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Abstract

Comparative Cultural Studies paper

Models of Continuity and Crisis of Perseverance Contemporary Issue vis-à-vis Selected European Paradigms and Overlooked Notions

In opening, the presentation protocols of this inquiry are stated and the reflective standards, open questions and invitation to discussion are set forth, contextualizing the issues and themes deliberated.

Elements from Mediterranean roots of Europe:

Reflections on almost invisible histories generated by the oral traditions of Tarantella Pizzica, and related Pan-Mediterranean practices are presented. Examples of communally held practices of trained memory and assimilation of knowledge without visible notation are assessed.

Aspects of Pre Classical roots of Europe:

Exploring the limits and values of UNESCO *intangible heritage recognition* and the contemporary process of commodification in the case of Corsican and Albanian archaic polyphonic singing that has possible pre-historic origins of the communal training and retention.

Overlooked Dynamic of Classical Influences:

Re-examining anew European self-image of the ninetieth century education and world-views with the formative question: Why, How and by Whom the Platonic Academy resurfaced in sixteenth century Florence where their seemingly most important ideas were not written down but instead “intentionally remembered,” probably for about one thousand years?

Facet contributing to the axioms of Constitutional Democracies:

Probing in to the nexus of ideas surrounding formation of European sovereign nations and related establishment of National Opera Houses constellated originally around the *Viva Verdi* cry, opera repertoire and theater architecture of Italian Risorgimento. Social ritual of the Opera House seen as shared education of then acceptable feelings, values and cultural identity.

In closing the issues of a possible contemporary *Crisis of Perseverance*, current de-contextualized information and the neuroscience and cognitive_research notions of ecology of mind and brain are paired with the historic examples of learning models cited in the paper. It is a proactive starting point for discussion about the contemporary state of mind and learning preparedness and lesser-known European cultural paradigms.

Key words: Mediterranean Roots, Tarantella Pizzica, Polyphonic Singing, Platonic Academy, Viva Verdi, Perseverance Crisis

Introduction and context

In opening, the presentational protocols of this inquiry are stated and the reflective standards, open questions and invitation to discussion are set forth, contextualizing the issues and themes deliberated.

To meaningfully utilize the researched, considered and factually rich forty years of lecture notes, conference papers and publications of Slobodan Dan Paich, he will be referred throughout the paper as 'the author of this work'. This is a protocol adopted to focus on the ideas presented rather than the carrier or personality of the presenter.

In the same vein, the protocol of introducing and referring to the current paper as a probing instrument is adopted. Language like: 'this paper's interest', 'in this paper' or 'in this work' will appear throughout.

To ground the questions, big or small the discourse is always connected to examples cited that stop at the boundary where generalizations may lose the connection with issues explored.

The form of contextualized questions with bullets in front is adopted for this paper.

A related example of this form of thinking, synthesis, questioning and presentation is cited below:

The author of this work wrote the paper *Public and Private Meaning - Reflection on Programmatic Pre-Arrangements and Unpredictable Responses in the Built Environment* for the Regional European Congress of the International Association for Visual Semiotics 2011 held in Lisbon, Portugal. The theme of conference was *Semiotics of Space/Spaces of Semiotics*. The paper's conclusion explores the limits and possibilities and asked a few questions:

- Can semiotics of space thinking bring a broader, more inter-cultural approach and liberate the understanding of an historic built environment from the disciplinary narrowness and remnants of nineteenth century national institutional interpretations of the history and space?
- What critical framing can semiotics of space offer to the inclusion of hearsay, stories and legends in understanding multiple layers of meaning associated with places over time? (

The author concluded with remarks:

The motivation behind writing the [2011] paper involves exploring the manifold interests that may come together. The elements are found in the richness of heritage, the approaches to fresh thinking, the meaningful and well-researched connections, the open questions, the sharing of insight and probing into the uniqueness of the human cognitive relationship to structured and inhabited space.

In structuring this [2016] paper, a dilemma was to put the material below in an appendix or into these introductory pages, it was resolved by being introduced here. Three contemporary cognitive researches that are of special interest in the Comparative Cultural Studies and Curriculum Design fields are helping articulate the values, interest and commitment of the author of this paper and the academic and non-academic communities he works with.

Three Contemporary Cognitive Researches Roots of Mutuality

There has been a lot of work done in the recent past on mirroring and imitation by cognitive psychology and neuroscience. A. N. Meltzoff and J. Decety from the University of Washington's Center for Mind, Brain & Learning wrote in the paper *What imitation tells us about social cognition: a rapprochement between developmental psychology and cognitive neuroscience*:

Our ability to imitate others' actions holds the key to our understanding what it is for others to be like us and for us to be like them. The past two decades of research have significantly expanded our knowledge about imitation at the cognitive and neurological levels. One goal of this article is to discuss striking convergences between the cognitive and neuro-scientific findings.¹

A. N. Meltzoff and J. Decety make a three-point theoretical proposal:

Imitation is innate in humans; imitation precedes mentalizing and theory of mind (in development and evolution); and behavioral imitation and its neural substrate provide the mechanism by which the theory of mind and empathy develops in humans.

A. N. Meltzoff and J. Decety tell us that the uses of the terms 'theory of mind' and 'mentalizing' are interchangeable in their paper. Their view of *Developmental Science* presents the concept that **infant imitation is the seed and the adult mentalizing, theory-making capacity is the fruit**. A. N. Meltzoff and J. Decety are proposing a 'linking argument':

Through imitating others, the human young come to understand that others not only share behavioral states, but are 'like me' in deeper ways as well. This propels the human young on the developmental trajectory of developing an understanding of other mind.

The study by A. N. Meltzoff and J. Decety articulates the human *imitative function* as the root of empathy and mutual understanding and helps appreciate portrayals of the human condition either as cultural expression or scientific exposition. This could become an aspect of education planning and construction of the future and be one of the elements contributing to asking questions in this paper.

Trauma Studies

Relationship of mirroring, compassion and possible inherited trauma resolution can also be one of the elements in asking questions in this paper.

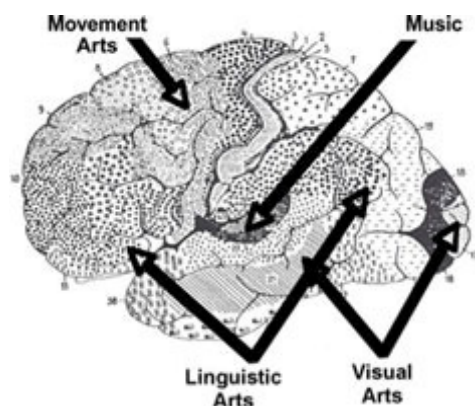
Of particular interest is the work of M. Y. B. Heart, a Native American Social Worker, mental health expert and associate professor at a number of premier universities in the United States. Dr. M. Y. B. Heart coined the term *Soul Wounds*. Her contribution to the field of inherited traits and behaviors is given with the model of historical trauma resolution for the Lakota people. Since its first publication, this work became internationally known and respected and forms the basis of post-colonial re-orientation of indigenous populations the world over.

Stanford University's Research Group on Collective Trauma is described as an interdisciplinary project that is studying the multigenerational legacies of trauma and brings together scholars from the humanities and sciences that includes DNA mapping. The group works to provide crucial insights into the effects of trauma on bodies, minds, and communities in order to propose new possibilities for resolution. Their recent conference in June 2015 *Soul Wounds - Trauma and Healing across Generations* echoes strongly with Dr. M. Y. B. Heart's influential study, *Wakiksuyapi* (Memorial People): *Heart Carrying the Historical Trauma of the Lakota* published by Tulane Studies In Social Welfare in 2000.

Cognition through arts

The paper, *How Arts Training Influences Cognition* (Posner 2008:5) written by a consortium of experts from the University of Oregon presents neurological and psychological aspects of learning through cultural expressions. The University of Oregon paper explores the evidence that arts training influences cognition. The authors state that the intricate brain network that aids *attention* and *perseverance practices* are directly related to motivation to express oneself:

Moreover, we hypothesized that the enthusiasm that many young people have for music, art, and performance could provide a context for [them] paying close attention. This motivation could, in turn, lead to improvement in the [personal neural] attention network, which would then generalize to a range of cognitive skills. Our training study supported this proposed theory about the mechanisms by which training in the arts can have a persistent effect on a wide variety of cognitive processes. The theory is based on the idea that each individual art form involves separate brain networks. In Figure 1[below], we summarize some of the specific brain areas involved in different art forms.ⁱⁱ



Arts and cognition diagram for University of Oregon cited paper

This paper's inter-disciplinary discourse broadened by citing research not only about mirroring as a root of compassion, approaching inherited trauma as a means of mutual understanding but also introducing ideas about multiple stimulus centers within the brain activated by cultural expressions. This wide array of sources and thematic streams can be signaled by few questions below

- Could there be a link made between various aspects of cognition and the paradigms of investigating and presenting societal phenomenon?
- Could a more complete picture emerge from social sciences and theoretical studies meta-thinking working closely with cultural and embodied expressions?
- At what point does an abstraction lose connection to its source and become a reduction? Do these kinds of generalizations become *cliché* in art and *truism* in thinking? What kind of procedures and institutions retain connection to the vitality of the samples studied or portrayed?

