

# **ETHICAL SOCIETIES AND PEDAGOGY**

## **A Search for a Democratic and Interdisciplinary Paradigm**

**Pius V Thomas♦**

### **Abstract**

The paper maps the terrain and dynamics of the desired transformation of knowledge societies into ethical societies and establishes the necessitating inner logic and its tenors of the primacy of the ethical composition of any modern, open, knowledge societies, with the model of a critical, dialogical concept of democracy and pedagogy. It tries to attain such a goal by presenting two contemporary thinkers of our times, Juergen Habermas and Charles Taylor. Having discussed the inner paradigm of ethical societies, i.e., a social dialogically constituted, open democracy, the paper moves on to its main argument in order to show how pedagogy and the institution of education, particularly, the higher educational institutions/universities are to be the prime ethical concerns and the organizational base of any ethical societies and hence, knowledge societies.

**Key Words:** Crises Tendencies, Critical Pedagogy, Dialogical Democracy, Knowledge Societies, Interdisciplinarity, Interculturality and Public Intellectuals.

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## 1. Introduction

As per popular sources, ethics is the discipline that examines the moral standards of the individual and society. It asks how these standards apply to the lives of society and examines whether these standards are reasonable or unreasonable or supported by good reasons or poor ones. However, as we approach ethics as the first philosophy, as presented and demanded poignantly in the last century by thinkers like Emmanuel Levinas, which was due to the theoretical and practical disenchantment with the destructive tendencies of what we broadly call (uncritical) knowledge as mere processed information, we see how ethics play a central role. Ethics then becomes something that ought to regulate and creatively engender knowledge. It also assumes itself as a receptacle that carries epistemic engagements and knowledge. Therefore, ethics, as the space for rationally and dialogically encountering the organically articulated moral claims and lifeworlds (*Lebenswelt*), has been a core concept in the search for the ideal of a (democratically) 'shared world', according to the phenomenological, post-phenomenological, hermeneutic and critical theoretical philosophical enquiries.

Contemporary societies, which can also be christened 'knowledge societies', are regulated largely by science and technology and imagined to have their civilizational identity acquired from them. In other words, knowledge societies as modern societies are lorded over by technologically enmeshed lifeworlds. But the present study presumes that they are marked with the ethical interspaces within them, which can be characterized by five major crises tendencies.<sup>1</sup> They are i.

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<sup>1</sup>The crises tendencies in the advanced capitalist/postmodern/technological societies are individually proposed and theorized by great thinkers of our time. I brought them together as a theoretical nomenclature against discussions on ethics: i. "Teachers as Public Intellectuals, Counsellors, and Performers," National Seminar on *Teacher Education: (Re) Formation and Innovation Policies, Practice and Challenges*, Holy Cross College, Agartala, from 19 – 20 April 2018, and ii. "Teachers as Public Intellectuals: A Democratic Overview" Institute of Philosophy and Religion, Aluva, Kerala, 12 July 2022.

Knowledge Crisis (major paradigm shifts in defining knowledge and fixing the epistemic standards over the last century, wherein the Cartesian and Newtonian Physics and worldviews give way to relativity theory, subatomic physics, non-Euclidean geometry, post-Darwinian understanding of biology, biochemistry, etc., and their resonances, along with post-positivistic, post-empiricist science(s) and critical hermeneutic engagements in the philosophy of science and philosophy), ii. System Crisis (the worldwide inclinations of modernist systems such as education, aesthetics, architecture, and mass media to shrink internally, as pointed out by postmodern thinkers like Lyotard and Baudrillard), iii. Legitimation Crisis (the worldwide predicament in self-justification faced by the nation-state and other social institutions like family, and marriage as pointed out by critical hermeneutics like Juergen Habermas), iv. Environmental Crisis (the crisis reflected in the nature and biosphere as a result of the interventions of the Anthropocene in the form of global warming, carbon emission and resultant cultural crisis as pointed out by scores of eco-sophists, deep ecologists, eco-feminists, and environmental ethicists), and v. Theological Crisis (the predicaments in understanding the concepts of God and deities, religions and religiosity as represented by radical theologians, liberation theologians, black theologians and feminist theologians). Consequently, as we have seen above, ethics negotiates the concept of knowledge in order to install counterfactual ideals as contemporary philosophy de-centres and deconstructs the concept of knowledge and makes it sensitized with ideas of emancipation, critical consciousness and contextualization (Thomas, "Knowledge and Rights," 28).

