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Special Issue on the International Philosophy Olympiad

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

www.philosophie.ch/jdph

- Volume 5 1/2021 -

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 (March 2021; Volume 5, Number 1/2021), please follow the instructions on the website. Your text should reach one of the editors no later than 25th of January 2021 (but manuscripts are also welcome at any time).

- Volume 5 2/2021 -

The following issue, which will be published in October 2021, will focus on a special topic: Philosophy Teaching and Digital Transformation. We welcome submissions on this broad topic, in particular answers to questions such as: How can (and should) philosophy be taught online? What are the advantages of online teaching? Is it possible to completely substitute the important features of philosophy classes by electronic communication or learning software? Please send your text to one of the editors no later than 15th of July 2021.

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EDITORIAL

Dear readers!

Please find on the following pages the first special issue of this Journal. Its focus is the International Philosophy Olympiad (IPO), an international essay competition for high school students that has taken place every year since 1993. Miha Andrič had the idea for a special issue on this topic in May 2019 and brought it up to the editors. The idea was to offer a platform for the discussion about fundamental aspects of the IPO and thereby to stimulate such discussion and to bring it to a higher level. The aspects we envisioned ranged from the purposes, aims, and culture of such an international event to questions about gender and fairness and about the format of the competition, the essay as a form of philosophical writing, as well as the teaching of writing and the evaluation of essays. In our views, these topics are also of interest for the research on the teaching and learning of philosophy in general.

We launched a call for papers in June 2019. The first submission we received was the one by Marc Foglia on the concept of the essay at the IPO. This is also the first article you will find in this special issue. Marc Foglia questions the idea that the essay is a neutral form for a philosophical competition and argues that the expectations as to what constitutes a good essay at the IPO are not yet sufficiently explicit. The paper was discussed in a Zoom meeting at the e-IPO 2020. It inspired several colleagues to write articles which in some ways are replies to the challenges posed by Marc Foglia, but each of them also represents an independent contribution.

Gad Prudovsky develops an answer to the challenge posed by Foglia to explain what the criterion of "relevance" means. He shows how it is possible to engage students in a philosophical conversation and thereby in a collaborative learning process by presenting a detailed plan for teaching Descartes' *Meditations*.

Marjan Šimenc investigates Foglia's claim that the essay is not a neutral form of writing. He argues that the essay is not a neutral form precisely because it requires the contestants to adhere to strict rules. He then seeks to develop a more complex definition of the philosophical essay.

Jonas Pfister discusses the evaluation criteria and the grading of essays at the IPO. He argues that the criteria should be specified, their status clarified, and a method of grading developed. In the appendix of the article, you'll find his proposal on how to use the specified criteria in evaluating philosophical essays at the IPO.

Yeri Hong investigates the process of how to teach essay writing for the IPO. She starts with the assumption that the writing of an essay for the IPO is importantly about expressing one's inner voice. Her suggestions for teaching methods are based on Peter Elbow's theory of writing. She explains how one can teach students to think creatively and critically about a philosophical topic, and she presents methods for writing in English as a second language.

Each of the contributions was read and evaluated by two reviewers in a double-blind process (in the case of the article by Jonas Pfister, Philipp Richter organized the review process). We would like to thank all of the reviewers, many of which are part of the IPO community, for their very valuable help. Thank you very much!

This issue also includes one country report. Steven Burik, Matthew Hammerton, and Sovan Patra describe the situation of philosophy in the educational system in Singapore. Although philosophy is not an official school subject in Singapore, there are spaces, as the authors explain, where the promotion of philosophical thinking is taking place.

At the end of this issue, you will find a special format: Short Questions, Short Answers. We asked some of the long-standing members of the International Committee of the IPO to answer some questions about the relation of the IPO to the teaching of philosophy. The answers come from Shinji Kajitani (Tokyo, Japan), Gad Prudovsky (Jerusalem, Israel), Thor Steinar Grødal (Oslo, Norway), and Ji-Aeh Lee (Seoul, South Korea).

Finally, we would like to thank Kira Lewandowski (Bochum) for proofreading the whole manuscript of this issue.

We wish you good reading!

December 2020
The Editors

WHAT IS AN ESSAY? THOUGHTS ON THE ESSAY AS THE FORM OF PHILOSOPHICAL EXPRESSION AT THE INTERNATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OLYMPIAD (IPO)

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Abstract
The author examines the essay as the form of philosophical writing practiced in the context of the International Philosophy Olympiad. He questions the idea that the essay would be an open, smooth, and neutral form in view of the many expectations of the jury. He argues that these expectations as to what constitutes a good essay, sometimes uncertain, ambiguous, or even contradictory, are not yet sufficiently explicit.

Keywords: essay, evaluation, Montaigne, quotation, questioning, interpretational work

The International Philosophy Olympiad (IPO) is an international philosophy competition. It is an essay contest between high school students whose work is evaluated by a jury of philosophy teachers from countries worldwide. The best essays are awarded prizes and published on the home page of the official IPO website.[1]

The essay is a smooth, open, and consensual form. Under the term "essay" no particular structure is imposed *a priori* on the contestants. The essay can be considered the touchstone of written expression in philosophy, which would explain the consensus it enjoys as a form of expression particularly appropriate for an international competition. The consensus around the essay stems from the participants' common wish, whatever their country, to adopt a single form of discourse as a common denominator, giving no advantage to this or that national form of teaching. We believe in the neutrality of the essay as a form. As a fluid form of expression, perhaps even as a non-form, the essay leaves aside the cultural and national asperities of philosophical writing. It is therefore also an open form, capable of accommodating a wide variety of productions. The first issue at stake in these reflections *is whether this hypothesis concerning the essay corresponds to reality.*

The second issue in this paper is to clarify *what the jury implicitly expects from a good essay.*[2] Indeed, not everything that presents itself as an essay can be accepted, formally, as a good essay. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that there is a hidden nature or dynamic to

[1] URL: http://www.philosophy-olympiad.org/
[2] This paper was discussed during the e-IPO 2020 with other jury members. My special thanks go to my colleagues Christine, Frosina, Mitieli, Attila, Gadi, Jonas, Marjan, Panagiotis and Thor for their comments.

essays, which we will try to uncover. What do we mean by essay? We cannot rely solely on any intuition we might have regarding the term, because it could include preconceived ideas which vary from country to country. Shall we face up to the Socratic demand for a definition, so as to determine precisely what we expect from students: "How can I know the qualities of something I don't know?" asks Socrates in the *Meno* (71b).

Despite its apparent neutrality, the essay has a long and rich tradition. The term was coined by Michel de Montaigne in the 16th century as a test or an attempt at personal judgment. Etymologically, the term refers to an attempt or a weight (in Latin, *exagium*). Montaigne evaluates the weight of ideas or opinions, with the aim of forming a personal judgment from other judgments, mainly of authors, whose authority appears to him to be contingent, variable, and susceptible to contrary assessments. The form of the essay implies that the personal judgment adopts the position of an arbiter, but not of an omniscient arbiter. The reflections proposed by the author of the *Essays* do not have the value of a statement of universal knowledge, quite the contrary. Montaigne claims a subjective truth in this matter: "These are my fancies, by which I try to give knowledge not of things, but of myself"[3], and points out the limits of this exercise, perhaps out of false modesty: "As for the natural faculties that are in me, of which this book is the essay, I felt them bending under the load. My conceptions and my judgement move only by groping, staggering, stumbling, and blundering; and when I have gone ahead as far as I can, still I am not at all satisfied"[4]. Writing an essay certainly retains something of Michel de Montaigne's *Essays*. It has the sense of exercising a thinking subjectivity, in contrast to a presentation of knowledge based on the student's memory. Francis Bacon's essays, published in 1597, are the first works in English that describe themselves as "essays". The English tradition is particularly rich, with authors such as John Locke, David Hume, or, closer to us, Bertrand Russell. Thus, the essay has behind it a dense literary and philosophical tradition, but also a significant tradition of teaching. Under the appearance of a smooth and neutral form, the essay has a historical depth that we should explore further. This is the first criticism, in the positive sense of the term, that I would like to make: *In the context of IPOs and the practice of essay writing, it is very likely that the less we are aware of a particular tradition, the more we are conditioned by it.*

Do we have a definition of the essay? With respect to the IPO, no particular form of writing is imposed on the contestants. We could consider the essay as being to philosophical expression what the good savage is to civilized man, or what man in Rousseau's state of nature could hypothetically be in relation to us. The essay could be seen as representing the possibility of thought free from any pre-established rule, of spontaneity without any particular hindrance. No imposed division, no *a priori* guidance of thought, no obligatory reference or expected author. The essay offers a great deal of formal freedom to the students, who are at liberty to determine a course of action for themselves. This is what the *IPO Guide for Contestants* emphasizes: "A philosophical essay should be an exploratory device, something that starts with a question and takes you on a path towards an answer" (Murphy 2017: 53).[5] This is a normative ("should be")

[3] *Essays,* II, 10, p. 410a. The reference to the *Essays* is given in the French edition by Pierre Villey at the Presses Universitaires de France (1924); here translated by Donald Frame (1943).
[4] *Essays*, I, 26, p. 130a.
[5] A note indicates that this description of the essay is borrowed from a professor of philosophy at a Canadian

but open-ended description. There will be a starting point at least ("starts with a question"), but not necessarily an end point ("towards an answer"), as in Plato's aporetic dialogues.

But is the essay truly a free form? The IPO Guide defines the essay as an "exploratory device" of thought. I googled (!) for an image to find out what this expression means in English, and I came across a NASA probe vehicle. The image of the "exploratory device" entails a number of expectations: the essay must demonstrate the student's curiosity and desire for intellectual conquest; as a "device", the essay essentially becomes a technical plan, whose genius consists in inventing tools, weapons, and machines in order to ensure the success of the author's desire for conquest; the "path" proposed by the student is an image that refers in reality to a "device" aimed at exploring a territory, etc. Not everyone will agree with this implicit vision of philosophy as the expression – among others – of a technical and conquering civilization. We need to continue working on a definition.

What are the main expectations of a good essay? The absence of an imposed form belies underlying norms, a certain number of expectations, and unfortunately, serious ambiguities, which I will now try to unveil. At the IPO in Rome in 2019, the IPO jury received the compendium of evaluation criteria written by Floris Velema in 2017. The "rubric" sets out the five official evaluation criteria in a concise and graduated manner. It provides valuable guidance for the members of the jury.

Essay number:

Name of reviewer:

International Philosophy Olympiad

	0	0,5	1	1,5	2
Relevance to the topic	The essay has no relevance at all to the chosen theme.	The essay has some relevance to the chosen theme.	The essay has sufficient relevance to the chosen theme.	The essay has more than sufficient relevance to the chosen theme.	The essay is fully in line with the chosen theme.
Philosophical understanding of the topic	The essay shows no philosophical understanding.	The essay contains some philosophical references without any clear understanding of the topic.	The essay contains some philosophical references and sufficient understanding of the topic.	The essay shows a philosophical understanding of thinkers, concepts, theory, etc., but is at times inconsistent or incomplete.	The essay shows insight and competence, as well as a clear understanding of thinkers, concepts, theory, etc.
Persuasive power of argumentation	The essay lacks argumentative force, analysis and persuasiveness.	The essay contains some analysis, but has limited argumentative force and persuasiveness.	The essay contains some analysis, has argumentative force and is to some degree persuasive, but not always consistent.	The essay contains good philosophical analysis and has argumentative force, but is not entirely convincing.	The essay contains good philosophical analysis, has argumentative force and has the power to convince.
Coherence	The essay lacks structure.	The essay has limited structure.	The essay has sufficient structure, but is hard to read.	The essay has a clear structure, including subheadings, summaries, etc.	The essay offers clear reading, is accessible, well-structured and arranged with good care.
Originality	The essay voices no original viewpoint.	The essay attempts, but fails to present an original viewpoint.	The essay shows signs of originality, but does not present itself as such.	The essay shows more than sufficient character, color and personality.	The essay shows character, is colorful and expresses personality.

Fig. 1. Rubric by Floris Velema

University.

The criteria are clear and concise. What are the corresponding expectations? Let us start with the first criterion "relevance to the topic". This criterion implies that the student has understood the quotation. On this basis, the student must identify a thesis and develop an argument. The first criterion suddenly ceases to be clear: In relation to relevance, does the criterion refer to the analysis of the quotation, the quotation being the touchstone of the relevance of the essay as a whole, or the development of an argument from a thesis, which has been extracted from the quotation? "The essay is fully in line with the chosen theme," one also reads with regard to the first criterion. It is not clear whether the student should give priority to an analysis of the quotation, or to the discussion of a thesis that he or she has established from the quotation. The jury's differences of interpretation of the first criterion explain differences in expectations. How to judge the relevance of the argumentation proposed by the student? Should one continue to refer to the quotation, or should one look only at the thesis extracted from it?