- Does a deep understanding of existing paradigms of identity and inherited and insisted upon world views create grounding for possible practices of mutual care and understanding?

The following diachronic examples intend to explore questions of cultural, sapient and biological continuity and contemporary issues vis-à-vis selected European paradigms and overlooked notions.

Elements from Mediterranean roots of Europe

Reflections on almost invisible histories generated by the oral traditions of Tarantella Pizzica, and related Pan-Mediterranean practices are presented. Examples of communally held practices of trained memory and assimilation of knowledge without visible notation are assessed.

Tarantella Women - History Written in Songs

Healing singing and dance of the *Tarantella Pizzica* and *Egyptian Zar* held by women for women for a thousand years is offered here as rare, obliquely recorded instances of continuity, verbal, non verbal processes with a gender specific place in the community. Also the training and practice of the Tarantella/Zar's lead musician offers a point of reflection on traditional societal and community roles for specifically gifted and dedicated women. The observed and recorded elements of this oblique history offer a small window into systematic learning, apprentice processes, qualified caretakers of community well-being and skilled performance and sharing standards.

- What are methodologies and protocols critically adopted that can facilitate inclusion of oral traditions, non-verbal transition of skills and intimate community practices and intangible sharing in a culture whose main understanding of history is mostly through written records and tangible artifacts?

To set the context for the question and open observations of an elusive cultural field some histories are discussed in more detail. The findings below are based on the 10 years research and lecture notes by the author of this paper.

Antecedents, Goddess Traditions and Greek Dionysian rituals

In Attica of Ancient Greece, Dionysus was worshipped at the Eleusinian mysteries with Persephone and Demeter, under the name of Iacchos, as brother or male counterpart of Persephone in the world of nature, fertility, continuity and new growth after a period in the underworld of preparation, germination and darkness. The motive is similar to the earlier Sumerian legend of the Passion of Inanna for Dumuzi. Sumerian Inanna, goddess of lands with greater population density, falls in love and forms a deep relationship with Dumuzi (Tammuz), a shepherd from the wild, mostly untamed and more sparsely populated Caucasus. Feeling unsupported in her underworld trials, Inanna sends Dumuzi to the underworld as punishment, only to regret and lament her decision. Inanna pleads with the gods for Dumuzi's release from the underworld. The gods consent on the condition that he has to live half the year as gatekeeper of the underworld during the barren months of the hot summer, and the other half on earth with Innana. The mythic motive of exile and return and women's bereavement and revival is shared in the stories of Isis and Osiris, Innana and Dumuzi, Dionysius and Persephone. These stories also cover the geography of the healing dances this paper is exploring as orally transmitted, chanted and sung traditions of women helping women.

Sacred offerings were brought to the grave of Dionysus at Delphi. In every second or third year (historians differ on this), and after spending an interval in the lower world, Dionysus is born anew. Women who were celebrating the feast invoked the newborn god. During their celebrations, they dressed in animal skins and carried poles called "*thyrsi*" which were entwined with ivy and topped with pinecones.

It is commonly accepted that the grave of Dionysus was at Delphi in the innermost shrine of the temple of Apollo.

The women-only part of Dionysian festivals proceeded from the grave of Dionysus in the innermost sanctuary of Apollo. Probably officiated by the priest or priestesses and then taken out of the temple into community space and then to the neighboring mountain of Parnassus. Amid the mountain at night women and girls held festivals celebrating the extinction and resurrection of the deity, around the time of the shortest day of the year. The rites, intended to express the excess of grief and joy at the death and reappearance of the god, were wild. The women who performed them were hence known by the expressive names of Bacchae, Maenads, and Thyides. They wandered through woods and mountains, their flowing locks crowned with ivy or snakes, brandishing wands and torches, accompanied by the sounds of drums and the notes of the flute, with "wild" dances, and "insane" cries of jubilation. As a god of the earth Dionysus belongs, like Persephone, to the world below as well as to the world above. The death of vegetation in the winter was represented as the flight of the god into hiding from the sentence of his enemies, but he returns again from obscurity, or rises from the dead, to new life and activity. Tarantella/Zar music, process and trained skills of the lead singer offer this kind of regeneration to every woman in need either in crisis or in a search for her roots and self.

Italian Tarantella Pizzica, Egyptian Zar

In looking for traces of discernable training and transmission of knowledge, the paper explores traditions and cultural phenomenon that happened in intimate and protected places often temporally adopted within a home or communal spaces. Beyond archeological fragments of daily life and survival, we focus on the activities, gatherings and festivals led and performed for and by women. Since these events were only carried out among the women, written documentary evidence is barely existent. What does exist are similar oral traditions to those even practiced today in some parts of North Africa, Eastern Mediterranean including Southern Italy and Asia Minor on the border of Iraq and Iran. There are two forms from this family of traditions that had more ethno-musicological and anthropological research than the others, they are the healing dances of Egyptian Zar and Southern Italian Tarantella. S. D. Paich, the author of this paper, in his work *Magna Graeca/Tarantella*ⁱⁱⁱ wrote about possible relationships between the southern Italian dance Tarantella, particularly the Pizzica type, and the Dionysian festivals and Pan worship of Magna Graecia and parallel dance ceremonies in the Greater Mediterranean region. In that paper S.D. Paich quotes Antoine Furetière's description of Tarantella in *Dictionnaire Universel* of 1690: [Furetière uses rationalist convention for humans as man, that historically obscured therapeutic Tarantella Pizzica as gender specific, women's process:

Tarantula, small venomous insect or spider found in the Kingdom of Naples, whose sting makes [wo]men very drowsy, & often unconscious, & can also be fatal to them. The tarantula is so called after Taranto, a town in Apulia where they are to be found in great numbers. Many people believe that the tarantula's venom changes in quality from day to day, or from hour to hour, for it induces great diversity of passions in those who are stung: some sing, others laugh, others weep, others again cry out unceasingly; some sleep whilst others are unable to sleep; some vomit, or sweat, or tremble; others fall into continual terrors, or into frenzies, rages & furies. [...] In some cases this illness can last for 40 or 50 years. It has been said since time immemorial that music can cure the tarantula's poison, since it awakens the spirits of the afflicted persons, which require agitation.^{iv}

Karol Harding in her article "The Zar Revisited"^v wrote in 1996 for Crescent Moon magazine:

The Zar ritual is cathartic experience which functions for women in these cultures as effectively as does psychotherapy in western culture. It involves several aspects which all contribute to its success as therapy: The patient is the center of attention, and receives the help and concern of her friends and relatives. Her experience and feelings are recognized as valid. As Dance Therapist Claire Schmais explains, 'it is community based, followers and members are not sent away to be cured.... It creates sense of community while it heals, embracing the individual within a community.

Karol Harding's description of the Zar leader with her knowledge, harmonizing abilities, understanding of repression and means of relief, paints a picture of a highly trained experienced person leading the deeply structured process:

Rituals are used to create the setting. They have specific players and roles: a leader, a drum corps, a 'patient' and participants. These rituals include an altar, the smell of incense, and costumes. Songs are chanted and drums play trance-like rhythms. The Zar provides a multi-sensory experience with sights, sounds and smells. The ritual sharing of food creates communion in all cultures and times. Thus, it is important to understand these rituals in the context of the total experience.

These types of dance ceremonies for women were organized to facilitate, share, hold and express anguish, loss and maltreatment. For example at times of Crusades behind war lines, widows, orphaned girls and bereft future brides created a bonding experience^{vi}. For thousands of years they taught each other rigorous techniques that found their way into or came from any of these places: Ancient Egypt, Prehistoric Danube Culture, Pagan Greece, Byzantine Balkans, Catholic Southern Italy, Zoroastrian and Islamic Persia, Ottoman Anatolia, Islamic North Africa and Medieval Spain.

Ethnomusicologist Hassan Jouad, in his *Les Aissawa de Fes – Trance Ritual*^{vii} describes the Aissawa Brotherhoods therapeutic trance dance:

...it should be pointed out that the practice of the ecstatic dance is not reserved for the sole followers of the [Aissawa] brotherhood. It is open to all, to anyone who suffers. Here, people with few resources, the elderly, the physically handicapped find, with the help of others, the occasion to be completely receptive towards themselves in all legitimacy.^{viii}

The author of this work in his paper *Magna Graeca/Tarantella* talks about an ad hoc or deeply established charitable institution that provides for the ceremony's expenses and of course for the ceremony's leader. This oblique in some communities or clear-cut charity provides modes of living for the dedicated women who hold tradition and knowledge. This is an age-old practice, almost a common law institution, of a pastoral role for women. Sometimes unspoken vows of "poverty" and service are taken— as if to insure that the practices of dance ceremonies will be selfless and directed to the well being of the community and to the person who is in a process of healing. This was by no means a public office and it was not outwardly accepted in all the societies where it was practiced. Nevertheless, whether open, discrete or covert, it existed under all types of circumstances for thousands of years.