## **2. Knowledge Societies to Ethical Societies: Two Prophetic Models**

According to some of the observations, knowledge societies are associated with mass-production of knowledge, achieved in "private business enterprise and market economy," which they combine with the capacities of modern ICT with information and group thinking organized in "shared spaces for knowledge

creation" (United Nations xi). Such observations maintain that any society can successfully cope with the tension created by ICT and resultant knowledge structures "by setting up institutions and organizations that enable people and information to develop without limits, and that open opportunities for all kinds of knowledge to be mass-produced and mass-utilized throughout the society as a whole" (United Nations xi). Similarly, such observations interpret "a society that follows this path as a Knowledge Society identifies the development of people as citizens and the development of democracy as effective conduits for achieving this transformation" (United Nations xi). The lifeworld of knowledge societies presupposes a democratic institutionalization.

The above insight about democratic lifeworld is the entry point to understanding ethical societies. We can trace the seeds of the ideas to understand ethical societies better in the theoretical efforts to ground democracy. It is important to understand that such efforts with the concepts of ethics as social interaction are to register the dialogical plurality with its rationality, coupled with the concept of rights. Let us try to briefly discuss the core and niche of ethical societies with the help of two important thinkers of our times: i. Juergen Habermas and, ii. Charles Taylor

Any critical thinking about the social life as the theoretical domain that facilitates ethics, according to Juergen Habermas, is the 'stand-in and interpreter,' operates as a rational mediator among spheres of science, morality and art<sup>2</sup> to establish unity on the level of culture on the one side and on the other side to

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<sup>2</sup> Habermas explains the role of philosophy as unitary and mediatory discourse, since, "Reason has split into three moments – modern science, positive law and post-traditional ethics, and autonomous art and institutionalized art criticism – but philosophy has precious little to do with this disjunction. Ignorant of sophisticated critiques of reason, the sons and daughters of modernity have progressively learnt to differentiate their cultural tradition in terms of these three aspects of rationality such that they deal with issues of truth, justice, and taste discretely rather than simultaneously" (*Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, 17).

provide lifeworld with the cultural tradition as the whole spectrum that can interlink the expert culture with the everyday communication. The intersubjective affirmation in everyday communication of an ethical and normative commitment is inherent in the 'reflexivity' of modernity/modern belief system, as it is dialogical. Just as dialogue determines the normative foundation, dialogue is being determined by the reflexive de-centration of differentiated value spheres.

Habermas affirms that the primacy of ethical life is necessary and demanding: "the skeptic may reject morality, but he cannot reject the ethical substance (*Sittlichkeit*) of the life circumstances in which he spends his waking hours, not unless he is willing to take refuge in suicide or serious mental illness" (*Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, 100). The communicative practice of everyday life in which everybody has to take a 'yes' or 'no' positions is theoretically and practically unavoidable. Since reaching an understanding is based on communicative action oriented to validity claims of assertoric and normative validity, no socio-cultural form is devoid of communicative action/social dialogue when it comes to the ethically formulated societies.

Hence Habermas's theory of communicative action and rationality for ethical grounding of modern (democratic) societies registers the following moral intuition, "... that instruct(s) us on how best to behave in situations where it is in our power to counteract the extreme vulnerability of others by being thoughtful and considerate" (Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, 199). As Habermas nurtures it into his principle and project of ethics, i.e., discourse ethics, he would argue that ethics acts as the imperative of invoking the intersubjective – communicative mode in all dimensions of social action and recognizes, "Someone who is blind to moral phenomena is blind to feeling. He lacks a sense, as we say, for the suffering of a vulnerable creature, who has a claim to have its integrity, both personal and bodily, protected. And this sense is manifestly closely related to sympathy or compassion" (*Justification and Application*, 174).

