledge associated with arts and craftsmanship, and is involved in the making of products like cups, chairs, tables, and houses. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle systematically developed two distinct kinds of human activity: praxis and poiesis. The word poiesis which comes from the Greek verb, poiein, means "to produce," and it is "the activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before" [10. P. 115]. It is distinguished from praxis (action, conduct), which has aims and intrinsic value. Poiesis belongs to techne (craft), while praxis belongs to phronesis (practical wisdom). In another sense, poiesis is also used specifically for poetry and its composition. In the following passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explicitly sets out the difference between them: "[...] action and making are different kinds of thing, since making aims at an end distinct from the act of making, whereas in doing, the end cannot be other than the act itself" [11. 1140 b 1—5].

Aristotle's treatment of the subject seems straightforward enough. Nevertheless, the passage contains a much greater complexity of thought than meets the eye. On the one hand, Aristotle refers to an activity whose end is different from the activity itself; on the other hand, he speaks of an activity whose telos is the activity itself. The first is poiesis and the second praxis. But how is this generic difference to be characterized? Aristotle's definition of poiesis hints at an assumption of a particular relationship between means and end. The activity of making is concluded when its goal (i.e., the end) is attained. End and means are therefore non-coexistent. When the end is achieved, the achievement brings about the cessation of the means (the activity); and vice versa—so long as the activity (the means) is being pursued, the end remains unaccomplished. This non-coexistence between means and end is of utmost significance, not so much for the understanding

of the end, as for the understanding of the nature of the process of poiesis. It was often stressed that the activity of poiesis is not desired for its own sake; this activity, therefore, has no intrinsic value; only the end gives it significance. It reveals that in poiesis there is a separation between production and product, as well as between the producer and what he produces. From the point of view, product as end takes priority over production as means and the producer is less considered than what he produced. Almost inevitably, philosophers are eager to conclude that it results in utilitarian values in our modern society: every human action is evaluated by its result, and when the focus is on the result the criteria of efficiency and utility are relevant.

In the chapter "The Reduction of Education to Curriculum as Techne and Its Ontological Consequences," Dewar tried to point out how education is reduced to be a process of the construction of objects or things, that, in other words, curriculum as techne is making students into products with market value. He writes the activity or process is beginning with an eidos or "idea" of how the final product will look in its completion. For example, an architect drafts plans for the construction of a house, which guides the bringing forth or making of the house. The second step of techne is poiesis or "making," which includes the maker, the tools, and the conditions of the making. The last step of techne is the ergon or "product," which would be the finished house [1. P. 27]. He continues, in techne the maker sees in advance the completed product; the making is informed and directed by seeing ahead, by envisioning the finished product. The congruency between the guiding eidos and the completed ergon determines the basis for assessing the expertise of the poiesis, the maker's skill, and ability. Therefore, a lack of congruency between eidos and ergon falls on the variables involved in poiesis: the tools, the conditions of construction, and most importantly, the maker's skill level. As a way of knowing, techne reduces variability [1. P. 27]. By envisioning a particular kind of house, with specific qualities and dimensions, one can optimize the utilization and control of resources in ways one would not be able to do without seeing and planning ahead. As a way of knowing, techne also controls and predicts outcomes. The maker knows in advance what to do; he or she projects and aims his or her making at future outcomes, knowing in advance the end to which the skillful making is directed. Broadly conceived, as a way of knowing, techne prioritizes the value of an idea, action, and production to the end of a finished product or result. Consequently, the value of the ergon ultimately stands above the value of the guiding idea (eidos) and the making itself (poiesis) [1. P. 27]. Regarding Dewar's illustration for techne, we address two points here:

