

JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE LA PHILOSOPHIE - UNESCO

Philosophy as a Life Experience

21st November 2013

Savona Town Hall, "Sala Rossa"

Regione Liguria PHILOSOPHY POLE

Location: Liceo Classico - Linguistico - Artistico "Chiabrera - Martini"

In collaboration with S.F.I - A.F.L - [A.I.P.Ph](#)

Scientific Coordination: Mr. Riccardo Sirello - Secretary and Editing of the Project: Ms. Lia Ciciliot, Ms. Raffaella Bertolo

On Thursday 21st November 2013, in the Sala Rossa at Savona Town Hall, the "*UNESCO Journée de la Philosophie*" was held. As usual, it saw the participation of many students representing different high schools, teachers and head teachers as well as the general public.

The "Journée" has become an important date for the representation of Italian and regional Philosophy.

After a short introduction by the headmaster **Alfonso Gargano** and the thanks to the Authorities, it was the Prefect Ms. **Gerardina Basilicata**'s turn to speak, she underlined the importance of the adults' role, being responsible for the education of teenagers in every area. The mayor Mr. Federico Berruti, the councilor for Culture Ms. **Elisa di Padova** and Ms. **Anna Sgherri** referred to the activities of the "*Philosophy Pole*" and to the themes it dealt with, i.e. *Models of rationality*.

The "Journée" can be placed in this context and it is the right occasion to renew the connection with UNESCO.

Ms. Sgherri observed how the first task of Philosophy, just like with Plato and Aristotle, is to "give answers" to the needs of society which is in continuous change. Precisely for this reason, the didactics of this subject require significant renovation so as to provide useful answers to students. The second task of Philosophy is the "formation of a democratic conscience" which we can obtain

by "looking around us", the ability to infer and to operate choices. The Laboratory of Philosophy becomes therefore a "quiet place to think" where we build "small pieces" of daily life and there we exercise true democracy which sets students and teachers on the same level.

Mr. **Riccardo Sirello**, secretary of "*Association Internationale des Professeurs de Philosophie*", as well as member S.F.I. and referent of the Philosophy Proje - located at Liceo Classico "Chiabrera" - described the activity of the Project, the function of his Portal and the "*Nuova Didattica*" magazine that has recently obtained the important recognition of the ISSN code.

He then illustrated the international meaning of the "XXII Olympics of Philosophy" and the "National Championship of Philosophy" that will take place, firstly in Italian high schools, then on a regional level and finally national.

Mr. Sirello read the message sent by Ms. **Irina Bokova**, General Manager of UNESCO, in which the accent has been set and he introduced the theme "Des sociétés inclusives, une planète durable" which concludes with an appeal to all professional workers, authors and teachers in the world, through the UNESCO network, to free the resources of thinking, reminding us how Philosophy helps us remember that the resources of the spirit are the only true renewable resources we have. Subsequently he read the message sent by Mr. **Hermann Lodewyckx**, President of the [A.I.P.Ph](#) that, through numerous philosophical matters, wished a pleasant day full of reflection.

The introduction to the "Journée" was completed by a presentation of slides, of greetings sent by the authorities not present because of work commitments, followed by numerous interviews of citizens of different States members of the Community that spread reflections of peace and solidarity.

Prof. **Letterio Mauro**, Philosophy professor at the University of Genoa, focusing his reflection on Philosophy as a life experience quoting the historian *Michelet*, and the importance of studying ancient thought, since the past contains ideas at a "concentration" level: what was said at that time is found today (for example *Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Plotinus* and *Marco Aurelio*), as the most important schools of thought were mostly lifestyles.

In the 20th Century this theory was developed by **Pierre Hadot** (Paris, February 21st, 1922 - Orsay, April 24th, 2010), a great philosopher and prestigious philosophy historian of the *Collège de France* who stated the need of contextualizing texts in order to understand them.

In Hadot's opinion ancient texts are real *paideia*, the real "global education" that takes place at school working together "*confilosofare*" as Philosophy was born as a need of "sharing". We find this concept in Hadot's "spiritual exercises". Ancient schools were *Bioi*, in other words "ways of life".

The true experience of life that Aristotle teaches is indeed the sharing, while for Epicure life is joy, the pleasure of living without pain.

In Plato, like in Aristotle, the experience of political life is translated as the participation to the *polis*: both philosophers put themselves at other people's disposal. From that derives the necessity of "being interested in someone", through an exchange of interest and of dialogue. Today instead it often happens that the philosophical work is born around a table, rather than from concrete problems debated with others and then translated to a completed work.

For Aristotle, Philosophy has no purposes, it is objective: its task is to sharpen our capability, enable us to face problems from a very broad perspective, not in the way a mere "technical person" does, moving and responding in a specific and very narrow area.

Hadot illustrated a type of experience that can broaden our life, i.e. the "experience of thinking about death": in what sense? He observes that in the *Epithet* and *Marco Aurelio's* works life is exalted: it must be lived as if every day was the last, considering then the present as the true dimension of the man, not the past and not even the future. Secondly, it appears necessary to take a "view from above", that is looking at things with detachment, trying to lift the glance. Our "*logos*" allows a universal open-mindedness, making our particular point of view smaller. Subsequently, it appears appropriate to try looking at our experiences in relation to the needs of other people and finally "wonder" at the Universe, that in Plato and Aristotle is translated as "*thaumathein*", that is "to look with astonishment".

After Mr. Mauro, Ms. **Raffaella Bertolo**, teacher of Law at the Liceo "Chiabrera - Martini", took the floor. She made some considerations about the *Declaration of Human Rights*, with the help of a short and effective presentation of slides.

The first important observation is that the *Declaration of Human Rights* dates back to 1948, in other words it follows the World War II and reiterates some essential values already expressed in first Constitutions; the second observation is that, next to human rights there must be "duties", since without them we would lose the human social being.

Although our Italian Constitution entered into force in 1948 and was followed by the Vienna Convention in 1967, this did not prevent a student called Jan Palach from setting himself on fire in protest during the "Prague Spring", on 19th January, 1969. And in the same year, the War in Vietnam saw a frightening escalation.

Ms. Bertolo concludes her incisive intervention by observing how the most important right that absolutely makes men free is expressed in Article 3 of the Italian Constitution: "*All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion or personal conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic and social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, and prevent the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social development of the country*".

Then there was a short debate, during which some of the concepts presented in the two interventions were clarified and expanded. After which, there was a clear, expressive reading of all the articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) by Mr. **Jacopo Marchisio**, known actor and director of the theatre company "*I Cattivi Maestri*".

The "Journée" was officially closed by Mr. Alfonso Gargano, who invited everybody there to the next edition to be held the third Thursday of November 2014.

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