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About

The *Journal of Didactics of Philosophy* is a peer-reviewed academic journal devoted to research on the teaching and learning of philosophy. It is published online twice a year. The access to all articles is free. Articles may be about any level of education, however the main focus is on high school philosophy. We welcome work with a philosophical or normative approach as well as reports of results from empirical qualitative and quantitative research. The journal also publishes reviews of books, textbooks and other educational material of international interest as well as country reports. These reports present information about ways of teaching philosophy, its institutions and activities in different countries. It is an aim of the journal to promote the dialogue among researchers and practicing teachers across the world.

Call for Papers (Volume 4, Number 1/2020)

Again, we are issuing an open call for contributions. If you would like your article, country report or book review to be published in the next issue (Volume 4, Number 1/2020) please follow the instructions on the website (www.philosophie.ch/jdph). Your text should reach one of the editors no later than 15th of January 2020.

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EDITORIAL

Dear readers!

Welcome to the new issue, which contains two research articles.

Jens Kertscher takes up the challenge posed by ancient texts in teaching philosophy to beginners. One of the texts that is often used in introductory courses in colleges and in high schools is the Platonic dialogue *Meno*, and especially the famous "slave example" as well as the so-called "theory of reminiscence" (*anamnesis* doctrine). However, beginners are often mislead by the mythical-religious parts of the dialog and its reasoning on the soul. There is a tendency to take Plato's dialog as an esoteric text about rebirth or the eternal life of the soul. Kertscher carefully explains that the anamnesis doctrine is not a mythical-religious teaching about an everlasting soul, but is a means to understand Plato's conception of knowledge; in doing so Kertscher points out how to avoid the "error of pre-existence" and dig deeper into Plato's philosophical reasoning with students.

The second article addresses a question of philosophical and political importance, namely how to evaluate basic values in political philosophy. Ján Baňas offers a tool for assessment which can be used in teaching. It takes up two criteria which are often mentioned by students, while reasoning on political topics – desirability and feasibility. Baňas gives a careful analysis of the concepts, and shows how they can be put to use in teaching.

In this issue you will also find a country report by Georgina Díaz. Díaz narrates the turbulent recent history of philosophy education in Spain, ending with possible good news. The second part of the report will be published in the next issue in spring 2020.

In the book review section Richard Morehouse takes a closer look at a book about philosophy with children in Australia. Morehouse points out that the book offers a combination of personal stories and theories as well as a great variety of perspectives. Nils Höppner reviews a newly republished book about philosophy of education by the philosopher and educationalist Günther Buck. Höppner explains the importance and relevance of the new edition, and makes reference to publications about Buck in English.

We would like to thank Jule Bärmann for proofreading the whole manuscript of this issue.

Please enjoy reading!

Again, if you have any questions or suggestions, please do contact us.

October 2019

The Editors

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"THE ERROR OF PRE-EXISTENCE" – ABOUT THE USE OF THE SO-CALLED ANAMNESIS DOCTRINE IN TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

Plato's dialogue *Meno* is a text that is often used in teaching philosophy. The slave example as well as the so-called "theory of reminiscence" (*anamnesis* doctrine) enjoy great popularity. However, the interpretation of this supposed doctrine is demanding and controversial. One problem is that the doctrine as presented in the *Meno* is peculiarly interwoven with religious ideas. If one takes Plato's text literally here, one must ascribe to him a bizarre thesis. This would be particularly unfortunate for philosophy lessons. In this article I introduce the context of the anamnesis doctrine in the *Meno*. By positioning the doctrine in its context the limits of mythical-religious interpretations become clear. I then present a standard interpretation and place it in the reception context of modern rationalist epistemology. Lastly, I outline a proposal for an interpretation that should also address the practical relevance of these considerations in the context of the Socratic way of life.

Keywords: Plato, Meno, *anamnesis*

Plato's dialogue *Meno* is a text that is often used in teaching philosophy, especially in high schools. This is undoubtedly connected with its fundamental ethical theme, namely the question of the teachability and the nature of virtue, but above all because the process of philosophizing itself is reflected in this dialogue. Against the background of the topic of the teachability of virtue, questions about the possibility of learning, about forms of knowledge and thought, or about the value of knowledge are addressed here in a very vivid way. The slave example as well as the so-called "theory of reminiscence" (*anamnesis* doctrine) enjoy great popularity. As Hans-Bernhard Petermann states, this text is particularly suitable as an introduction to philosophizing (Petermann 2007: 52-53).[1]

[1] Petermann develops his own model of philosophical knowledge based on the first two chapters of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. From this, he wants to gain a "kind of didactic system of forms of philosophizing" (Petermann 2007: 42), which should be suitable to specify the demand for competence orientation for the subject philosophy. Although Petermann's approach captures the reflexivity of philosophical knowledge in a differentiated way, the competence grid taken from the Aristotelian text remains blurred: For example, "experience" and "feeling" are called differentiations of the competence of "seeing" (ibid.: 51). Furthermore, the orientation towards non-empirical conceptual problems, which is essential for philosophizing, is not sufficiently illuminated. In order to

1. Introduction and didactical classification

Dealing with Platonic dialogues presents unusual challenges to the didactics of philosophy. It is well known, Plato's dialogues are multi-layered works already due to their literary form, the philosophical content of which is not always obvious (cf. Wieland 1982, Szlesák 1993). The liveliness and superficial accessibility of the dialogical form easily conceals the complexity and depth of the philosophical problems negotiated. To work with these texts therefore does not only place high demands on the hermeneutic skills of the interpreters but requires a thorough understanding of the special nature of philosophical problems and questions. The philosophically appropriate examination of Plato's dialogues is already demanding for experienced readers, and even more so when Plato's philosophy is to become a topic of teaching in high school.

With ancient texts, there is the additional difficulty that the world of thoughts, e.g. of Plato and Aristotle, often seems strange to today's readers, especially to the younger students. Aristotle's so-called virtue ethics will not be accessible to them if they expect what can be found in self-help literature, or if they think in terms of empirical-psychological concepts of happiness or in terms of old-fashioned moralizing concepts of virtuous action. A similar situation can also be observed in the use of Plato's work, and the fact that Plato often presents his thoughts in the form of parables and myths makes it even more difficult. Their philosophical content is fundamentally missed if such myths are interpreted as pictorially conveyed teachings of Plato. A particularly sad chapter in the history of such hermeneutical misconduct is the handling of the aforementioned anamnesis doctrine, which plays an important role in the *Meno*.

The interpretation of this supposed doctrine is of course controversial. One problem here is that the anamnesis doctrine presented in the *Meno* is peculiarly interwoven with religious ideas, but also with metaphysical assumptions about the human soul and its connection with the body. The helplessness in the philosophical interpretation of the passages in question in the *Meno* easily leads - especially in school contexts - to present these thoughts literally as a "doctrine" with a certain reverence for the old. It is then attributed to Plato the "theory" that souls in an earlier life, before their incarnation, have looked at ideas and that the individual can fall back on this earlier knowledge of his soul when he gains knowledge. If one takes Plato's text literally here, one must therefore ascribe to him a bizarre thesis.[2] This would be particularly unfortunate for philosophy lessons because then Plato would no longer be presented as a philosopher with whom it would be worthwhile to think about concepts such as knowledge, but would be, as it were, forced into a museum and would only be thematized in the mode of a subject lesson as the representative of a peculiar theory that could at best satisfy esoteric needs (keyword:

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reflect on this aspect of philosophizing with didactic intention, Plato's *Meno* is particularly well suited, as will become even clearer in this article.

[2] This is emphatically argued for by Ebert (2018), who not only problematizes literal interpretations of the anamnesis metaphor as "doctrine", but is also skeptical of all attempts to philosophically interpret the reminiscence metaphor. Cf. the pointed remarks in Ebert 2018: 178-179. Ebert's commentary offers many valid considerations, based on a close reading of the text, against the widespread assumption that this is a "doctrine". On the other hand, he seems to underestimate the possibility of understanding reminiscence as a metaphor that can be interpreted in terms of its philosophical content. There is, as will become clear in the following, a philosophically reasonable tradition of interpretation that manages without mythical assumptions.

transmigration of souls). Instead of making it possible for students to gain experience in thinking, which they could gain by coming to terms with a paradigmatic philosophical position, a philosophical fairytale lesson is offered.[3]

What is problematic with such teaching is not only this little differentiated hermeneutic confrontation with Plato's dialogue. Even from the point of view of the didactics of philosophy, the mere retelling of mythical images or the unreflected reproduction of the utterances of a philosophical genius are completely unphilosophical and must therefore be avoided in philosophy lessons. According to many positions in current didactics, the focus of philosophy teaching should be on problems.[4] Now it is characteristic of philosophical problems or questions that they cannot be examined or solved with the help of empirical methods. They are essentially conceptual problems.[5] They arise when basic concepts and distinctions that are used in first-order practical and theoretical thinking are thematized in a reflective manner. Jay Rosenberg has therefore characterized philosophy as a "second order" discipline (Rosenberg 1996: 5).[6] In other words, philosophical investigations are based only on thinking, and one of their most important methodological tools accordingly is argumentation or the analysis of arguments (Rosenberg 1996: 20). Every philosophical assertion must be justified by arguments. This does not only apply to the reconstruction and evaluation of other's positions, but also to the formulation of one's own positions.[7] Last but not least, this also applies to an assumption which is according to the standards of common-sense as peculiar as that of the pre-existence of the human soul - regardless of whether Plato actually subscribed to it. If, on the other hand, one leaves it at the naïve re-narration, one already for methodological reasons misses the claim of philosophical thinking and leaves the field of philosophy, for mythical narratives do not require any justification.

As already indicated, the analysis of basic concepts supported by argumentation is paradigmatically presented in the *Meno* and is itself made the object of methodological reflection: in the first part, Socrates conducts a conceptual investigation with Meno by discussing the question of the nature of virtue. Specific philosophical lines of argumentation are presented in the form of Socratic refutation strategies. In the second part, which focuses on a conversation between Socrates and a slave boy, the method of philosophical dialogue is presented and reflected upon. In the third part, finally, the method of testing a hypothesis and

[3] The identification of the mythical narrative with a doctrine is widespread in German textbooks. Cf. Nink 2011: 191; Heller/Gerhardt 1993: 105-108; Aßmann/Henke et. al.: 369.

[4] For an insight into the discussion about problem orientation in philosophy lessons see the schemes in the context of the infamous "Bonbonmodel" by Sistermann 2016: 203-206 as well as, in more detail and differentiation, Thein 2017: 23-48.

[5] This possibly uncontroversial minimal provision should suffice for the following explanations. The fundamental philosophical discussion of what exactly a philosophical problem is can therefore be ignored here. Cf. the contributions in Schulte/Wenzel 2001 and, for didactic purposes, the passages in Thein 2017 cited in the previous footnote.

[6] Rosenberg formulates this aptly when he states that "philosophers are not in any straight forward way thinking about the world. What they are thinking about is *thinking about the world.*" (Rosenberg 1996: 7)

[7] Cf. again Rosenberg 1996: 20: "What Rule One insists is that although any view, however outrageous, may properly be introduced for philosophical discussion, its proponent is obligated to endeavor adequately to support that view by giving reasons for it, by producing arguments which subsequent critical exploration of the view can then usefully and fruitfully engage."

its implications is used to clarify the question of whether virtue is teachable (on the method of testing hypotheses see Hallich 2013: 136-140).

