

# Didactics of Philosophy and Philosophical Practices

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## 1.

One of the principal concerns of philosophical thinking is the question of how to teach philosophy. This question has been present throughout the history of philosophy and has received significant attention in recent years, both from theoretical and practical perspectives.

In countries where philosophy is taught in secondary schools, philosophers discuss a variety of methods and approaches for teaching philosophy in the classroom and reflect on the curriculum's content. Furthermore, recent years have witnessed the proliferation and diffusion of several practical approaches to engaging children, adolescents, and adults in formal and informal philosophical contexts. These approaches include, to mention a few well-known examples, Lipman's Philosophy for Children (P4C) and Nelson's Socratic Method.

These practices and the theoretical debates that revolve around them often challenge the standard transmissive model at the core of the traditional approach to teaching philosophy. Moreover, by emphasizing that philosophy is, first and foremost, a practice rather than a body of truths to be transmitted from teacher to students, these practical approaches fuel the debate on philosophy didactics with crucial questions such as: What is the role of practice in philosophical teaching? What is the purpose of teaching philosophy? Should we teach philosophical ideas or teach the skill of philosophizing? Can we truly separate knowledge of philosophical content from the ability to philosophize? What does it mean to philosophize?

This emphasis on practice is often justified by recognizing that philosophy, among its core aspirations, seeks to cultivate wisdom or, at the very least, to transform the individual who engages in philosophical inquiry. The papers collected in this special issue explore the topic of philosophical education by examining the intersection between the debate on philosophical practices and the

debate on the teaching of philosophy.

We have invited authors to reflect on questions such as:

- What is the purpose of philosophical practices?
- What is the role of truth in philosophical practices?
- Are there philosophical truths that can be taught in philosophy courses?
- What is the role of the history of philosophy in philosophical practices?
- What does it mean to adopt a phenomenological approach to philosophical teaching?
- What are the various approaches to teaching philosophy?
- Who should be included in the secondary school philosophy curriculum, and why?
- What does it mean to learn how to philosophize?
- Why should philosophy be taught?
- What is the role of emotions and feelings in philosophical practices, learning, and teaching?
- Are there taboo topics in the teaching of philosophy and in philosophical practices?
- How can we innovate in philosophical praxis and teaching?

As we will see in the presentation of the papers in this volume, each paper addresses some of these questions and combines both theoretical and practical insights gathered through experiences in various educational settings.

## 2.

Before moving on to the presentation of the articles in this volume, it is important to say a few words about what is probably the greatest source of inspiration for the contemporary discourse on philosophy education and philosophical practices: *Philosophy for Children*.

*Philosophy for Children* has become a widely embraced educational experience across the world, and the current issue serves as further

evidence of its diffusion. Since its inception in the 1960s, thanks to the visionary idea of Matthew Lipman at Montclair State College in New Jersey, Philosophy for Children has evolved over the years in various ways, adapting to national contexts and historical periods. While they fundamentally share Lipman's original goal of enhancing students' critical thinking and reasoning skills, educators involved in Philosophy for Children have developed diverse methodologies, making it a multifaceted realm of educational practice. In essence, the present state of Philosophy for Children can be described as "remaining true to Lipman's vision while extending beyond it."

This departure from the philosophy's founder can be observed in the evolution of the terminology itself, notably the shift from "Philosophy for Children" to "Philosophy with Children." At first glance, this may appear to be a simple change in terminology, but it signifies a deeper recognition of the intersubjective dimension of practicing philosophy in the classroom, as initially encapsulated in Lipman's concept of a "community of inquiry." When one perceives this community as the intersection of philosophy and children, it can be understood not just as a unidirectional process, i.e., from philosophy to children (Philosophy for Children), but as a bidirectional exchange, where philosophy influences children and, in turn, children contribute to philosophy (Philosophy with Children).

This two-way interaction between philosophy and children signifies that philosophy imparts its ideas and reasoning to children while, simultaneously, children contribute their ideas and reasoning to philosophy. As a result, what may initially appear as a teaching experience evolves into a genuine dialogue between the philosophical tradition and the world of children. At the outset of this lengthy journey, when Lipman introduced philosophy into the classroom, it seemed like philosophy could open up a completely new realm for children, and it indeed succeeded in doing so. In the ensuing decades, those engaged in teaching philosophy in the classroom came to realize that this experience was not only unveiling new horizons for children but also for philosophy itself. By engaging with children and teaching

them about itself, philosophy was, in turn, gaining a deeper understanding of its own nature.