Similarly, Habermas would enlighten us that the non-hierarchical, participatory virtues/ideals as origins of democracy are always suggestive of the constructive logical links that establish between freedom, dialogue, peace and justice. Freedom is moderated and radicalized at the same time as choice, autonomy and participation in democracy. The need to conceive a critical notion of democracy thus becomes the formative force of ethics and modern societies, according to Habermas's theoretical efforts. Therefore, the concept of ethics as engendered by discourse theory, which Habermas develops, brings in the critique of existing forms of (liberal) democracies, the concept of justice in the modern, pluralistic societies, the concept of knowledge, the political will formation, etc. Habermas's concept of ethical societies also moots the notion of the freely constituted public sphere<sup>3</sup>, as the base of civil society and democracy. The concept of the public sphere presupposes the core values of any radical form of democracy and ethical society, such as the freedom of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to participate freely in political debate and decision-making. So, as Jim Walsh observes, "Habermas is interested in the re-modernization modernity so as to develop systems of free discourse necessary for the maintenance of civil society and democracy" (*In the Net*. 6), which Habermas would postulate as the core principles of ethical societies.

Charles Taylor posits democracy as engendering ethical life. Democracy as ethical context of action becomes what it ought to be in self-rule as it is the essence of freedom and part of what must be secured. Taylor reminds us that as an essential component of citizen capacity, full participation in self-rule is seen as being able, at least part of the time, to have some part in the forming of a ruling consensus, with which one can identify along with others. To rule and be ruled, in turn, means that at least some of the time, the governors can be 'us,' and not always

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<sup>3</sup> The public sphere is "a realm in which individuals gather to participate in open discussions... (but this is) subject to particularization based on the historical context and on the topics that are admitted for discussion" (Holub. *Juergen Habermas* 3).

'them.' Such an insight tells us that democratic self-reflectivity of rights and the law/legal provisions need to be organic, which is informed by an ethics of plurality. Ethics of plurality as the rational/dialogic self-understanding of the post-traditional, multi-religious and multi-cultural state of affairs, in turn corresponds to people's rights and people's rights for self-rule.

This enquiry goes deeper in Charles Taylor. Any Right discourse, according to him, has two dimensions, or they are co-originary. They are Moral and Legal or constitutional discourses. The life and quality of democracy is in the efforts to continue and bridge/challenge these two discourses with a dialogic and interactive relation in the form of Democratic Rights and People's Rights. According to Taylor, democratic rights are given/granted/gained in the constitution, but people's rights are to be made through self-rule, interpreted further, which is a constant activity. The 'agencies' like Parliament, Executive, Judiciary, the Fourth, and Fifth Estates, which interpret democratic rights are genuine when they are capable of linking them and activating them as people's rights. In other words, the making of democratic rights into people's rights is in the constitutional, legal, political and cultural institutionalization of the freedom to talk and listen, freedom of speech and finally, to communicate at multiple social levels, which can be called broadly the enactment of social dialogue. Stated differently, people's rights and self-rule cannot be imagined without the conceptual and concrete realization of the public sphere and civil society; without them, there cannot be ethical societies as the notions of the public sphere and civil society come into the horizon of our socio-political life and coexistence as the effort to rationally link morality, justice and political will formation in modern pluralist societies.

Therefore, Taylor, perhaps in the same vigour of Habermas tells us about public sphere.

The public sphere is a common space in which the members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media: print, electronic, and also face-to-face encounters; to discuss matters of common interest; and thus to be able to form a common

mind about these. I say “a common space” because although the media are multiple, as are the exchanges that take place in them, they are deemed to be in principle intercommunicating (*Modern Social Imaginaries*, 83-84).