In philosophy lessons, high school students should learn in philosophy lessons to identify philosophical problems and to acquire the conceptual means to deal with such problems appropriately, and that means: not on the basis of a mere exchange of opinions. This is not possible, however, if one only externally appropriates and reproduces what a recognized philosopher has said. The exemplary examination of this can only take place after a problem and the concepts relevant for thinking about it have been identified and formulated. In the problem-oriented didactics of philosophy the concept of the "pre-concept" has been proposed in this context; from these pre-concepts of the students, which represent a first positioning to philosophical questions, the joint philosophical reflection can proceed (cf. Zimmermann 2016: 62-70, Thein 2017: 55). These pre-concepts can be understood as pre-opinions and views that learners bring into the classroom even before they are confronted with philosophical theories.[8] Learning can then be analyzed as a "conceptual change" (Zimmermann 2016: 62-64). According to this didactic model, the teacher's task is to collect pre-concepts, to put them into the form of assertions that can be evaluated, and to record and, if necessary, already work through explanatory patterns for such assertions (cf. Thein 2017: 51 and 55-59). Through insight into incoherencies or tensions between individual assertions, conceptual problems can be formulated that arise from the implications of the pre-concepts or the presupposed explanatory patterns. With regard to the *Meno*, such pre-concepts could also be easily collected. From my own experience with introductory courses in theoretical philosophy, I suspect that many students will, for example, express the opinion that all knowledge is preliminary and fallible, that all knowledge is based on experience, or that they will uncouple the concept of knowledge from that of truth, because there is "no truth". Such pre-opinions can be expressed in the form of assertions (e.g. "everything we know, we know from sensual experience"). In a further step, one can collect arguments that speak for or against such assertions. In this way, students can come to the conclusion that there is also knowledge that is not based on experience, namely mathematical knowledge. Only when an awareness for such conceptual contexts has been developed can the questions addressed in the *Meno* be approached with a view to philosophical insights: How does knowledge differ from casually true opinions? What is the value of justified opinions as opposed to merely randomly correct opinions, when both can lead to success in practice? What kind of knowledge do definitions of terms as demanded by Socrates give us? And finally the central question for the interpretation of the anamnesis metaphor: what could knowledge have to do with memory? So if one orients oneself, as in this ideal-typical run, on the conceptual questions and problems that the canonical texts or approaches as well as their specific terminologies pose, these take on a different function. They are no longer a "subject matter" that is badly appropriated and at best judged externally (i.e. as an opinion expressed that is usually pompously called "one's own statement"), but they become

[8] Cf. Zimmermann 2016: 65 with some examples especially for philosophy lessons. Thein associates the concept of "pre-concept" historically with that of "prejudice" (*Vorurteil*) (cf. Thein 2017: 52-55). Plato's Socratic dialogues, one could claim against the background of this didactic model, proceed from the "pre-concepts" or prejudices of the interlocutors.

the media of philosophizing through which students learn to better understand the specificity of philosophical problems and to differentiate their own attempts to think.[9]

In this contribution, I will now discuss suggestions for interpreting the "anamnesis doctrine", which do without mythical assumptions and place its philosophical content in the foreground. It is not, however, an exegetical contribution to research on Plato; rather, I am pursuing a more practical purpose related to teaching: I would like to suggest a problem-oriented approach in teaching philosophical questions about the concept of knowledge in the vicinity of Plato's *Meno*, exemplarily starting from the metaphor of anamnesis. More than a suggestion is not intended in this context, nor is it possible given the ongoing and ramified scholarly discussion.[10]

First, I introduce the context of the anamnesis doctrine in the *Meno*. Already by positioning the doctrine in its context the limits of mythical-religious interpretations become clear. I then present a standard interpretation and place it in the reception context of modern rationalist epistemology. Lastly, I will outline a proposal for an interpretation that should also address the practical relevance of these considerations in the context of the Socratic way of life.

2. The eristic paradox and a rejection of the naive-mythical interpretation

At the center of the passage in the *Meno*, in which the anamnesis theme appears, is a conversation between Socrates and a slave boy. The ability of the slave boy to solve a non-trivial geometric problem with Socrates' guidance is intended to illustrate the possibility of acquiring knowledge through reminiscence. The more precise context in the dialogue is a situation in which the conversation between Socrates and Meno about the question of what virtue is has reached a dead end. Meno has failed with his attempts at a definition, he feels driven into a corner by Socrates' arguments. As a good student of sophists, he tries to help himself by taking Socrates by surprise with the famous Meno paradox (or eristic paradox). This paradox is intended to rule out the possibility of learning in general (*Meno* 80d-e):

> *Men.:* Why, on what lines will you look Socrates, for a thing whose nature you know nothing at all? Pray, what sort of thing, amongst those that you know not, will you treat us to as the object of your search? Or even supposing, at the best, that you hit upon it, how will you know it is the thing you did not know?
>
> *Soc.:* I understand the point you would make, Meno. Do you see what a captious argument you are introducing – that, forsooth, a man cannot inquire either about what he knows or about what he does not know? For he cannot inquire about what he knows, because he knows it, and in that case is no need of inquiry; nor again can he inquire about what he does not know, since he does not know about what to inquire.

[9] Rosenberg distinguishes history of philosophy as an object from history of philosophy as a medium of philosophical thinking (Rosenberg 1996: 9). With this differentiation, the contrast between philosophy teaching as the mediation of philosophical-historical knowledge as "Bildung" vs. "Selbstdenken" (*autonomous thinking*) also loses its explosiveness.

[10] For a helpful overview with detailed bibliographies see Canto-Sperber 1993, Scott 2006, Hallich 2013, and Ebert 2018. For a discussion of anamnesis in *Phaidros* and *Phaidon* see Ebert 2018: 182-191.

The paradox uses, as Hallich emphasizes, the ambiguity of the Greek *eidénai*, which, as in the English verb *to know*, can denote both the propositional "knowledge that" and the relation of acquaintance (Hallich 2013: 92). One can reconstruct the argument following Hallich in such a way that this ambiguity is revealed (cf. Hallich 2013: 93):

> P1) What you know (**by description)/by acquaintance** you do not have to search for (because you know it already).
> P2) What you do not know **(by description)/by acquaintance** you cannot search for (because you do not know what you are looking for, so you do not know **by description/(by acquaintance)** what to look for).
> --------
> K) Search is impossible.

Socrates could therefore have resolved Meno's paradox already by disambiguating the concept of knowledge. However, he does not do this, but continues the conversation by bringing into play the possibility of acquiring knowledge through reminiscence, what should then become known as the anamnesis doctrine. He first presents this supposed doctrine in a mythical-religious version, of course with a strategic intention for the conversation. In the context of the faltering conversation, he wants to convince Meno to continue the investigation into the nature of virtue. But this should happen not just "anyhow". Rather, Meno must also be convinced that the acquisition of knowledge is something valuable or worth striving for. Socrates must therefore resolve the paradox in such a way as to make apparent the connection with his conception of life as dedicated to knowledge. The practice of testing and reasoning leading to knowledge as demonstrated and exemplified by Socrates belongs to a virtuous way of life and that means: a good way of life. One could say that this is an indirect message of this dialogue and at the same time the dramaturgical background for introducing with the anamnesis metaphor a very specific concept of knowledge which is opposed to the sophistic conception. At the end of this article I will come back to this.

In order not to misinterpret this passage, the strategic intention of Socrates must be kept in mind. In his mythic-religious narrative Socrates refers to priestesses, to whom he ascribes ideas of the immortality of the soul and its reincarnation (*Meno*, 81a10-d6). From this it must not be concluded, however, that Socrates or Plato, through the figure of Socrates, are concerned with making plausible the idea of immortality of a substantially existing soul or even with providing an argument for it. If one would actually interpret this passage as an argument for the immortality of the soul, it would be circular (cf. Canto-Sperber 1993: 75).

According to that argumentation the statements of the priestesses would serve to prove immortality, which in turn is a condition for the souls to have already acquired knowledge before their incarnation. The statements of the priestesses would then have a justifying function in connection with the question why the soul has knowledge without sensual experience. It has such knowledge because it is immortal. People are therefore not only dependent on experience when they want to learn something, but can fall back on the knowledge acquired by their soul in the prenatal state by remembering it again. In this sense, learning, getting to know, and

searching in general can be addressed as ways of remembering. So one can, contrary to Meno's paradox, search for something one does not yet know.

The statements of the priestesses remain dogmatic, of course. This becomes clear when one further asks why the soul was able to acquire knowledge before its incarnation. The answer would be because it is immortal. But why is it immortal? Because otherwise it would have no knowledge without sensual experience and it would then also be impossible to understand why one can learn something etc. The dogmatic setting leads into a circle. Against this background, the episode with the slave boy would serve proving the initially dogmatic – and in the end circular – thought of a prenatal acquisition of knowledge. Since the conversation with the slave already presupposes the immortality of the soul, it would be circular in relation to the myth of the priestesses and thus would also prove nothing.

If one wants to avoid these circles, one can simply grant the idea of immortality the status of a religious belief, which could then be persuasive only outside of philosophy. An interpretation of these passages, which aims at attributing Plato or Socrates the thesis of the immortality of the soul or even a theory of reincarnation, thus already encounters fundamental logical problems (dogmatism and circular reasoning). So it is somewhat naïve to assume literal "doctrines" or "theories" here, and it would also and especially make sense for the teaching of it to completely dispense with such assumptions and to avert the fascination for the esoteric, which may easily arise in this context. Socrates is by the way quite aware of these inconsistencies and accordingly distances himself at the end of the episode from the mythic-religious view of knowledge as anamnesis (*Meno* 86b6; cf. also Ebert 2018: 95-96).[11] The teacher should therefore explicitly point out that Socrates speaks descriptively and ironically about any priestesses who have this opinion without him sharing it.[12]

As I have already indicated, it is a matter of dissolving the paradox and preparing Meno for the Socratic conception of knowledge (of course in a way that corresponds to his modest mental capacity). This conception of knowledge, which is explicitly reflected in the context of Socrates' conversation with the slave boy (*Meno*, 84a4-d5), is also a background motif for the

[11] In order to reject misunderstandings from the outset, I want to emphasize that I am not interested in criticizing Plato's metaphysical speculations as such. This article is not at all about judging Plato's doctrines, e.g. about the soul or the theory of ideas. My aim is rather to stimulate a philosophically reflected handling of these doctrines in the context of school teaching. For the study of Plato in class it is therefore necessary to distinguish between the well-founded or at least justifiable conceptions of philosophical metaphysics and a mere spiritual understanding of metaphysics. As I have already stressed, for this purpose it is necessary to understand the philosophical problems for which metaphysical theories want to offer solutions and the argumentations which are intended to justify these theories. A spiritually understood metaphysics is naive against this background, because it renounces both. Interpretations of Plato's philosophy that promote such an unreflected pre-conception of metaphysics are accordingly naive.

[12] In religious or theological terms - not only in the mythical folk religion of ancient Greece - it is often assumed that the soul is not something sensually perceptible or scientifically explainable. Thus at this point Platonic Socrates does not have to be accused of believing that the soul, although not sensually perceptible, nevertheless exists; rather, Socrates is probably concerned with identifying the speech of "soul" as a paradigmatic case of an unobservable entity on the basis of a popular-religious commonplace. It would thus be a question of linguistic clarification of a common concept rather than the taking up an unfounded assertion. This thought, to which Philipp Richter drew my attention, certainly refers beyond the text. It is, however, philosophically relevant both methodically and systematically for an understanding of reflected speech about non-empirical observables as well as for the teaching of philosophy.

further course of the dialogue. The question then is: what is the peculiar philosophical content of these passages about the connection between knowledge and reminiscence (anamnesis).

One can certainly emphasize an epistemological aspect that concerns the concepts of knowledge, the opposition of knowledge vs. true belief, as well as the question of the value of knowledge. This epistemological dimension has always been at the center of the philosophically informed reception of the *Meno*. But one can also add an ethical aspect to this, which refers to the way of life propagated by Socrates (the Socratic *ethos*, the answer to the question of a good life worth living).[13] After all, this dialogue is also about determining the essence of virtue (although this question is ultimately answered just as little as the question of the teachability of virtue).

3. A standard interpretation and its rationalistic precursors

So what could be meant by the thought that every acquisition of knowledge can be understood as reminiscence? This can be followed by further questions: Is the soul a kind of subject that exists in principle independently of the body and that remembers things? Is memory the discovery of something that already exists? In particular, the question arises as to how the metaphor of "anamnesis" (memory or reminiscence) is to be interpreted exactly and why this thought is unfolded using a geometric example. When dealing with the text, it is therefore necessary to explore the scope of meaning of this metaphor and to work through possible interpretations: What exactly does "remember" mean here? Does it make a difference whether we are talking about "memory" or "reminiscence"? What exactly is "remembered" and how does this happen? Thinking about such questions will also make students aware of the fact that it is indeed a metaphor that needs its own philosophical interpretation, not a factual statement about substantially existing souls. A philosophical interpretation would therefore not be an esoteric speculation. Rather, it would have to make this metaphor understandable as an attempt to express a philosophical thought, which in principle is also accessible to a conceptual-argumentative discussion.