It is not clear whether it is the student's task to understand, interpret and discuss the quotation's author's thought, or to use the quotation to discuss a thesis or a question the student has formulated. In other words, how much value can and should be placed on accuracy of interpretation and fidelity to the quotation? *Is the quotation only a pretext, the real starting point of the essay being the question formulated by the student?*[6] *Another ambiguity arises: Is the true starting point of the essay the question, or is it a thesis that the student formulates in response to the question and submits for examination in the argument?* At the IPO 2019 in Rome, on the jury of which I was a member, a student spotted a question that was probably familiar to him in Donna Haraway's quotation,[7] and then returned to an argued course that he or she had probably learned. The members of my jury gave a low mark to this essay, which was primarily based on the recitation of knowledge. However, one member of the jury found the essay admirable from the perspective of the philosophical culture he was referring to. This is a sign of ambiguity about what can be expected of a good essay. If one considers that the essay is a discussion of a thesis resulting from the proposed quotation, based on a question chosen by the student contestant, why would this essay not receive an excellent grade?

"A philosophical essay [...] starts with a question", says the IPO Guide (Murphy 2017: 53). However, the contestant is *confronted with a quotation and not with a question,* which somewhat blurs the object of the initial consensus. As things stand, the students must develop for themselves the question that they will attempt to answer from the quotation. Does this imply that they must be able to disentangle and choose between possible meanings? What degree of latitude do we leave the students to choose the question they will try to answer, as in the previous concrete case? Indeed, the students enjoy considerable latitude to choose an approach in relation to the topic and how they will develop their arguments.[8]

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[6] On this issue, I personally share the opinion expressed by Gadi Prudovski and Marjan Šimenc at the e-IPO 2020 conference: if the quotation is treated merely as a trigger, that can be seen as a form of disrespect. It should be a kind of "conversation" (Gadi) or "dialogue" (Marjan) with the author.

[7] Topic IV: "All readings are also mis-readings, re-readings, partial readings, imposed readings, and imagined readings of a text that is originally and finally never simply there. Just as the world is originally fallen apart, the text is always already enmeshed in contending practices and hopes." Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*: *The Reinvention of Nature*. New York (NY), Routledge, 1991, p. 123-124.

[8] "This freedom is legitimate", recalled Jonas Pfister during the e-IPO, "insofar as it is compatible with the first

This is all very well, but it is not unreasonable to consider that there is also something arbitrary about this approach. The urgency of a four-hour essay is not conducive to a thorough examination of the quotation. Moreover, since each quotation may give rise to a good handful of questions – a "swarm", as Socrates would say[9] – it gives an idea of the range of possibilities facing the students and the jury. If the hypothesis is correct, then we should see each year that the essays are totally different from one another and praise this as a magnificent example of the extreme diversity of human thought. But we can also worry a little about this: the amplitude between two essays is so great that it would seem rather vain to try to compare them with each other. The evaluation of the essays could then be discouraging. I cannot make a general statement, as France's participation in the IPO is very recent. However, the hypothesis that I am propounding corresponds to reality, as experienced by the French jury since 2018. To sum up: *the place of the analysis of the quotation in the essay, as well as the link between the quotation and the question formulated by the student, are the first two important sources of ambiguity.*

Do good essays consist in discussing theses that the students have posed themselves? The IPO Guide endorses this interpretation: a good essay is an essay written "in defense" of a thesis extracted from the quotation. "In its essence, a philosophical essay is a well-reasoned defense of a thesis" (Murphy 2017: 57).[10] However, the wording of this expectation may give rise to a legitimate *caveat*. If the jury assesses the relevance of the essay by reference to the quotation, it will appreciate the students' work through their concern for a thorough understanding of the author's thought and the link between it and the question formulated. This is what the second criterion of the "rubric" specifies: "Philosophical Understanding of the Topic." We can then ask ourselves if the thesis maintains a rather distant relationship with the quotation but is well defended, will the resulting essay be better than another essay mainly concerned with interpreting the quotation correctly, showing that several interpretations and questions are possible, trying to establish their respective strength and determining which one should be preferred? Personally, I would give a better mark to the essay that had taken the second path, notwithstanding the fact that it did not correspond to the traditional idea of the essay as an argument deployed on the basis of a thesis. To sum up: *the place of the thesis discussed by the student constitutes a third source of ambiguity.*

The essay does not theoretically have a predetermined shape. Is it then necessary to entrust the students with the elaboration of the form of their essays? This is what the guide suggests: "The next step is to decide on a clear structure for your essay" (Murphy 2017: 56). It would seem as though it were up to each contestant to decide what form she or he will give to the essay. However, this advice does not seem realistic. Will a contestant be able in four hours to invent such a formal structure by him or herself? Or is this advice not somewhat hypocritical, as some students already have an idea of the correct form of the essay in mind? Isn't the idea that the form of the essay could be invented, decided or chosen by the students, part of a myth of an absolute origin of thought? In reality, our pupils must have *learned how to write an essay*

criterion of relevance."

[9] Plato, *Meno,* 72a: "I seem to be in great luck, Meno: while I am looking for one virtue, I have found you to have a whole swarm of them."

[10] Murphy refers to Peter Horban's *Writing a Philosophy Paper*.

in order to be able to write a *good* essay.[11] This is a pedagogical mission that goes far beyond the framework of the IPO. The essay does not impose any *a priori* form but contains many expectations. *Let us avoid leading the contestants to believe that the essay has an entirely free form, which does not need to be learned and practised.* The essay is a complex form of philosophical expression, codified by the expectations of a jury, involving an effort of appropriation on the part of the contestants. This creates inequalities between those who have been trained in essay practice and the others who have not. There is no alternative to coaching students to write essays. In that respect, as Gadi Prudovski pointed out at e-IPO 2020, the essay is always an intellectual counter-education.[12]

It would probably be futile to hope to fix once and for all the method of writing and evaluating essays in a list of perfectly coherent criteria. However, not to pursue a methodological reflection on the essay would be to entrust oneself to the arbitrariness of one another's assessments and to the influence of the different national teaching traditions. Hoping in the end that personal and/or national arbitrariness might be compensated mechanically, or calculated by virtue of an algorithm, would be tantamount to renouncing the work of reason – the last straw for philosophy teachers! A recommendation that I would like to make at the end of these thoughts is the following: *as members of the IPO jury, we must continue to make more explicit the expectations of a good essay.* Indeed, this work of clarification is far from over. It has its place *a priori*, before the competition, but also a posteriori in the exchanges between members of the jury during the evaluation process.

Let us summarise the difficulty: Under the appearance of a smooth, neutral, and open form, the essay hides an ideal scenario that remains marked by deep ambiguities. These can give rise to legitimate hesitations among students, and to divergent assessments among jury members. Ideally, the students analyse the quotation and derive a question from it; then, having identified a thesis related to the question, they submit it to examination in the form of an argument. An objection to this ideal scenario is that it is precisely an ideal and that in fact the jury will tolerate deviations, perhaps even see in them marks of originality. However, on the one hand, I would like to recall that the essay seems to be a highly standardised form of philosophical expression. The information about this ideal form of the essay must be fairly shared – which it clearly is in the context of IPO.[13] On the other hand, the formal ideal of the essay remains a source of confusion for both students and jury members because of profound ambiguities.

In conclusion, I will recall the main ambiguities concerning the form of the IPO essay at this stage, ambiguities that we can hope to resolve in the future:

(1) **Analysing the quotation**: **Is this interpretational work of value in itself?** Is the

[11] During the e-IPO 2020, Thor Steinar Grødal outlined the principles of essay training, which is often absent from national curricula. The student is led to ask the following questions: What is the problem? What is the background to the problem? What are the pros and cons? Can I defend a position?

[12] "With the essay, you can't cheat: you have to put yourself in the situation of being an adult and no longer a child", Gadi Prudovsky pointed out. "The essay is yours, you are in the driver's seat". From this point of view, the essay can be considered as a legacy of the ideal of the Enlightenment, e.g. in Kant ("sapere aude").

[13] The information provided by the IPO about the essay is accessible: formal expectations of the essay are explicitly presented in the IPO Guide, available online and downloadable; the current evaluation criteria are defined in the "regulations" on the IPO website; *last but not least*, the award-winning essays are fully available on the website.

quotation, at best, a starting point, or, at worst, a mere pretext for an argument? One way to limit ambiguities would be to formulate the topics in the form of questions. However, confrontation with an author's thought does have value in itself.

(2) **Wording of the question**: **How much value do we place on it?** Can the student extract the question from the quotation without displaying a minimum of arbitrariness, given that any quotation gives rise to a wide range of interpretations? How much time should the student spend formulating the question from the quotation? What is then the expected style of questioning: Is it to deepen the questioning throughout the essay? Or is it to ask the question, as one would immerse oneself in a cold bath before coming out of it reinvigorated, as Nietzsche once said,[14] to move on to more serious things?

(3) **Position of the thesis: Is it related to the question or to the quotation?** Is it a question of first discussing the appropriateness of the thesis, the thesis being the basis of the jury's assessment? Or, without falling into any fetishism of the thesis, of giving oneself the freedom to examine other theoretical possibilities related to the quotation?

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[14] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, book V, § 381: "For I approach deep problems like cold bath: quickly into them and quickly out again."

WRITING PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS: PRACTICING CITIZENSHIP IN THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS[1]

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Abstract
The aim of this essay is to illustrate, by means of a detailed teaching plan of Descartes' *Meditations*, how a genuine invitation of young students (11th grade) to be part of an ongoing philosophical conversation is possible. The educational goal is to practice involvement in the philosophical concerns of the thinkers we read, actually to experience the unrest that fuels their written work. The didactic proposed is geared towards fulfilling this goal. It rests on several principles, chief among which are a) paying close attention to the text in its full literary richness, b) learning through writing in response to carefully devised prompts, c) teaching that represents the personal journey of the teacher; and d) engaging students in collaborative learning. Many of the practices described are inspired by the methods developed in the Institute for Writing and Thinking (IWT) in Bard College.

Keywords: Descartes, Plato, Belief, Doubt, Fear, Will

Prologue: Reading Philosophy

Two thirds of the way into *Theaetetus*, Socrates shifts the focus of discussion from defining knowledge to understanding the notion of false judgment (Plato 1973: 187c8-d9):

> Socrates: Well now, I wonder if it's still worth raising once again, a point about judgment.
> Theaetetus: What point do you mean?
> Socrates: It's rather bothering me now, and it often has before, so that I've got into great difficulties, by myself and with others. I can't say what, exactly, this experience is with us, and how it comes into being in us.
> Theaetetus: What experience?

[1] I am happy to thank Miha Andrič, Marc Foglia and Jonas Pfister for organizing a Zoom meeting on philosophical essays during the 2020 e-IPO. The discussions in that encounter encouraged me to explore my thoughts on the matter by writing this essay. I am lucky to teach in a wonderful school. I am deeply grateful to my colleagues – especially Edna Ruppin, Liora Harari Amedi, Valerie Zakovitch and Yael Justus Segal – for their friendship and intellectual support, and to my students for their love of philosophy. I am equally grateful to Bard's Institute for Writing and Thinking (IWT) and especially to its director Erica Kaufman, for developing their innovative teaching practices and for their inspiring workshops. I thank Lucy Aitchison and Dalia Drai for reading a draft of this essay and commenting on matters of style and content. I am also grateful to the two anonymous referees for their attentive reading and constructive comments. Finally, I thank the Edelstein Center at The Hebrew University for granting me a fellowship that enabled me to devote the needed time for writing this essay.

> Socrates: Judging something false. I'm still in two minds, now, as to whether we should let it pass, or investigate it in a different way from the one we took a short while ago.

Delightful! A turning point? Not at all. Socrates does not even consider to "let it pass" and return to the supposed main issue of defining knowledge. Not now, when he finally reached the true crux of the matter.[2]

Socrates is "bothered", immersed in "great difficulties". It is now the reader's task to inquire into the source of these difficulties, actually to experience with Socrates his philosophical unrest. Defending this normative demand, being both a philosophical and an educational duty, is the main burden of this essay. In other words, a philosophical text prompts the reader to embark on her own exploration, but she should respect it by trying to be concerned with, even bothered by, the author's concern. The text is not just a trigger for the reader to dwell in her own philosophical habitat. Through the text, the reader converses with the author and broadens her accustomed philosophical landscape.