Given the educational dimension of this experience, as philosophy encountered children, it had to grapple with its inherently educational aspect, which is intrinsically intertwined with its role as an intellectual pursuit. While inquiry remains a fundamental aspect of being a philosopher, when dealing with a group of children, one must temporarily set aside the role of a researcher and adopt that of a teacher. Consequently, the focus shifts from theory to praxis, prompting philosophers to reflect more on the practical aspects of their work.

The essays featured in this current issue precisely reflect the daily engagement in philosophical praxis that many teachers and educators have been undertaking for several years in various contexts.

### 3.

The paper by Walter Omar Kohan, Daniel Gaivota Contage, and Carlineide Justina da Silva Almeida presents the Center for the Study of Philosophies and Childhoods (NEFI), based in the State University of Rio de Janeiro. With its twenty years of teaching, research and activities dedicated to the teaching of philosophy and a philosophical education, the experience of NEFI is of special important for anyone interested in the promotion of philosophy understood as a practice which is open to anyone and in all contexts. The text discusses the specificity and the history of the group, emphasizing some dimensions of its present activity, such as the international colloquiums on philosophy and education, the NEFI editions publishing house, the Professional Master in philosophical education with childhoods, the extension projects, the journal *childhood & philosophy*, and the educational (formation) experiences. Along with a detailed description of its history, the paper also lays out the pedagogical and methodological principles that guide NEFI and its main activities.

Philosophy with children is just one of the many ways in which philosophy can step out of the confines of academia to engage with non-professionals. In contemporary discourse, the term "Public Philosophy" is used to encompass the wide variety of philosophical initiatives designed for a non-academic audience. In her article, "Outlines of a Critique of Public Philosophy", Lucia Ziglioli examines several definitions of 'Public Philosophy' and suggests considering its distinctiveness based on its educational objectives: "public philosophy is the philosophical practice devoted to provoking and promoting philosophical thinking in everyone interested, in order to help them achieve a better understanding of themselves and the reality they inhabit." She then addresses various objections to the entire concept of Public Philosophy and provides responses to them. In her discussion, she elaborates on Plato's myth of the cave as a means of framing the overarching concept of public philosophy, its goals, and how it differs from professional academic philosophy. She concludes her paper by delving into an important yet often overlooked topic: how to evaluate public philosophy?

In their paper, "IiNtetho zoBomi: Conversations About Life" – a different way to teach ethics", Lindsay Kelland and Pedro Tabensky describe "IiNtetho zoBomi", a student-led course in philosophy that takes place at Rhodes University. The course provides a platform for students to reflect on their questions, to explore ethical issues and to learn to philosophize. In this paper, the authors describe in detail how the course is structured, its pedagogical principles, and they make several observations that are useful for anyone interested in proposing kindred courses in their own academic contexts. In this way the paper contributes to the attempt of this special issue to offer illustrations of ways to actively engage students in the activity of philosophizing.

Enrico Liverani's contribution - entitled "What is the form of reasoning involved in philosophical dialogue?" - explores the structure of philosophical dialogue from the standpoint of argumentation theory. He develops what he describes as the "AID questions device" (where "AID" refers to the three forms of inference

individuated by Peirce, namely abductive, inductive and deductive inference). The AID questions device is a tool that can be employed within the framework of the philosophical dialogue methodology; its aim is to help high school students to develop critical thinking skills through engagement in disciplined philosophical dialogue. By applying Peirce's modes of reasoning within Toulmin's structure, Liverani proposes the AID questions device in order to enable students to actively engage in the various types of arguments in the context of a dialectical exchange where the facilitator guides the students through an exploration of philosophical questions.

In the paper entitled "Teaching argumentative skills with LEGO. Building a case for an embodied and enactive approach" Menno Van Calcar explores a didactical proposal that uses LEGO in order to foster the development of critical thinking and argumentative skills. This proposal is framed in the context of the debate between cognitivism and so-called E-accounts of cognition (where "E" stands for embedded, embodied, extended, enactive, ecological). Whereas cognitivism explains cognition in terms of internal representation, e-accounts stress the role played by external factors. The author justifies the use of LEGO on the ground of the plausibility of e-accounts of cognition, and illustrates with some detail an experience he carried out with students between 14 and 16 years old, during a 4-week course on informal logic.