First, he fails to take the metaphysical significance of Aristotle's philosophy into consideration, which is the main difference between the ancient and modern understandings as Sloterdijk points out. "As a technical enterprise, curriculum's emphasis on a product is problematic because it undermines the ontological nature and meaning of education…" [1. P. 27]. Dewar is correct to address the ontological nature and the meaning of education is undermined, but it is not due to the concept

of techne itself. Rather, it forfeits metaphysical significance in the modern era. Let us return to the above passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* referring to non-coexistence between means and end, in order properly to interpret the relationship of means and end, Balaban suggests, we must distinguish between relative and relational relationships [12. P. 185—198]. The relativization of the relationship between means and end works against their relational character, since an end, as such, is not related to a means, nor is the reverse true. The relativization of the relationship would result in the absurdity of a means that is not a means-toward-an-end so that an activity that is a means becomes pointless [11. 1194 a 22]. Aristotle concludes that the existence of an absolute and non-relative end must be assumed; that is to say, it must be desired for its own sake, "while we wish the others only for the sake of this" [11. 1194 a 20]. This ultimate end is freedom per se, which is "eudaimonia" (the good life) for Aristotle. All human activities including poiesis and praxis are for the ultimate good and "eudaimonia" is meant to be in harmony and unity with the universe, that is true freedom. How can one acquire the first principle, to be free from necessity in the human world and live a free life? The answer is theoria-contemplation. Pure contemplation in Aristotle is a function of the divine; God is the archspectator, the theoros of himself and the world, not merely-like ordinary theoroi—of limited events like the games or the consultation of oracles. The essential distinction is between the perishing and the unchanging, between the transient and the eternal. Mathematics, the paradigm of theory, gives access to another world, where the soul is released from the body, a world which Plato almost certainly derives indirectly from an older philosophical tradition in India. When Plato's God turns his attention to our world, he does so in the guise of a craftsman. It is most of importance for our discussion. The Platonic characteristic language of craft analogy, for example, is ubiquitous in the biological texts, where Aristotle often speaks figuratively of nature as an agent "crafting" (*demiourgein*) his products. Divine nature brings things forth which is where the word techne originates from by way of contemplation of the nature of things, beholds eidos (form, essence, idea). When Aristotle uses the word techne to express the function of mortals for producing or bringing forth, he draws an analogy between the perishing and the unchanging, between the transient and the eternal. Among all the beings in the universe, the mortal human employs similar methods as the divine for bringing something into being that did not exist before, but the human is not equal to the Eternals. The human lives in time and beholds the eidos in time, that is, he beholds the eidos (form/essence) from praxis (practice), i.e., life experiences rather than from a theory meant to be separate from practice. From this perspective, techne is concrete, variable, and context-dependent rather than reducing variability as Dewar describes. When Dewar refers to "the school as a social institution, curriculum as techne makes or transforms (poiesis) the guiding values (eidais/plural) of society into products (erga/plural), which are people whose identities and social roles have been determined in advance, usually in accordance with, in the case of contemporary education, the dominant economic eidos…"

[1. P. 28], he attempts to emphasize that the eidos of students are so pre-determined by society that they forfeit their possibilities or latent eidos which ought to be disclosed in the trial-and-error process of factual life experiences. Briefly, in the field of human affairs, eidos is revealed or actualized from individual factual experiences in time rather than pre-given by contemplation which is the privileges of the divine. According to Dewar's description, society plays the role of the creator.

Instead of philosophers who are inclined to attribute modern technologization to techne, Heidegger discusses techne and poesis at length in *The Question Concerning Technology* and emphasizes that techne "reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us" [13. P. 295]. He gives the example of a chalice — a silversmith reveals the vessel from its state as just metal. "It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that techne is bringing forth" [13. P. 295]. However, "The revealing that rules in modern technology is challenging, which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supplies energy which can be extracted and stored as such" [13. P. 296]. This kind of unconcealment orders everything to stand by, to be ready at hand, to be rendered as "standing-reserve (Bestand)," and that which exists as standing-reserve, something to be set-upon, no longer exists as that thing. Heidegger says that through technology, the Rhine can be seen in one way—as a source for a hydroelectric plant. However, the Rhine is also a beautiful river, a magnificent feature of the landscape that has been captured in poetry, such as in Hölderlin's *The Rhine*. So, through technology, the Rhine has been revealed as standing-reserve, specifically as a source for hydroelectric power. Therefore, it ceases to be simply a river. This assertion, that once an object revealed as standing-reserve through technology can no longer be simply that object again, applies to humans as well. People are too in danger of becoming standing-reserve and can be set-upon by technology. Those scholars, such as Dewar, argue this has already happened, an industrial-capitalist society sees people merely as products with market value. Heidegger says, "There was ever a time when it was not technology alone that bore the name techne. Once that revealing which brings forth truth into the splendor of radiant appearance was also called techne" [13. P. 315]. By way of Heidegger's interpretation, we illustrate that techne is "as revealing, and not as manufacturing," and clarify two kinds of revealing, one rules in modern technology, the other is "brings forth truth into the splendor of radiant appearance" which is of much significance to us. So far, we can conclude that techne is revealing that which brings forth truth into appearance, it is not restricted to things but extended to humans as well.