Let us first remind ourselves of the geometric problem: the task that Socrates sets the slave is to construct a square from a given square that has twice the area of the square of origin. The wit of it is that you have to construct the square you are looking for from the diagonal of the starting square. Socrates proves this in dialogue with a slave boy by leading him step by step through questions to this insight (see *Meno*, 82b-85b, for a clear presentation see Hallich 2013: 101-104).

An interpretation perspective, which I take up here and which is widely accepted today (at least in some variants), can be described as "minimalist" (Canto-Sperber 1993: 83). It goes back to Plato scholar Gregory Vlastos. Vlastos interprets "anamnesis" as a metaphor for how one can expand one's own knowledge on the basis of logical abilities, namely the right reasoning (Vlastos 1995: 157). These inferential abilities are activated by Socrates through

[13] The good life is of course to be understood as a good life in the polis. The initial question of the teachability of virtue thus acquires an eminently political significance. It refers to the question of who is suitable to make citizens better citizens. This topic is explicitly addressed in the final part of the dialogue: cf. *Meno* 99a-c. However, the text ends in an aporia, if not even ironically, when virtue is called "a divine dispensation" (99e).

simple questions. Socrates therefore does not manipulate his interlocutor or ask suggestive questions.[14] Rather, he specifies tasks that the slave boy must solve on his own. According to this interpretation, the slave's mistakes during the first attempt at a solution can be understood as an inadequate actualization of logical abilities. The true opinions, to which the slave boy finally arrives, do not have to be understood as expression of propositional knowledge, which was already there and only waited to be "taken out" from the depths of the mind. This would be implausible because the slave is presumed not to have any mathematical knowledge. All the more the question arises what it could mean that his soul should have this knowledge; and this question makes clear the problem of the naïve hypostasis of the soul as an immaterial substance. Under this condition one would be compelled to accept still another soul beside the slave and his inner life, which can be active independently of the body of the slave, e.g. which learns or actualizes knowledge.

An obvious strength of Vlastos' minimalist interpretation is that it does not require such unfounded metaphysical or religious-esoteric assumptions. Another reason for his criticism of the propositionalist interpretation is the fact that the insight of the slave does not set in by itself, but is accompanied and triggered by questions. The slave's own contribution consists in establishing the connections between the individual steps that he develops together with Socrates. Thus the propositionalist misunderstanding with regard to the actualized knowledge in the described learning situation is excluded from the outset. Hallich therefore characterized the knowledge actualized by the slave as "understanding knowledge" (*verstehendes Wissen*) in contrast to propositional knowledge (Hallich 2013: 111). In the next section, I will make a proposal on how this interpretation can be expanded a little further.

Before I do so, I will discuss a reference to the *Meno* in the context of modern rationalist epistemology that is important for the correct understanding of the so-called anamnesis doctrine. It stands in the context of the controversy over innate ideas between empiricists and rationalists. In § 26 of his *Discourse on Metaphysics*, entitled "That We Have All Ideas in Us; and of Plato's Doctrine of Reminiscence," Leibniz writes about the ideas:

> We have all these forms in our mind; we even have forms all time, for the mind always expresses all its future thoughts and already thinks confusedly about everything it will ever think about distinctly. And nothing can be taught to us whose idea we do not already have in our mind, an idea which is like the matter of which that thought is formed.
>
> This is what Plato so excellently recognized when he proposed his doctrine of reminiscence, a very solid doctrine, provided that it is taken rightly and purged of the error of preexistence and provided that we do not imagine that at some earlier time the soul must already have known and thought distinctly what it learns and thinks now. Plato has strengthened his view by way of a fine experiment, introducing a little boy, whom he leads insensibly to extremely difficult truths of geometry concerning incommensurables without teaching him anything merely by asking appropriate questions in proper order.

[14] Just as esoteric interpretations take Meno's philosophical claim seriously in the wrong way and completely misunderstand it as a philosophical claim, one underestimates this claim and misses the philosophical punch line by falsely accusing Socrates of manipulative questioning, see Hallich 2013:104-108.

> This demonstrates that our soul knows all things virtually and requires only *attention* to recognize truths, and that, consequently, it has, at very least, the ideas upon which these truths depend. One can even say that it already possesses these truths, if they are taken as relations of ideas.

Here Leibniz excludes from the outset the misleading thought of a "pre-existence" of souls.[15] He then emphasizes an aspect that the minimalist interpretation does not take into account. Plato expressly admits that in the process of learning as *anamnesis* both false and true opinions are initially produced (the slave boy is initially mistaken). Leibniz takes this up by specifying that the soul knows "virtually".[16] It should be noted, however, that "virtual" does not mean "merely simulated" or "not real", as the expression is often used today, for example, when we are talking about "virtual reality". Rather, the term derives from the Latin "virtus" (force of action, according to force, cf. Knebel 2001: 1062). The term refers to the contrast between act and potency, i.e. to something that is implicit or possible (as the German translation by Holz makes clear, see Fn. 16). The concept of the virtual on the one hand captures that the mind or soul actually possesses "innate" knowledge, but this knowledge is not always complete and actualized. Therefore, attempts to actualize it may at first bring false opinions to light. The process of actualizing, i.e. in Plato's metaphor the "anamnesis", requires mental effort from the subject, as well as practical exercise, and may, if only temporarily, even fail.

Descartes also stresses the necessity of activity with reference to the *Meno* in the letter to Voetius, when he states that the assumption of innate geometric truths does not imply that this knowledge must be known as something finished (e.g. in the form of the Euclid's *Elements*) to every person.[17] The virtual character of innate knowledge thus does not necessarily mean that it is present and always easily accessible to everyone.

According to Leibniz, even future knowledge is virtual in the mind and not only, as in the minimalist interpretation, the ability to acquire it - a thought which, however, can only be understood if one observes Leibniz's analytical theory of truth (Poser 2016: 120-121). Thus Leibniz's and Descartes' rationalistic appropriations of Plato's anamnesis metaphor offer an answer to the question of how knowledge can be extended a priori on the basis of a source; thus one does not have to restrict knowledge a priori to conceptual relations that remain tautological, as in empiricism.

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[15] It does not become expressly clear from this quotation what Leibniz believes to be the error of pre-existence. However, it can be inferred from the text that Leibniz understands “reminiscence” as the ability of the soul to clearly think thoughts which it “already thinks confusedly” i.e. virtually. This ability of the soul does not presuppose that it must have existed before the body. In general, the ability to gain knowledge through pure thinking does not presuppose such an assumption. But also assumptions about the existence of the soul, by the way, would need to be justified: What exactly could be meant by the assertion that the soul "exists" or even existed before its incarnation, especially since it is not an object that can be identified in space-time?

[16] Hans Heinz Holz translates the French "virtuellement" into German as "der Möglichkeit nach" (engl. "possible"). Compare with the translation by Herbert Herring in the edition published by Meiner (Leibniz 1985).

[17] „Atque inde Socrates apud Platonem, puerum quemdam de Geometricis elementis interrogando, sicque efficiendo ut ille puer quasdam veritates ex mente propria erueret, quas prius in ea fuisse non notaverat, reminiscentiam suam probare conabatur […]. [E]x eo quod omnes Geometricae veritates fint eodem modo nobis innatae, dixisses neminem esse in mundo qui nesciat Eculidis elementa.” (Descartes 1974: 167)

The considerations of Leibniz and Descartes can well be related to the minimalist interpretation, for even according to this interpretation the anamnesis must essentially be understood as a process of actualizing already existing abilities. Our rationalists, however, go further by at the same time offering a philosophical explanation of how knowledge can be expanded a priori on the basis of a source of knowledge - a claim that the minimalist interpretation does not make. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Neo-Kantian philosopher Paul Natorp attributes to Plato relating to the *Meno* the "discovery of the a priori" (Natorp 1921/2004: 43). Natorp criticizes, however, that Plato's logical investigation in connection with the theory of reminiscence has taken a misleading psychological turn. In contemporary interpretations, the idea of "virtual knowledge" reappears under the term "tacit knowledge" (cf. the discussion in Hallich 2013: 112-115).

It would certainly be tempting to use the passages from Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics* in school for advanced students to explain the slave example and to continue the epistemological problem of knowledge a priori in its rationalistic as well as transcendental philosophical variants. If one sticks to the fact that competence-oriented philosophy teaching always aims at building up a reflective knowledge of such distinctions and the criteria of their use in the solution of philosophical problems on the basis of basic conceptual distinctions (cf. Tichy 2016: 49), this topic offers itself almost as a paradigmatic training field for these purposes. Following the introductory remarks on the role of pre-concepts in problem-oriented teaching, the lesson plan would first have to determine the philosophical problem. With regard to the rationalistic conceptions and their connection to Plato's anamnesis metaphor, this could be the question of whether knowledge can be expanded exclusively through sensual experience. The lesson plan would furthermore be guided by the question of how students should change their position on the concept of knowledge, which they initially advocated as a pre-concept, in the course of such a discussion. In this way, students could acquire the distinction between different sources of knowledge such as thinking and sensory perception, which they may not initially be familiar with, and refer to the further distinction between knowledge as propositionally fixable content and knowledge as a process and actualization of abilities. They could then continue by becoming aware of the relevance of such distinctions for their own learning processes in various areas of their environment. The mastery of such distinctions can be used for opening up other philosophical problem areas (e.g. the justification of norms), but of course also for further work with the *Meno*, in order to work out the difference between knowledge and true opinion and then the question of the value of knowledge in connection with the parable of Larissa. Again, it is necessary to identify the philosophical problem and possible pre-concepts so that they can be reflected on and refined together in the classroom. In view of the parable of Larissa, students are inevitably confronted with the problem of reducing knowledge to practical success: it is possible to succeed even without knowledge. Why then does it make a relevant difference whether I know something or only mean to know it?[18]

[18] Konrad Paul Liessmann (2008) discusses the topicality of this problem in a moody way as errors of the knowledge society.

I will deal with this question in the next section. I will therefore no longer pursue the rationalist lines of interpretation here, but come back to the minimalist interpretation. Perhaps one can even dispense with the assumption that it is essentially about the knowledge of a priori truths. Geometry would then have a different accent as paradigm.

4. An alternative proposal

The interpretations presented in the previous section emphasize in *anamnesis* the aspect of the process rather than the result of the process, i.e. the propositional knowledge extracted at the end.[19] This aspect becomes clear in the text if one pays attention to the distinction between true beliefs and knowledge. This distinction is already introduced during the conversation with the slave boy and is taken up again at the end of the dialogue, after the parable of Larissa. There Socrates explicitly asks Meno again about the anamnesis metaphor. In the conversation with the slave Socrates stresses that the ignorant already has true beliefs:

> *Soc.:* So that he who does not know about any matters, whatever they be, may have true opinions on such matters, about which he knows nothing?
> *Men.*: Apparently.
> *Soc.:* And at this moment those opinions have just been stirred up in him, like a dream; but if he were repeatedly asked these same questions in a variety of forms, you know he will have in the end as exact an understanding of them as anyone. (*Meno* 85c)

And shortly before Socrates distances himself from the mythical content of this thought, he summarizes the result of the exercise with the slave boy as follows:

> *Soc.:* So if in both of these periods – when he was and was not a human being – he has had true opinions in him which have only to be awakened by questioning to become knowledge, his soul must have had this cognizance throughout all time? (*Meno*, 86a)

According to Socrates, it is therefore not so much the fact that true beliefs (*aletheis doxai*) were already present in the slave boy, or in the soul, which were now brought to light that is decisive, but the conversion of such true beliefs into real knowledge. This is done by the Socratic technique of questioning. In this respect, it is not the content of any true beliefs that is the subject of *anamnesis*, but the process that leads to knowledge. In this process, the validity and conclusiveness of the inferences that lead to the solution of the geometric problem are examined. The conversation with the slave boy should therefore demonstrate, using a particularly clear and comprehensible example, what it means to arrive at well-founded insights from merely true opinions, starting from generally communicable contents in the form of statements, by examining inferential connections between these statements. For in fact the slave boy does not literally remember the solution of the geometric problem; only in conversation with Socrates, i.e. in the dialogical process of reflection, errors are uncovered and

[19] The suffix -sis usually denotes a process in (ancient) Greek.

the disconnected, only coincidentally true beliefs turn into real knowledge. The comparison with a dream in which all ideas are merely "stirred up" but not yet consciously arranged into coherent interrelations fits in well with this.