The language of the songs varies tremendously and the well-trained Tarantella /Zar singer will have a vast repertoire. In her training the origin of the song, its rhythms, melodic potential as well as language of songs lyrics will be discussed and imparted through repetition of the oral transition learning process. The case histories of some responses to certain types and specific songs are part of the training. What gets cultivated is intuition, the capacity to sense the unique disposition of a woman in need and deeply internalize appropriate songs. The initially open explorations with the person in need are carried out until the song or the rhythm is found, then the phases of the therapeutic process began.

- How does it happen?

A brief analysis of one fragment, the middle section of the song much beloved by people of the region, the *Tarantella di Gargano* is included here. In the community setting, outside Tarantella Pizzica process, often a young man sings the song. It is almost a troubadour's devotional song to his beloved lady. It honors her and demonstrates passion and devotion. When sung in the therapeutic context by mature, nurturing female voice of the trained Tarantella Pizzica singer, it potentially offers deep respect and resonance to the person in need. A translation of the poetic, imaginative fragment tell us:

In the middle of the quarry there is a fountain,
the source from which water flows,
over there you put a bird to sing,
sings and rests and says "how beautiful you are."
For you I want to be that bird, dreaming of being
next to you, beautiful lady.

Just as the text song in the Southern Italian dialect with word repetition, extended vowels and passionate subtext is an example of a well-constructed verbally/sung piece that communicates within an elusive "syntax" of deep emotions. Against the driving rhythm of Tarantella the complimentary and more undulating rhythm of words offers an immediacy of response, layered, archaically contrapuntal relationship.

- What happens in the dominate industrial societies where this type of care and solidarity is not available?

Contemporary psychologist and psychotherapist Judith Duerk's book *Circle of Stones - Woman's Journey to Herself*, the opening chapter is titled: *The universal importance of woman's tears*. In it she writes:

No she must be allowed to cry. It is only when woman can experience her tears in the moment that she can also experience her true, deep feeling values in the moment.

J. Duerk continues the introduction to the second chapter with these words:

How might your life have been different if there had been a place for you? A place for you to go . . . [J. Duerk uses the device of three dots with spaces between] a place of women, to help you learn the ways of woman . . . a place where you were nurtured from an ancient flow sustaining you and steadying you as you sought to become yourself. A place of woman to help you find and trust the ancient flow already there within yourself . . . waiting to be released.^{ix}

The questioning forums may offer a platform for these and other overlooked notions to be brought into mainstream reflective and practical studies.

Aspects of Pre Classical roots of Europe

As a starting point and link to present-day issues, an exploration of the limits and values of UNESCO *intangible heritage*^x recognitions is approached. The *intangible heritage* recognition often triggers the contemporary process of

commodification and appropriation. The case in this chapter is archaic polyphonic singing that has possible pre-historic origins of the communal training and retention in Corsica, Sardinia, Sicilia, Albania and Istria. Like the preceding chapter, this is a specific contribution to the thematic framing of this paper's reflections on current issues vis-à-vis selected established European paradigms. Also, possibly the significant cultural phenomena, that are lesser known or out of interest focus of contemporary social science or tangible archeology. The question arises:

- What are the overlooked antecedents and notions of European Culture?

The reason for bringing the subject of shared cultural tradition over considerable and until recently almost inaccessible parts of central and eastern Mediterranean, is to question the nineteenth century notion of Classical Greek culture as the cradle of European civilization.

- What are the limits and values of UNESCO *intangible heritage recognition* and the contemporary processes of rising nationalism and commodification in the case of archaic polyphonic music?

The second issue is the noble, needed and sometimes urgent UNESCO recognition of intangible heritage and then its appropriations by national politics and commercial media often without respect to the source, intimacy and community values of people who preserved them over centuries. This opens the issues:

- What is the relationship of seminal and geographically dispersed but related cultural phenomenon?

The other big question is the view of archeology, traditions and heritage classified as national characteristic since the formation of the large national units and accompanying newly re-structured identify of the nineteenth century Sovran Nations.

- Can the sub-themes of this paper's comparative, trans-regional and diachronic approach, be positioned in contrast to nationalist and mono-disciplinary methodologies?

In her comprehensive book *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology-Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Past* Margarita Diaz-Andreu discusses the relationship and emergence of archaeology as a discipline to the establishment of nationalist movements and politics. She writes:

Archaeology thus grew out of a political context in which the nation was the major element which provided legitimacy to the state. This happened in Europe as in all the other parts of the independent world, including the Near East, Latin America, China, and Japan. The very nature of the nation, however, was an arena of negotiation in which archaeologist had a voice. To start with, it was necessary to demonstrate that the nation indeed existed, and for this the construction of its life history was crucial. Knowledge of the past and an understanding of the events that had led to the specific make-up of a nation became a political tool. ^{xi}

For the reasons of giving material for questioning, this chapter will present, although summarized, some detailed elements of archaic polyphonic singing for a possible debate in order to ask more detailed and a few big questions. As the intention of this paper is to not just the present abstracted questions but to portray the context they came from in a critical way. Possible overlooked notions of European heritage in general and the lesser-known aspects of archaic polyphonic music in particular could become one of fertile starting points.

Archaic polyphonic singing

Several previous papers have reflected on the presence of Mediterranean polyphonic traditions expressed in tonalities different from the tempered scale of western music since eighteenth century AD and different from the Pythagorean-Ancient Egyptian music modalities of classical periods. The author of this paper sketched a series of open hypotheses about archaic polyphonic singing^{xii}. This type of singing survived in the Central Mediterranean Basin, the Balkans and the Black Sea Watersheds. The following text is a synthesis^{xiii}, reiteration along with some verbatim sections from this author's earlier cultural history papers and lecture notes. The details included are in non-technical, statistical or musicological jargon to give context and open a knowledge based discourse.

Corsica

In remote parts of Corsica songs celebrating Mary, mother of Jesus were sung in churches in an archaic three part polyphony not as the Gregorian Chant of usual Catholic liturgy. The remote regions of Corsica were only accessible by dirt roads and mule tracks well into the mid twentieth century. The regions preserved the archaic polyphonic singing transmitted by oral tradition over centuries and were only recorded by musicologists in the 70's of the 20th

century^{xiv}. These field recordings became the basis for a subsequent revival and integration of archaic polyphonic singing into Corsican mainstream popular music and the re-emergent national identity. This type of polyphonic music is essentially different from parallel religious or popular music based on a tempered scale. The difference lies not only in tonalities and procedural characteristics but also in the particular devotional intimacy of unaccompanied, orally trained singing. The singers have often grown up and trained together.

In Corsica, polyphonic singing is typically in three parts. It consists of a special contrapuntal relationship between the two upper parts supported by the base. It is intimate polyphony, traditionally sung by male singers, each part sung with special competences. These competences presume the religious nature of singing that provokes a particular set of emotions, deeper than conventionalized piety. [This is not a critique of piety but a diachronic reflection on cultural continuity and similarities across the Mediterranean; a comparison drawn from observing the poetic quality found in devotional music in many cultures]. The three parts Corsican archaic polyphony adopted itself to Christian liturgical evocations of the sacred mother. The three parts are called *a sigonda*, *a terza* and *bassu*:

A Sigonda is a part of the singing tradition where the lead singer sets the tone. By lifting the voice his role is not unlike muezzin's call to prayer. *A Sigonda* singer is both the lonely human voice imploring an audience from the un-knowable forces of nature and representative of an individual in a community. The depths and beauty of his imploring is shared and understood by his community. Men and women identify with the call.

A Terza is a poetic, stylized representation of the presence of another human being, answering, contributing to the call, a co-aspirant. The two are soaring together, modeling a sense of solidarity within the boundary of transparent, recognizable local tradition. *A Terza* singer gives to the audience or rather to his community by singing an embellishing counterpoint to the lead singer, a tradition handed down for centuries. The familiar embellishments offer a reconciling quality similar to myth and heroic epics. Everyone knows the story but they are reassured each time, by the resolution at the end. The role of *A Terza* singer is also like a humanized, stylized echo from a special sanctuary cave.

Bassu is the grounding, harmonic function of lowest voice. The ancients knew about the evocative quality and the paradox of a deep voice. It is on one hand reassuring deeply grounding, while on the other hand it has a quality of implied universality. We are purposefully careful in using terminology to describe the intangible here, as we want to stay in the realm of observable phenomenon. Neurologists and musicologists have observed the soothing effect of the deep tones on the human nervous system. The liturgical singing of the Byzantine Rite and particularly the Russian Orthodox choral work utilizes this dual function of the deep bass voice.