In the same conceptual fervour, Taylor adds, ‘...[the] crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally dialogical character. We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression’ (Taylor, “*The Politics of Recognition*,” 32).

Extending the passionate plea for the public sphere and dialogue, Taylor argues that they become essential in the technological and industrial civilizations, which appeared in the nineties of the last century, which can be called the late-capitalist, contemporary society (knowledge societies), as reflecting a culture of narcissism as it is, in his language, comprised of three malaises namely, an irresponsible individualism, dehumanizing instrumental reason, and undemocratic despotism. The creative alternative that he proposes to it is a culture of authenticity as the culture of dialogue, which makes us define ourselves /our identity against the significant others (Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 30-33). As he defines the contours of an ethical society as democratically realized in an ethics of authenticity, a culture of dialogue and an open public sphere/civil society, it needs to be as aligning with efforts for planetary ethics with environmental sensitivity and cross-cultural and intercultural conceptualizations of coexistence which reclaim the conceptual credibility of authentic global/local responsibility.

Having minimally highlighted what the present study calls the inner paradigm of ethical societies, i.e., a social dialogically constituted, open democracy, according to the models discussed above, the paper moves on to align its main argument with the above counterfactual ideal as follows: Pedagogy and the institution of education, particularly, the higher educational institutions/universities are to be the prime ethical concern and the organizational base of any ethical societies and hence, knowledge societies. The paper lays it out in the subsequent



fashion. i. Universities as intercultural and transnational centres of knowledge production ii. Teachers as Public Intellectuals, and iii. Knowledge as interdisciplinary engagement and Counselling as the dialogical and ethical mode of pedagogy.

### **3. Universities as Intercultural and Transnational Centres of Knowledge Production**

Universities, both historically/contextually and conceptually, are with an enlarged scope than the corporate (the term corporate<sup>4</sup> is

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<sup>4</sup>I feel that this concept is inspired by the contemporary critics of globalization, knowledge production and corporates/corporate culture like Vandana Shiva who takes us closer to the argument that the global environmental thought or ecological philosophy presents before us how the orientation latent in corporatism to 'Globalization-land-corporatism-eco-crises-food scarcity' should be rejected for an alternative dimension of 'Critique of patriarchy-food democracy-women centred understanding of nature-bio-spherical equality'. When it comes to the bio-spherical equality, the corporate culture and the globalization are the biggest challenges. She along with many such critics of globalization, corporatization and contemporary crisis of knowledge, system and life as a whole, proposes an idea of earth democracy as an alternative to the imagery and metaphor of the corporate, globalized world. Earth democracy, for instance, challenges the kind of democracy under corporate control which has mutated from of the people, by the people, for the people into of the corporations, by the corporations, for the corporations In earth democracy, Shiva explains, "the concern for human and non-human species comes together in a coherent, non-conflicting whole that provides an alternative to the world view of corporate globalisation, which gives right only to corporations and which sees humans and other beings as exploitable raw material or disposable waste" (Shiva 8). Earth democracy is that which includes peace, justice, sustainability with total rejection of violence on the basis of a fundamental ideal of ethics in order to establish an ethical society. The ethics of sustainability will guard and guide us here that the things that belong to nature, we cannot have the right to buy or sell it. We can just use it in a sustainable way.

used as a rival imagination of institutions like the universities. It is hinted here that the corporates are without a dialogical self-understanding), modernist idea of them being local and merely 'the community of teachers and learners'. But, our contemporary vision and expectation of the universities are far more wanting, revolutionary and creative than their primary defined functions. The universities/centres of higher education inform us of a more nuanced public domain of associating social responsibilities with knowledge and ethics. Let us try to take this insight further and see how universities are more democratic, more people and life oriented and thus closer to the ideal of dialogue, ethical sustainability, and creatively constructed knowledge.