The question now is why this process is illustrated with the metaphor of "anamnesis". In order to answer this question, one must connect Socrates' conversation with the slave boy with a passage that is often overlooked, but which is quite crucial if one wants to liberate the anamnesis metaphor from the "error of pre-existence" (Leibniz) of souls.

I mean a passage following the parable of Larissa, which deals with the distinction between true beliefs and knowledge. It is about the practical service of knowledge to orientation. When it comes to finding the right way to the city of Larissa, true beliefs and knowledge perform the same service. Both lead to the same end:

> *Soc.:* Hence true opinion is as good a guide to rightness of action as knowledge. (*Meno*, 97b)

Thus Socrates records the result, whereupon Meno rightly says the following:

> *Men.:* It appears to me that he must; and therefore I wonder, Socrates, this being the case, that knowledge should ever be more prized than right opinion, and why they should be two distinct and separate things. (*Meno*, 97d)

Socrates answers again with a comparison aimed at the difference between true beliefs and knowledge. The particular value of knowledge is that it is linked to reasoning, making knowledge permanent. In this context, Socrates refers to the anamnesis metaphor:

> *Soc.:* For these, so long as they stay with us, are a fine possession, and effect all that is good; but they do not care to stay for long, and run away out of the human soul, and thus are of no great value until one makes them fast with causal reasoning. And this process, friend Meno, is recollection, as in our previous talk we agreed. But when once they are fastened, in the first place they turn into knowledge, and in the second, are abiding. (*Meno*, 97e-98a)[20]

At the latest as this point, the absurdity of (textbook) interpretations of the anamnesis metaphor becomes apparent, which associate it with reincarnation esotericism.

The passage confirms once again that "anamnesis" should be understood as a process. Anamnesis is here addressed as the making fast of the true beliefs "with causal reasoning" (*aitías logismo*). It is reminiscence that turns true beliefs into lasting knowledge. What is meant

[20] Cf. Canto-Sperber 1993: 89-91. Ebert considers the sentence in which the motif of reminiscence is taken up to be a text forgery "from the circle of Pythagorean Neo-Platonism". According to Ebert, this assumption is supported by the existence of a manuscript tradition dating back to Stobaios in which the passage in question does not appear, cf. Ebert 2018: 180-182. I cannot discuss this philological finding in the context of this article. But even if Ebert's hypothesis could be proved to be true, the philosophical content of the interpretations discussed here would thereof remain unaffected.

is that a "logos" – not an isolated statement, but an argumentative context –, provides for the *aitía*, the cause in the sense of an explanatory reason for the true beliefs. True beliefs are thus placed in a coherent and explanatory context by reasoning. Anamnesis would thus be a process that consists in actualizing the ability of reasoning. On the basis of unexplained preconceptions in the form of true beliefs and of logical abilities (which are emphasized by the minimalist interpretation), thoughts are justified and developed into insights. Thus, this passage can easily be connected to the minimalist interpretation, whereby the ability of reasoning as a process does not merely mean the isolated verification of beliefs in the sense of a widespread opinion in today's epistemology. The standard definition of knowledge, i.e. knowledge as justified true belief, always refers to individual statements in the form of propositional knowledge. However, the example of the slave already makes it clear that it is not about individual beliefs, but about the actualization of an ability that is supposed to produce complex insights through the process of argumentative reasoning.

Thus, according to the passage interpreted here, "memory" primarily means this explanatory aspect as a process, rather than the bringing forth of true opinions, which was at the forefront of the slave episode. If one now brings together both passages – the slave episode and the conversation about the value of knowledge – one can conclude as a result of this interpretation that the metaphor of reminiscence should capture these two aspects: the discovery of true beliefs *and* their justification in the sense of unfolding and examining their inferential connections. While the first aspect is also illuminated in the slave episode, the discussion about the value of knowledge is explicitly about the aspect of justification as a rational ability.

The metaphor of "reminiscence" vividly aims at the process of bringing out, but - and this would be a further aspect of this metaphor – of bringing out something that was not made by the subject, but is, as it were, given to the person from somewhere else. Thoughts that want to appear as justifiable assertions are not made by the thinker by being thought, but grasped by the exercise of rational abilities (cf. e.g. Frege 1918/1986: 35), as something that claims validity independently of the subject. Therefore, a thought can be grasped by any thinker with this claim to objective validity. In any case, it is not unusual to imagine the claim to objectivity of thoughts in this way. This applies especially to mathematical truths and proofs. However, all conceptual thinking, not least philosophical thinking, is oriented towards abstract structures. According to this interpretation, "reminiscence" would not only be a metaphor for the exercise of rational abilities and the possibility of gaining knowledge through them, but also a metaphor for the special objectivity of abstract thinking. Merely true opinions become insights based on justifications that are achievements of rational thinking, which is oriented towards abstract structures, i.e. structures accessible to thinking only. Thus thoughts are grasped that claim objective validity. The metaphor therefore remains understandable even if the thoughts brought out are not thought of as something that has literally once been experienced by the soul, either empirically or in "an earlier life". Of course, we are dealing with a metaphor: it remains open what the status of thoughts is. The text remains metaphorical, i.e. it does not commit us to a certain metaphysical teaching about the mode of being of thoughts, e.g. as ideas that exist in their own realm of reality.

One should not lose sight of the fact that the dialogue revolves around the theme of virtue and its teachability. The epistemological questions, in particular the theme of knowledge as reminiscence, fit into this theme which structures the dialogue. It is not least about the service of knowledge to orientation in practical life, or as Ursula Wolf puts it: "The *Meno* inquires if and to what extent it is possible to gain useful knowledge for human condition derived from verified hypotheses" (Wolf 1996: 123). The parable of Larissa has shown that true beliefs orient just as well as knowledge, but they offer no stable orientation. However, those who repeatedly test and justify their true beliefs according to the model of Socrates are better oriented, as is the traveler to Larissa who really knows the way. Socrates is not concerned with the stability of certain beliefs or bits of knowledge as such. Rather, his claim is aimed at the stability of beliefs as a valuable attitude guiding one's own practice. The Socratic way of thinking refers to a way of life that offers itself as an alternative to the success orientation of sophistry. Whatever virtue is exactly: A virtuous, good life is a tested, reflected life, a life lived in the "continuity of the *elenchus*" (Wolf 1996: 127).[21] Thinking, which deserves this name, has its value not least in the orientation it can offer.[22]

Thus the interpretation of the anamnesis metaphor proposed here on the one hand takes up the central motif of the so-called minimalist interpretation, namely the aspect of reminiscence as the exercise of rational abilities. But the proposal also goes beyond this, in that the rationalist motif of pure thought as a fundamental source of knowledge is strengthened in contrast to mere true beliefs (without, however, explaining the possibility of a priori expansion of knowledge, or even wanting to say anything about the ontological status of thoughts as abstract entities). This interpretation also places the metaphor of reminiscence in the context of the Socratic main question of the right way of life. In doing so, it wants to offer some starting points for a philosophically appropriate work with Platonic ideas in school, which is not a mythical-esoteric or ideological practice, but the joint operation with basic conceptual distinctions and reasons. This is exactly what students should learn.

The reading of Plato is philosophically demanding, and even more demanding is good teaching of philosophemes of Platonic dialogues. Contrary to what the easily accessible literary form of dialogue suggests, it is hardly possible or meaningful without an understanding of the specificity of philosophical thought. As with most philosophical literature, students must learn to face up to this challenge. Therefore, if one wants to open a path to philosophical thinking for them with Platonic dialogues like the *Meno*, one does not help them by avoiding these difficulties with simplistic narratives.

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[21] *Apology* 38a 1-7: "and if again I say that to talk every day about virtue and the other things about which you hear me talking and examining myself and others is the greatest good to man, and that the unexamined life is not worth living, you will believe me still less. This is as I say, gentlemen, but it is not easy to convince you."

[22] At various points in the text it is considered whether the correct use of something requires a certain type of knowledge (*Meno* 87e5-88a5 and 88d4-e2). However, to what extent this technical knowledge is a suitable model for virtue knowledge remains open here, as in other dialogues. For further investigation (cf. Wolf 1996: 32-36 and 59-65). Furthermore, the ability to learn requires a good memory and must again be guided by prudence (*phronesis*, *Meno* 88b4).

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On Assessment in Teaching Political Philosophy: Desirability and Feasibility

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Abstract
The article offers a tool that can be used for assessment of ideas in political philosophy with students in education processes. The proposed method of assessment is based on the criteria of desirability and feasibility. Employing this method can help the students focus more carefully and point their thinking to two important aspects of normative theories in political philosophy. The article provides an analysis of the two criteria and shows how desirability-feasibility assessment should proceed. By doing that, it proposes a system of combining desirability and feasibility in critical assessment of ideas in political philosophy.

Keywords: political philosophy, assessment criteria, desirability, feasibility

When trying to assess some normative theory (or a part thereof) in political philosophy, (at least) two basic aspects of the conception need to be addressed: its desirability and feasibility[1]. Many authors have in fact employed these criteria when thinking, discussing, and writing about various theories/conceptions/claims in political philosophy. Employment of these two criteria suggests that desirability and feasibility might be very useful tools for and/or important aspects of making assessment in political philosophy. However, despite employing desirability and/or feasibility as assessment criteria in political philosophy, we find only relatively few more systematic attempts to explicitly expound their meaning.[2] I believe these two criteria might be

[1] It might be argued that selecting just these two criteria for assessment in political philosophy is a questionable reduction. On the one hand this objection is correct since these two criteria are clearly not the only criteria one needs in order to make a fully comprehensive assessment in political philosophy. Among other (and prior) aspects of a theory in political philosophy that are to be addressed fall e.g. the consistency of the theory's different claims, the logical validity and soundness of arguments, etc. However, these prior considerations are not specific to political philosophy, but are relevant for all areas of philosophy (and in fact any theory). For this reason, when proposing desirability and feasibility as assessment criteria in political philosophy, I am not dismissing the prior and more fundamental criteria, but assuming that they have been assessed and deemed fulfilled before proceeding to desirability-feasibility assessment. I am thankful to one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing out the need to address this point.

[2] Some authors use the criteria without almost any explication, relying, as it were, only on their intuitive meaning, e.g. Kuna (2010). Others, as for example G.A. Cohen (2009), provide some explicit explanation of their understanding of the criteria (or one of them in Cohen's case). A good systematic account of feasibility can be found e.g. in Gilabert–Lawford-Smith (2012) and Southwood (2018). Other authors that have discussed (at least one of) the criteria (using different understandings/definitions thereof) are for example: Räikkä, J. (1998), Pasquali

helpful not only for political philosophers, but also for teachers of philosophy in the education process when teaching political philosophy. The aim of this article is to propose an analytical explication and an explicit definition of desirability and feasibility that could then be used as tools for assessment in teaching political philosophy. After discussing the individual criteria, the article describes how desirability-feasibility assessment should proceed with the aim to propose a system of combining the criteria in critical assessment of political ideas.

1. Desirability

The analysis of desirability (and later also that of feasibility) will proceed in the following manner: it will start with considerations of the ordinary and/or intuitive meaning of desirability, which will gradually be developed further in order to arrive at an understanding and definition that could be appropriate for employment in the context of assessment in (teaching) political philosophy. This gradual approach has been adopted, since it might also be employed with the students, i.e. to ask them to try to come up with a definition of the criteria themselves – starting with ordinary meaning and then eliciting further specifications until they arrive at a definition that would be appropriate to serve as an assessment criterion.