1. Introduction

In this issue, Marc Foglia's paper "What is an essay? Thoughts on the essay as the form of philosophical expression at the International Philosophy Olympiad (IPO)" sets a starting point in the discussion regarding the role of essay writing in teaching philosophy. I follow his lead in several respects:

- Focusing on the productive integration of essay writing in philosophy teaching (mainly in high school).
- Taking IPO methods and criteria[3] as setting values that need exploration and clarification. This means looking at a specific type of philosophical essay, the type that invites the writer to respond to a quotation.
- Viewing essay writing as a relatively open form of writing, less rigid, that is, than the academic paper or an exam answer, but still "conditioned by a tradition".[4]
- Regarding the question concerning the appropriate attitude of the writer towards the quotation as our first issue.

In IPO regulations the response to this last issue is phrased as a demand that the essay should be "relevant" to the quotation, but Foglia invites us to explore the exact nature of this highly vague term.[5] In what follows I propose a way to understand the term.

I want to illustrate the teaching practice that emerges from my understanding of the term "relevant". It is a long illustration, the main bulk of this essay, representing, I estimate, at least six double sessions, ninety minutes each, in class. I am not documenting my own teaching,

[2] As McDowell remarks in his note to that passage: "the discussion of false judgment is in fact highly relevant to the dialogue's main concern" (Plato 1973: 194).
[3] For IPO criteria of essay evaluation, see in this issue Foglia 2020: 132.
[4] "In the context of IPOs and the practice of essay writing, it is very likely that the less we are aware of a particular tradition, the more we are conditioned by it." (Foglia 2020: 131).
[5] "Is the quotation only a pretext, the real starting point of the essay being the question formulated by the student? Another ambiguity arises: Is the true starting point of the essay the question, or is it a thesis that the student formulates in response to the question and submits for examination in the argument?" (Foglia 2020: 133).

though the practices described, and the contents discussed are drawn from my actual classes, in high-school and university. I attempt here to integrate them into a coherent teaching module devoted to the study of Descartes' *Meditations.*

The methods employed in this module are inspired by the practices I have learned in several week-long workshops led by associates of the Institute for Writing and Thinking (IWT) at Bard College. The basic drive of IWT is to "enrich learning in all disciplines with programs which focus on the role of writing in teaching and learning."[6] The teaching plan detailed below is my enthusiastic application to teaching philosophy of the methods I have acquired and the enriching experiences I have enjoyed in these workshops. In several places below I mention the practices by their IWT names and refer to a book of essays that introduces these practices and their rationale (Vilardi and Chang 2009). These references are only reminders, they do not reflect my full indebtedness to the way in which IWT transformed my teaching.

2. Teaching Descartes' Meditations

The teaching module I am about to describe is part of an Epistemology course for 11th grade students. It is an elective course, so I assume that they are highly motivated and prepared for hard work. Prior to this study unit, the class learned some basic philosophical logic and several Platonic dialogues. I chose to describe the flow of the class as a set of instructions to teachers.[7]

The students arrive to the first class after reading at home the first meditation. The reading instructions are minimal. The main requests are, to research a little bit on the historical and personal context of the book and its author, and to note the autobiographical nature of the text and reflect on its credibility. Start the first meeting by reading aloud the final paragraph of the first meditation.

> Like a prisoner who dreams that he is free, starts to suspect that it is merely a dream, and wants to go on dreaming rather than waking up, so I am content to slide back into my old opinions; I fear being shaken out of them because I am afraid that my peaceful sleep may be followed by hard labour when I wake, and that I shall have to struggle not in the light but in the imprisoning darkness of the problems I have raised. (Descartes 1996: 15)[8]

In the first stage, read the paragraph aloud. Then you may be a bit playful: ask one student to read it as if it is an indifferent analysis in a professional academic conference. Ask another

[6] For more information see: Bard College Institute for Writing & Thinking, accessed 23 July 2020 http://writingandthinking.org.

[7] A caveat should be added here. The didactic offered is highly time consuming, at least six ninety minutes sessions devoted to Descartes' *Meditations*. This led one of the referees of this paper to suggest that the study plan may "suit a special course for undergraduate university students better than average high school students." I agree that high school curricular constraints may prevent such a prolonged and attentive reading of a single text. But this is a drawback of the type of curriculum that focuses on "covering the material" at the expense of meaningful philosophical engagement with it. In all other respects (students' involvement, playfulness, scaffolding the difficulties encountered in the process) I believe that the didactic suits high school students.

[8] I am working with translations. The attentive reading I suggest, including the employment of subtle linguistic and literary sensitivities, is best done with the original text. My own limitations (I don't read Latin) as well as the students' preclude this.

student to read it as an emotional monologue in a drama.[9] During that second reading invite the students to underline an emotion or a state of mind that attracts their attention. At this stage prompt them to write several lines in which they explain their attraction. Specifically, ask them to relate to these emotions in a personal and associative way. When they finish their writing, read aloud the paragraph, and ask the students to interfere in your reading when you reach their chosen term and read aloud their reaction to the term they underlined. By the end of this stage, the class will be filled with personal and emotional reactions to the text in its fullness not only in its thin philosophical content. Let me give an example:

Upon reaching the words "being shaken out" a student interrupts and reads: "being shaken out makes me feel like a fruit that falls from a tree that is shaken. Who is shaking the tree? Am I going to rot, alone on the ground?" We do not react but continue till the next interruption.[10]

Next, prompt the students to write several lines regarding the state of mind that Descartes shares with us. The prompt needs explanation. The students are asked to describe the state of mind (say: he is afraid) and its object (say: of freedom). This is followed by two other prompts. First, "do you believe the author", and second, "why". Now invite the students to share their reactions to the prompts and initiate class discussion. After the end of the discussion ask the students to write an opening paragraph of an essay that reacts to the quote from Descartes.

The aim of the exercise is to encourage attentive conversation with the text. By attentive, I mean opening up to the full range of the author's act of communication. I want the students to immerse themselves in a conversation: "What is he (Descartes) trying to say to me, what is the reaction he is trying to elicit?" To immerse oneself in a conversation does not mean to surrender to all its maneuvers. One can object, resent, doubt, oscillate, be swayed, and so on, but it all starts with listening.

One might object that the purpose of philosophical education should be to train the student to be attentive to the content of the text, the thesis that it advances, the arguments it uses, and not to be sidetracked by the marginal emotive, stylistic, evocative, uses of language. The wonderful language of Descartes, his inviting and personal way of writing, only decorate the real thing. The suggested exercise distracts the student from her true object of attention.

My first reaction to this objection is philosophical. The assumption that language, any language, can be transparent; that content can be expressed in a way that is free from imagery, metaphor, analogy, conventions of presentation, and the like, was severely undermined by the philosophy of the previous century. I shall not attempt to document all the philosophical work that established this line of thought. Within analytical philosophy, whose history was dominated by the idea of an ideal language, the critique was launched by leading figures such as Wittgenstein, Austin, Quine, Sellars, Davidson, Goodman, Kuhn, and Hesse. The doubts about the possibility of transparent language were voiced even regarding mathematical and scientific language. In "softer" domains of discourse, such as metaphysics, politics, and ethics, this repudiation of ideal language was even more dramatic. Though I share this philosophical response and believe it has crucial implications for the didactics of philosophy, it is not the main line of argument I pursue here.

[9] In IWT this practice is called "text rendering".
[10] This practice is another type of "text rendering".

Even if we grant that in reading philosophical texts we should focus our attention on the philosophical content and neglect the style of presentation, our entry point is the text in all its richness. There are no shortcuts. Let us go back to Descartes. The most we can do, if we try a content-focused reading of the passage, is the rather thin statement that doubting old opinions is not a one-time effort and it has a high psychological price. But why is that? Why is the struggle not over once you understand that your old opinions are vulnerable to doubt? Surely, if the skeptical work was done properly, there is no need for continuous sustenance. This passage discloses a drama in which the intellect is not the only character. But how can we uncover the characters in the drama without paying attention to their traits, their virtues, and vices?

So, what is the object of Descartes' fear? The first, immediate answer is that he is afraid of waking up, mainly because waking up is followed by hard labor and struggle. In opposition, the dream represents tranquility, peaceful sleep. We have then the opposition between periods of sleep and periods of being awake as an opposition between peace and struggle. He wants to go on dreaming because he prefers passivity (as in "sliding") over activity (as in "hard labor"). A tension lurks: our narrator prefers the vice of idleness over the virtue of industriousness.

But can we simply say that Descartes is afraid of hard work? Such a conclusion contradicts the imagery of the passage. In the first stage, suspicions are raised regarding the peaceful dream of the old opinions; namely, the supposed freedom is cast into doubt. But if he wakes up and goes out of the prison, what awaits him? "Hard labour [...] in the imprisoning darkness of the problems I have raised." Note the imagery: darkness vs. light, imprisonment vs. freedom, dreaming vs. awakening. Descartes is willing to struggle in the light. The fear is not of hard work *per se*. It is the horror of leaving a peaceful prison never to return, for the sake of entering the darkness of another life imprisonment with the bonus of hard labor. In other words, Descartes' fears that the supposed light of knowledge is itself an unattainable illusion.

If we follow this interpretive track, a natural sequel will be that Descartes' fears are spurred by his doubts regarding the efficacy of the skeptical method. But why is it so frightening? In the classroom this can be a crucial question to ask in our joint attempt to share Descartes' *own* concerns, the sources of *his* unrest. And if he is worried about a life of constant struggle to no avail, then we should understand why seeking truth is such a struggle – to wit: not just hard work but struggle.

At this stage offer the class to juxtapose Descartes' state of mind by the end of the first meditation with that of Plato's prisoner forced out of the cave. There is a deep philosophical dialogue between the texts, but here again, I suggest starting with the imageries. Prompt the students to list common images that serve both philosophers. Socrates describes the process of forcing a prisoner out of the cave and habituating him to turn his eyes to the sun. The first stage is difficult:

> Socrates: Consider, then, what being released from their bonds and cured of their ignorance would naturally be like. When one of them was freed and suddenly compelled to stand up, turn his head, walk, and look up toward the light, he'd be pained and dazzled and unable to see the things whose shadows he'd seen before. What do you think he'd

> say, if we told him that what he'd seen before was inconsequential, but that now – because he is a bit closer to the things that are and is turned toward things that are more – he sees more correctly? Or, to put it another way, if we pointed to each of the things passing by, asked him what each of them is, and compelled him to answer, don't you think he'd be at a loss and that he'd believe that the things he saw earlier were truer than the ones he was now being shown? (Plato 1992: 515c-d)

Invite the students to write on the imagery used here by Plato and to identify similar patterns present in the first meditation. We may note here several conspicuous resemblances: movement from darkness to light, from imprisonment to freedom, the suffering in the new situation, and the longing for the old way. But we should also note a glaring difference. Descartes writes: "I am content to slide back into my old opinions" whereas Plato writes that "he'd be at a loss and that he'd believe that the things he saw earlier were truer than the ones he was now being shown". Descartes is drawn back to his old opinions by the appeal of comfort, almost seduced by the prospect of the calm and undisturbed existence of his customary beliefs. Plato's prisoner still believes in the truth of his earlier sights. He opts for the old beliefs because he is not – yet! – able "to see the things whose shadows he'd seen before". In Descartes' plot, we witness an inner struggle. The narrating subject himself suspects that his felt freedom is only a dreamt illusion. Out of his own drive for true freedom, he embarks into an awakening journey, and then something – again, within him – holds him back. In Plato's plot, an external agent exerts force on the unknowing prisoner, as the task itself – looking at the sun – involves a phase of blindness. There is no inner struggle. Without the external force, he would have remained loyal to his old beliefs. But once this process of forced habituation reaches its conclusion the drama ends.