A version of this specific type of archaic polyphonic singing can be found in several places around Mediterranean, Balkans and Caucasus.

Sardinia

Very similar to Corsica, Sardinian *Canto a tenore* survived and flourished in the more remote and pastoral culture of central Sardinia.

While Corsican is three part devotional singing, Sardinian polyphonic chanting is performed with four distinct vocal parts by four men standing in a circle very close together. The four distinct parts are boghe the narrator, the lead voice, cronta or contra a dialoging voice, mesa boghe or mesuvoche the harmonizing partner of contra and the consolidating echo of the lead and basso the grounding and transcending base. With its deep timbre the Sardinian base has an identical function as Corsican bassu. Although sometime bassu is the narrator as well, the general attitude, function in the community and division of singing parts is clearly part of the same archaic musical tradition.

The tenores polyphonic chants have an overall quality of a lament, both in secular or ceremonial settings. This may be because this music tradition is based in the devotional singing. The Sardinian polyphonic chant's sacred songs are called Gozos.

The Sardinian A Tenore singing style^{xv} was recognized, in November 2005, as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

Albanian Archaic Iso-Polyphony

Also recognized as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. Albania is another Mediterranean mountain region with strong pastoral tradition and survival of an archaic form of singing, the Iso-Polyphony, resembling Sardinian and Corsican examples.

“Iso” is the name for the drone accompanying the singing. The drone can be continuous or rhythmic depending on the region. Like Corsican or Sardinian polyphony it is generally sung by male singers. Today in the concert halls or on television the lead singers are also women. For thousands of years in pre-industrial societies, the Iso-polyphony were a family tradition transmitted from parents to children, similar to the transmission of traditional crafts, trades and folklore in general.

The recording: Albania | Labe County – Complaints and Love Songs is a remarkable document of the majority of the different types of Iso-Polyphony. In the accompanying notes to the compact disk B. Lortat-Jacob and V Sharra writes:

With regard to polyphonic music, such practices belong to a shared communal heritage that obliges each to take an active part and set out to move all those assembled. The Albanian music on this recording should be seen and heard in this context. When fully mastered, this singing has a penetrating occult force, a magic. In performance, its singers do far more than simply apply the rules of a relatively straightforward musical grammar of notes and melodic formulas memorized by their ancestors; their music is a song that they actually do enjoy "being together" evoking in an extraordinarily effective way the charm of solidarity. The performance has in fact as much to do with ethical concerns as with aesthetic ones. For in the process of strictly oral tradition, singing is a collective moral responsibility to work out a sound from in the close company of a select group of friends.^{xvi}

The text cited and the title of the recording *Complaints and Love Songs* points to the deep societal function of these songs. The difference and similarity of Istrian example adds to the questions of discernable widespread cultural practices found in most ancient traces of human presence.

Istrian polyphonic tradition and music scale

Istria, in Croatia is the largest peninsula in the Adriatic Sea and the most northern point of the Mediterranean. It is a home of a distinctive musical form, a style of two-part polyphonic singing. Usually performed by male singers who sing "thinly" and "thickly," with a consolidating pulse on the lowest note and the final resolution.

In Istria this type of song is also sung by women, or in the combination of a male and a female voice or by a male voice accompanied by a small shepherd's pipe.

Like in Corsican, Sardinian and Albanian archaic singing, in Istria too, there is a lead singer performing the narration melody within the usual range of a male voice. The second singer also follows the embellishing, dialog role we found in the earlier examples. In Istria the second singer accomplishes that in the "thin" form of traditional singing, in the high register, that is also characteristic of some echoes. "Thin" denotes the high, "thick" the low register of the voice. In some cases the lead singers return to the deepest notes expressed as a rhythm, the narration's cadence. It is the most rudimentary expression of the reassuring quality of the deep notes similar to more elaborate bassu singers from the mid-Mediterranean islands. In Istria the role of the singer performing "thinly" is sometimes taken over by a small "flute," *sopela* that plays the counter part of the dialog and embellishment.

In the notes on Isatrian music accompanying field recording from the archives of Radio-Televizije Beograd, S. Zlatić^{xvii} writes:

The music represents the archaic bottom layer, which has not undergone either temporal or territorial influences. One does not feel here the influence of the neighboring [Slovenia, Tirol, Venetian Republic, Roman Catholic Church] musical folklore areas or the influence of art music. However the most recent tunes – and they are still being created do use scales based on the tempered musical system, and thus lose the archaic qualities.

Musicologists studying this archaic bottom layer of music in Istria and nearby geographic areas of the Croatian coast have identified a recognizable five-tone musical scale different from the Pythagorean and Egyptian pentatonic scale

we still use today. In the musicological archives of Dr. Milica Ilijin (1910-1992), an early mentor of the author of this paper, are several pages of music notation with notes from experts trying to define the intervals of the Istrian scale writing intervals in percentages next to the notes. These intervals are beyond half or quarter tones of the pentatonic or octave scale as we know them.

The stone hand axe about 2 million to 800,000 years old was found in the Šandalja Cave near Pula, Administrative center of Istria, Croatia. Marking the human presence in Istria in the Lower Paleolithic. In the Upper Paleolithic there are numerous findings of human presence from 10,000 to 40,000 BC, exemplified by large deposits of bones of hunted animals. The Neolithic period yielded discoveries of pottery, other artifacts with traces of husbandry and agriculture.

These archeological findings of material culture bring us to consider other traces of human presence in ancient caves. The article *Pre-Historic Music and Art in Paleolithic Caves*, by Professor S. Errede^{xviii} honors the life work of Iégor Reznikoff's recognition of the intentionality of cave markings and their relationship to human singing. By citing this relationship of archaic singing to specific places, this paper proceeds by positing possible connection between acoustic cave notation and an almost extinct archaic polyphonic singing tradition.

The intentional building of Paleolithic temples that respond to specific tones and echoes activated by human voice integrating the sonic caves experiences with a dedicated place of worship, these monumental tectonic achievements with accompanying acoustic shaping may be also integrated into archaic tonal influences. These unusual sonorities provoke questions:

- Is the origin of this tonality possibly in natural echoes and overtones of certain, human designated sacred spaces codified and carried home for soothing, communal connection and evocation of the Paleolithic sensibilities of the transcendent?
- How does the presence of archaic, intentional, sophisticated traces of ancient humanity and their systematic study influence the re-defining and critical look at the origins of European and World Cultures?

Antecedents and elements of this discourse

In preparing the field for exploring contemporary issues vis-à-vis selected European paradigms that will close this paper, an approach of questioning possible overlooked notions is presented here. This section builds connections between the two major strands of this paper. Cited are histories, traditions, modalities of learning and knowledge integration of Classic Greek and Mediterranean philosophic systems. Followed by their ramification for emergence of Renaissance Civilization. The first three chapters prepare for comparison with and as a contrast to contemporary issues. Intention is to present the set of references for asking one of the key questions in this paper:

- What is the difference between internalized knowledge and decontextualized information?

Historic Issues of presenting Pythagoras

One of many overlooked aspect of presenting roots of Western philosophic tradition is the fact that Pythagoras' contribution is the result of him spending 20 formative years in ancient Egypt and being admitted into training and officiating circles of priesthood at the sacred cities of Thebes and Memphis.

Wim van den Dungen in his essay *Hermes the Egyptian* dedicates a chapter titled *The influence of Egyptian thought on Thales, Anaximander & Pythagoras*^{xix}. W. van den Dungen writes:

Iamblichus writes Pythagoras buried Thales and knew Anaximander before he stayed 22 years in Egypt and was initiated in the teachings of the priests of Thebes (plurality & unity of the Divine) and the doctrine of the resurrection of Osiris (the immortality of the soul).

W. van den Dungen considered and researched observations and extracts point to the Egyptian roots of Pythagorean thinking:

[Pythagoras initiated a] "school" of thought, a teaching in which *religion, mysticism, mathematics and philosophy* were allowed to interpenetrate each other.[...] These speculative considerations took place "next to" physical inquires into the nature of all possible beings. With his emphasis on numbers and the theology of arithmetic [...] he is credited with the theory of the functional significance of *sacred numbers* in the objective world and in music. [...] attributed to him [are], like the incommensurability of the side and diagonal of a square, and the Pythagorean

theorem (well-known in Egypt, Mesopotamia and India),

Pythagoras was mentioned in Diogenius Laërtius' *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* containing biographies of the Greek philosophers written approximately in the first half of the third century AD. W. van den Dungen tells us that Diogenius Laërtius writes:

Pythagoras *entered the Egyptian temples and learned the secrets of their gods*. This is a remarkable testimony. The Egyptian gods were hidden from sight. Nobody, except Pharaoh and his appointed priests, could enter the "holy of holies" and face the deity.[...]