At the outset of the analysis of desirability, one has to ask what the claim "*x* is desirable" means. This is the level of ordinary/intuitive meaning of desirability. On this level, I suggest to consider general dictionary meanings of desirability. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines desirability as: "desirable (that) | desirable (for sb.) (to do sth.): that you would like to have or do; worth having or doing" (Wehmeier 2000: 315). Collins COBUILD *Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* provides the following definition: "Something that is desirable is worth having or doing because it is useful, necessary, or popular" (Sinclair 2003, 381). Yet another useful definition that could guide our thinking about the ordinary/intuitive meaning of desirability can be found in *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*: "something that is desirable has qualities that make you want it" (Mayor 2002: 375). The underlying structure of all the above dictionary definitions (ordinary meaning) of desirability all indicate the following definition of desirability (DD):

DD_1: *x* is desirable if it has quality *q* that makes *y* want (to have, to achieve) *x*.

An immediate obvious problem with DD_1 is that it fails to specify some reliable criterion for determining what is truly and/or objectively desirable. DD_1 states that desirability is based on the existence of a *q* that gives rise to a relation *y wants x*. However, it does not reflect the fact that different people might be drawn to want different (possibly even opposing or contradictory) things (based on different qualities). According to DD_1, e.g. democracy might be deemed desirable in virtue of giving every citizen a vote. At the same time, DD_1 enables someone else to consider e.g. racism desirable based on the fact that it deprives a group of people (that he hates) the right to vote. Thus, DD_1 is too subjective and therefore rather

(2012), Keulman–Koós (2014), McGeer – Pettit (2015). For further sources, one can consult the references indicated by these authors.

uninformative, since it allows almost any *x* to be deemed desirable given it possesses a quality that has the ability to initiate a positive response in someone. DD_1 is therefore useless and possibly also highly controversial if we wanted to use desirability as an assessment in (teaching) political philosophy.

Since DD_1 proved to be insufficient, the following specification might help avoid its shortcomings:

DD_2: *x* is desirable if it would help *y* to achieve a desired end *e*.

DD_2 is derived through further analysis of DD_1. As regards DD_1 one may notice that every *x* deemed desirable is such in virtue of the end hoped to be achieved by obtaining *x*. Thus, what is really desired is not only the *x* itself (with the quality *q* that makes us want it), but an end one hopes to achieve by obtaining *x*.[3] Therefore, adopting DD_2 might help avoid the problems of DD_1; namely the lack of a reliable criterion determining what *x* is truly/objectively desirable, as well as the possible confusion caused by the fact that according to DD_1, different opposing, even contradictory things could end up being considered desirable. The criterion for an *x* to be desirable, according to DD_2, is whether obtaining *x* would actually bring *y* to the achievement of a desired *e*.

DD_2 might raise a serious objection that needs to be addressed. The possible objection is that DD_2 understands everything desirable only as "instrumentally desirable", i.e. desirable only because it brings us to some other end. This might seem to be a mistake, since political philosophy clearly includes, analyzes, discusses, and proposes ideas, conceptions, and values that seem to be desirable in themselves without an instrumental value for something else, as e.g. to end wars and achieve peace, to end/decrease world hunger/poverty, to build a just society, etc. All these seem desirable things/goals without any apparent further goal they need to help us achieve. Consider the case of bringing about peace, and for the sake of simplicity, let us understand peace in a rather restricted way as the absence of military conflict. To end war is indeed a desirable thing that does not need an appeal to any further end it is to help achieve. Yet, although one can consider peace as desirable without an appeal to a further end, it does not mean there is no further end that peace is intended to achieve, and/or that this end is irrelevant for the desirability of a particular attempt to achieve peace.

Thus, there are things that can possess:

1) "two-fold desirability" – they are desirable in themselves (e.g. peace), but also due to a further (and higher) end they help to achieve (in the case of peace it is the possibility for fuller human flourishing [peace is a necessary - but not sufficient- condition for full human flourishing]); [4]

[3] In an Aristotelian framework, this is the case except in the case of the final end, or highest good, that we wish for itself and nothing else.

[4] In making this distinction, I am taking inspiration from Aristotle's discussion of the character of the ends people choose in his Nicomachean Ethics.

2) only "instrumental desirability", i.e. they are desirable only as a means to some end (e.g. money).

This distinction between 1) and 2) will be important in the last section of the article in the context of the discussion whether desirability is separate from or dependent upon feasibility. However, despite the fact that it is formulated in terms of an end, DD_2 (and also DD_3) should be understood as expressing "two-fold desirability" not "instrumental desirability".

A further difference between DD_1 and DD_2 can be explained with the following example. Imagine a person, let us call him Jack, is thirsty and wants to ease his thirst. On a table in front of him, there are two glasses filled with the exact same amount of a transparent liquid. Neither of the two liquids has any taste or smell. One of the glasses, glass A, is filled with water; while the other, glass B, is filled with poison so strong, that if Jack puts even a little sip of it in his mouth, it will kill him immediately. According to DD_1, both the glasses are desirable since both include a liquid substance, which is a quality would make a thirsty person want it. However, according to DD_2, only glass A is desirable, because glass B would in fact not bring Jack to the desired end – i.e. easing his thirst, but to a certain death.

However, even DD_2 requires a further specification. For according to DD_2 without further qualification, racism, for example, might still turn out to be desirable – namely in case there is a person whose goal is to make sure black people are e.g. not allowed to vote. Or consider the example with the two glasses of liquid. If Jack wanted to commit suicide, then according to DD_2 glass B would, in fact, be equally desirable for him as would glass A be for a person wishing to ease her thirst. According DD_2, if a person has an informed preference (one wants *x* and truly knows what it is) instead of simple preference (one wants *x* and thinks that it is what one wants, but it might in fact, not be what one wants) she might still desire for something that is objectively undesirable (glass of poison to commit suicide). It is, therefore, obvious that even DD_2 requires further specification. It has to be supplemented with a requirement that the end *e*, which is to be achieved is not just any end, but an end which is a genuinely good/proper end for *y*. Thus, the following further specification of DD_2 can be proposed:

DD_3: *x* is desirable if it would help *y* to achieve *e*, which is genuinely good for *y*.

This definition of desirability addresses all the problems connected with DD_1 and DD_2 mentioned above. This could be easily demonstrated if applied to the problematic outcomes of the above examples where DD_1 and DD_2 failed. However, with adopting DD_3, a complication of a different sort occurs. This definition requires an argument for what might count as *e*, i.e. a *genuinely good end* of *y*. However, for the purposes of this article, a genuinely good end of *y* is understood in the Aristotelian terms of an end that is in accordance with the *telos* of *y*, which is defined by the dispositional properties of the *y*'s nature.[5]

[5] This understanding of a genuinely good end requires an extensive argument that would need much more space than this article allows for. Thus, I ask the reader to take the argument for granted for the sake of the argument here.

Now, this teleological understanding of the genuinely good/proper end of *y* assumed to stand behind DD_3 might, unsurprisingly, raise another very relevant objection. If DD_3 presupposes a teleological understanding of what can count as a genuinely good/proper end of *y*, is the desirability criterion thus understood applicable to all different types of theories/conceptions in political philosophy? Can it also be used for assessment of other than teleological theories (or parts thereof)? Is it suitable for assessment of e.g. a political theory rooted in deontology? This is an objection that might render DD_3 inadequate for assessment in political philosophy (with the exception of teleological political conceptions). However, I would argue that despite being serious, this objection does not present a fatal blow to the definition of desirability understood in terms of DD_3. After all, even a deontological conception – in which the rightness of action is determined by the action's adherence to a rule/obligation and not by the outcome of the action or the good/end sought in the action – is analyzable in terms of an end. The end, in such case, would be an action performed because of an obligation imposed by a rule. Thus, despite the seriousness of the objection, DD_3 is suitable for application even to other than teleological political conceptions/ideals, be it only in a restricted sense.

Before moving to the discussion of feasibility, it might be useful to summarize the requirements desirability criterion understood in terms of DD_3 imposes on a normative political theory or conception. Here, these requirements are formulated negatively, i.e. by stating in what way a theory in political philosophy could fail to be desirable. *X* might fail to be desirable in the following three respects:

a) *x* fails to help *y* to achieve *e*, or
b) *e* fails to be a genuinely good end of *y*, or
c) *x* fails in both respects indicated in a) and b)

From what has been said it follows that the DD_3 requirements of "*x* helping *y* to achieve *e*" and "*e* being a genuinely good end of *y*" are both necessary, but not sufficient conditions of *x* being desirable. Only if both these contentions are met, we have a sufficient reason to pronounce *x* to be desirable.

2. Feasibility

The first step in assessing a normative political theory (or a part thereof) is to analyze its desirability. However, there might be and in fact is a number of desirable normative theories that are not feasible (e.g. various utopias). One might say that to pursue and try to implement such theory would be unwise, sometimes even dangerous. A clear definition of feasibility that could be employed as an assessment criterion in political philosophy is, thus, also needed. This definition is developed in a way analogous to the definition of desirability in the preceding part:

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary lists the following definition of the term "feasible": that which "is possible and likely to be achieved" (Wehmeier 2000: 427). *Collins COBUILD – Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* defines "feasible" in the following manner: "If something is feasible, it can be done, made, or achieved" (Sinclair 2003: 523). *Macmillan English Dictionary of Advanced Learners* provides this definition: "possible or likely to succeed"

(Mayor 2002: 510). Besides dictionary definitions of "feasible" and/or "feasibility", a quick look at the synonyms of the word "feasible" might also be useful in the attempt to specify a definition of feasibility that could be used as a criterion of assessment in (teaching) political philosophy. In the *Oxford Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms*, one can find these words listed as synonyms of "feasible": "achievable, attainable, easy, possible, practicable, practical, realizable, viable, workable" (Spooner 1999: 150).

Based on the above dictionary definitions, one can propose the following definition of feasibility (DF):

DF: *x* is feasible if it is possible to bring it about in reality.

DF expresses a possibility-based account of feasibility (Southwood 2018: 2-3). The type of possibility referred to in DF above is not just (pure) logical possibility as used in the theory of possible worlds. The type of possibility that the DF requires is possibility understood in terms of empirical possibility.

Prima facie this definition might seem circular, and without further specification it would indeed be circular. What DF requires in order to escape circularity is an explicit specification of the limitations that put restrictions on what is empirically possible in our actual world. These limitations on feasibility can be divided into two classes of limitations:

1) those that pertain to human nature; and
2) technical limitations.[6]

There will most probably quite rightly be a great deal of disagreement about what is (the true) human nature (if such thing even exists). It is impossible here to provide an argument for the existence of human nature, much less one for what it truly consists in. However, it is a fact, that every theory/conception in political philosophy unavoidably presupposes (be it only implicitly) some view of human nature (Shapiro 1998) that can theoretically be extrapolated and made explicit. Thus, for the sake of the argument, I will take for granted that there is such thing as human nature, however, I will not try to further specify what its true character is.

Every conception that aspires to be implemented in an actual society, which might rightly be considered feasible, has to be based on recognizing a true/reasonably realistic picture of human nature. The various limitations pertaining to human nature express the requirement that a normative theory/conception, aspiring to be feasible, has to respect human nature. Clearly, there have been political arrangements based on only partially-true, even false views of human nature that were actually implemented and were not immediately rejected (e.g. various dictatorships and totalitarian regimes). However, they were unstable and eventually after some time were rejected and/or failed. Thus, even if disrespecting the limitations on feasibility imposed by human nature this does not directly prevent the implementation of a conception, it does make the implementation unstable and unfeasible in the long run. On the other hand, it

[6] Some of the various more particular limitations are mentioned below, however a broader and fuller picture is offered in e.g. Gilabert – Lawford-Smith (2012).

has to be noted that respecting human nature is only a necessary not a sufficient condition for feasibility of a political arrangement. Furthermore, respecting human nature does not enable us to design and implement a "perfect" political arrangement once for all either. This is at least partially true due to the fact that the circumstances in which human beings live change.