> Socrates: Finally, I suppose, he'd be able to see the sun, not images of it in water or some alien place, but the sun itself, in its own place, and be able to study it.
> Glaucon: Necessarily so.
> Socrates: And at this point he would infer and conclude that the sun provides the seasons and the years, governs everything in the visible world, and is in some way the cause of all the things that he used to see.
> Glaucon: It's clear that would be his next step.
> Socrates: What about when he reminds himself of his first dwelling place, his fellow prisoners, and what passed for wisdom there? Don't you think that he'd count himself happy for the change and pity the others?
> Glaucon: Certainly.
> Socrates: And if there had been any honors, praises, or prizes among them for the one who was sharpest at identifying the shadows as they passed by and who best remembered which usually came earlier, which later, and which simultaneously, and who could thus best divine the future, do you think that our man would desire these rewards or envy those among the prisoners who were honored and held power? Instead, wouldn't he feel, with Homer, that he'd much prefer to "work the earth as a serf to another, one without possessions," and go through any sufferings, rather than share their opinions and live as

they do?
Glaucon: I suppose he would rather suffer anything than live like that.
(Plato 1992: 516b-e)

The prose is clear: nothing lures the prisoner back to prison. The riches of the old ways were turned off completely, they can no longer tempt him. His soul is one. His state of mind is completely stable. There is nothing in him that can provoke unrest. Descartes emulates Plato's rich imagery, inviting us to walk again in the path from darkness to light, from servitude to freedom; but he adds an antagonist that was not present in the first allegory. We will come back to this drama later in the essay, but I think that now the class is ready to return to our question regarding Descartes: What is the source of his fears?

The answer we have already reached is that Descartes is afraid that the supposed light of knowledge is itself an unattainable illusion. We also wondered why is it that the journey towards truth is portrayed as a struggle. After noticing the difference between Plato and Descartes, we may infer that in the latter's understanding the struggle is not just the companion of a single transitory phase. The pursuit of knowledge involves an ongoing struggle against an internal demon that draws the inquiring subject back to his dubitable opinions. At this stage of our reading, we have just finished the first meditation; the students are left to do some guesswork. We may play the game and leave the search for the villain within us to a later stage in our reading of the book – to the fourth meditation. Meanwhile, we can prompt the students to probe again the question of fear from a different angle.

It is quite usual to point at Descartes' search for a stable anchor on which we may rely, so that we shall not drift in the sea of opinions. Descartes claims that without such solid foundation knowledge is impossible. The reference to Archimedes in the second meditation strengthens this line. In our paragraph it is possible to understand "being shaken out" of our old opinions as a variation on the same theme. The old opinions form a solid structure, reliance on which does provide stability and may serve us well in daily life. So, it may indeed be a reasonable answer to the question regarding the source of Descartes' fear: he is not sure that the skeptical method will lead him to find a new anchor and he fears the prospects of unstable life.[11]

Though it is a reasonable interpretation, it invites a two-headed arrogant dismissal of Descartes' worries. "He is looking for an assurance that we today know is unattainable" coupled with "we have grown out of those fears, we have matured. Today we can live without such an assurance". The first head scorns Descartes for not accepting our contemporary embrace of our fallibility, thus leaping over the rationalist/empiricist debate before it even started. In terms of historical interpretation, it represents the vice of whiggish anachronism that treats Descartes as an embryonic stage in modern philosophical and scientific maturation. The second head psychologizes his philosophical quest. My starting point stresses our role to initiate our students into the world of philosophical conversations. To converse with a philosophical text involves a

[11] Charles Sanders Peirce (Peirce 1877) offers an evolutionary explanation for this type of quest to stabilize our knowledge. William James (James 1986) expressed a similar aversion towards an undecided state of mind.

search after the authors' concerns and making them, at least temporarily, a source of unrest to us as readers. I do not want my students to enter the role of therapists. You should not research into Descartes' fears in order to prove that they are not grounded in a real reason to worry. On the contrary, you read him in order to broaden your understanding of the real philosophical concerns that gave rise to such fears.

We are back with the fear and the troubling question: What is so threatening in a world in which our quest for knowledge is always accompanied by doubt, not as a methodical tool but as an enduring companion of an everlasting task? Let us look at the progress of science to improve our understanding of Descartes' worries. He was, we should remember, a philosopher/scientist. In our times, as Weber reminded us one hundred years ago, "science is chained to the course of progress" and in principle "this progress goes on *ad infinitum*" (Weber 1948: 137-8). But, as Weber points out so profoundly, this is not necessarily a reason for celebration. The law of progress determines that "[e]very scientific 'fulfilment' raises new 'questions'; it *asks* to be 'surpassed' and outdated. Whoever wishes to serve science has to resign himself to this fact [...]. For, after all, it is not self-evident that something subordinate to such a law is sensible and meaningful in itself" (Weber 1948: 138). Weber describes a situation quite similar to Descartes' nightmare, in which scientific research is in fact conducted within the "imprisoning darkness of the problems" that were raised in the first meditation. If we try to think of such a situation as a source of philosophical worry, we may recognize, with Weber, that devotion to such an endless endeavor may become a meaningless Sisyphean struggle.

We still have a long way to go in our attempt to understand the philosophical sources of Descartes' fears; but it seems that we went far enough in the illustration of the non-therapeutic attempt to decipher philosophical concerns that are embedded in the texts we read with our students. I mean that by now, our students may themselves be bothered by the concerns we have formulated. We may remind them that they ask often, what is the point of philosophy if we go back to questions that were formulated thousands of years ago. Is there a philosophy teacher that did not hear students voicing such a challenge? And their question stems out from a worry quite like the Cartesian one: are we going through all this hard work just to stay in the darkness of chronic doubts and disagreements.[12] Given Weber's sharp diagnosis of the nature of scientific research, chaining philosophy "to the course of progress", in the way certain philosophical naturalists recommend, cannot alleviate *this* worry.

We can now return to the search of the villain in Descartes' internal drama. What is the power within us that makes the struggle for truth so hard? What is the source of error? We may present the class with this issue after several sessions in which the second and third meditations are read and discussed. By now they are ready to read Descartes' response to this troubling question:

> So, the power of willing that God has given me, being extremely broad in its scope and also perfect of its kind, is not the cause of my mistakes. Nor is my power of understanding

[12] There is an interesting bifurcation between science and philosophy at this point. In science we have ample historical evidence that shows that even a firm scientific consensus will be "surpassed and outdated". In philosophy the research never yields a communal agreement. In both cases the lack of stability generates discontent.

> to blame: God gave it to me, so there can be no error in its activities; when I understand something, I undoubtedly understand it correctly. Well, then, where do my mistakes come from? Their source is the fact that *my will has a wider scope than my intellect has*, so that I am free to form beliefs on topics that I don't understand. Instead of behaving as I ought to, namely by restricting my will to the territory that my understanding covers, that is, suspending judgment when I am not intellectually in control, I let my will run loose, applying it to matters that I don't understand. In such cases there is nothing to stop the will from veering this way or that, so it easily turns away from what is true and good. That is the source of my error and sin. (Descartes 1996: 41)

There is so much to do with this paragraph. Here is one option: break the class into several groups and ask them to draw a map divided into territories of knowledge.[13] The landscape should be drawn with close attention to details: perceptual valley, scientific plain, mathematical path, the sea of self-knowledge, and God's mountain. Of course, let the students invent their own geography. Why not add moral and political judgments and aesthetic valuations to our map, even though they are not mentioned by Descartes? After the groups finish the playful map-drawing we may compare the different maps. Now let us start the game. In the stage prior to the skeptical challenge, the stage of the "old opinions", who controls the terrain? Is it a legitimate occupation? Ask the students to answer the question of legitimacy using Descartes' terminology. Now what happens by the end of the first meditation? The previous sovereign, the unrestricted will, is dethroned. Who is the agent that conducted the coup? Did it seize power? Not really. Refer the students to the imperative to restrict our judgment, to suspend "judgment when I am not intellectually in control". One power was dethroned, but by the end of the first meditation, there is no replacement. We are left with unsecured territory open to attack from various forces. Prompt the students to answer again the question regarding the source of Descartes' fears. I think, now we may reach an answer that reflects Descartes' fear. In the first meditation, the intellectual faculty of understanding drove away the unwarranted judgements of the will from their customary strongholds, not by replacing them with stable affirmations backed by our understanding, but by setting the rules of reason – *the method* – to which the struggle must conform.[14] But at this stage, there is no guarantee that the faculty of understanding, the intellect, is strong enough; that there is a "territory that my understanding

[13] This is a version of the general IWT practice "Writing from Images".

[14] Here I agree with Jan Forsman that deciding to doubt (suspend belief) is not "an easy act of the will" (Forsman 2017: 51). In the first meditation Descartes provides the will with the reasons needed to doubt. I partly disagree with Forsman about the possible endurance of the state of suspension of judgment. He claims that as "Descartes describes the suspension to be arduous and difficult, it suggests that we should read him as being completely serious about the general suspension of judgment. Based on this, the use of the method is not a purely hypothetical mind game. Descartes truly means that we should suspend judgment on all of our opinions and beliefs, as difficult as this may be. Suspension of judgment is therefore meant to be psychologically real and genuine" (Forsman 2017: 56). Yes, Descartes is absolutely serious about the duty to suspend judgment when lacking conclusive evidence. And yes, it is difficult to contain our previous habits to judge on matters that are not secured by reason. But if reason dictates complete skepticism, then it condemns us to a futile struggle in "the imprisoning darkness of the problems I have raised". If so, we may have reason enough to sway our will back to the old opinions. I do not want to press the point. I am not a Descartes scholar and Forsman's interpretation is very convincing. The didactic path that I offer in this paper can reasonably lead to his conclusions, and if they are arrived at in class by one of the students they will be welcomed most happily.

covers". And if this is the case, is the intellect strong enough to block the will from taking over again?

There is no doubt that Descartes depicts an internal drama. By now it is also clear that the two contending forces are the intellect and the will. Equipped with this understanding we go back to the struggle between the two main forces on the map and to our paragraph at the end of the first meditation. Ask the students to write what happened, given their present knowledge, in this battle between the two faculties. Then prompt them in a more focused way: did any of the battling forces lose territory in the first meditation? Did any side gain control over a certain piece of land? After writing on the two prompts ask them to share whatever part of their written materials they wish to present and discuss the variety of answers in class. Say the discussion leads to the understanding that though the will lost its unwarranted strongholds the intellect did not seize control over the vacant territories. We are left with doubts, in "no-man's-land". If so, what was the intellect's achievement in the first meditation?

Given the explanation of error in the fourth meditation, it seems that in the first meditation the faculty of understanding succeeded to restrain the will; provided it with reasons to confine its judgments only to the proper fields, yet to be discovered by reason. Does this mean that Descartes *understood* and *affirmed* by the end of the first meditation that his "will has a wider scope than [his] intellect has"? Well, it seems that not yet, as this is part of self-knowledge that was only conquered by reason in the second meditation. Does he *understand* and *affirm* the duty to restrain judgment? No doubt that he feels the burden of the duty to restrain his judgments, that is, to *behave* as he ought, but is this an achievement of his understanding? His intellect gave reasons that tempered the appetite of his will, but was the truth of the matter secured?

We are now in deep waters indeed. It is a great opportunity to explain in class the distinctions between reasons to believe and reasons to act, between intellectual reasoning and practical reasoning, between judging a belief to be true or false, and accepting or rejecting a duty. And most importantly, between the Platonic non-voluntarist conception of believing and Descartes' version of the voluntarist conception. If time allows and the class is willing and capable, we can turn to a crucial controversy between Plato and Descartes. Remind the students of Socrates denial of the possibility of weakness of the will, as "[N]o man voluntarily pursues evil, or that which he thinks to be evil. To prefer evil to good is not in human nature" (Plato 1956: 358c-d). Contrast this with the closing paragraph of the first meditation as expressing a genuine fear from the potency of the will to lead us to error: to *sin*.

We can now come back with our class to the Cartesian struggle. Ask the students if they should add to their map of the terrain of knowledge a special place for method. Then ask those who answered in the affirmative to write what they think happened to this location during the first meditation. Ask those who thought that there is no such place in the terrain, to explain what the achievement of reason was in that meditation.

We have two camps in class, those that take the rules of method to be part of the surface geography of knowledge and those who see them as having a different role, say that of a guiding norm. We have two rival interpretations. Which provides a better explanation of Descartes' fears? Prompt the students to formulate a proposition that may be regarded as a constraint on

the interpretation of Descartes' *Meditations*. Give them an example: the proposition that "the *Meditations* is a text that documents a progression in Descartes' understanding". As a progression assumes that latter understandings are not at Descartes' disposal at earlier stages, we can say that a demand that an interpretation of a fragment in the book must be sensitive to its place in the progression is implied in the proposition. In this sense, the interpreter cannot use Descartes' understanding in latter fragments when she constructs Descartes' consideration in the earlier one. This is what I mean by "constraint".

To manage this interpretive exploration, I recommend using the method of "dialectical notebook".[15] This is an in-class written task in small groups that ensures active participation of all students. Given the fact that the discussion is very demanding, combining understanding of both content and method, a group effort may be helpful. The process itself is quite simple. Divide the class into groups of three students, provide *each student* with an A3 paper with four columns (see below).