W. van den Dungen touches upon the required discretion and containment of trained tradition practitioners. Pointing to Diogenius Laërtius writing:

[Observing] Rule of silence: the Egyptian gods and their priests were out of sight and hidden - *silence was golden*

The deeply researched observation and hard work of W. van den Dungen is honored here. It is burgeoning research and questioning of which work of W. van den Dungen is an example:

In spite of these historical uncertainties, the contribution of Pythagorism to Western culture has been significant and therefore justifies the effort, however inadequate, to depict what its teachings may have been. [...] What could Pythagoras have learned from the priest of Memphis and Thebes?

This brief reflection on geographically and culturally African/Ancient Egyptian roots of European culture begs a question:

- How can study of Pythagoras's contribution to western thought as a student of ancient Egypt open a connection that so far has been buried under particular views of the history of ideas?

One of the issues is misunderstanding of seemingly closed and hermetic systems' *protective discretion* in most cases rather than possible conspiracy motivation. It seems that the Pythagorean, Platonic and Neo-Platonic methods and practices aroused antagonisms of orthodox, established and public religious institutions. Similarly to when Medieval Christian Gnostics were persecuted by Catholic and Byzantine Orthodox Church. Seeking direct knowledge without institutional mediation appears to be a problem in many cultures. Ibn Arabi one of the central medieval interpreters of Islam in his writing refers to himself and his teachers as Gnostics.

- What is the characteristic and difference between the direct training method of teacher-student and the cultivation of memory of oral traditions?

- What are the examples and who are the practitioners if they have no or only oblique documentary traces?

Socrates

An exponent of the teacher-student relationship was Socrates. The barefooted teacher and mystic Socrates, often on the way to attending to matters of daily life, stopped in the streets and porticos to commune with a world of ideas. An elderly impoverished thinker, he was accused of corrupting youth and executed in the democratic Athens of the 5th century BC. He did not write down any of his ideas and teaching. What is it that makes him and other teachers of philosophic austerity and rigour so unacceptable to the authorities? Plato also never expounded directly on his theories but puts them in the mouths of the characters of his dialogues allowing for contrasting and inconclusive views.

Plato for Critical studies

Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science published in 2011 J. B. Kennedy's article *Plato's Forms, Pythagorean Mathematics, and Stoichiometry*^{xv}. J. B. Kennedy is a science historian at The University of Manchester, Great Britain. He has worked on the long disputed secret messages hidden in Plato's writings by utilizing

Stoichiometry^{xv} which deals with analysis of the variables in the elements in chemical reactions. Vastly expanded by computer algorithms, modern Stoichiometry has been developed to track, predict and analyze complex chemical reactions. Using Stoichiometry J. B. Kennedy "reveals that Plato used a regular pattern of symbols, inherited from the ancient followers of Pythagoras, to give his books a musical structure". Here we quote J. B. Kennedy from the 2010 press release about the discovery sent by The University of Manchester:

Earlier Pythagoras had declared that the planets and stars made an inaudible music, a 'harmony of the spheres'. Plato evoked this hidden music in his books. In antiquity, many of his followers said the books contained hidden layers of meaning and secret codes, but this was rejected by modern scholars. It is a long and exciting story, but basically I cracked the code. I have shown rigorously that the books do contain codes and symbols and that unraveling them reveals the hidden philosophy of Plato. This is a true discovery, not simply reinterpretation. This will transform the early history of Western thought, and especially the histories of ancient science, mathematics, music, and philosophy.

Although seemingly unrelated and distant from Plato and Pythagoras, a fully trained Tarantella singer embodies and is in touch with some internalized system of which the songs are extensions and tools. This system she does not divulge but only teaches it to successors and future practitioners. We are not implying that they are the same tradition but pointing to a dynamic of transmission and continuity.

J. B. Kennedy continues:

However Plato did not design his secret patterns purely for pleasure – it was for his own safety. Plato's ideas were a dangerous threat to Greek religion. He said that mathematical laws and not the gods controlled the universe. Plato's own teacher Socrates had been executed for heresy. Secrecy was normal in ancient times, especially for esoteric and religious knowledge, but for Plato it was a matter of life and death. Encoding his ideas in secret patterns was the only way to be safe.

J. B. Kennedy concludes his article Plato's *Forms, Pythagorean Mathematics, and Stichometry* by stating:

Though the evidence reported here will need to be verified and debated, it does clarify, in a surprising way, Aristotle's once puzzling view that Plato was a Pythagorean.

Pythagoras is considered one of the fathers of western mathematics and music theory and is lauded as proto-scientist. In this portrayal his symbolic and metaphysical teachings were regarded as quaint. Like Plato after him, nineteenth century scholarship painted them as giants rising out of a ceremonially entangled and superstitious ancient world with clear thought and conciseness. Plato's connection to Persian /Zoroastrian Chaldean Oracle and his journey and study in North Africa like Pythagoras's early years is of interest to this study.

Ammonius Saccas Platonist Teacher

Alexandria of the 3rd century BC was the home of a philosophy school held by the almost anonymous Ammonius Saccas, sakkophoros - sacks bearer. He made a living as a dockworker loading sacks on the ships, a Socrates like figure who gained independence of thought and philosophic practice through his humble and arduous profession. He did not document any of his teaching or write down his ideas and encouraged his pupils to do the same. The known students of Ammonius were Plotinus, Origen and Herrenius who must have, according to tradition, accepted the requirement that nothing be written down. It was only when Herrenius, probably departing from the school, wrote about his ideas that Plotinus and Origen responded in writing to correct partial and misleading representation. It is with thanks to this rising to the occasion that we have the significant writings of Plotinus.

Ilija Savic, colleague of the author of this paper, in researching Porphyry, early Neo-Platonist and traces of Orphic Mysteries for his doctoral thesis, before his untimely death in 1965, was of the opinion that neither Clement of Alexandria nor Athenagoras were fully trained Orphic initiates. He shared this view with colleagues that prior to converting to Christianity, they must have had only a rudimentary training in the mysteries and denounced them because of their limited knowledge. It appears that facts about Orphic, Elysian or any other mystery processes came from students that had broken the training either voluntarily or had been asked to leave.

Hypatia of Alexandria

Another example of a complex relationship of a Platonic School to the surrounding culture is, the life and work of Hypatia in the fifth century, before she was brutally assassinated by a Byzantine appointed bishop. She held a Platonic Academy at Alexandria. She wrote on mathematics, astronomy and music but did not write about her teachings of philosophy and methods of transmission. Destruction of Hypatia and burning of the Library of Alexandria saw dispersion of Hellenic, Jewish and Egyptian/African scholars, writers, translators and scientists into the geographic areas of the Fertile Crescent or Maghreb. An overlooked fact of cultural history is that the Old Testament, as we know

it, was compiled at the Alexandrian Library by a *collegium* of probably eighty Rabbis and most likely first drafted in Greek, which points to the multiple cultural strands nurtured there.

Ibn Masarra

G. N. Atiyeh^{xxi} in his paper gives insight into the Iberian mystic and teacher Ibn Masarra born in “883 AD in Cordoba, and died in 931AD in a hermitage he had founded for his friends and disciples in the Sierra of Cordoba”. G. N. Atiyeh writes:

M. Asín Palacios, the Spanish scholar who first reconstructed an integral account of Ibn Masarra's life and thought, concluded that he was the first Andalusian to structure Spanish Islamic philosophy (*hikma*) and that he conveyed his doctrines in a series of *batini* (inward) esoteric images and symbols (Asín Palacios 1972). The centerpiece of Asín's thesis, however, was the elaboration of a whole theory of Ibn Masarra's inspiration from a pseudo-Empedocles, who had developed a peculiar form of Plotinian ideas on the One and the five eternal substances of Primal Matter, Intellect, Soul, Nature and Secondary Matter. According to Asín, Ibn Masarra was the founder of a philosophical-mystical school which influenced Jewish, Christian and Muslim medieval philosophers. Andalusian Sufism from Isma'il al-Ru'ayni (d. ah 555/ad 1268) to Ibn al-'Arabi by way of Ibn al-'Arif (d. ah 536/ad 1141) sprang from the Masarra school.

G. N. Atiyeh in the following passage points to a perpetual strife and danger Neo-Platonist thought encountered under any system.

His success came from a Socratic style of pedagogy as well as a charismatic personality and skill in communication. After his death the jurists carried out a veritable persecution of his disciples; who had formed themselves into an ascetic order, the Masarra, in Cordoba and later in Almeria.

This Rudimentary survey of diachronically similar occurrences and methodologies is presented to create the context for better understanding of the life and work of Georgius Gemistos and his role and relationship to Florentine Renaissance.

Overlooked Dynamics of Classical Influences

Re-examining anew European self-image of the ninetieth century education and world-views with the formative question:

- Why, how and by whom did the Platonic Academy resurface in sixteenth century Florence where their seemingly most important ideas were not written down but instead “intentionally remembered,” probably for about one thousand years?