Technical limitations on feasibility of a political ideal require that:

a) It is logically consistent;
b) it conforms to physical laws;
c) it presumes our world history. (Jensen 2009: 172)

This second class of limitations on feasibility is not violated often (Gilabert – Lawford-Smith 2012: 811). This is understandable since technical limitations for a considerable part express what is empirically possible in our actual world. Where political philosophy is more prone to violate the criterion of feasibility is, thus, on the level of conformity with human nature. The criterion of feasibility serves two basic functions. "The first is to *rule out* political proposals on the ground that they cannot be implemented in practice. [...] In its second function feasibility enables *comparative assessments* of various proposals" (Gilabert – Lawford-Smith 2012: 812). The second function means that the criterion of feasibility enables us to decide between several desirable proposals – a more feasible proposal takes precedence over a less feasible one.

3. Desirability-Feasibility Assessment

After developing a definition of desirability (DD_3) and feasibility (DF) that could serve as assessment criteria in (teaching) political philosophy, the last step remaining to be made is to show, how the desirability-feasibility assessment (DFA) proceeds.

Above, I have developed DD_3 and DF in separate sections that might indicate that the criteria are independent of each other. If this is the case, then DFA should proceed in the following (simple) way: i.) assessment of desirability; ii.) assessment of feasibility; iii.) judgment on the conception under assessment. However, the independence of the two criteria is not something we can assume and take for granted. It might be that case that desirability of a conception is not separate from, but dependent upon its feasibility, i.e. a conception can be deemed desirable only after it has been also determined to be feasible.[7]

In an attempt to answer this question that has important implications for how the DFA proceeds and functions, I would argue we need to distinguish between two types of desirability already discussed in section dedicated to desirability above:

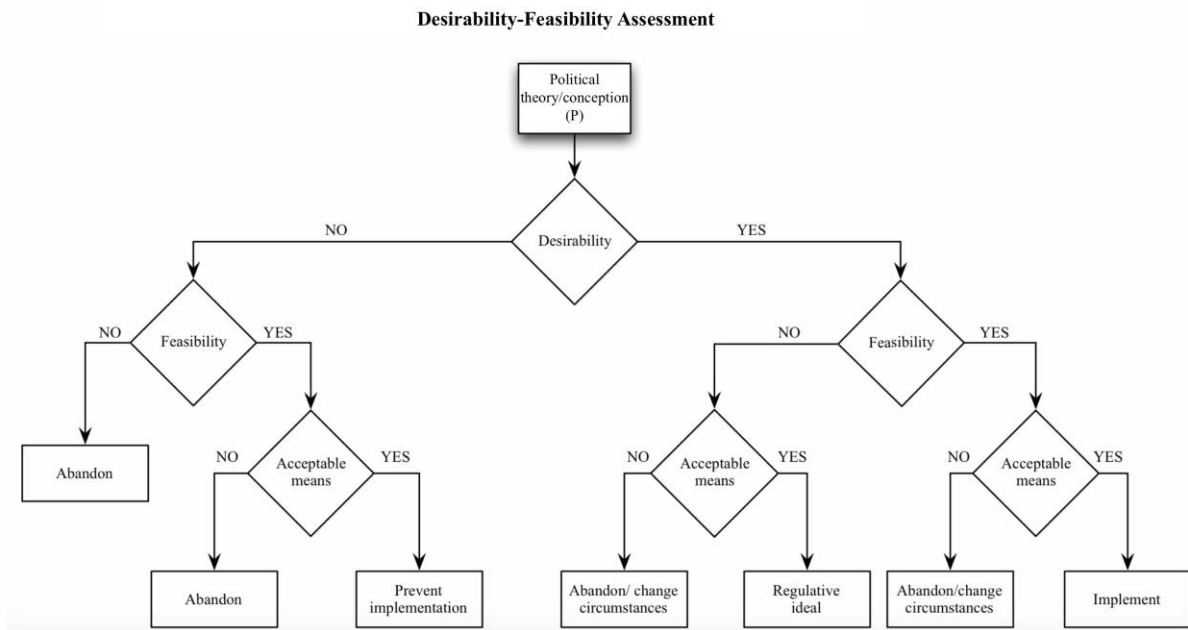
1) "two-fold desirability" – *x* is desirable in itself, but also as a means to some other end;
2) "instrumental desirability" – *x* is desirable only as a means to some end.

[7] This is a view held e.g. by Gilabert (2011); however, he later seems to abandon it in favor of the possibility to make the desirability and feasibility considerations separate (Gilabert – Lawford-Smith 2012).

Accordingly, we need to distinguish two levels, on which desirability assessment occurs:

a) desirability assessment on the higher level of a normative theory/conception as a whole;
b) desirability assessment on the lower level pertaining to the means for implementing/sustaining that theory/conception.

Desirability assessment on level a) concerns desirability 1) and should be kept separate from feasibility considerations. On the assessment level b) that concerns desirability 2), however, desirability cannot be fully separated from feasibility. The DFA process is schematically presented in the following diagram:



The first step of DFA consists in determining if *P* (normative political conception under assessment) is desirable (two-fold desirability) (DD_3). This is the first and the highest level of the DFA. Here, we make desirability considerations without, yet, having to take into consideration feasibility of *P*. If *P* is deemed desirable, we move to the second step of deciding whether it is feasible (DF). If *P* is found to be feasible (it does not contradict human nature, nor technical limitations), we proceed to the assessment of the available means for *P*'s implementation and/or sustenance. The available means for implementation and/or sustenance of a *P* are determined by the circumstances of the situation in which we make the assessment. It is important to note, that the evaluation of the available means comes back to the criterion of desirability,[8] but this time it concerns "instrumental desirability". Here we are once again asking the question if a given means will bring us to the desired end (implementing/sustaining

[8] In order to avoid confusion, on the lower level of assessment I propose to use the term "acceptability" rather than desirability of the means.

P) and combines it with the assessment of feasibility. The combination occurs since, by definition, only such means are desirable that are at the same time feasible, because the reason for the existence of a means is to get us to some end (means *qua* means can possess only instrumental desirability). If acceptable means are available, we can conclude *P* can/should be implemented. If no acceptable means are available, we can either try to change the circumstances so that we make acceptable means available, or we abandon *P*.

Another argument for keeping desirability considerations separate from feasibility considerations on the higher level is the following: if there is a *P* that was deemed desirable, and (ultimately) not feasible, but if there are acceptable means for trying to achieve this *P* we might still want to keep and pursue this *P* as a regulative ideal. As for example the strive to end world hunger/poverty – we might not ever fully succeed in reaching this desirable political goal, but we should not stop trying. If we insisted that desirability is dependent upon feasibility already on this higher level, it would mean that we should abandon the goal and thus loose a very good and important regulative ideal.

Lastly, even if a *P* is deemed undesirable on the higher level, we should still assess its feasibility. This is due to the fact that somebody ill-intentioned might persuade people to pursue an undesirable *P* that is feasible and has acceptable means available. If there are such *P*s we should be aware of them and thus be prepared to try to prevent their implementations.

After the analysis provided so far, one might ask a very relevant question of how to implement the two criteria in a particular classroom setting. Here, I will refrain from trying to provide some step-by-step implementation guide. This is due to the fact that there is a wide variety of education systems, that allow for different approaches in teaching philosophy and possibly preclude others, but also (and possibly more importantly) due to the fact that each group of students is different and unique. For these reasons, there probably is not one correct/best way how to employ DFA in education process. Each teacher wishing to use DFA in his/her in teaching will be the best architect of the most appropriate employment of the criteria in their classroom. However, I will conclude with an example that shows one possible way to employ DFA in a classroom setting and points out how it might contribute to a better understanding of a theory in political philosophy. Within a seminar on political philosophy at university level, students were assigned to read Rawls on his theory of justice as fairness. They were also asked to answer the question whether they found his theory to be desirable and feasible, without being given any particular prior definitions of the criteria. Further, they were asked to provide reasons for the outcome of their DFA of justice and fairness, i.e. indirectly and implicitly they were asked to define the criteria. When the analysis of the content of the assigned text ended, the most notable comment coming from a number of students was that they had found Rawls' justice as fairness to be unfeasible. The argument was that the veil of ignorance was "completely unfeasible" since it is impossible for someone not to know his/her race, sex, wealth, strength, conception of the good, etc. The employment of DFA was thus essential in detecting a misunderstanding of an important aspect of Rawls' idea of the original position. (Actually, Rawls models a purely hypothetical situation and the veil of ignorance requires the parties selecting the principles of justice to exclude what he considers to be morally arbitrarily information from their consideration, not in fact not knowing/forgetting it in reality).

The discussion on desirability and feasibility of justice as fairness in this group, thus, helped the students to reach a correct understanding of an essential part of Rawls' theory.

The aim of this article was to propose an analytical explication and an explicit definition of desirability and feasibility that could be used as tools for assessment in (teaching) political philosophy. When developing the definition of desirability, I have proposed a distinction between "two-fold" and "instrumental" desirability that has an important implication on how the desirability-feasibility assessment should proceed and function. The criterion of desirability was defined as DD_3: *x* is desirable if it helps *y* to achieve *e*, which is genuinely good for *y*. Feasibility was defined as DF: *x* is feasible if it is possible to bring it about in reality, and expressed that feasibility of normative political theories/conceptions/ideals is limited by technical limitations and human nature. In the last section of the article I have described the process of desirability-feasibility assessment and argued that desirability is assessed at two distinct levels that correspond to the two types of desirability. On the higher level, desirability and feasibility assessment are to be kept separate, while on the lower level desirability is dependent upon feasibility. Besides the short example in the previous paragraph, I have not described in any detail how the implementation of the proposed criteria and assessment procedure should be done in the education process. This is due to the fact that it will be heavily dependent on the particular circumstances of each classroom. However, my hope and aim were that the article might become a useful inspiration for teachers to try to adjust the proposed assessment tools to their particular needs and make use of it in teaching political philosophy.

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Country Report:
Philosophy at Secondary Schools in Spain – Part I

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Philosophy and the subjects related to it have traditionally formed a fundamental part of the curriculum in secondary education in Spain. However, we have been witnesses to how the rapid succession of legislative changes, aiming at raising the academic level of the Spanish to the UE level, have displaced Philosophy from the place where it belongs by its own right.
Among the factors that have determined this circumstance, I will include:

1. The positivist prejudice that considers all knowledge that does not entail an immediate influence on the development of technologies and economic expansion superfluous and a mere erudite ornament.
2. The traditionalist prejudice responsible for the rivalry between the subjects of Ethics and Religion (Catholic), by offering Ethics as an "alternative to religion".

Before analyzing these factors in more detail, I will offer a general historical overview of educational laws in recent Spanish history.

Recent history of Spanish educational legislation

From the 70s to the 90s in the 20th century, the LGE (August 6, 1970), which accompanied our maturing as a democracy, was in force. This law extended free and compulsory schooling up to the age of 14 years and offered a Baccalaureate in 4 years that is still remembered today with longing. This post-compulsory education from 14 to 18 years allowed the intellectual maturation of students in demanding conditions. There were three compulsory subjects related to Philosophy: Ethics (16 years), Philosophy (17 years) and History of Philosophy (18 years).

In the mid-nineties, the LOGSE was passed (October 3, 1990). It was a law that adapted the European measure to extend the age of schooling to 16 years of age, which meant that the Baccalaureate was reduced to 2 academic years (from 16 to 18 years). Curricula became more flexible and new subjects aimed at specialization led to the decrease of hours devoted to core subjects (such as Language and Mathematics). Humanistic matters were also neglected including Philosophy. Nevertheless, in the last year of compulsory secondary school (16 years) there were two hours a week of Ethics and this subject was also frequently offered in the other courses as an optional subject alternative to Religion.

The laws that followed the LOGSE retained the same structure of the curriculum, but added some modifications. The LOE (May 3, 2006), promoted by a socialist government, prevented the marks of Religion from counting for the average of the academic record. Ethics disappeared as an alternative subject to Religion. Although that hour was on free disposal of the secondary school, actually, the alternative to religion became an hour devoted to games or, at best, to self-

study time. The new subject of "Education for Citizenship and Human Rights" was mandatory in part of primary education and in compulsory secondary education (12 to 16 years).