In the article titled "Storia della filosofia e pratica della conversazione filosofica," after reviewing the main historical perspectives on teaching philosophy to children, Luca Mori proposes an intriguing approach to conducting philosophy in a classroom with children. This approach begins with a shared reading of a traditional text or a portion of it, aimed at fostering a conversation that can stimulate philosophical reflections on a specific topic. In this context, the mental exercise of utopia assumes a significant role as it assists children in addressing social issues and aspects of everyday life by comparing and discussing their personal ideas with others. This approach allows for the realization of educational principles

advocated by figures like John Dewey, emphasizing mutual listening, collaboration, and shared inquiry.

Another example of good practice in the teaching of philosophy is the method called "Philosophia Ludens," as described by Annalisa Caputo in her contribution titled "Una proposta di filosofia per le scuole di ogni ordine e grado: Philosophia ludens." Originally conceived as a collaborative project involving university professors, researchers, and school teachers, "Philosophia Ludens" stands out as a commendable convergence of theoretical exploration and pedagogical experience. Operating as a form of cooperative learning, it functions as a group-based laboratory activity, with its distinctive educational feature rooted in creativity and playfulness. This method encourages healthy competition among different groups or teams of students, providing an enjoyable and engaging approach to addressing significant philosophical topics. As a non-technical approach to philosophy, "Philosophia Ludens" can be implemented in both high schools where philosophy is part of the curriculum and in schools where it is not.

Stefano Gonnella's contribution, titled "Per una didattica della fenomenologia: L'Analisi riflessiva di Lester Embree," aims to suggest an approach to teaching phenomenology. While phenomenology has often been considered a speculative discipline, Gonnella underscores its original purpose as a practical method, initially articulated by Husserl's famous motto, "to the things themselves." The author discusses the concept of "applied phenomenology" as developed by Lester Embree, one of the few phenomenologists who revived Enzo Paci's idea of a concrete phenomenological attitude. Embree's method of reflective analysis serves not as a guide for teaching phenomenology but rather as a means to practice phenomenology itself. It encourages individuals to engage with the world without preconceptions or doctrinal biases, adopting an intuitive perspective to observe and describe things from the viewpoint of the observer. Through this reflective analytical approach, one can comprehend the act of seeing an object as tantamount to experiencing the act of

perceiving it. When this method is transmitted from teachers to students, the latter can explore an alternative approach to studying and learning.

Phenomenology makes a reappearance in Markus Bohlmann's paper, "Questioning the Digital Lifeworld: Analyzing Technologies in Philosophy Class Using Postphenomenology." In this paper, the author introduces a novel adaptation of traditional phenomenology, reconfigured within a technological framework. Centered around the concept of the "lifeworld," which represents the underlying structure of our daily experiences, postphenomenology seeks to engage with this experience through digital tools. Drawing on the theories of American philosopher of technology, Don Ihde, which emphasize the relationships between humans and technology, the author proposes utilizing technological tools as effective means to help students establish a connection with their lifeworld. By providing examples of technology's application in the classroom, the author discusses the challenges that such a teaching experience may pose for the future of philosophy education.

In his contribution, "Who is the Subject of the School? Philosophy and the Challenge of Teaching", Gianluca Solla explores the relationship between teaching and processes of subjectivation. In particular, the author focuses on teaching and learning through the lens of the notion of the desire to know. Through an analysis of the reflections that Michel Foucault, Jean-Claude Milner and Bernard Stiegler have devoted to these issues, this paper explores the process of subjectivation in the context of contemporary schools and contemporary institutional discourse on teaching and knowledge. In this way the article gives voice to a problem which animates many of the educational proposals that emphasize the role of philosophy in education.

In his paper, Luca Zanetti offers an account of philosophical problems with the intent to help philosophy teachers to plan dialogic inquiries in the classroom. He distinguishes two ways in which we might perceive a question as a problem. First, when we find ourselves

inclined to believe in propositions that appear incompatible with each other. Second, when we find ourselves inclined to believe in propositions that seem incompatible with our desires. He discusses both of these cases and articulates a didactic strategy termed the Clash Strategy. This strategy suggests introducing stimuli in the classroom that will help students appreciate the inherent clash that drives the philosophical question to be explored during the dialogue. The method can be used by philosophy teachers in high school and university, but can also be used by P4C facilitators in order to plan and facilitate philosophical inquiries according to the Community of Inquiry pedagogy.