It seems that a Platonic Academy needed to be seeded by a trained and practicing Platonist. Since closing the Academy in Athens in the fifth century AD with Proclus as its last teacher and the earlier public murder in 415 AD of Hypatia of Alexandria, the last Platonist teacher there along with the destruction of the Alexandrian Library at about the same time period, the likelihood of finding one fully trained Platonist for Florence, a thousand years later in the early 16 century AD, was very small. The History of culture is full of examples of tenacity and ingenuity of the continuation of traditions under most difficult circumstances.

Florence of Cosimo Medici

Cosimo the Elder in 1434 inherited the Medici Bank, became the head of the Medici Family and de facto head of state of the Florentine republic without having to hold a political office.

Cosimo embodied the concept of true leadership that knows what people can do and creates conditions for them to excel. This is true for any profession, there are examples of this among educators, theater or film directors and conductors. The Roman Emperor Hadrian was legislator, strategist and architect initiating some fine and memorable buildings and managing the Empire by a remarkable choice of people.

Cosimo knew the balance of statement – understatement and value of cultivated discernment and he had a sense of the role of Florence and the needs of his time. He was not a rich man of parochial outlook who bought respect through outer forms. He was well educated, constantly learning and surrounding himself with the best minds and talent of his day. Cosimo had a combination of deep outlook, interest in transcendence, but also in the ideal form of government

and matters of legislation.

The chronology and inventory of Cosimo's collection of Greek manuscripts, their translation and the surrounding process of Classical Greek language teachers and manuscript acquisition dynamics are outside the scope of this paper. In the process of assembling tangible and intangible elements of Greek, Egyptian, Mesopotamian/Persian, Hebrew and Arab civilizations, Cosimo Medici had an indirect connection with the renowned Byzantine teacher of Philosophy and Law, Georgius Gemistos. This connection came through several Italian, or rather Florentine, Umbrian and people from states that were in loose coalition with Florence. Also through Greek-speaking members of the intellectual circles in Rimini and who were friends and possible students of Georgius Gemistos and made intentional and repeated visits to him in the Byzantine City of Mistra.

As a culmination of mutual awareness at a distance, Cosimo Medici and Georgius Gemistos met at the occasion of Byzantine Empirical delegation hosted in Florence in 1438. Creating conditions where Platonic ideas could be taught in the open must have appealed to both of them. All this history provokes many questions, here are the few:

- Who is Georgius Gemistus, nicknamed Pletho?
- Why was his role so severely obscured since the Counter Reformation, generation later and three centuries later under United Italy Patriotism and international academic presentations of the Renaissance?
- Why is he important for this discourse?

Georgius Gemistus Pletho (1355–1454)

Reflections in this chapter are mainly based on the book by C. M. Woodhouse titled *Georgius Gemistus Pletho- The Last of the Hellenes*. The book presents the elusive, almost hidden history of the lifework of the late Byzantine teacher of philosophy. It contains the detailed study of most of the surviving documents written by Gemistus and his immediate circle of contemporaries. C. M. Woodhouse in his book writes about the philosophy omissions that the renowned Byzantine teacher of philosophy and law Georgius Gemistus nicknamed Pletho left out from his excerpts and summaries. This is a key quote and the reason for his inclusion in this work. For emphasis, the quote is in bold letters:

In the higher studies, especially philosophy, he preferred oral teaching. He [Georgius Gemistus] liked to emphasize that Plato and the Pythagoreans distrusted the written word as the means of communicating their most important ideas.^{xxii}

So through looking at C. M. Woodhouse's meticulously researched findings and to fill some gaps with open questions and tentative hypotheses, this paper addresses transmitting of insight and distilling through means other than writing. Oral traditions were the main instrument for passing knowledge and training dexterity of the body, of the mind and acquiring skills before writing was invented. It persists throughout history to this day, in different regions and for a different purpose. Oral transmission is ever-present in the Mediterranean, European and global history. Brief reconstruction of George Gemistus' life journey, and practice contain seed for discussion heralded by opening questions of this section of the paper.

Byzantine philosopher's early education and youthful studies

Georgius Gemistus was born into a family of jurists that was close to the Byzantine Court at Constantinople, either as advisers, courtiers or cherished guests. As a son of a prominent family he was exposed to the finest cultural achievements of his time and received a classical education and general education of quality. His instinct for learning, family support, independent spirit, deep inborn sense of dignity and discretion led him to cultural and cosmopolitan places and cities in search of knowledge and meeting the wise people of his time. He traveled to Cairo, Baghdad, East Mediterranean islands and territories with possible learning communities like Cyprus, Anatolia and Palestine. Adrianopolis seems to be a place where he studied under a teacher. At the time of Gemistus Adrianople / Edirne in Threce was the cosmopolitan capital of the Ottoman state. Threce, today East Threce or European Turkey is bordering with Greece and Bulgaria, separated by the Dardanelles from Turkey of Asia Minor.

According to C. M. Woodhouse, the most careful of the sources on Gemistus, it appears in indirect references that he studied with the obscure philosopher Elissaeus. C. M. Woodhouse critically evaluates admissible references from written sources and gives glimpses of Elissaeus. Summarized here, Elissaeus must have been a trained Greek philosophy teacher, also connected to Zoroastrianism of Persia, an interpreter of Islamic thinkers like Averroes and Avicenna. Elissaeus was maybe of Jewish origin and learning but not part of orthodox or mainstream views.

Elissaeus' mix of interests, skills and attention to the diversity of traditions reflects a more Arabic intellectual climate with the Mediterranean richness of influences and counter influences than the Byzantine dogmatic views of what is pure and what is heretical and corrupted knowledge. Elissaeus must have been a trained Platonist who carried the teaching and methodology of transmutation of knowledge of the Platonic Academy that since its closure in the fifth century AD went underground.

Discrete Learning Containers

The thinkers, teachers, students, and devotees traveled and intentionally followed or looked for their own networks of religious, ethnic, learning or mystic communities, libraries and schools. After the final destruction and burning of Alexandrian Library in the 5th century AD the dispersed scholars, formed formal and informal fraternities that kept some of Hellenic and other traditions alive, evolving and sometimes cross-pollinating. Just like Ibn Arabi who founded the networks of his tradition and beliefs traveling from Spain to Anatolia via North Africa, so did young Gemistus crisscross the Eastern Mediterranean in search of deepening and broadening his philosophical, legal and historic interests. This culminated in Gemistus finding or being found by a living teacher capable of transmitting and training in the manner of Socrates and the Platonic Academy that once flourishing in Athens.

It appears that in looking at a number of instances inter-culturally, that a training of philosophers with an aspiration to some direct knowledge of transcendent reality demanded a rigorous cultivation, not only of the intellect but also of the being of the aspirant. As this is a cultural history paper it does not advocate any outcome but the fact that humanity in most of its cultures have methodology for transcendence is of interest here. Neo Platonic schools seem to offer such training. Through ancient writings like Diogenius Laërtius *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* the traces of itineraries of wisdom seekers and holders crisscrossing the Mediterranean can be gleaned. These journeys are often about finding or been found by teachers and teaching for the sake of training. Gemistus Plathon belongs to that culture of highly trained philosophy teachers of the Mediterranean who exposed themselves to inner and outer uncertainty for the sake of training.

We learn mostly about Gemistus' training from a vigorous detractor, a life long enemy and his ex-student Scholarios who became Patriarch of Constantinople under the new name of Gennadios.

General characteristics of direct learning

To remain comparative and open in the study of methodologies of direct learning from a teacher, we based this draft of the stages on scant documentary evidence, folklore, training of musicians, artist and craftsmen in traditional societies, oral reminiscences, post training diaries, anthropological writing and Pythagorean, Platonic, Neo-Platonic, Hermetic and Cabalist training fragments. Gemistus Pletho must have gone through the same process resembling phases listed below:

1. Natural aptitude and schooling
2. Years of physiological destitution and search (regardless of outer circumstances)
3. Signs, recommendations, hearsay about a teacher or a school
4. Meeting of the teacher and student
5. Testing of the student's resolve
6. Preliminary acceptance into some form of apprenticeship
7. Renunciation, service, daily practice and learning
8. First responsibilities, privations and isolation as test of quality of being
9. Deeper internal acceptance, shedding aspects of conditioning
10. Rejection from the school/teacher as second larger test of the resolve
11. Bewilderment and crisis, temptations of power
12. Transpersonal merging into the essence of the school or teaching
13. Specialization and Life Skills, profession
14. Fully integrated as a proponent / carrier of a particular tradition and becoming its teacher

C. M. Woodhouse meticulously presents the case of Gemistus' ex-pupil Scholarios, later renamed Gennadios as Patriarch of Constantinople. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and death of Gemistus in 1454, Scholarios posthumously was seeking to justify his burning of Gemistus' advise to the princes in the Book of Laws. To explain the genesis of this Gemistus' last work and to Scholarios' opinion the most heretical, the manuscript of which he had received from sister of Theodor Despot of Mistra, into whose hands it had gone when Gemistus died. Scholarios' denouncement is our source for following Gemistus' path of learning and the multiple influences he absorbed.