Second, according to Dewar's description, the guiding eidos is foreseen by the maker before making, rather than seen in the process of making with variability. It can be regarded as the difference between the logos of techne and the logos in techne. Aristotle recounts that when some visitors surprised Heraclitus in the kitchen, he invited them to come in with the remarks "for here too are gods" [14. 645 a 20]. Plato habitually chose technological metaphors to illustrate his philosophy; his dialogues are full of references to agriculture, medicine,

shipbuilding and navigation, and the training of animals; they were passed on—and no doubt also originated—not only through trial and error and imitation but also through discussion and instruction. Thus, it can be seen that techne is not merely the theory of the practical arts; it is the practical arts themselves instead of production, fabrication, and manufacture. It is just as disclosed in the *Gorgias*, Socrates says, "As for me, I do not give the name techne to something lacking in reason" [15. 465 a]. What we want to make clear is that because man is the being in time, the eidos guiding his actions is not purely theoretical, static, but disclosed and revealed through interactions with the living world in time. From the view of the above discussion, we will further contend techne is not only the practical arts themselves but also virtue-techne to attain harmony within the soul i.e., happiness [16. P. 36]. It is exactly as Aristotle emphasizes that virtue is cultivated through practices, as in the act of art. Anything we have to learn to accomplish (such as being an architect or being a righteous person) must be learned in practice (such as building or doing justice).

III. Spiritual Practice for Happiness

When we see virtue-techne as a means of happiness of life, the eidos (form, nature, essence, etc.) of the human comes from life for itself. Life is the process of humans moving from potential to reality, it is the process of human self-realization. Gadamer points out that if the theory is a human practice, "…Is it not, if it is human, a looking away from oneself and looking out toward the other, disregarding oneself and listening for the other? Life, then, is a unity of theory and practice that is the possibility and the duty of everyone. Disregarding oneself, regarding what is: that is the behavior of a cultivated, I might almost say a divine, consciousness. It does not need to be a consciousness cultivated by and for science; it only needs to be a humanly cultivated consciousness that has learned to think along with the viewpoint of the other and try to come to an understanding about what is meant and what is held in common" [17. P. 35]. This means that theory, in the scope of practice, is to go out of its own "view" of the existence and nature of others, that is, to consider the position of others and to think about the principles that are generally valuable for community interaction. Burger also pointed out in the discussion of Aristotle's fraternity that the division between theoretical life and practical life excludes the theoretical meditation on human goodness, that is, the principle established in the fraternity is the meaning of living together in humanity, where political nature (practice) and rational nature (meditation) are one [18. P. 212—217]. This is what we want to point out in this article if education is virtue-techne, how should we guide students in the process to understand the "nature of human beings" and thus live out their possibilities. The point is, how do we understand the "nature of human beings?"

In *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Exercise from Socrates to Foucault*, Hadot mentions that ancient philosophical traditions guide oneself, the universe, and the relationships of others. As he points out, "philosophy" originated from the love of wisdom and was originally the pursuit of the unity of knowledge and practice, that