Writer	**Respondent 1**	**Respondent 2**	**Writer**
Write a proposition that you consider a constraint. Explain why and support with textual evidence. End with an interpretive demand that is raised by your constraint.	Do you accept the writer's constraint? If not, explain and support with textual evidence. If yes, add another textual support.	Do you accept the writer's constraint? If not, explain and support with textual evidence. If yes, add another interpretive demand.	Sum up the discussion and reformulate the constraint you offered (or explain why it should be discarded).
Answer:	**Answer:**	**Answer:**	**Answer:**

Tab 1. Dialectical Notebook: Constraints on the Interpretation of Descartes' *Meditations*

Have the students sit in triangles and instruct them as follows: each one responds to the question in the first column titled "Writer". After ten minutes, each participant gives her sheet to the student sitting on her right and they all respond to the question posed in the second column titled "Respondent 1". After another ten minutes, each participant hands over the sheet to the student on her right and the three answer the question in the third column titled "Respondent 2". In the final stage, each student gets from the student on her left the sheet she has initiated and devotes the last ten minutes to respond to the question in the fourth column, titled again "Writer". Completing the task takes forty minutes. It is hard work; they should have a break. When they return ask each threesome to compile an agreed-upon set of constraints and to record dissenting voices. With this at hand, we resume full-class discussion on the interpretation of the

[15] This is another effective practice in IWT arsenal. For an extensive discussion on a variety of uses of the method, see Ranny Bledsoe 2009.

Meditations. It will take quite a while and it is important to devote to it all the time that it needs. The students worked hard, and they earned the privilege to conduct a true philosophical discussion. They may enjoy the justified feeling that their opinion has weight and that it counts.

We do not know in advance what the list of constraints arrived at will include. Although I believe that, as teachers, we determine the procedure, not the results, I do feel that in this final discussion a certain philosophical insight must appear. If it does not grow out of the students' work, I recommend summoning it. Descartes writes in the paragraph from the fourth meditation that "When I understand something, I undoubtedly understand it correctly". Now his idea of methodical doubt presupposes that a person may entertain a certain content (say, a perceptual content) and judge it to be true, even though upon examination the judgment may be incorrect. It follows, from the perspective of the fourth meditation, that I could not have understood the content I entertained. The issue is crucial. For Descartes, believing is a two-stage affair: entertaining a content is not believing. To reach belief this first stage must be followed by judgement. But Descartes must give some account of the cognitive nature of entertaining a content, lest the old opinions of the past be reduced to mere mumbling; thus nullifying distinction between Cartesian epistemology on the one hand and Plato's or Spinoza's conceptions[16] on the other. The Cartesian drama, in other words, presupposes some liaisons between the intellect and the will. In the first meditation the intellect provides reasons for the will to suspend judgment. The will listens to the voice of reason, but it is not robbed from all its power. All this happens while the contents of the old opinions are still entertained, awaiting verdict. When the subject reaches understanding, grasping clear and distinct ideas, suspense ends. The judgment becomes part of the understanding.

Here then is a reformulation of the interpretive dilemma: Does Descartes, by the end of the first meditation, understand the rules of method or did he commit himself to them by a voluntary willful act? I noted the importance of this question in the history of philosophy, but I think that we must acknowledge the crucial religious weight of this moment. Seen from the perspective of the fourth meditation, overcoming error is equivalent to overcoming sin. Did Descartes reach an understanding of method that rendered him immune to sin or does the end of the first meditation represent a moment in which a voluntary leap of faith was for him the only path to salvation?[17]

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[16] The Platonic conception is represented nicely in the query about the very possibility of having false opinions in the section of the *Theaetetus* I presented in the Prologue. For Spinoza, see for example his discussion on the inability to entertain falsities in section 54 of his *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*: "For in our own case, knowing as I do that I exist, my existence or non-existence cannot be a matter of fiction for me; nor again can I engage in the fiction of an elephant that can pass through the eye of a needle; nor knowing the nature of God, can his existence or non-existence be a matter of fiction for me" (Spinoza 1992: 245).

[17] Accepting the second horn of the dilemma leads to an interpretation that sheds light on William James' debate with Descartes. James' thesis is iconoclastic: "Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for to say, under such circumstances, 'do not decide, but leave the question open,' is itself a passional decision, – just like deciding yes or no, – and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth" (James 1986: 11). The icon, I think, is Descartes', and on the interpretation here suggested the polarity rests on a deep agreement. They share the idea that faith must rely on an act of the will. The *timing* of the "passional decision" is the junction in which their ways part: For Descartes it is the grand single decision to embrace method, for James it is the recurring act of will that is called for whenever a person is confronted with "a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds". In contemporary terms this is the debate between foundationalism and naturalism in epistemology.

This discussion leads us back to the division of the class into two camps before we entered our dialectical notebook: one takes method to be part of knowledge proper and the second takes it as a form of guiding norm. Return to that debate and open a discussion: did the exploration done in the dialectical notebook change allegiances? If so, why? If there still are clear camps in the class, ask each camp to provide a written explanation that uses textual anchors on which to ground it. It should be a joint effort in interpretive argumentation that responds to the demands of the interpretive constraints. Specifically, both sides must directly address the question: wherein lies the power that still operates on Descartes, tempting him back to his old opinions?

After this long journey, leave time for the class to process it. Start this session by revealing the pedagogical and philosophical considerations that informed the study module. Emphasize the element of choice: you chose the text, the Platonic comparison, the method, the entry point, and the philosophical focus. There are alternatives, this is neither the only nor the single best way to study the *Meditations.* Stress that your choices embedded the text within a specific philosophical conversation and identified its *systematic* core. In this sense you invited them to join a philosophical journey on a path that you carved. The method enabled them to find their own way. This is not an apology, putting texts on the table and leading the students with instructions and questions is the teacher's role. But as they have read the whole book, ask them to write a list of themes that were left out in the learning process that you have led. This is a hard question; best divide the class into groups of three so that they can help each other. Next, invite them to think together of other entry points to Descartes' text and invite them to share their insights in a group discussion.

In the second part of the session prompt them to reflect on the process they have gone through in the past weeks. In what ways was it different from other classes you take? Did you feel the joy of slow discovery or would you prefer a more thematic option, in which the theses and the arguments of the text are summarized by the teacher? Did you lose track at a certain point, and if so, why? Did the work on the more literary elements of the philosophical texts – imageries, metaphors, etc. – advance your understanding or did it made you lose track? Have a short discussion in which the students share their reflections. As this is a crucial phase in which a community of learning is consolidated, share with them your own experience as well. [18]

This ends the series of meetings devoted to Descartes' *Meditations.* To wrap it up, ask the students to write a personal essay. Give them two options: either respond to the final paragraph of the first meditation or choose another paragraph in the texts and converse with it. Emphasize that this is not an exercise in summarizing the class proceedings but an explorative task that may lead them along a variety of paths. Empower them to take their own stance, to use the familiarity they have gained with the text to conduct an informed discussion with Descartes. Remind them that you are inviting them to participate in a conversation, that this is exactly what you tried to do in constructing the study module. You chose your focus and went with it. Choosing a way necessarily implies neglecting others. Advise them to forget the false ideal of comprehensive coverage of the text and promise them that your assessment is never guided by a search for completeness. Encourage them to occupy the driver's seat and to lead their readers

[18] This is an invitation to think and write about the learning process. In IWT terms this is "process writing". For an elaboration, see Guy 2009.

from beginning to end; to make their own point. It may end with a critical approach that challenges Descartes' coherence or it may help integrating the fragments of his thought into a coherent whole. Be that as it may, the close attention we give to the details of Descartes' text ensures that the educational ideal of conversing respectfully with past philosophers is met.

3. Morals to be Drawn

a. Philosophy teaching should be text-based and historically minded. One cannot really converse with past thinkers and become part of the philosophical tradition without encountering original texts. Furthermore, collecting select passages written by past masters in order to give the students "the feel" of philosophical texts misses the point. To converse with someone, you need to hear her through, immerse yourself in her train of thought. Obviously, we cannot ask the students to read the complete writings of Plato, but to read a dialogue from beginning to end is a reasonable task. One of the results of this moral is that our philosophical curriculum will be less comprehensive. I am not sure that this is a real shortcoming.
b. Our reading of texts should attend first to the concerns of the author, only then to the students' concerns. To study philosophy is to broaden one's concerns not to remain in their confines.
c. Hence it is important to engage the students in philosophical discussions that are not in their immediate concerns; meaning, not to concentrate solely on the easier path to their hearts through ethics and political philosophy.
d. Essay writing is the culmination of a process and the central method of assessment. It enables the student to participate in the conversation, not just to be a silent listener.
e. Though the culmination is a personal challenge, the way to it is necessarily communal. The practices described in this paper are geared towards the construction of a community of letters.
f. The essay should be a personal journey that is grounded in a sincere effort to take part in an ongoing philosophical conversation. Hence, our methods of assessment should reward sincerity. How? This is an issue for a separate paper that will analyze the criterion of "originality".
g. The teaching methods should represent the personal journey of the teacher. The path described here is the one I have chosen. It contains a choice regarding the heart of the matter and therefore there are glaring omissions. Making this fact transparent to the students is a crucial element in their philosophical initiation. In making it transparent, the teacher expresses her own devotion to the philosophical enterprise. Such an expression must be sincere. If it is not, philosophy teaching immediately joins the dreadful hidden curriculum that is the lion's share of our schooling: that teaching (learning) it is separated from doing

it.[19] But if it is sincere, it becomes clear to the students that the teacher invites them to a republic of letters, the very same republic of which she herself is an enthusiastic citizen.[20]

h. The alleged clash between text-based and thematic-minded teaching should be abandoned. The module described in this essay is clearly text-based. Still, it is the core of a course in epistemology. It reflects the choice of a focal theme in the teaching of this philosophical subject matter. The theme, in short, is to problematize the idea of entertaining content as a cognitive stage that precedes the act of affirming judgment and is independent of it. The teacher's choice of texts and prompts creates the needed thematic coherence without bombarding the students with text-book banalities.

4. Summary by Example – Application to Essay Assessment

One of the quotes in the 2020 e-IPO was:

> "It will be necessary to [...] awaken the experience of the world such as it appears to us insofar as we are in the world through our bodies, and insofar as we perceive the world with our bodies. But by re-establishing contact with the body and with the world in this way, we will also rediscover our-selves".[21]

A student versed in the methods of close reading that were introduced in this essay will try, before analyzing the content, to sense the author's mood. Here is one way: There is an experience that went dormant (it needs awakening). The author laments a loss and urges his readers to re-establish and re-discover that past. The sense of loss is connected to an act or a process that separated a unity, as the need is to re-establish a contact that was severed.

Now the student may look at the imagery. The experience needs *awakening* so that a certain perceptual-bodily *appearance* will again occupy center-stage. Does the imagery ring a bell, does it resonate familiar philosophical language? Clearly it does, even for a beginner. The philosopher ascends from *Appearance* to *reality* as in Plato's cave, discrediting sense perception as a vehicle to truth. The self is passive when it lends itself to the deliverances of the senses and becomes free by overcoming them. It is *awakened* to its true nature by attending

[19] The damaging separation between teaching and research trickles down to the schools from the universities, in which the distinction is clearly hierarchical. You would often hear professors complain that "my teaching load hinders my ability to do good research"; whereas the converse – "my research load hinders my ability to teach properly" sounds almost like a grammatical mistake in Academo-language.

[20] All through the essay I stressed not only the teacher's choice of themes but also the optionality of methods, using expressions like "here I recommend" or "one option is". This led one of the reviewers of the paper to wonder "which signposts/methods/prompts described are necessary for this didactic to work properly". My response is twofold. First, the choice of specific methods must remain in the teacher's hand if we want to respect the principle that "the teaching methods should represent the personal journey of the teacher". Second, the methods suggested can work only if the teacher shares the morals listed in this section. Of which I should stress a) close attention to the text in its full literary richness, b) learning through writing in response to prompts and c) engaging students in collaborative learning. So, I cannot answer the challenge directly by pointing to specific methods that are necessary for the didactic to work. The best I can do is to suggest this vague characterization of the frame of mind the teacher needs to adopt. Thus, for instance, I cannot say that the prompt to underline the expressions of Descartes' emotional states of mind in the closing paragraph of the first meditation is essential; but I can say that reading this paragraph without prompting the students to pay attention to the emotional language Descartes chooses to use, will nullify the effects of the didactic I lay out.