- What happens when a trainee cannot understand rejection from the school/teacher as a second larger test of resolve and cannot endure bewilderment and crisis?

Posthumous assassination of Gemistus by Scholarios/Gennadios is a typical reaction of a departed student who had no courage and depth to live through the ordeal of integrating given knowledge within inner physiological wilderness. Something Pythagoras did despite that he nearly died in this phase of being tested. Partial knowledge often leads the failed candidates to seek worldly and political power. Similarly to the phenomenon of a deeply wounded and revengeful child's controlling need that may be at the core of inner motivation of some well known dictators, a kind of blind spot.

The trained wisdom keepers who have survived the bewilderment phase have deep solidarity and recognition of each other. It appears from the inter-cultural studies of acquiring mastery that earn, evolved ethics and open heart are a starting point of possibilities of trained transition.

Plato's dialogs are full of degrees of these currents between Socrates and various guests responding to him at the symposiums as well as among the guests themselves. When Ibn Arabi in the thirteenth century wrote biographies of wisdom keepers of his time this solidarity through experience permeated his writing.

Often this training, particularly the initial phases happen in big cosmopolitan cultural centers where access to diverse histories, beliefs, libraries and significant municipal buildings and parks offer learning opportunities.

- What are the characteristics of cultural capitals of Gemistus time?

Cairo and Adrianopole

Cairo gained cultural importance through the complex tangles and battles of numerous interests throughout the late middle ages. Its prominence was aided by Abbasid Caliphate dynastic infighting, Mamluk Turkic Military successes, Mongol invasions and ambitions and Christian Crusader claims. Also the rise of the Ottoman and shrinking of the Byzantine Empires witnessed development of cultural and learning institutions that attempted to rival earlier Abbasid Baghdad. Like Cairo for the Mamluks, Adrianopole for the Ottoman state developed into a significant cultural and learning center. Adrianopole was in the late 14th century the capital of the Ottoman state. Gemistus went to Adrianopole when he was twenty approximately in 1380.

Constantinople

The capital of what survived of the Eastern Roman Empire was almost an opposite story to Florence. Constantinople was overgrown with consolidating, conserving politics at every level. Imperial family infighting, dogmatic and politicized church and a weak army were contributing to the sense of ailing empire, a sense of a different and new future was completely absent. It was a matter of decades and then years of impending conquest by any of the multiple contenders. The minds like Gemistos were not welcomed, only the procedural pedantry ruled the day. But the deepest sickness of any culture is not the benign neglect of the past due simply to the passage of time, but a vigilant self-loathing of the previous phase and its history. The Byzantine Empire by persecuting its own pagan culture forced it to go underground and flourish at neighboring cultures that absorbed them.

This is why the timing of the raising of Florentine renaissance and the living connection to generative ideas are a seeming miracle of the meeting of these two strands of Mediterranean culture, the strand of a living germ hidden within an imploded seed and the numinous flow of rejuvenating, affirming instinct.

Georgius Gemistus and Cosimo Medici

In 1438 the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Paleologus headed a delegation with Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople to the west hoping to create powerful allegiance with the Pope in defending his largely shrunken and tittering Empire against the rising Ottoman powers. At Ferrara a joint council was arranged with the Pope to discuss possible union of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Because of the rumors of plague, Cosimo Medici suggested that the proceedings be redirected to Florence at his expense. Although not a churchman but a secular philosopher, Gemistus was invited to accompany John VIII Paleologus on the grounds of being highly recognized by some of his contemporaries, a Greek version of the concept of *stupor mundi*, the marvel of the world, a subject of admiration and wonder. It was believed that Gemistos knew the entire legal system by heart (as a proponent of the cultivated oral tradition, he must have had a similar connection to the philosophical knowledge), he had a reputation of generosity as a teacher and of living to the highest standards of ethics. Already a decade before the Council of Florence, Gemistos was consulted by the Byzantine Emperor on the issue of unification of the Greek and Latin churches. Eventually at the Council of Florence the document of the union was created, agreed upon and signed. It was so watered down that the agreement was a matter of trivial technicality. Immediately after the council both parties ignored it and the Byzantine clergy saw it as usurping their imagined supremacy as inheritors of the first Christian Roman Emperor Constantine. At times the schism of the two churches seems to be more about the politicized Apostolic or Imperial succession than about some

theological differences. Hidden within history of events, the Byzantine clergy valiantly guarding Imperial succession stemming from Emperor Constantine's conversion had not been studied as a recurrent pattern and one of the causes of demise of Byzantium.

At the Council of Florence the real union happened behind the scenes not only of two views of Christianity but also many strands of Mediterranean learning. Gemistus was invited by Florentine humanists to lecture on Greek philosophy. Because Gemistus was not an ecclesiastic functionary but a secular scholar, he was needed at very few sessions of the council. Cosimo de' Medici attended Gemisto's lectures, as he also was not an ecclesiastic but a lay citizen of Florence. The documentary material about what happened in those meetings is very minimal most commentators conclude that Cosimo was so inspired by these lectures and Gemistus' teachings that it prompted him to found the Accademia Platonica in Florence. As we have mentioned before, Gemistos did not write his concept or processes, but mostly summaries. These notes are his mini-reference library allowing only indirect glimpse of his teaching. The relationship to books or reference material by the scholars was completely different before the printed book, memory and oral traditions played a great part in holding the knowledge.

Gemistus' lectures and Cosimo's attendance at them must have been a climax of a process of direct or indirect communication most probably started a decade or more before. Medicies have been collecting Greek and Roman statuary with pagan motives, manuscripts connecting to traditions of Kabala, ancient Egyptian alchemy, Hermetic tradition and Muslim medicine and science for their library. It opened as a first public library in Europe in 1440. Cosimo' interest in philosophy and a philosophic basis of government must have led him to Gemistus. They could have communicated with each other through Gemistus' students and Italian merchants traveling through Greece. Probably the reason Gemistus was enlisted in the Byzantine Emperor's delegation is because of his contacts and the respect he held in Italy. After the council and sojourn in Italy, far reaching was the influence of Georgius Gemistus Pletho on Florentine Humanist Marsilio Ficino, the first director of the Platonic Academy in Florence. Today in limited circles of scholars like the Warburg Institute in London and eminent Renaissance scholar the late Frances Yates, Gemistus is considered one of the most important influences on the Italian Renaissance. The Medicies did not unearth broken statues and found rare manuscripts they were also seeking and succeeded in connected to living breathing tradition still in existence at their time.

If we read the material carefully and caringly presented by C. M. Woodhouse and add our comparative thoughts on teaching transmissions, it could be summarized that Gemistus intentions were never to be original or remembered but simply to carry the inspiration, experienced inner connection and wisdom inherent in the Platonic training applied to his time. Just like the effectiveness of a fertilizing germ, it is not the uniqueness of its form that matters but the vigor of carrying the cellular signature forward. These processes may open our thinking about perspectives and struggles of inceptions, growth and maturation of Civilizations. The question is:

- How can contemporary culture benefit from knowing about a vitality communicated through living human beings?
- Is this at all relevant within paradigms of virtual reality and simulated experiences?

Facets contributing to the axioms of Constitutional Democracies

Viva Verdi - Rise of national opera house as a symbol of enlightened cosmopolitanism is the paper by the author of this work presented at the conference *The Risorgimento and Italian Unification in Global Perspective* organized and held at John Cabot University in Rome in September 2011. Summarized here, the paper probes the nexus of ideas surrounding formation of European and Global sovereign nations and related establishment of National Opera Houses constellated originally around the *Viva Verdi* cry, opera repertoire and theater architecture of Italian Risorgimento. Social ritual of the Opera House seen as shared education of the then acceptable feelings, values and cultural identity.

Forty-six years after the Congress of Vienna, modern Italy was formed in 1861 when Vittorio Emanuele II became king of United Italy. The plans and political structures of Metternich, Habsburg foreign affairs minister had already crumbled after the 1848 unrests. Post Napoleonic partitioning of the world enacted at the Congress of Vienna and the political agenda of preserving aristocratic order was well abandoned within decades.

One of the building blocks of the overthrow of Austrian dominance in the north of Italy was gathering force and collective will through Italian opera, particularly Verdi's operas. *Viva Verdi* was the cry of the public at the end of the performances that became a code for *Viva Vittorio Emanuele Re di Italia*. After the success of Italian unification all the new forming nations or diminished and consolidated old ones built a national Opera House on the Italian model. The architectural languages of Italian cultural meridian gave credence to the new sentiment and values of emergent nations. This can be traced from Stockholm to Brussels, Prague, Zagreb, Belgrade and Sofia to mention just a few.