is, knowledge, exercise, and practice could not be distinguished. While, for a philosophy that stressed the importance of applying theory to real-life situations in our times, the practice of philosophy as described by Hadot, consisting as it does in a series of spiritual exercises, we must identify whether it is still an option for us today. Recalling Hadot's answer, Chase suggests yes, as long as we are willing to separate the wheat from the chaff. To speak very roughly, the great metaphysical constructions of ancient philosophy such as Plato's theory of ideas, Epicurean atoms, and the void, and the all-pervading fiery Stoic pneuma or logos, are, according to Hadot, secondary accretions upon a few basic central insights and a few key techniques—which he calls "spiritual exercises"—aimed at increasing our happiness by transforming the way we see the world, and consequently, our very way of being or existing [19. P. 263]. This seems to imply that we must think about human nature from a larger perspective. According to Hadot, "philosophy in antiquity was an exercise practiced at each instant. It invites us to concentrate on each instant of life, to become aware of the infinite value of each present moment, once we have replaced it within the perspective of the cosmos" [20. P. 274]. Thus, the exercise of wisdom entails a cosmic dimension. Whereas the average person has lost touch with the world, and does not watch the world qua world, but rather treats the world as means of satisfying his desires, the sage thinks and acts within a cosmic perspective. "He has the feeling of belonging to a whole which goes beyond the limits of his individuality. The cosmic consciousness was a result of spiritual exercise, which consisted in becoming aware of the place of one's existence within the great current of the cosmos and the perspective of the whole. This exercise was situated not in the absolute space of exact science, but the lived experience of the concrete, living, and perceiving subject" [20. P. 274]. Hadot divides two different kinds of relationships to the world and recalls the opposition pointed out by Husserl between the rotation of the earth, affirmed and proved scientifically, and the earth's immobility, postulated both by our day-to-day experience and by transcendental/constitutive consciousness [20. P. 276]. It is as Merleau-Ponty wrote, "the womb of our time and of our space" [20. P. 276]. In the same way, nature and cosmos are, for our living perception, the infinite horizon of our lives, the enigma of existence which is shudder and a divine pleasure [20. P. 274].

These metaphysical constructions coincide with our above discussion of the ultimate end of techne for Aristotle, which has been lost in modern times. For the ancients, the basic insight lies in, through the spiritual practice of factual life, transforming the way we see the world, and consequently, our very way of being or existing. However, since Descartes, modern humans have regarded the universe and the world as objects and are committed to transforming the universe and the world into things we can manipulate, a practice that has alienated man from the world in which he lives. That is the reason homelessness is a feature of modern civilization, one that marks the world in which modern man lost his true life. Indebted to Hadot's elucidation, we contend that as Being-in-the-world (Heideggerian term), human beings' affectivity emerges from the interactive relation between the body and the world. But human affectivity concerns itself with the body as lived (corps vecu)

rather than the body as an organism. That means a kind of body-mediated spiritual exercise, whereby the human can switch its thinking and acting from "human-centered" to "holistic cosmos" and be able to see all universal nature on the horizon. From this perspective, we advocate education as techne, but not techne in the sense of modern technology, which privileges what we make to who we are, rather, we advocate techne in the sense of virtue-techne (praxis), through which spiritual practices constantly integrate the individual into the Logos of the universe and are united in the divine pleasure.

IV. Examples for Education as Spiritual Freedom

Subsequently, we will take the Kang Chiao International School, which is a high school in Taiwan, as an example to illustrate how spiritual exercises can be practiced in a specific educational scene. This school requires all its graduates to climb the highest mountain in Taiwan, Jade Mountain, to the top, an altitude of about 3,950 meters. The reason for this requirement is to train teachers and students' physical fitness, endurance, and willpower, and act in concert to exercise the spirit and attitude of mutual assistance and cooperation. Most important of all, in the process of climbing up step by step, teachers and students cultivate the ability to be close to nature, to care for the environment, and to foster a sense of being united with the earth. One might ask whether all students can complete this task and successfully obtain their diplomas. Surprisingly, the Principal indicates that the challenge is usually quite successful, although some students fail to reach the top due to altitude sickness, approximately 90% of the students can achieve the goal. In fact, in addition to receiving a diploma at the top of the highest mountain, the teachers also arrange other mountaineering activities for students, who believe that the mountain can give a sense of spiritual belonging. "Real education doesn't just happen in the classroom," the founder of the high school said, who grew up in the countryside. This educational scene reminds us of Goethe's verses cited by Hadot:

> The best part of man is the shudder.
> However dearly the world makes him pay for this emotion,
> He is seized by amazement when he feels the Prodigious [20. P. 276].

