

**DAVIDE COLOMBO 5AA**

**OLIMPIADI DI FILOSOFIA - CANALE IN LINGUA INGLESE**

**OPTION 3**

Plato, stating that the “good of education” lies in its ability to make men good and affirming that men become good thanks to education are naturally led to act nobly, he deeply embodies one of the strongest beliefs of his time: there’s a direct proportionality between being and acting, that is to say, in this specific case, that if you are well brought up you must act well. Plato’s argument seems obviously simple and limited as it does not consider two really important factors: the former is the social and historical context in which a single person is inserted (and this specifically influences the education a person receives), the latter is the willingness of the individual (while this aspect is related to Plato’s idea that a good education directly leads to a good acting without any external or internal disturbance).

In my opinion Plato with this sentence, making us think that willingness is negligible with respect to education makes the same mistake Socrates (his “philosophy teacher”) made when he claimed that if you think well you cannot act dreadfully. Although this argument was firmly criticized and seen as a form of ethical formalism and intellectualism in the following centuries, we must not condemn it, since it is a product of the society in which the philosopher lived, a society in which the role played by willingness was not as capital as today, when we are all persuaded that everybody is free and can do everything.

In the last century Hannah Arendt completely overturned this thought in her foremost masterpiece “La banalità del male”, where, providing the example of those German generals that in the second world war deported thousands of Jews just with the excuse of being obeying laws and superior orders, she stressed the importance of thoughtlessness in acting bad, while if you want to act well, you have to think about it.

As I already said in the previous section, the way people think, their culture and thus their education, depend on their social and historical background. To support my opinion, I will provide the case of some African tribes in which young women are even nowadays deprived of their sexual organs.

This behavior doubtlessly educates women to think they are inferior to men, since the same treatment is not reserved to these last ones.

We, people living in a highly developed world as regarding society, can judge these customs starting from our cultural background and we can certainly consider them disgusting and disrespectful, but we fail if we think that our traditions are right and theirs are wrong and we make an even bigger mistake if we believe that changing a certain tradition or mind is a duty we must respect. "Exporting democracy" (as US used to do for example) is a total farce, since even walls have come to the conclusion that behind the surface there are precise financial interests. Saying this, it may look like I am trying to close myself into a sterile relativism, but the truth is that the same relativism I could be accused of, is imposed by history and societies themselves, which involve in their continuous and unstoppable changes even culture and education, making it impossible for us to fix absolute parameters to which referring. The concepts of evil and good are under the effect of this constant change too, so, even if I could say quite surely that education often depends on them, I cannot say what good and evil are.

In conclusion, I will tell my readers what education is for me nowadays: it is a series of rules and conventions that every different society or culture has imposed on itself, in order to create several diverse settings in which people are expected to behave always in the same way. This constantly happens at school for example, where pupils are supposed to be quiet, to study and respect teachers and teachers are required almost the same. On the one hand this kind of agreement has produced the absence of misunderstandings: everybody knows what behavior has to be kept according to the place, like obedient soldiers. On the other hand, the result is clearly a complete annihilation of our real and inner personality that is forced every time to shape, ending up losing itself. This is obviously, as I said before, what education is and not what education should be: for me, a total matter of respect, respect towards yourself and the others. It is evident that education nowadays is the opposite of what it should be.