The national movements of the nineteenth century reframed the identity of populations from subjects of aristocratic families, dynasties and empires to citizens of territorial, linguistic and cultural units. The Italian opera played an important part in this transformation and new identity. The 2011 paper cited at the opening of this section and summarized here by examining the architecture, repertoire and administration of the opera house, reflected in detail on the influence the Italian Risorgimento had on standards of international culture and global identities as a symbol of "enlightened cosmopolitanism", emancipation of middle classes and signs of a new era.

Replacement of feudalism with the industrialized society resulted in the formation of sovereign nations that encompassed adjacent territories often engineered by colonizing interests that created real or imagined antagonists and supremacists.

In a global geopolitical sense there is no place that does not belong to some country, empire or commonwealth. Modern geography and perception of the world is by countries rather than watersheds, mountain ranges, dominate regional botanical spaces of weather patterns. These and other planetary and regional characteristics lie at the root of the diversity of survival techniques and cultural expressions pertinent to the climate and configuration of the region. Just as cultural osmosis could be an emergent field of study, so environmental responses could be another sub study of international relations.

From the point of view of *Critical Studies* and the theme of *Asking Big Questions Again* the issues of *regional and global* emerge here as do the bleared edges of cultural need and manipulation. The feudal pomp and circumstance of royal or ecclesiastical ceremonies and public appearances augmented and expressed through and by the institution of the Opera House with its ethos of including all strata of society under one roof.

The example of rise of national opera houses as a symbol of 'enlightened cosmopolitanism', a facet contributing to the axioms of *Constitutional Democracies* has its own contradictions. As an institutionalized art form it always begs the question of what was state owned and subsidized, what was commercially driven, what was deeply original and a true expression of its period and how inclusive and what voices it represented.

Conclusion - Future possibilities and Perseverance Crisis

In closing the issues of a possible contemporary *Crisis of Perseverance*, current de-contextualized information and the neuroscience and cognitive research notions of ecology of mind and brain are presented. This serves as a proactive starting point for discussion about the contemporary state of mind and learning preparedness.

Visited in a previous section of the paper, the institution of National Opera House with its ethos of including all strata of society under one roof was broadened by the introduction of radio, film industry, television broadcasts and currently by computer devices and ubiquity of electronic media. This amplifies the issues of *regional and global* and the bleared edges of cultural need and manipulation.

A few big questions emerge: What are the social implications of de-contextualized information and its impact upon knowledge-based cultural fields, individual expression, identity and cognitive development of children? In the age of electronic globalization does the global, often linguistically biased, annexation and preservation of the cultural domain have potential for democratization of all-inclusive information?

Jean-Noël Jeanneney, head of *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* wrote in 2006:

A 2005 survey of 22,000 adult Internet users...found that 62 percent 'make no distinction whatever between advertising and other information,' and only 18 percent could tell which data were paid for by companies.^{xxiii}

Ten years later these stark statistics are even more poignant.

To open the discussion beyond this paper and gain perspectives, some further more specific questions could be asked:

- Are there sufficient independent analysis of the literature and critical discourse on the information age by scholars, curators and culture makers? Is there any potential critical education about the effects of commercially dominated globalized information and how it influences the creation of new and original works of culture, scholarship or curriculum development?

All this is to emphasize the need of protected, independent critical studies and cultural expressions even on a reduced

scale.

Crisis of perseverance

In probing the context for the future of learning and curriculum development, discrete homage to a pre-eminent critic of contemporary culture, society and technology Lewis Mumford is included in this closing section of the multi-faceted discourse for the Fifth Euroacademia Forum of Critical Studies.

Lewis Mumford (1895 – 1990) was a critic and public polemist respected on both sides of the Atlantic in the cultural sphere of the English language. American born, his views were published in the leading magazines and newspapers as regular columns culminating as a series of influential books.

The author of this work presented the paper *Informed Response – Curriculum of Care: Seven Examples of Intended or Inadvertent Initiatives Reflecting Mumford's Ideas of Inclusive Technics* for the 2013 symposium inaugurating China Lewis Mumford Research Center at the Shanghai Normal University. The paper visits Mumford's critical stance about tools, technics, architecture, town and regional planning, education, inner life and cultural phenomenon. Also discussed are Mumford's articulations of three ages of Technology and their adaptation and amplification in response to *the state of the world* we find ourselves in.

In this section asking some open questions on preparing and critically constructing possible future outcomes, Mumford's quote from *Art and Technics* may offer some context:

[..]we find ourselves more absorbed than ever in the process of mechanization. Even a large part of our fantasies are no longer self-begotten: they have no reality, no viability, until they are harnessed to the machine, and without the aid of the radio and television they would hardly have the energy to maintain their existence.^{xxiv}

Mumford wrote this even before the advent of computer games, smart phones, reality shows and social media.

The closing discourse here is centered around the questions of causes of current communication modalities and their effect on the minds of contemporary children as a way of asking big questions on possibilities and impossibilities of *Constructing Future*. Articulated as questions some of the issues of interest could be:

- How are we [concern citizens] addressing less-acknowledged ecology of mind, internal self, and social connection that are as threatened as the natural environment?
- How are we thinking about, for and with children?
- Could cultivation of personal mastery and informed balancing of the visceral with the virtual open new paradigms of learning?

At this stage of the paper it may be significant to re-visit issues of the importance and limitation of asking open or answer seeking questions in an academic context. If the goal was to ask a completely objective question, the process of eliminating any possible bias or agenda would render a question too abstract, groundless. If question form is a disguise for forwarding a particular agenda, it burdens the question's openness. In closing this paper with the agenda of relating to issues of *Constricting Future*, *Curriculum Development* and *Life Long Learning*, some very specific questions present themselves. These are examples of agenda rich questions and attempts to contribute to the current discourse of *Asking Big Questions Again* for the Forum of Critical Studies.

- How are we coping in the contemporary milieu of intense commodification with expanding and invasive product marketing?
- What are the mechanisms for nurturing the inner self and cultivating discernment among the children and youth targeted as consumers?
- Can a coalition of scientists, artists and educators create a pilot project with programs that are easily implemented for children and youth at different levels of development, as well as create supporting materials for teachers and parents with workshops to lessen this global pandemic of un-contextualized information?

Addressing *Crisis Of Perseverance* as articulated by the members of Artship educational initiatives was a response to problems, particularly among children and youth lacking role models or witnessing success through perseverance [the author of this paper is part of that curriculum research group].

Artists of all types are the embodiment of achievable mastery and the tangible experience of completion.

Frank Giunta, the Airship board president at the time, in an annual report for 2004, wrote:

When Hallie Williams—a founding member of Artship, its long time chair, and a juvenile probation officer in Oakland—and Artship artists worked at Juvenile Hall [Detention Center for Delinquent Youth and Children], it became clear that artists' relative mastery of drawing and other arts helped the youth realize their ideas. The presence of a trained artist was essential.^{xxv}

This snippet of information is here to pave a way for a question that generalizes specifics of the example:

- Can a multi-year comprehensive educational project addressing the ecology of mind and perception by teaching about the senses and their physical and psychological effect on cognition and learning abilities help?

B. Shneiderman wrote in his paper *Human Values and the Future of technology*, a declaration of responsibility in 1999 for the *Computers and Society Journal*:

We can make a difference in shaping the future by ensuring that computers "serve human needs (Mumford, 1934)." By making explicit the enduring values that we hold dear we can guide computer system designers and developers for the next decade, century, and thereafter.^{xxvi}

B. Shneiderman's writing attests that Mumford's articulations and critiques are an aspect of these emerging paradigms of tempering and understanding technology as a partner in the biology of continuity.

There are alternative practices, often less respected by the dominant societies that preserve the essential, embodied paradigms necessary for sapient conciseness. There is evidence that demonstrates the presence, often small in scale and spontaneous, of coalitions of concern citizens. At this junction in our globalizing society of extreme dependency on machines, pre-digested and de-contextualized information, the possibility of balancing initiatives and paradigms invites our final question:

- Could the surviving humanity learn from these inclusive paradigms, nurture and educate future caretakers of habitation and bodily well-being and integrate them with a development of the curriculum of care and reciprocity?

Questioning as a process and as linguistic formulation although natural to the human mind and to child development, is not always welcome. There are and were societies, institutions, workplace expectations and family structures that don't allow and even punish questioning. Socrates, Gordano Bruno, Tommaso Campanella, Tomas Moor are just a few examples of many silenced for their questioning. At the end of the proceedings of this conference *Asking Big Questions Again* for the Forum of Critical Studies it may be interesting to assemble one crucial question from each paper presented and make it into a few paged anthology to be shared with our students and as a testimony of engagement, concern and freedom to ask.

End Notes

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