[21] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, 1945/2014, p. 213. Translated by Donald A. Landes.

to *reason*, free from bodily imprisonment. Descartes' way to his true self, the *cogito*, turns away from the body altogether.

If the student's first task is to be relevant to the author's concerns, the focus on the "literary" elements of the quote led her well. Merleau-Ponty calls for a radical revision of the philosophical tradition that banishes the body from our conception of knowledge and the self. Now she can write her own essay that takes part in *this* conversation. This is not the only relevant conversation. But a response to this quote that will not attend to the author's sense of loss that was brought about by the philosophical tradition, and to his urgent call to re-instate what was lost, does not fully meet the "relevance" criterion.

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IPO ESSAY: FAIRNESS, PLURALITY, AND FREEDOM

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Abstract
The article examines the status of the IPO essay, starting from the thesis that the essay is a neutral form that does not favour or disadvantage any particular group of students and that allows everyone complete freedom of writing. The discussion yields two findings: firstly, the essay is not a neutral form, since students are required to adhere to specific rules in their writing. The basic regulations governing the essay are contained in the IPO Statute in the form of criteria of evaluation. Further provisions are laid down in the IPO Essay Guide. The Guide specifies in greater detail what is expected of students in their essay writing; however, these specifications seem to be one-dimensional. The article seeks to propose a more complex understanding of the philosophical essay based on various essay writing guides which focus on the essay as representing not merely a form of knowledge examination, but also a school of thought and a realm of freedom. Thus, the second conclusion arising from the article is the thesis that the philosophical essay is by essence linked to the freedom of the subject; however, this is not a complete freedom, but one that should be regarded as relating to philosophical socialisation and qualification.

Key words: IPO, essay, freedom, rules, emancipation

The article by Marc Foglia in this issue highlights key issues and presents important considerations relating to the status of the IPO essay, thereby inviting anyone interested in the topic to continue with the discussion. This article should be seen as a response to that invitation, even if it only focuses on a part of the issues raised in Foglia's article.

First of all, let us turn the spotlight on the role of the IPO. The IPO is not merely an international essay writing contest for secondary school students. Even though, it may be an achievement in itself to see philosophy elevated to an Olympic discipline in the modern world, the IPO is in fact much more than a competition. It has a positive impact on the reputation of philosophy in various education systems and contributes to improving the quality of teaching philosophy. The IPO is also an opportunity for students and philosophy teachers form around the globe to come together by virtue of philosophy and for the purpose of philosophy and to forge friendships through philosophy. At the same time, the IPO is also a realm for joint reflection. Hence, this article does not primarily focus on conveying new knowledge as much as it aims to open up and expand the realm for joint reflection about the IPO and for the benefit of the IPO. If philosophy is an activity that constantly questions the self-evident, then the IPO

should also be open for reflections on its foundations. These foundations also include the essay written by students competing in the Olympiad, which is why I believe it is important to expand the realm for these reflections. Therefore, this article does not seek to yield any final verdict on this matter, but rather aims to follow on from the reflection that inspired it and hopes to inspire others to contribute to the discussion.

1. The neutrality of the essay and fairness of the IPO competition

The abovementioned article begins with a description of the status of the IPO essay:

> The essay is a smooth, open, and consensual form. Under the term 'essay', no particular form is imposed a priori on the contestants. [...] The consensus around the essay stems from the desire of all the participants, whatever their country, to have a common denominator, which would give no advantage to this or that national form of teaching. We believe in the neutrality of the essay as a form. As a smooth one, perhaps even as a non-form, the essay leaves aside the cultural and national asperities of philosophical writing. (Foglia 2020: 130)

This description of the neutrality of the essay is in itself not a neutral description, or to put it in other words, it is not a description of what the essay is but rather a description of the status ascribed to it in the framework of the Philosophy Olympiad. As pointed out by Marc Foglia himself, the status of this "hypothesis concerning the essay" is contentious, not least for two reasons. The opening phrase "the essay is a smooth, open, and consensual form" suggests that the essay is a form that does not impose any requirements on students, since it provides every student with complete freedom in expressing the content he or she wishes to present. Looking at the essay from this perspective, essay writing does not require any specific preparation or training that would equip students with a grasp of essay writing rules. The essay is not subject to any particular rules and as such allows complete freedom of writing.

It seems as if this conception of the essay is a prerequisite for ensuring the impartiality of the form in which students compete at the IPO. If the essay imposed specific requirements on the student, such requirements could potentially be culturally specific, putting certain students in a privileged position. Students from cultures where essay writing is introduced to school children at an early age would have an advantage over those living in cultures where this type of essay writing is not taught. In this case, the essay would be culturally specific and would not represent a neutral playing field where students from various cultures could freely meet. Marc Foglia therefore makes the following claim:

> The consensus around the essay stems from the desire of all the participants, whatever their country, to have a common denominator, which would give no advantage to this or that national form of teaching. (Foglia 2020: 130)

This means that the consensus is not rooted in fact but actually stems (to a certain extent) from a desire. Desires can obscure one's view of reality and give rise to bias; hence, the consensus

on the essay is not necessarily rooted in fact and may stem from an illusion. It should be added at this point that the wording "we believe" is ambiguous, as it is not quite clear to whom the "we" refers. The "we" does not appear to be empirical, referring to the actual participants at a specific Olympiad; rather, it seems to be a "we of principle", i.e. a requirement imposed by the IPO as an institution to which everyone who identifies themselves with the Philosophy Olympiad as a meaningful project must adhere. An individual is allowed to have misgivings regarding the neutrality of the essay, but as soon as they participate in the Olympiad, they subscribe to the collective "we" that constitutes the Olympiad and allows it to live on.

Yet the neutrality of the essay (possibly) being a prerequisite illusion is not the only possible interpretation of the consensus to which Marc Foglia refers. The reasoning can also be reversed. In this case, what makes the IPO possible is not that everyone believes in the neutrality of the essay (regardless of the facts), but an IPO essay that is in fact a specific type of essay designed to be neutral as a form. This means that the IPO essay must be constructed in such a way that it does not favour any cultural or national tradition or any method of teaching philosophy.

It would follow from the above that the IPO essay is not a matter of tradition but in fact something new: a specific type of essay defined as an IPO essay which is a *novum* and differs from the various essay writing traditions. As such, it is neutral and provides the students competing in the Olympiad with a level playing field. While it is true that nothing can be found in official IPO documents to support this thesis of the IPO essay as a novelty, there is also nothing there that would preclude it.

The conception of the IPO essay as a *novum* is one possible answer to Foglia's question whether the form of an essay can provide a fair competition model for the Olympiad. Marc Foglia himself does not give a clear answer to the question he asks in the introduction. He argues that the essay is not a realm of complete freedom, that the essay has a tradition, that students should therefore be taught how to write an essay and that the current essay evaluation criteria have serious shortcomings. All four claims are substantiated with convincing arguments with which the author of this article can only agree. However, Foglia does not address the question implied in his initial query: is an essay that imposes specific requirements and is more closely related to certain cultural traditions (and certain traditions of teaching philosophy in upper secondary education) than others in fact a form that allows for fair competition among students.

What follows below is an attempt to combine the two theses, namely that the essay is a fair form despite the fact that it has its tradition (or even traditions) and a stronger presence in certain cultures than in others. The point of departure shall be that demanding "neutrality" may be setting the bar too high and that a lower standard would be sufficient to ensure a fair competition. One possibility would be not to require the complete neutrality of the essay, but to only prescribe a minimum common core for the IPO essay. To put it in other words, students would be allowed to write various types of essays but all essays would have to include a common core designed as the lowest common denominator of the various traditions from which the students originate. This conception presupposes that all philosophical traditions feature certain common elements which can be included in the essay. The IPO essay would thus be the lowest common denominator of all the various cultures, traditions, and methods of teaching

philosophy.

However, the approach described above would itself be based on assumptions that are questionable. The first assumption is that any "national philosophy" is uniform and homogenous rather than plural, dynamic and contradictory; the second is that students are only influenced by philosophy rather than the general culture of any country, which is in itself never homogenous or static. Furthermore, what is also assumed is that the essay is a clear and unequivocal notion. Yet even a brief consideration shows that the essay has undergone a complex evolution since it was first introduced by Montaigne. This evolution has resulted in a plurality of essays, so Montaigne's essay can no longer be seen as the model for the ultimate essay but merely as one of the numerous forms of the essay, i.e. the personal essay.[1]

In the light of the above, it is not even immediately clear which type of essay is involved when speaking about the IPO essay. Although every student and every teacher bring to the table a certain preliminary understanding of the essay (as well as of what philosophy is and how it should be taught), this does not mean that these preliminary notions must be the benchmark for the IPO essay. Plurality can hence be found both among the students writing the essay and originating from different cultures as well as among the different forms of the essay. The IPO Statute that governs the content of the IPO does not deal explicitly with the nature of the essay which may give the impression that it is taken for granted; nevertheless, the Statute does contain criteria of evaluation which can be considered as a manifestation of a certain implicit conception of the essay.

Before delving into the definition of the essay found in the Statute, there is one more possible solution to the issue of the neutrality of the essay to consider. Even if it is conceived as the lowest common denominator of all traditions, the essay is not necessarily a neutral form. But what is sufficient to ensure fair competition at the Olympiad (which, as will be shown later, is a very specific competition) is that the essay be a form that is equally alien to all students. A precedent for using alienation as a mechanism for ensuring fairness already exists within the IPO: at the IPO, students are not allowed to write their essay in their mother tongue but in one of their foreign languages. Mutatis mutandis, a similar requirement could be imposed when it comes to the form of the essay: the IPO essay does not necessarily have to be a form common to all cultures, it could just as well be one equally alien to all cultures. Given that the essay as a form is much more common in certain cultures than in others, this use of the alienation principle is not really a viable option. However, there is another possibility: the alienness of the essay to the students. It could be argued that the philosophical essay is not a natural form of writing, nor does it resemble the essays in other school subjects. All students must learn to master it at some point just like a foreign language; in this sense, it is equally alien to all students. Hence, no student can have an advantage over the others, since writing a philosophical essay puts all of them face to face with an alien form, they must gradually become versed in. In the light of this interpretation, what makes the IPO possible is not the illusion that the essay

[1] "The personal essay is what most people mean when they consider the essay as a genre. It has the characteristics usually mentioned in defining the essay generally: an informal style, a casual, meandering structure, a conversational tone, the clear imprint of the author's personality, and a tendency toward subjects Phillip Lopate (1994) has dubbed "the familiar and the domestic, the emotional middle of the road." Most of the great essayists have been masters of the personal essay, from the genre's founder Montaigne onward." (Werner 1997: 1386).

is a neutral form, nor the novelty of the IPO essay as a form, but the fact that the philosophical essay is equally alien and unnatural to all participants.

As shown above, the argument that the philosophical essay is equally new to all students could provide a solution to the initial issue of the neutrality of the essay. However, further consideration shows that that is not an adequate definition of the IPO essay. It may fulfil the requirement for fairness, giving all students a level playing field (in principle) and not putting any competitor in a privileged position; however, theories focussing on knowledge evaluation emphasize that any knowledge examination must be valid in *terms of content*.[2] In general, this means that an examination in any subject must actually test the knowledge (and skills) acquired by the student in the course of that subject. In the case of the Philosophy Olympiad, this would mean that the essay should in fact test all the relevant philosophical knowledge. So, the question is: is the knowledge required for the IPO essay and shown by students in their essay writing really essential philosophical knowledge? Does the essay truly attain all the key goals of philosophy in upper-secondary education? Regardless of whether the IPO essay is a novum or a cross-section of different traditions, this may perhaps ensure a fair evaluation, but it is no guarantee of the validity of the evaluation. Obliging students to express their philosophical ideas in an obscure form may put all students in an equal position, but it is a position that is equally senseless for all of them. Therefore, the link between the essay and philosophy (or the link between the form of the essay and the form of philosophy or, to take it a step further, the question whether the essay as a form encourages philosophising or hinders it) is an issue of vital importance. Before addressing it, let us focus on the formal definition of the essay within the IPO.

2. The definition of the essay in the IPO Statute and the Guide

Certain information on the nature of the essay can be found in the IPO Statute entitled *Regulations concerning the organization of the International Philosophy Olympiads.* The Statute as a formal document does not contain any justification as to why the Olympiad takes place in the form of an essay writing competition, nor does it provide any definition of the content and form of the essay; however, it does contain instructions regarding essay assessment criteria. These allow us to deduce what is expected of an essay, so it could be said that the assessment criteria serve (to some extent) as a replacement for a definition of the essay. In the section entitled *The Competition*, item C entitled *Grading the essays* lists five criteria of evaluation, namely: relevance to the topic, philosophical understanding of the topic, persuasive power of argumentation, coherence, and originality.[3]

[2] According to classic test theory, good assessment has two characteristics: reliability and validity. In the case of IPO what is important is *inter-rater reliability* (consistency across evaluators) and *content validity* (Schaughency, Smith, van den Meer and Berg 2012).