In order to make such an attempt, the paper makes an organic distinction between corporates and universities. The fundamental differences between the corporate and universities are: i. When corporates and corporate culture are hierarchical in nature, universities are or expected to be homonomous (sharing and having a sense of equality). ii. When the corporates mainly distribute or mould channels of knowledge, the dominating and guiding metaphor and the internal logic of universities is that universities create knowledge. iii. In corporate culture, knowledge is considered mainly as information which is to be used by centric or hierarchic authorities, but the gist of knowledge, as far as the universities are concerned, is in the mutual movement of knowledge from information to critical knowledge/emancipatory Knowledge awareness and creation. iv. To use an old and established organizational, communicative concept, communication methods in the corporates are vertical, horizontal, grape wine, etc. whereas, in the universities, the horizon of communication is dialogical, though we may show that the conventional organizational communication methods are there in the universities or the basic platform is that of dialogue. The basis of communication in universities is knowledge creation, and therefore it cannot be achieved without dialogical self-critique and interdisciplinary critique of knowledge.

Similarly, quite differently from the corporates, the universities negotiate, stimulate and deliver the social

responsibility question in the ideal ethical frameworks. They function primarily with the understanding that while the corporates and the profit dimension are hard and exclusive, which means that the corporates cannot function without the idea of profit, the universities can avoid the idea of profit and can deal with their prime product knowledge with universal inclusivism. Secondly, the concept of intercultural communication that guides the universities is primarily ethical in nature and would lead us to global democracy, where the underlying concept is local community and its contextual self-affirmation. It is also exemplarily an integrated model of individual rights and community rights.

The ethical framework of social responsibility is understood to mean that it inspires and invites the universities to apprehend a plane, which perhaps, may lead us to the loftiest ideal of critically and dialogically imagined democracy. Following Jacques Derrida's concept of cosmopolitanism, which perhaps, shows us one of the most radical forms of democracy in taking our discussion to the extreme ethical singularities. According to Derrida, the ethical singularities as justice questions are conveniently left out by all our efforts to dialogically know and systematize social life, including, learning, education, and the universities. His idea of cosmopolitanism prompts us to look at universal inclusivism with a more radical ideal of social and ethical pluralities. In his sweeping discussion of hospitality and cosmopolitanism, Derrida shows that the conditions laid down by the host limits hospitality ordinarily, whether it is in a home, city or nation. Hence, he takes conditional hospitality into the realm of 'unconditionality' and declares "Anyone who is anyone arrives at any moment and passes without needing a key for the door." (Derrida. "Hospitality". In *Basic Writings*, 260). Here we have hospitality that is limitless and unbounded. Therefore, though quite idealistically, Derrida puts forward the post-trans-national (counterfactual) ideal of 'the Metropolis' as the cities of refuge in order to realize true cosmopolitanism where the strangest of the strangers are welcomed, which the state presently fails to do (Derrida, "On Cosmopolitanism," 413-422). Derrida's notion of

cosmopolitan freedom in 'the Metropolis' engenders fearless academic reasoning and freedom in the universities. The universities should be the Metropolises where the strangest ideas are recognized, welcomed, and discussed unconditionally. This is the true core of ethical social responsibility and academic freedom.

#### **4. Teachers as Public Intellectuals**

The paper presumes to designate the teachers/academics as public intellectuals. As Romila Thapar says, public intellectuals are nurtured and inspired by heterogeneity of world views, deliberative democratic choices of civil societies and promoters of public spheres (Thapar. "To Question or not to Question: That is the Question," 1). A crucial poser that comes into the picture here is that as we think of contemporary education and the teacher-student relationship, particularly from the point of view of the instruments of knowledge societies is the dominance or the increasing dehumanizing influence of technology in pedagogy. It is, in other words, the primacy ascribed to 'gadgetization' in the name of ICT etc., of education. Though it is a question which cannot be answered in simple terms, there are reasons to think that the human presence in the role of the teachers is unavoidable. The need of deep democratization of education, the educators and of knowledge itself is the most fundamental ethical demand. A democratic understanding of education as sharing of knowledge in a world of relatedness and relatedness of meaning in the human interaction would open before us the vista of the world of democracy.