As we are writing, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan continues the debate on how to respond to the recent new curriculum for high schools which emphasizes the "spontaneous, interactive and common good," the skills of "action, communication and social participation," and student-based curriculum planning. Some scholars have put forward the idea: the university should go to zero and then restart. To make college students have a sense of meaning, purpose, personality, and thus the motivation to learn, which is a constant educational problem, ought to be regarded as the primary challenge. Liberal education and cross-disciplinary curricula have been promoted in recent years while meeting with little success, and the Ministry of Education started the University Social Responsibility Practice Program (USR) in 2019. USR's core values are not only to promote universities to become local sustainable development coordinators but also to cultivate students as

being talented at responding to others. In addition, many people are pushing for the reformation of university education. One such example is occurring in the Philosophy Department of National Chengchi University, which is organizing a Philosophy of Care program which aims to recognize philosophy as a way of life pervading across all disciplines.

Also, at National Chengchi University, the Chinese Culture Subjectivity Research Center (CCS), which is funded by the Higher Education Sprout Project of the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, has formed a research group engaged in applied ethics and meaning therapy to enhance students' abilities in care of self, others, and the environment.

Next, as a comparative study for educational system redevelopment, we would like to introduce the current state of education in Russia which is in the process of reform as a result of a radical institutional transition to a three-tier system of education assuming the introduction of Bachelor, Master's, and Doctoral degrees. The former Soviet-era-established educational system has been transformed into a radically different one, and it is natural that a discourse arose, beginning with which internal starting point Russia should consider as a role model for shaping the country's updated educational system.

Despite debatable and often polarized positions, there is still a general tendency to form a new educational system on humanitarian grounds, including the paths of education and upbringing. Every university teaches philosophy, religious studies, sociology, anthropology, and various special courses on spiritual Eastern and Western practices, viewing them as foundation stones for future success. Yet, certain areas of education, which may seem quite far from the humanitarian sphere, are based on studying and applying the spiritual experience of different schools of philosophy and historical and religious development in different countries.

Here is an example that shows the harmonious combination of practical education in applied economics, HR, PR, marketing, and finances at the Hotel Business and Tourism Institute of RUDN University in Moscow. Our comments are on the MBA program *Personal Life Strategy of an Entrepreneur*. Developed alongside the leading Russian top-managers in a service business, the MBA program addresses the question of how to become a better version of yourself by reaching self-fulfillment goals in business and life. Although the demand for such programs is quite high, the market is overflowing with con artists offering enlightenment wholesale. Taking into account its rich experience and accumulated background knowledge, RUDN University answers the questions precisely: to become a prosperous businessperson one shall master soft skills, including that of a particular mindset. We agree with our colleagues from the School of Economics and Management, Lisbon, Portugal who expressed the notion that to be a successful businessperson one must possess an integrative mentality, be sensitive to the relevant social environment and local cultures [21. P. 467–485].

Therefore, based on the principle of combining practical skills and profound analytical thinking, the MBA program *Personal Life Strategy of an Entrepreneur* was developed at the Hotel Business and Tourism Institute of RUDN University.

While launching the program, we considered a foundation in the humanities (including philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and so on) which is a critical skill for today's entrepreneurs. Therefore, we have built this program looking back at the giants. For instance, the *Corporate PR, Anti-Crisis and Communications* part of the MBA program starts with an introduction to Aristotle. The module's author, himself majoring in sociology, familiarizes students with Aristotle's treatises *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, using these major treatises as a beacon to shine a guiding light through the millennia. Delving deeper into PR narrative creation, the students make themselves comfortable with anthropology and literary studies' classics such as Joseph Campbells' *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*, and Jorge Luis Borges' take on story types.

Although some unprepared listeners may find such a reliance on humanities an overkill, the vast majority of fiction and non-fiction works (including PR communications, such as articles, essays, comments, op-eds, press releases) still use the same drama techniques once described by Aristotle.

That is just a selected example. The RUDN University's MBA program continues using humanities to make its point: one shall become a better version of themselves through spiritual growth and the study of humanities. Researchers of entrepreneurship and innovation culture note: "Entrepreneurship and innovation are central to individual and organizational success and advancement in the modern economy. […] As technologies rapidly evolve and new markets dynamically emerge, so too does the individual ability to innovate and act in entrepreneurial ways, which sets certain individuals apart from others. But what does it take for an individual to innovate and act in entrepreneurial ways?" [22]. The article's authors argue that the true source of innovation "[…] is an ability and perspective that resides within each one of us, something we refer to as the entrepreneurial mindset" [22].