[3] It should be pointed out that the Philosophy Olympiad is a competition that differs significantly from the Olympic Games in sports. In the Olympic Games, there can only be one winner, whereas in the Philosophy Olympiad, several essays (and their authors) can take first place; the same goes for second or third place. Not only is it not known in advance, which essay will take first place; it is also impossible to predict how many essays will take it. This means that an essay ranked in first place is not simply better than all the others; it merely exhibits one aspect of excellence, of which there are many. This is also what sets the Philosophy Olympiad apart from the Mathematical Olympiad. In the Mathematical Olympiad, it is also not uncommon for several students to share the first place, but that usually means that all of them managed to successfully solve the given mathematical problems.

This list is all the *Statute* has to say on the nature of the essay: it enumerates the criteria with no explanation as to why these criteria are relevant, why there are five of them, or what these criteria actually mean. It is not much, but the IPO statute is also not the document that should provide a detailed definition. But the problem is not the lack of a definition in the Statute, but the fact that there is no other document of formal validity where a detailed definition could be found. In his article, Marc Foglia refers to an interpretation of the evaluation criteria developed by Floris Velema for the IPO in 2017 (Foglia 2020: 132), but this interpretation is not available on the IPO website, so it has no formal effect.[4] This also means that at the level of official documents, the status of the essay and the evaluation process are defined in a very rudimentary manner.

Nevertheless, these criteria do reveal some characteristics of the essay. Firstly, the essay is based on philosophical understanding, which means that it is not an essay in general but a philosophical essay. Secondly, the evaluation criteria require that the essay serve a communicative purpose, given that it needs to be persuasive. What is also required is that the essay be based on argumentation. Argumentation is closely related to the "persuasive power" which brings the philosophical essay closer to the field of rhetoric. However, the demand for coherence points out that the logical validity of deductions and conclusions is also an essential element of the essay and the grade. The criterion of originality refers to the fact that the students are not only expected to present the well-established positions of others but must offer a personal contribution of their own. And that is all.

Further details on the IPO essay can be found in the *Essay Guide* (Murphy 2017). The status of this document is somewhat unclear, as it is published on the IPO website in the section entitled *Philosophy Resources* which could give the impression that it has no official validity. However, it bears the title *IPO Essay Guide* and it was produced by the *IPO Essay Guide Committee* (established at the IPO in 2015) after consultation with the formal bodies of the IPO, so it can be considered at least as a semi-official document.

The IPO Guide on the philosophical essay appropriately begins with a short definition of philosophy:

Philosophy is often defined as inquiry, more specifically inquiry into matters of profound

In the Philosophy Olympiad, however, the best essays arrive at very different conclusions, since it is the path that led (the subject) to that conclusion that matters.

[4] The grading rubric defines each of the evaluation criteria in further detail by means of descriptions of five achievement levels for each criterion of evaluation. In this process, all five criteria are assigned the same importance (that is, it is considered that they have the same weight), they all bring the same number of points and are (considered) independent of one another. However, there is also an alternative to this analytical approach to evaluation criteria, i.e. the holistic approach where descriptions do not refer to individual criteria but the essay as a whole. The holistic description of an *excellent essay* in the *International Baccalaureate Programme* quoted below serves as a good illustration: "The response is well structured, focused and effectively organized. There is appropriate use of philosophical vocabulary throughout the response. There is clear identification of the view(s) of philosophical activity presented in the unseen text. Effective references are made to the text. The student draws explicitly on their personal experience of philosophical activity, using well-chosen examples or illustrations to support their points. There is clear analysis of both similarities and differences between the student's personal experience of philosophical activity and the view(s) of philosophical activity presented. The response contains well-developed critical analysis. All, or nearly all, of the main points are justified. The response argues to a reasoned conclusion." (IBO 2014: 47)

> interest to humanity – truth, knowledge, reality, meaning, social justice and the mind. Art and literature also look into these questions, but only philosophy examines these subjects directly, logically, and in depth.

This definition is quite general and formal and appears to be an introduction to further reflection. But the *Guide* leaves it at this definition and moves on to the philosophical method:

> In either form, the critical components of any philosophical inquiry have always been to craft a thesis, usually related to one of these subject areas, and persuade a listener or reader to accept one's thesis through honest, logical, and thorough argumentation.

After this brief and concise definition of philosophy and the philosophical method in the Introduction, the next section of the Guide provides the reader with a series of recommendations on how to write a good philosophical essay. This instrumental task is an appropriate goal for a text with the subtitle *How To Write a Philosophy Essay. A Guide for IPO Contestants*.

It should nevertheless be pointed out that the Introduction does not appear to be entirely philosophical. Reading it from the philosophical point of view, it fails to address (or at least to address explicitly) a number of issues. Let me only list a few: Why are philosophical topics relevant for humanity? Why would anyone want to write a philosophical essay about these topics? Why is the essay the most suitable form for persuading other people?[5]

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the Guide as a whole is well-designed and very humble in its ambitions. It defines itself as being merely one of numerous guides and makes no claims of originality, stating that "Its principles have been inspired by over two dozen guides written by professors of philosophy from around the world." (Murphy 2017: 53) However, a brief look at the authors of the listed resource documents shows that most of them work in English-speaking countries. In this respect, the Guide makes no effort to encompass and present the existing plurality of perspectives on the philosophical essay. Furthermore, the titles of most of the referenced texts contain the phrase "philosophical paper". The reference for the drafting of the *Guide* is not the theory of the essay, the history of the essay, reflections on the essay as a genre, or the teaching of philosophy, but existing guidelines for writing texts that are related to the education and work of professional philosophers (or future professional philosophers) in the academic world.

Admittedly, the Guide makes no pretence of doing any of the above. It only promises to provide guidelines on essay writing rather than an in-depth reflection on the nature of the essay. It promises to provide instructions (a tool) that will help students with their essay writing and this tool is exactly what it delivers[6], as proven quite clearly by the content of the text. The main

[5] Reading the Guide from the philosophical point of view and analysing how much plurality it allows with regard to the definition of philosophy and the philosophical method may well be controversial. It should perhaps be pointed out that the description of the method does not merely refer to "persuasion" but to "honest, logical, and thorough argumentation". However, even this disclaimer cannot conceal the implicit assumption that the purpose of the essay is to persuade the reader rather than to merely present or discuss a perspective, inviting the reader to consider his or her views on the matter at hand.

[6] It can definitely be said that the Guide is a very well-conceived and clear essay writing guide that is without a doubt a valuable aid to students preparing for the IPO.

body of the text contains the "framework on how to write a philosophy essay" (Murphy 2017: 54) which consists of eight steps: *Know your audience. Organize your thoughts. Structure your essay. Write your introduction. Argue your position. Consider counter-arguments. Craft a conclusion. Revise, edit and rework your essay*. The Guide thus provides a systematic overview of the instructions given to students by teachers teaching them how to write an essay.

This points to an important element that determines the role and place of the essay today. At least in the USA, the essay has become a vital element of the educational process and in the course of the massification of higher education, the USA have become the dominating provider of university education. Most of the authors to whom the *Guide* refers work in the USA and all of the texts referenced in the Guide were written in English. It could therefore be said that the understanding of the essay today is primarily the result of its role in the study process rather than its long history.

The Guide is a good tool and as such only contains what is absolutely essential. It does not claim to provide the only relevant guidelines ("it outlines one method", Murphy 2017: 52), but given that there is only one IPO Guide, these guidelines (may) acquire the status of official guidelines. This is why it would make sense (at least for teachers) to have an additional document that would elaborate on what the Guide merely presupposes and include what was omitted from the Guide. For philosophers, it might be quite interesting to see what was excluded from the text from the draft to the final version. To give an example: in the "methodological practice of Socratic philosophizing", Martens identifies five methods of "methodologically integrative philosophizing" (Martens 2009: 499), namely *phenomenological (observing and describing), hermeneutical (understanding someone), analytical (testing the assertions), dialectical (contradicting and disputing) and speculative (using imagination to find a different point of view).*[7] From Martens' perspective, focusing solely on the "conceptual-argumentative analysis" reduces the scope of philosophical reflection. As mentioned above, the Guide opens with a definition of philosophy but confines itself to a mere presentation without digging any deeper; it adopts the same approach when it comes to the philosophical method. This brevity of the Guide is understandable since it is conceived as an aid for novice students and the results of the underlying reflection are therefore presented in the form of clear recommendations. The Guide does not seek to explore issues, present alternative views, advocate its perspective, or rebut potential objections. It does not have to comply with the elements set out in the Guide itself as elements of a good essay. It would therefore make sense to upgrade it with additional texts that will examine the nature of the philosophical essay from a more exploratory perspective rather than for the sole purpose of drafting essay writing guidelines.

3. The essay as the application of knowledge, a catalyst of refection, and a realm of (free) thinking

The embeddedness of the essay in the education system is typical not only of the USA but can also be found in other countries such as France, the difference being that in France this type of text is referred to as a *dissertation* rather than an *essay.* All students of *lycées* must pass a *baccalauréat* which includes a mandatory *dissertation philosophique* as one of the more

[7] The brief outlines of the methods given in brackets are taken from Marsal 2009.

demanding elements.[8]

However, the purpose of these texts is not only the examination of knowledge, even though they may sometimes only be used to that effect. An example of an essay with limited ambition is described in the essay writing guide for the IELTS test (*The International English Language Testing System*):

> In order to be able to write good essays it is first of all essential to make sure that you understand the purpose of the task. It may seem obvious: the purpose is to test your ability to write essays for university or college in English. (Duigu 2002: 19)

In this case, the aim of the essay is clearly testing. It serves no other purpose; students will only write it so others can evaluate their competence. What will be checked in the course of this test of the students' essay writing ability is also clearly defined in advance:

> Candidates are assessed on their ability to: present the solution to a problem; present and justify an opinion; compare and contrast evidence, opinions and implications; evaluate and challenge ideas, evidence or an argument. The topics are of general interest and it makes no difference what subjects candidates study ... The main emphasis is in fact on your ability to think and argue appropriately about a common issue. This is because university students need to be able to analyse and discuss problems and solutions, and evaluate and express opinions. University study is not simply about presenting facts. (Duigu 2002: 2)

Here, the essay is a form allowing the candidate to *show certain skills* which can then be assessed and graded. The same could be said of the IPO essay: it is a way for the contestants to show a certain understanding of philosophy and certain general skills so that they can be evaluated. Skills cannot be evaluated unless they have been manifested and the essay thus becomes a tool for making these skills (and knowledge and understanding) evident and accessible for evaluation. However, even in education, the essay is used more broadly and does not always serve merely as a display of skills. Certain authors even see it as *the very core of education*:

> Essay writing is at the heart of education. Whatever you study, at some point you will be asked to write an essay. And if you aren't, then you probably won't ever weave together the different strands of what you've learnt. In humanities subjects – Literature, History, Philosophy and so on – students are judged on their essays. (Warburton 2006: 7)

As Warburton puts it, it is "essay writing" and not simply the essay that "is at the heart of education". One of his justifications for this claim is that students are judged on their essays.

[8] It should be noted that the texts referenced below are not analysed in detail. They are mentioned as examples illustrating the scope of the essay rather than to provide a comprehensive analysis of how the essay is construed in each of the texts.

Hence, being "at the heart" could mean that essay writing is important because evaluation is so vital. But it can also mean more: anything that is subject to evaluation is relevant and given that essays are assessed and graded, this can only indicate that essays incorporate the essence of a certain field. The essay is not only about knowledge and understanding; what is specific of the essay is the effective application of understanding. But Warburton emphasizes another crucial aspect:

> Getting down to writing is very important. It is often in the act of writing that the subject comes into focus for the first time. I've had the experience in the middle of an examination of suddenly understanding the connections between different parts of a syllabus in a way that eluded me throughout my revision. Writing is a kind of thinking. (Warburton 2006: 8)

Not only is the essay a means for the author to prove that he or she knows something so well that this knowledge can be put to use; the writing of the essay as such is a thinking process. Hence, the essay can be considered a thinking aid. From this point of view, it is not merely a tool allowing one to show off their knowledge but also a tool that facilitates thinking. Venturing even a step further, it could be said that the essay is in fact thinking itself – not merely a training method for better thinking, but a form in which thinking develops. The rules that must be observed in essay writing are not just a necessary evil for others to be able to understand the text but are constitutive of thinking.