In the post traditional/knowledge/ethical societies, however, the organic relationship between education and democracy brings before us an exclusive predicament. As we can see, the internal criteria for evaluation for individuals and collectivities/cultures manifest their innumerable plurality and enormous 'oppositonality'. One of the most convincing and gripping answers put forward by some thinkers was communication, dialogical ability and the willingness to recognize one's own values as part of the world of values: Critical and dialogical

ethical theorists like Juergen Habermas, Hans Joas and Richard V Kahn are immediate examples. For thinkers of that sort, education becomes that which engenders cultural communication or intercultural communication, and by being so, promotes the greatest value of democracy.

Let us try to discern the democratization of education and the educators as seeing and situating the question of the conceptualization of knowledge and knowledge mobilization from a de-centred point of view, which intimately engage with the basic crises tendencies which control, determine and delimit our lifeworld. As we go forward in understanding education from the above point of view of the idea of democratically de-centred knowledge, we encounter the most fundamental and primeval question of communication and dialogue, without which we cannot think of education. Education without the ideal of communication and dialogue will be a performative contradiction. That is the reason why the discussion that is carried out here in the paper considers that when we think of education in general and pedagogy in particular, there are three prominent components: i. The dialogical and contextual construction and dissemination/flow of knowledge, ii. The ethics and dialectics of being teachers and students, and iii. The emancipatory potential of education, which becomes the major ground and also presents a complex situation. These components present before us a multifarious play of our concepts of knowledge, creation of knowledge and the social and political topography of information flow. Therefore, the major Philosophers of Education, particularly the Critical Pedagogues, for example., Paulo Freire, Richard Kahn and Nel Noddings, seem to believe that the basic function of education, on the one side, is to transform individuals constructively and make them change the community and the society, and on the other side, is to make knowledge democratically disseminated.

As Nel Noddings writes,

Education in the 21st century must put away some 20th-century thinking. All over the world today, many educators and policymakers believe that cooperation must displace

competition as a primary form of relating. Competition is not to be abandoned—some competition is healthy and necessary—but it should no longer be the defining characteristic of relationships in an era of growing globalization (Noddings. *Education and Democracy*, ii)

Therefore, Nel Noddling brings in themes like ecological cosmopolitanism, educating the whole person, patriotism, race and multiculturalism, political education etc., as the prime concern of education and democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (*Education and Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, vi-ix). Similarly, another major critical pedagogue of our time, Richard Kahn speaks of an eco-pedagogy, which according to Antonia Darder, urges

for a critical shift in our worldview from one that is dominated by the instrumentalization of ethnocentrism, xenophobia, militarism, and the fetishizing of all living functions, to one that acknowledges unapologetically and wholeheartedly the deep intimacy and organic connection at work in all forms of existence. (Darder. "Preface". *Critical Pedagogy, Ecoliteracy & Planetary Crisis*. xiv)

In the spirit of Vandana Shiva's "earth democracy," Kahn also argues for an eco-pedagogy that demands we "remove our blinders, imagine and create other possibilities," reminding us that "Liberation in our genocidal times, is, first and foremost, the freedom to stay alive" (Kahn, *Critical Pedagogy, Ecoliteracy & Planetary Crisis*, 2-10). Paulo Freire, one of the most original critical pedagogues of our times, stresses dialogue and human world relationship as the purpose of education as 'the anti-dialogical' element undoes education. Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 88-101). Paulo Freire argues that the essence of education is the practice of freedom as it is to initiate dialogue and search the human-world relationship to create 'generative themes', which will determine the program content of education as the practice of freedom. Paulo Freire's invigorating critique of the dominant banking model of education leads to his democratic proposals of problem-posing education where the concept of education is an instrument of emancipation against oppression.