We end this section by summarizing that the scholars behind the described RUDN University's MBA program have taken the findings of their colleagues to the heart, striving to implement humanitarian and spiritual principles in the applied field.

V. Conclusions

The educational scenes from Russia and Taiwan tell us the pursuit of integration between practice and theory is a tendency in education. We observe that in all educational institutions, from liberal education hallmarked by cross-cutting, interdisciplinary studies, to business management programs focusing on economics and globalization, a university's social responsibility and role in cultivating the character and sense of well-being of its students cannot ignore the extant spiritual problems, i.e., the meaning and the end of our existences. Just as Postman's insight into contemporary education points out its problem lies in the presence of technology and the absence of metaphysical thinking, it is also Dewar's observation "the privileging of epistemology over ontology in educational research and its ontological consequences," all of these developments result in unprecedented levels

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of mental illness and emotional distress. It is the symptom of modern capitalist society and the technologicalization of civilization. These can not only be achieved through knowledge, interpretation of texts, and philosophical discourse but must be cultivated through spiritual practice, including the wisdom given to us by ancient philosophy. The pursuit of ancient philosophical wisdom is designed to find a "space" for individuals in the universe, whereas the separation between theory and practice, the division between body and the mind characterizes the modern civilization which exists from the whole view of the universe. Arendt diagnoses the symptom of the modern as triple alienation: earth-alienation, world-alienation, and then self-alienation, which results in the annihilation of meanings [23. P. 1—6]. While techne as technology is a frame (Gestell) for the modern and deprives its possibility, techne still bears its ancient, metaphysical roots. It can be seen from the practical point of art, then, it is a cultivation of the skill, how people discover their nature and possibilities in the affection between man and man, and man and nature. Thus, we appropriate "doing" philosophy or philosophizing in the Heideggerian sense and Hadot's spiritual exercises as techne. Spiritual exercises as techne can be regarded as a substitute for education as techne in the sense of production or fabrication. It means a kind of body-mediated practice, whereby people affect with one another and with their surrounding world, switch their thinking and acting from "human-centered" to the "holistic cosmos" and can see all universal nature on their horizons, and, lastly, to disclose meanings of their existence.

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Духовные упражнения как techne: философия как способ освобождения образования

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Аннотация. Изучение систем образования как социальных явлений заставило ученых задаться вопросом о роли образования в современном обществе. Вопрос «Как улучшить образование?», естественно, приводит к размышлениям, что не так с нынешней системой. Если образование призвано возвысить следующее поколение, то как оно может достичь цели обеспечения осмысленного существования обучающихся? Образование свелось к процессу конструирования объектов, где учебная программа как techne

превращает студентов в товар, имеющий рыночную стоимость. Авторы статьи предполагают, что тенденция интерпретации techne как «технологии» является перспективой современности, а правила современного образования базируются на правилах актуальных технологий, ведомых парадигмой производительности. Предлагается более широкая интерпретация techne как культивирование добродетели — добродетель-techne. Таким образом, образование можно рассматривать как techne в смысле праксиса (практики, упражнений), а не как производство в смысле производства. Подчеркивается рост числа самоубийств среди студентов в последние годы в Тайване, где, по мнению авторов, система образования не уделяет должного внимания праксису. Исследуются альтернативные, ориентированные на праксис понятия образования, от аристотелевского культивирования добродетели до «духовных упражнений» Пьера Адо для обоснования отхода от парадигмы производства. Опираясь на Хайдеггера, авторы используют концепцию «techne как раскрытие», выделяя две концептуальные схемы образования. Во-первых, современное образование ценится за приверженность метрикам, основанным на парадигме производства. Во-вторых, образование — процесс, ценность которого определяется жизненным контекстом участвующего в нем индивида. В заключение, в качестве сравнительного исследования, исследуется состояние образования в России и на Тайване, а также приводится пример одной из средних школ Тайваня, которая включила в свою учебную программу духовные упражнения, в том числе обязательный поход на вершину самой высокой горы страны для воспитания в учениках чувства (и ценности) освобожденной жизни до окончания школы.

Ключевые слова: философия образования, techne, эвдемония, добродетель, духовные упражнения, праксис, жизнь, природа, Пьер Адо, Хайдеггер, Аристотель

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