The current law is the LOMCE (December 9, 2013), also known as "Wert Law". It was promoted by the conservative party as an attempt to return greater workload to subjects such as Mathematics and Language. In this law, the contents associated with Philosophy lose their presence in the curriculum. The History of Philosophy ceases to be compulsory in the 2nd year of Baccalaureate (18 years) and the subject of Ethics in 4th year (16 years) disappears together with the subject "Education for Citizenship and Human Rights" that, as we will see later, had been a matter of controversy. However, the LOMCE allows the autonomous governments to determine certain subjects within their scope, so that 9 out of 17 regional governments have chosen to keep History of Philosophy in the 2nd year either for all types of Baccalaureate or only for some. In the rest, it becomes a subject that the students cannot choose and that the schools do not offer.

Marginalization of the humanities in high school curricula

The arrival of the LOMCE meant the confirmation of the tendency to corner humanistic matters (its reforms have also negatively affected the Plastic Arts and Music). Currently, a student can attend compulsory education and leave it at 16 without having matured his critical spirit in contact with the foundations that structure Western thinking.

A misunderstood idea of progress has enforced this shift towards a pragmatic view of education. It has been considered that to be competitive, our country had to produce engineers, economists and entrepreneurs. However, business schools have already realized what the eminent Spanish philosopher Emilio Lledó (Sevilla, 1927) has been explaining for years: that an economist and an engineer also need the humanities. For Lledó, as a society, we cannot afford this loss, because it would mean the death of a country's greatest wealth, which is culture, where freedom resides. "Philosophy plays an essential role, because it forces us to think about language, about good, about justice, about what we are, about the truth. Since ancient Greek times, philosophers have always been the critical conscience of an era."

The voices that defend Philosophy today, claim their potential for basic education, both as support for core subjects (because it teaches students to express themselves both orally and in writing), as well as to help the maturation of critical capacity at an age in which the first questions and concerns appear. But for these reasons, the subject requires a minimum span of time: at least two years.

The controversial "Education for Citizenship and Human Rights"

As we have anticipated, with the LOE a new subject appeared on the horizon of the subjects related to Philosophy: "Education for Citizenship and Human Rights". This subject aimed at teaching democratic and constitutional values, following the recommendations of the European Council in 2002, which affirmed the importance of this type of education to promote a free, tolerant and just society.

Despite the support of European institutions and recognized entities such as the NGO Amnesty International, the implementation of this subject aroused a notorious suspicion among

some conservative sectors that understood that the State assumed a moral education that should rest with the family. In addition, they considered that the Left was trying to shape children's viewpoints, imposing a biased perception on sexual education and multi-parental or homosexual families. For the Catholic Church, it was an attack on the traditional family. Although other conservative tendencies did not oppose and understood that the subject was focused only on the teaching of Human Rights, there were parents who even declared themselves "conscientious objectors" to prevent their children from taking the new subject and even raised their protests to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

To add fuel to the fire, certain conservative media claimed that prejudices against businessmen and the free market were poured into some textbooks. However, we must remember that in Spain there are no official manuals, but the schools are free to use the sources they consider most appropriate. In contrast, sectors of the anarchist left were annoyed because the parliamentary democracy was contemplated as the only system that respects human rights.

Ethics as an alternative to religion

With the LOMCE, both the controversial "Education for Citizenship" and the Ethics of the 4th year of Compulsory Secondary Education (16 years) have disappeared. On the other hand, there is an optional subject called "Ethical Values" that is offered in the other years as an alternative subject to Religion, which counts again for the general records.

The choice between the subjects of Religion and Ethical Values raises paradoxes. The underlying assumption is that every religion includes a moral code, so that people who study religion will have the same training as those who choose Ethical Values. If that were so, it would not matter if we reached moral awareness through religion or through processes of criticism and rational discussion, dialogue and confrontation of ideas. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the two subjects are not equivalent, because in one case it is considered that moral values depend on the divine will and in the other they are human creations, dependent on societies and history. Presenting Religion and Ethics as alternatives at the same level recalls the theory of the double truth of medieval scholasticism.

Philosophy teachers claim their own space for Ethics and that an analogous alternative to Religion (such as Religious Culture or History of Religions) may be given. One thing is a shared, public and minimal ethic, regardless of the creed or the absence of this, and another very different thing is a religious training that you want to convey. By placing an "or" in between ethics and religion, the former is being betrayed, as is the latter.

The future of philosophy in Spain

The near future raises favorable prospects for Philosophy to recover the lost ground. On October 18, 2018 the main political parties approved a non-legislative motion in the Education Committee of the Congress of Deputies to reinforce the presence of the subject of Philosophy in Secondary Schools. The intention of political parties is that Ethics in the 4th year of secondary school (16 years) and History of Philosophy in the 2nd year of Baccalaureate (18 years) becomes compulsory again, so that students have a process that takes 3 years through which to mature their critical thinking and that allows every citizen to acquire notions that roots

them to the Western cultural project, which, by the way, has been developed on the basis of philosophical efforts to answer questions of meaning.

Burgh, Gilbert/Thornton, Simone (eds.) (2019): Philosophical inquiry with children: The development of an inquiry society in Australia, London/New York: Routledge.

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A group of philosophers in Australia inspired by the work of Matthew Lipman and Margret Sharp (1980)[1] set out to teach philosophy in schools. Their efforts over about thirty years led to the development of an inquiry society in Australia. While this is an ambitious task and many efforts are moving in opposition such as curriculum efforts that were and are excessively career-oriented and, to that extent, anti-intellectual, this group of philosophers, educators, administrators, and classroom teachers continued toward the goal of an inquiry society. This book creatively integrates several strains of this development in a more or less chronological manner.

Overview

The book is divided into four parts and an Editorial Introduction. Gilbert Burgh (Senior Lecturer in the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry at the University of Queensland) and Simone Thornton, who teaches in the same School wrote the introduction. Their introduction begins by recognizing the value of critical thinking as a quest for active and informed citizens and goes on to argue that philosophy plays an important part in reaching that goal. A greater vision than merely raising the status of philosophy in schools as a sufficient outcome is required in their view. They write:

> Lost is Dewey's vision of thinking as inquiry; a kind of knowing in action. Inquiry us both critical and creative: a dialogue that lends itself naturally to classroom discussion elicited from student curiosity that can provide a natural basis for learning (Burgh/Thornton 2019: 1).

Their introduction places Lipman's project as well as the subtitle of the book *The development of an inquiry society within a context for educational improvement and innovation*. A wide reading of John Dewey is obvious to those familiar with Dewey's corpus. For those less familiar with his work, an awareness of John Dewey's perspective on democracy and education is helpful as a prerequisite for an understanding of the Australian project as stated in the title of the book under review. Toward that end, *Dewey's Democracy and Education* (1916/1944) makes a case for both.

[1] See Lipman, M., Sharp, A.M. and Oscanyan, F.S., 2010. Philosophy in the classroom. Temple University Press for the title of their seminal work.

> Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education. But there is a deeper explanation. Democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a form of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his *or her*[2] own action to that of others, and to con-sider the action of others to give point and direction to his or her own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which keeps *us*[3] from perceiving the full import of *our*[4] society (Dewey, 1916/1944: 87).

John Dewey's grounding of education in democracy is central to understanding Philosophy for Children and Community of Inquiry and all its applications and modification in Australia and worldwide. The book is organized into four parts: The development of philosophy for children in Australia, Ideas into books, Philosophy in schools, and Reflection. After a short introduction by the editors, each section has a short introduction of its own, followed by four to six chapters, except for the last section which contains only one chapter.

Part I: Developing philosophy for children in Australia

Laurance Splitter and Jennifer Glaser led a collection of committed individuals beginning in the mid-1980s to implement philosophy for children in Australian classrooms using the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children curriculum. This section documents how, where, and with whom this project was undertaken. In "Getting started: the early use of the IAPC curriculum" Glaser with Anita Bass explores how the early IAPC curriculum highlights a unique vehicle used to spread the word on a community of inquiry and philosophy in schools was the use of a series of 26-episodes of one hour in duration. "One of the radical ideas behind this series was that a philosophical concept would anchor each segment. These concepts were explored explicitly in the Munch Kids animations, providing a conceptual framework for the episodes overall and could be used on their own as a new stimulus for inquiry" (29). Each chapter features different and sometimes overlapping aspects of these early efforts ranging from a presentation of the challenges of working to develop in national network within a federation structure (Chapter 3 – Laurance Splitter and May Lecky), and the role played by newsletters and journals in influencing educators, philosophers, administrators, and teaching toward implementing this project (Chapter 4 – Stephen Miller). The fifth chapter is called "Australian practices goes overseas" (Megan Lafferty) documents the comings and goings of Australian philosophers and educators who traversed back and forth beyond the Australian continent, some to level permanently and some to return.

[2] "Or her" was added to update the outdated use of the male pronoun previously considered gender neutral.
[3] "Men" was changed to us, see above footnote for reason.
[4] See above footnote.

Part II: Ideas into books

After a short introduction to Part II by Gabrielle Mardon, Laurance Splitter's chapter is the first entrée in *Ideas into books*. The dominance of Splitter's writing in this work is a reflection, in part, of his role in Philosophy for/with Children (hereafter P4wC) in Australia. "Meno to Harry Stottlemeier and friends: you are not wanted here" appears to be intended to make a point about at least part of the way Australian educators responded to the introduction of "foreign" curriculum. However, Splitter's reference to the richness of the original curriculum produced by the IAPC which "stands as an historic paradigm in the development of a movement designed to bring the discipline of philosophy for children" (Splitter and Sharp 1995, 105) is some indication of the complexity of the Australian project.

The ideas of a curricular framework by Jennifer Glaser in philosophy provides the reader with some sense of how essential aspects of Lipman's original project are integrated and re-thought. Much of her struggle with the IAPC is captured here. "P4C invites children of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to join this dialogue on their own terms, but also on equal term with each other" (Glaser, 2019: 84).

Susan Wilk's chapter, "Resourceful teaching and teacher resources" captures one of the key elements of Australian P4wC. Wilks presents two sides of what makes Australian P4wC unique, that is, using non-Lipman materials developed in Australia and assisting classroom teachers by creating tools that encourage student to discuss concepts and ideas philosophically.

"From picture books to science" by Tim Sprod captures an interesting quality of the Lipman material as he works to apply picture book stories to philosophical discussions. He argues that all teachers interested in teaching philosophy in schools would benefit from reading and accessing the Lipman and Sharp manuals but that P4C can also be used using picture books for children and in science education. Philip Cam succinctly and powerfully captures the essence of how a Community of Inquiry (COI) works, at least in its ideal form in his chapter "Writing for children and teachers".

> A handy metaphor is to think of COI as maintaining an elliptical orbit around two foci. One may exert a stronger influence at one moment and the other at another, but their conjoint influence is always present, so that the COI builds a disposition and capacity to inquire that is inseparable from developing the forms of regard and social concern that help sustain an open and democratic community (Cam 2019, 123).

The metaphor of an elliptical orbit with two foci also seems to this reader to inform his two foci in writing, that is writing for children and writing for teachers.

John Dewey's contributions to teaching and curriculum come to the fore in Clinton Golding's chapter "Connecting concepts and developing thinking classrooms". Golding imaginatively integrates Lipman and Dewey to provide a framework for "thinking classrooms" in New Zealand and Australia. It is clear that Golding has read deeply in the work of John Dewey, even though there are only two references to him. Dewey's ideas permeate Golding's application to connecting concepts and developing thinking in the classroom.

Part III: Philosophy in the schools

After a short interlude of photographs reflecting the events and people involved in variety of turning points and accomplishments, Mardon writes a preview and overview of the next six chapters. This introduction, as all previous ones, helps orient the reader to the framework of this part of the book, allowing easy access to a full reading of each individual chapter or the selection of chapters that match the interest and taste of the reader.