Education, Freire, tells us that is a mutual process, world-mediated, which helps people to become more fully human. Anti-dialogics, says Freire, is the instrument of oppression. The anti-dialogical action is characterized by conquest, divide and rule, manipulation, and cultural invasion. The dialogical action is characterized by cooperation, unity, organization, and cultural synthesis (Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 138-148).

The ethical interface of a meaningful pedagogy, as it demands the primacy of the ethical stance in learning and teaching, initiates an appropriate recording of the play between dialogue and democracy, as it can be addressed by the concept of interdisciplinary competence.

### **5. Knowledge as Interdisciplinary Engagement and Counselling as the Dialogical and Ethical Mode of Pedagogy**

The term 'Interdisciplinarity'<sup>5</sup> is proposed and understood to denote the 'beyond disciplinary-dimensions' of knowledge together with the ability to represent the dialogical/communicative, critical and contextual knowledge, which transcends the disciplinary boundaries in designating and understanding knowledge. Interdisciplinarity impregnates 'interdisciplinary competence,' which can be understood after the concepts of 'linguistic competence' and 'communicative competence'. "Linguistic competence," according to Noam Chomsky, "is the system of linguistic knowledge possessed by

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<sup>5</sup>As Pollock observes, the concept of going beyond the disciplinary bounds or crossing the borders of disciplinary determinism or narcissism comes alive "when academic scholarship extends beyond the parameters of a single discipline, it tends to follow one of four trajectories: (i) multi-disciplinarity – drawing upon a range of disciplines to apply them individually; (ii) interdisciplinarity—engaging the disciplines in collaborative forms of inquiry; (iii) crossdisciplinarity—employing the disciplines to illuminate aspects of one another; or (iv) trans-disciplinarity—transgressing and undermining disciplinary boundaries" Pollock, "Interdisciplinarity/Cross Disciplinarity/Transdisciplinarity," quoted in Britany 367.

native speakers of a language and the 'ideal' language system that makes it possible for speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences in their language" (*Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, 3-10). Similarly, 'Communicative competence' is the competence of a speaker to possess pragmatic or dialogue constitutive universals to 'produce grammatically well formed' sentences which are intersubjective (that which acts as a *priori* elements which enable the speaker in producing speech act and to produce the general structures of the speech situation) (Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of the Society*, 1& 68). In the same fashion, interdisciplinary competence can be framed as the competence to approach knowledge critically, dialogically, and contextually.

Interdisciplinary competence recognizes and aims to attain self-transcending, self-critical, liberative dimension of knowledge. It intends to overcome and border crosses disciplinary delimitations by translating knowledge into contextual and intercultural moulds of the subjects and disciplines to situate it within the lifeworld. Transdisciplinary competence creates a space beyond the borders of disciplines on context-to-context basis through consensual and dissenting dialogue to nurture continuity to it by frequently searching for the moral-ethical implication (Thomas, "Disciplinary Narcissism and the Pedagogy of Transdisciplinarity," 155-168).

At the Practical Level, interdisciplinary competence activates in a very concrete manner the concepts of teachers as public intellectuals, counsellors and performers. They are defined and explained further:

- i. Teachers acquire interdisciplinary competence by achieving the qualities of a public intellectual. Then, as we have seen in the ideal state, teachers can undo her/himself to translate knowledge as contextually meaningful wisdom. In other words, teachers should be primarily educated to be public intellectuals who can instil democratic and critical minds and challenge all false and imposed ideas of homogenization. This is essential wherein democracy is likely to fall into majoritarianism. Teachers, as public intellectuals, should have the competence to make a



culture of allowing to talk and willing to listen and retrieve the communicative and dialogical function of education.

ii. By teacher as the performer, it is intended to argue that teachers become performers in order to translate knowledge into the context of knowledge, wherein the teacher empties her/himself of her/his egotistic self to create the student or the other as dialogically and communicatively redeemed other. The old ideas of teachers' decorum and comfort zones should be transformed by the teacher into a theatrically versatile enactment of the subject being taught. Teachers should have the competence to translate the subjects and themes discussed into dialogical reclamation of contextualized knowledge/wisdom of the mother culture with which the subject of education stands in dialogue.

