

September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Archbishop Elpidofore,

I hope this e-mail finds you well in these confusing and challenging times. First and foremost, I would like to thank you on behalf of all the participants, all students in the English Literature Department of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, for the unique opportunity offered to us to participate in the Unbound Prometheus program. Thanks to your financial support we had the chance to experience an enlightening five-day seminar on *TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF: EXPLORING IDENTITY FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA*, a subject all the more useful in contemporary culture. I am therefore writing to express this gratitude and share with you our view of the program that we were lucky enough to be a part of.

Regarding the organization of the seminar, the program officers together with Professor Douglas Trevor from the University of Michigan worked fast and efficiently to inform us of his inability to travel to Greece and hence the transfer of the program online, a process that was completed without any problems. Additionally, Professor Douglas Trevor provided us with the material that we needed to study several days before our meetings, a fact that helped us to get acquainted with the texts prior to our discussions. Also, he did an amazing job at presenting this material to us using various slides about the sociocultural context of each text and the biography of the writers, points that were especially helpful for our thorough understanding. The choice of this particular material was effectively focused and relevant to the subject matter which was the effect of technology on the concept of the Self from the Renaissance to the present. So, we were able to expand our knowledge regarding the evolution of such a multidimensional and ever-changing conception by reading writers like Woolf and Dickens through a contemporary technological prism, drawing also from our own experiences in a technology-driven world. Professor Douglas Trevor chose texts that were comprehensible by all of us, but he was also particularly helpful, making sure that all questions were answered and every concept fully understood. Moreover, his arguments were clear and the transitions in between topics proved to be smooth and natural to the effect of reassuring understanding even more.

Regarding the atmosphere and interaction during the meetings, Professor Douglas Trevor managed to create a friendly and welcoming environment that laid the foundation of fruitful and constructive discussions based on material presented in an interactive way. What left us all amazed was the respect he showed toward every one of us and the ideas we expressed. Comments and questions were encouraged at any time even if it meant interrupting him, as he pointed out. As a result, we felt free and confident to make any remark on what we read or talked about. The Professor proved to be a great moderator by transforming what could have been a monotonous lecture with a passive audience into a dynamic discussion with active participants. He was really attentive and open to new ideas during our conversations as we shared our own experiences with technology and he offered plenty of positive feedback as regards our arguments, a fact that further promoted our participation. Additionally, he definitely enhanced the development of our critical skills and gave his own constructive criticism about the concepts and texts we focused on. However, what one of us pointed out as a

suggestion for improvement, understandable due to the time limit, was the incorporation of interactive activities or multimedia resources that could have further supported interaction, together with a presentation of the factors that resulted in the way the Self is conceived in the West and the provision of links to present-day literary works. This suggestion was the only reason the average evaluation score of the entire student group failed to reach a perfect score. We were asked by the program to evaluate the experience of attending the seminar on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). The average score of the entire group was 4.83.

In conclusion, the overall experience was undoubtedly rewarding in the sense of intellectual and social enrichment through thought-provoking and engaging material, as well as through meeting kind and helpful people, including Professor Douglas Trevor, the Unbound Prometheus team and all my colleagues. We left this seminar with a definitely better understanding of the concept of the Self and the ways in which technology has and is still affecting it. We had the chance to acquire a more concrete conceptualization of a subject so contemporary in order to better interpret both ourselves and others. Having transferred the seminar online did not diminish its effect, it was even particularly interesting to talk about technology while using an online platform to communicate, as one of the participants pointed out. It was an honor meeting and working with these people even for five days. We are all grateful for the opportunity you offered us and we sincerely hope that more students will have the chance to experience this program in the future.

Best regards,

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