In Jannette Poulton's article she characterizes the lack of teacher educators with considerable knowledge in philosophy and philosophers with qualification in education is a problem for effective and widespread implementation of philosophy in the classroom. In some form or another, this is a persistent problem in Australia and many non-European countries, and even in Europe it is unlikely that many philosophy classrooms are widespread in primary schools. Poulton ask a key question that needs to be addressed when thinking about philosophy in the classroom: What is the collaboration between the philosopher and the classroom teacher supposed to look like?

The next two chapters, "Philosophy and the curriculum" by Monica Bini, Peter Ellerton, Sue Knight, Stephan Millett and Alan Tapper, and "Philosophy in schools across Australia" (Kate Kennedy White with Liz Fynes-Clinton, Lynne Hinton, Jill Howell, Emmanuel Skoutas, Daniel Smith and Matthew Wills), are reviewed together to illustrate the interconnection of themes in this work and the manner in which one topic informs another topic throughout this work. Bini et al in their chapter focus on defining a space for philosophy in an Australian curriculum, while White and colleagues focus more on the day-to-day, school district-to-school district implementation of philosophy instruction in the schools. Both chapters follow how working on a national approach within the structure of a federal system influences these compatible but unique projects. While these chapters lean heavily on Australian philosophers and educators the innovations and applications of Jerome Bruner, Lawrence Kohlberg, Howard Gardner, David Perkins[5] as well as lessons learned from the work done in Reggio Emilia are also implicitly and explicitly discussed in these chapters.

Selena Prior and Susan Wilks's chapter, "Philosophy in public and other spaces" begins with a nod to John Dewey's larger educational vision and Matthew Lipman's specific application to classroom teaching. Lipman's approach to philosophy with children while valued in Australia has been, nearly from the beginning, criticized and modified. Dewey, on the other hand, seems to have been equally valued and less cited in this as well as other chapters. It is the integration of various philosophies of pedagogy, education, and approaches to cultural transformation that is the hallmark of Australia's move toward an inquiry society, including philosophy in public spaces.

Chapter 16, "Australian research into benefits of philosophy for children" written by Stephan Miller, Rosie Scholl and Alan Tapper review and summarize the research done on P4wC conducted in Australia and also includes a number of projects done by Australians working overseas. Reviewed are both experimental studies and qualitative study. This review of the literature on research in P4wC in Australia provides a good understanding of what has

[5] Many of these educators are discussed in the Prior and Wilks chapter.

been accomplished in P4wC and COI in Australia and to a lesser degree what has occurred worldwide. The authors make thoughtful suggestions as to what research might be pursued more deeply and more thorough understanding of process and outcome of P4wC and community of inquiry.

The penultimate chapter is authored by Jennifer Bleazby and Christina Slade and entitled "Philosophy for Children goes to University". The approaches of either teaching a limited number of courses or teaching for a limited time in either Departments of Education or Departments of Philosophy have led to successful but limited implementation of P4wC in schools. Many *ad hoc* workshop approaches appear to have had more success but a fourth option of "embedding of P4C within course offerings" in subjects that emphasize critical thinking, project-based learning, inquiry learning, ethics courses, and controversial subject matter approaches to history and the social sciences also provides an alternative way of teaching philosophical ways of thinking. These alternative approaches have potential for motivating students and teachers while at the same time offering opportunities to those trained in P4C to share their expertise. As the authors note, Australian curriculum already has policies such as Critical and Creative Thinking and Ethical Understanding as capabilities that must be taught in all subjects (228).

Part IV: Growing up with philosophy in Australia

The editors of this volume end by stating one of the central tenets of P4wC and COI, it is a collaborative pedagogical method based in social-cultural learning (236). This simple phrase captures much of the rich theory, development, and story of this book which began with the original work of Matthew Lipman and Ann Margret Sharp who drew on the writing and teaching of C.S. Pierce and John Dewey as well as Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, Howard Gardner, David N. Perkins to name but a few of the non-Australians who contributed to this project. It goes without saying that the focus here is on the Australian contributions many of whom authored these chapters, but as those contributors acknowledge they did not "appear full blown out of the head of Zeus". The democratic vision of John Dewy is seen in action throughout the book as expressed in this statement:

> P4C is founded on the view that theories if classroom practice, as well as curriculum material and classroom materials, need to be attentive to the concerns of children and adolescents, and therefore, the larger social and political issues from which these concerns arise' (246-7).

The chapter ends with a set of questions intended to encourage further research in this area.

Reviewer summary comments

Two elements regarding the construction of the argument of this book are what makes the book of great value to readers beyond Australia and beyond philosophy for children. First, each chapter is a combination of personal stories integrated with educational, philosophical and pedagogical theory that simultaneously focuses on P4wC and COI and broader educational and

cultural issues. The second advantage of the structure of the book is the different vantage points of the authors. While some of the chapters may seem to repeat similar themes, the reader will recognize the value of the different vantage points of the writers as they look from different positions regarding, for example pedagogy and curriculum, national policy and classroom practice, elementary and secondary classroom or university instructor, ad hoc workshops or university curriculum.

The title of this book, *Philosophical inquiry with children: The development of an inquiry society in Australia*, echoes its structure and its broad challenge to all educators. – What efforts have been initiated, both successful and less successful, that will engage us in a new and ongoing project to make our society an *inquiry society*? Gilbert Burgh and Simone Thornton and their many colleagues who contributed to this book have laid before us a challenge that ought to be undertaken.

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Buck, Günther (2019): ***Lernen und Erfahrung. Epagogik*****. Herausgegeben von Malte Brinkmann, Wiesbaden: Springer VS. (4th edition. First published 1967)**

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According to a widespread view in contemporary debates on didactics and psychologically inspired learning theory, two basic assumptions about the concept of learning are (tacitly) presupposed. On the one hand, learning is to be taken as a continuous and progressive process, as a *learning process* in which the students increasingly acquire additional skills and knowledge. On the other hand – and related to this – it is assumed that learning is to be understood in terms of *results* and can accordingly be seen in the form of achievements. It cannot be denied that these assumptions are in some tension with basic principles of philosophical teaching and learning. It is obvious that not only positive results of an increasing knowledge characterize philosophizing. Therefore, there should be furthermore an acknowledgment of controversy and discrepancies, a free formation of judgement in open fields of thought and opportunities for testing alternative ways of thinking as well as in-depth reflection on self-delusions. Nevertheless, the widely used assumptions are supported within the framework of the current cross-national developments in education policy by the implementation of educational standards in the curricula (e.g. as a result of the PISA studies). It is reasonable to suspect: The suggestive persuasiveness of this widespread view does not only result from the conviction of being able to diagnose learning processes in the form of outcomes, but rather from the theoretical axiom that *learning is a continuous process* towards a clearly focused aim.

But there are other concepts of learning. Günther Bucks reasoning on learning does not focus on moments of fulfilling standards but on discrepancies and the experience of failing. Buck has elaborated these central ideas in his philosophical study on *Lernen und Erfahrung. Epagogik* (*Learning and Experience. Epagogy*). After an increased response to Buck's theory in pedagogy and educational philosophy in recent years (e.g. by Andrea English (2014), Norm Friesen (2017), Andreas Gelhard (2016; 2018), Käte Meyer-Drawe (2008), Sabrina Schenk/ Torben Pauls (2014)), his most influential and important book is currently being published in a fourth edition (1967/1969/1989) after exactly 30 years with a new foreword by the editor Malte Brinkmann (Berlin), although unfortunately not in English. Günther Buck (1925-1983), who was a professor of pedagogy and a member of the well-known research group *Poetics and Hermeneutics (Poetik und Hermeneutik)* around thinkers like Blumenberg, Jauß and Koselleck, outlines in his text both a theory of learning from a hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective and a still instructive reflection on didactic forms of learning. The original subtitle of the study is formulated with regard to Aristotle's concept of 'Epagogy': *Towards a Concept of Didactic Induction (Zum Begriff der Didaktischen Induktion).* It is not entirely clear why this subtitle has not been explicitly included in the new edition. Buck has evidently assigned a central role

to the systematic relationship between Epagogy in the sense of induction and didactic forms (such as the *example* in Chapter 2) in understanding the concept of learning.

The book is divided into three large chapters. In the first chapter, which bears the title of the entire study, Buck develops the categorical context of his project. He attempts on giving a focused reconstruction of the history of philosophy with reference to especially Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Husserl and Gadamer with the systematic claim to justify the complex internal structure of the experience of learning *as* learning-as-experience. Against this background, he explores the central didactic approaches and forms of his philosophy of learning. In the second chapter Buck specifies the connection between *Induction and Example* (*Induktion und Beispiel).* In the third chapter, which was only added posthumously in the third edition of 1989, he examines the relationship between *Analogy and Understanding of Analogy (Analogie und Analogieverstehen).*

Against the teleological view of a linear-additive learning process, Buck emphasizes the constitutive role of disruptive, counteracting obstacles for any kind of learning. Mainly with reference to Hegel's explanations from the *Introduction* to the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Buck clarifies that learning does not mean that the learner gains new experiences in dealing with objects *within* an existing horizon of background assumptions; but rather that he makes a second-order experience about his current criteria and conditions of experience itself (79-89). Hegel's idea of the "reversal of consciousness" ("Umkehrung des Bewusstseins") finally proves to be the central theoretical resource for Buck's anti-teleological and negativist concept of learning. He terminologically defines it as ‘transformative learning’, as Andrea English (2014) has translated the term "Umlernen" (11). Buck signifies that the experience of irreconcilable contradictions has an impact on the learner himself insofar as he is compelled to examine, revise and transform his thought-and-action-leading background assumptions. Of course, one should not overlook the fact that Buck is following Hegel only partially and (following Gadamer) defends the inexhaustible, unlimited openness of all learning and experience against Hegel's teleological system.

Nota bene: Buck attempts to define the concept of learning philosophically; but he does not address the peculiar claim of *philosophical learning* as required in the theory and practice of philosophy teaching. A systematic examination of Buck’s theory in the didactics of philosophy is largely a desideratum. However, I would like to suggest at least some of the potential starting points for a didactical reflection. On the one hand, it can be said that Buck's theory could contribute to an expanded understanding of the traditional principles of *Subject- and Student-Orientation* in the context of philosophical learning and teaching. His sophisticated analysis on the fore-structures of learning (following especially Aristotle and Husserl) opens up an instructive theoretical approach in a twofold sense: First, he presents plausible reasons for the assumption that *conceptual* learning should be based on background and pre-knowledge (see e.g. Christian Thein (2017)). With convincing arguments he, secondly, confirms the didactical claim that the confrontation with philosophical problems enables the learner to dismantle ethically significant self-delusions along this background and pre-knowledge.

On the other hand, one can say that Buck's multifaceted analysis highlights the special status and function of the didactic form of the *example* (chapter 2). With a view to philosophical

learning and teaching (at least in the German-speaking debate), this form has been examined only rarely in recent years. It may be assumed that both in the training of (prospective) teachers and with regard to the practical organisation of teaching and school lessons, the 'classical' models of general didactics about *Examples, Exemplarity* or *Exemplary Learning* (e.g. by Wolfgang Klafki, Martin Wagenschein) seem to be still quite common. Of course, Buck does not only point out the didactical and philosophical inadequacies of these models (131-133); he also presents a differentiated analysis of *examples* with a view to their opening function for abstract and conceptual learning. For the theory and practice of the teaching of philosophy, the part of the study in which Buck decisively demonstrates the relevance of examples for the learning of *philosophical concepts* seems almost to be indispensable (167-172). Furthermore, the higher-order level of Buck’s theory also results from the fact that he does not justify the deep reflection on the phenomenon of learning against the scope of teaching. Among other things, Buck's decidedly didactic analyses on *examples* and *analogies* provide substantive objections against the tendency to undermine the validity and motives of teaching and teachers; a virulent problem that has been aptly problematized in current discourse as 'learnification' (Gert J. J. Biesta).

So: With regard to the teaching and learning of philosophy, Buck offers a variety of starting points. He provides a corrective against the reductionist tendencies to narrow the concept of learning down to standardised objectives and one-sided results. Through his negative concept of learning, he also suggests the close connection between the experience of contradictions and the advocacy of alternative ways of thinking with a view to the formation of philosophical judgements.

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