iii. By teachers as counselors, let us try to see how teachers enact the competence to translate knowledge as the most concrete context of meaningful wisdom through interpersonal relationship that is established in knowing and grounding the learner as the representative of a concrete and unique culture. By counselling or teachers as counsellors, it should be understood that the teachers' ability and competence to identify, question and correct the tacit consent generated in the students of the subjects taught, challenging the a-cultural, false universals and authoritarian totalities. It is cultural and intercultural mediation of knowledge with which the immediate context is addressed. In other words, it is the contextualization of knowledge. More practically, teachers as counsellors travel to the minute and singular situations of teaching and learning to address the taught. It dialogically attempts to redeem whatever forms of knowledge that are addressed through an intimate local context wherein the learner is found with her/his acquired information, both deficiently and proficiently. It is also primarily an ethical bindingness which makes the teacher capable of reconstructing (and also deconstructing) knowledge, the taught and the context. The ethical bindingness, which brings 'knowledge, the taught and the context' into one frame in a deconstructive or reconstructive endeavour, is in the telos of the interpersonal and inter-subjective recovery of the other and otherness in the learned/the student by

the teacher as a counsellor by renewing and regenerating knowledge in the respective cultural framework. It is achieved in the dialectical and dialogical interaction between the disciplinary and interdisciplinary realization of knowledge.

## **6. Conclusion**

Knowledge societies, as they are modern, post-traditional, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies, are entitled to remain/become ideally ethical societies; otherwise, they will implode due to the absence of a mechanism to address the 'pluralities (the multitudinous religious-cultural and value claims which operate within)', with which they are constituted. Therefore, the inner dynamics of ethical societies are instituted primarily, as famously argued by Juergen Habermas, with a democratic public sphere. The democratic public sphere demands a deliberatively democratic institutionalization, wherein the determining feature is an all-embracing social dialogue. Such a social dialogue, which involves a multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic interaction so as to visualize and realize a free, non-authoritarian and heteronomous (from the point of view of life systems, different and diversified growth patterns and expressions), political and civil society, also prepares it to be empowered and ensured with constitutional patriotism and morality and a transnational cosmopolitanism.

Besides, Applied Ethics as Practical/Professional Ethics, significantly and organically determines life, as contemporary living is controlled and designed by the expert cultures, while they are designated as Knowledge Societies. Professionals, expert cultures and technology redefine our lives and the world of values. One of the most striking realization of the post-industrial culture is that though science and technology emerged as a boon to humanity and they are expected to act as the tools or handmaid of change, eventually they insensitively manipulated and disfigured the natural environment into mere, mechanized, technological environment. Thus, we realize that technology spinelessly and undemocratically used is the cause of human induced eco-crises and resultant miseries. In such a

contemporary scenario, it is a very urgent need that the humanity in general and professionals like educators, engineers, experts from the fields of medical sciences, social sciences and the artificial intelligence, in particular, become informed of the world of values, the concerns of morality, ethical thinking, applied ethics and the green responsibility to humanity and to the biosphere, which can make them sensitive to their professional accountability to the society.

Hence, ethical societies present before us the regulative ideal that they ought to be dialogically democratic, which induces the democratization of life, social interaction, power, knowledge and hence education and the education of the educators. As it is a dream and a hope for better, equal, cosmopolitan ways and systems of life, it is the substratum for the future of humanity. The notion and ideal of ethical societies are the basis for the future of life as life, and bio-spherical equality cannot be imagined without the throbbing concepts and ideals of a global-planetary ethics, supported with a deeper notion of earth democracy and a corresponding concept of intergenerational justice. Consequently, it would be appropriate to conclude with Paulo Freire as he rightly observes, "One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be. After all, without hope there is little we can do. It will be hard to struggle on, and when we fight as hopeless or despairing persons, our struggle will be suicidal" (Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 3).

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