In the light of the above reflection, the essay loses the status of an evaluation tool for thinking and becomes a catalyst of thinking. This is true of the essay in general, but when it comes to the philosophical essay, there is even more to it. In philosophy, the essay can have a Socratic dimension.

Reflecting on this, it may be useful to build on Jonas Pfister who considers philosophical writing to also be related to a personal dimension.[9]

Certain French authors even take a step further in this direction by assigning qualities to the *dissertation* that go beyond the emphasis on thinking and linking the *dissertation* to the formation and transformation of the subject. For them, writing a *dissertation* is not just a matter of a subject thinking in philosophical terms and using philosophical reasoning to navigate through life and thinking: "philosophising means re-learning to see the world with new eyes" (Russ and Farago 2006: 20). The aim of the *dissertation* is the "formation of the mind" and the acquisition of "dynamic and autonomous thinking" (Russ and Farago 2006: 23). The transformation occurs as soon as the subject enters the realm of thinking and starts moving freely through it. The boldest of definitions even go so far as to link the writing of a dissertation to a "spiritual exercise" (Russ 1992: 76), in the course of which the student establishes a dialogue with him- or herself. Reflection (upon oneself) hence equals transformation (Russ 1992: 76).

[9] "The same reasons that speak in favour of a philosophical diary in class also hold true of writing essays: it requires reflection and allows the writer to find reassurance and, depending on the topic, also their identity." (Pfister 2016: 285)

These conclusions are consistent with the thesis that essay writing entails not only learning to philosophize, but also offers the subject a realm of freedom. A good starting point for this discussion is the perspective developed by the Dutch theorist in the field of philosophy of education Gert Biesta (Biesta 2010). Biesta classifies the aims of education into three domains. The first domain entails socialization, i.e. the acceptance of the rules and norms of a society. The second domain is qualification in the sense of acquiring knowledge and skills that can be put to use in the labour market. The third domain is emancipation[10] which refers to the fact that students should acquire the ability to express themselves, to take a stand, to think things through for themselves. It is my belief that the philosophical essay offers a realm of freedom that is closely related to the emancipation of the subject.[11]

If the philosophical essay does in fact include an element of emancipation, this should also be reflected in rules governing the writing and grading of essays. The *IPO Guide* puts no explicit emphasis on this element; however, the instructions for evaluating essays included in the *IPO Statute* allow for this possibility. Originality, which is one of the five criteria of evaluation, can definitely be seen as a realm of freedom allowing the subject to create something new. In order for the subject to do so, creating something new must be permissible under the essay writing rules. The creativity in question is naturally not creativity in the absolute sense, but creativity within given bounds. In the context of the essay, this means that the essay is a realm in which the student can think and go where his thoughts take him. This is creativity in the sense that the essay entails both adherence to rules as well as the freedom provided by these rules. The freedom to reflect upon the world we are part of and to examine how this world defines us as well as the freedom to start something new. The fact that originality is one of the evaluation criteria for essays allows us to view the IPO essay not only as a realm of philosophical socialization (into philosophical tradition and culture) and qualification (acquiring philosophical skills) but also a realm of emancipation and the subject's freedom. The essay is thus once again linked to the freedom mentioned by Foglia ("a thought free from any pre-established rule, of a spontaneity without any particular hindrance", Foglia 2020: 131); however, this is not a complete freedom, but one that should be regarded as related to (philosophical) socialisation and qualification.

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[10] Biesta occasionally refers to the third domain using the terms individuation and subjectification.

[11] It is obvious that the essay is related to socialization and qualification, but it is not so clear whether it also has any relation to emancipation. To put it in other words: socialization into a type of discourse, which the essay certainly is, requires the knowledge and respect of rules (of essay writing). Emancipation would also open up the possibility to use the essay not only to reflect upon and question certain well-established general beliefs, but to also to question and challenge certain essay writing rules.

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EVALUATION AND GRADING OF PHILOSOPHY ESSAYS AT THE INTERNATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OLYMPIAD

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Abstract
The correct evaluation of philosophy essays is an important topic in the didactics of philosophy. Two central questions are which evaluation criteria should be used and how they should be applied to reach fair grades. Focusing in this article on the essay competition of the International Philosophy Olympiad (IPO), the list of five evaluation criteria for an argumentative essay at the IPO is discussed. It is argued that these criteria should be specified, their status should be clarified, and a grading method should be developed. The article contains an appendix with a very short guide for evaluators at the International Philosophy Olympiad.

Keywords: Evaluation Criteria, Fair Grades, Essay, International Philosophy Olympiad

The correct evaluation of philosophy essays is an important topic in the didactics of philosophy. It is important because it involves questions about concepts that touch the fundamentals of what philosophy is, epistemological questions about recognition of good philosophy, and ethical questions of fairness in grading. I focus here on the essay competition of the International Philosophy Olympiad (IPO), an essay competition for high school students that has been held since 1993. I first explain the concept of a philosophical essay and the criteria of evaluation at the IPO. I discuss some of the problems with these criteria and propose some ideas on how to improve them. Then I discuss some problems in the grading process and propose some solutions. I argue that a grading method should be developed to increase the validity and reliability of the grades.[1]

1. The concept of a philosophy essay and evaluation criteria at the IPO

What is a philosophical essay? There exist different concepts of philosophical essays. One can distinguish between a more literary form in the tradition of Montaigne and a more argumentative form in the tradition of Francis Bacon. Given that one of the criteria of evaluation at the IPO is about argumentation, it is this second, argumentative form that is intended in the

[1] I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for very helpful constructive criticism. It helped me see the flaws in the structure and the argumentation in a previous version of this article. That first version did not satisfy the criteria of a good philosophical essay by any standards. The constructive criticism led to a reorganization of the whole essay and to a development of my arguments. I hope that now at least the general line of argumentation is fairly clear.

competition and that is the focus here.

As a general characterization of an argumentative philosophy essay, we may take the one by Jay F. Rosenberg in his introductory book *The Practice of Philosophy*:

> A philosophical essay is neither a research paper [...], nor is it a literary exercise in self-expression. It does not deal with feelings or impressions. It is not a report or summary. Fundamentally, it is the *reasoned defense of a thesis*. That is, there must be some point or points to be *established* in the essay, and considerations must be offered in *support* of them in such a way that the considerations can be seen *to* support them. (Rosenberg 1996: 56)

Similarly, in his guide on how to write a philosophy essay for IPO contestants, Frank Murphy writes that "the critical components of any philosophical inquiry have always been to craft a thesis [...] and persuade a listener or reader to accept one's thesis through honest, logical, and thorough argumentation" (Murphy 2017: 53).

Given this characterization, we can say that a good philosophical essay is one that, at least, *argues well for a thesis*. The demands for such philosophical writing include, as Rosenberg mentions, "clarity of exposition, precision of statement, organization of ideas, and logical rigor and consistency" (Rosenberg 1996: 56). We thus have an understanding of the argumentative essay as it is widely used in teaching philosophy and at the IPO. I therefore do not share Marc Foglia's skepticism about the concept (Foglia 2020, this issue). However, I share some of his concerns about the evaluation criteria at the IPO.

What are the evaluation criteria of the essays at the IPO? They are the following five: relevance to the topic, coherence, philosophical understanding of the topic, persuasive power of argumentation, and originality.[2] These criteria are tailored to the specifics of the competition which includes the writing of an essay in four hours on a chosen topic out of four (philosophical quotations or questions) without the use of any material except for a mono- or bilingual dictionary.

These five criteria have a great record of success. Up to this year, they have been used in twenty-eight editions of the IPO and have, as far as I know, stayed the same during all these years. This is an impressive record, considering also the varieties of philosophical cultures and traditions that come together at the competition. However, there are also some problems with these criteria, some of which I will now discuss.

2. Problems with the evaluation criteria

I would like to mention three types of problems for the evaluation criteria of the IPO. First, problems concerning their justification: Are all of the five criteria justified? Second, problems concerning their meaning: What do the criteria mean exactly? Can they be interpreted differently, and are all of the interpretations to be included? Third, problems concerning their application: How are the criteria applied? Do all of them have the same status? What is their relative weight?

[2] See the statutes at: http://www.philosophy-olympiad.org/

(1) Justification of the criteria: No justification for the criteria is explicitly given in the statute of the IPO. However, several of them are implicitly justified: Given what a good argumentative philosophy essay is, we can say that it is justified to use the criteria of relevance to the topic, coherence, argumentation, and philosophical understanding.[3] But, as I will argue now, one aspect of the criterion about argumentation and the criterion of originality are not justified.

The criterion about argumentation demands "persuasive" power. But to persuade is not a necessary condition for a good argument. An argument may be excellent according to objective standards – deductively valid and consisting of premises that are true or that may be reasonably held – and yet one might not be persuaded by the argument because one does not believe that one of the premises which may reasonably be held is in fact true. I may acknowledge that the argument is excellent according to these standards, while at the same time not believing that all of the premises are true. Therefore, persuasiveness is not a necessary condition for a good argument. Furthermore, persuasiveness is not a genuinely philosophical aim, and it even may be anti-philosophical. A bad argument – an argument that is invalid or unsound – may be very persuasive, using rhetorical techniques of pleasing the reader, for example. "Power of argumentation" should therefore not be meant to be "persuasive" power.

The criterion of originality is problematic in the context of a high school competition. First, what is original is radically dependent on background and context. For a high school student not having enjoyed a course in epistemology, developing a radical skeptic, empiricist or rationalistic view about knowledge can be very original whereas for another student it might just be the reproduction of course material. The educational and philosophical background of the students is not generally known to the assessors which makes it in principle difficult if not impossible in some cases to apply the criterion. Second, what someone takes to be original in a philosophy essay is heavily dependent on subjective evaluations. It is therefore a highly subjective criterion. And a highly subjective criterion should not be used in grading a philosophy paper. Such an argument has been put forward by Frosina Postoloska in discussions at the IPO.

(2) Meaning of the criteria: The meaning of each of the five criteria is not clear. For example, does relevance to the topic relate to the whole essay or to its parts or to both? In what way has the essay to be original? Must it design a new solution to a problem? (Probably not.) What counts as philosophical understanding? Must the essay refer to positions in the history of philosophy? In case the topic is a quote, must the essay give a correct interpretation of it? (It is generally taken at the IPO not to include this, but it is not stated anywhere.) Is the criterion of coherence to be understood to apply to the exposition of the essay, the use of terms, or the claims made? What does the criterion of the power of argumentation include? (At least, it should not include persuasiveness, see above.) All of the criteria in their present, general form

[3] I am concerned here about whether or not it is justified to have these criteria, not about the more fundamental question about what such justification could be. I see at least three ways in which a criterion can lack justification: a) It is not adequately related to what a good argumentative philosophy essay is. b) It is not something that high school students can reasonably be taken to try to achieve. c) It cannot be consistently applied in principle. (In the context of education, the criteria of evaluation can be justified by reference to educational goals, that is, in the end, being an independent thinker cooperating in society, see Campbell 1988, Part Two).

need first to be interpreted before they can be applied.

(3) Application of the criteria: More problems arise when one tries to apply the criteria. One concerns the status of the criterion of relevance to the topic. Is it a criterion like any other? No, it cannot be. It should rather be a *prerequisite* for a good essay. This is a point that has been repeatedly made by Barbara Conrad in discussions of the International Jury of the IPO. If one does not treat relevance to the topic as a prerequisite (or ascribes to the criterion a very heavy weight), an essay that has no relevance for the chosen topic whatsoever could nevertheless receive a high grade, and since such an essay could have been prepared in total in advance, such grade would not be justified. Therefore, relevance (in one sense) should be a prerequisite for a good essay.

A second problem concerns the relative weight of the criteria. Do they all have the same weight? According to the rubric of Floris Velema they do (see Foglia 2020: 132). But such equal weighing is not stated in the statute, and it is doubtful whether it would lead to acceptable grades. For example, an essay that shows "insight and competence, as well as a clear understanding of thinkers, concepts, theory, etc." but voicing no original viewpoint would receive the same grade as an essay showing originality ("character", being "colorful" and expressing "personality") but no philosophical understanding. That seems to be the wrong result.

3. Possible solutions to the problems

One way to deal with the problems is to keep the five criteria and to specify their meaning, clarify their status, and determine their weight. This is the more conservative way. Another, more progressive – but not necessarily better – way would be to design a new list of criteria.

Going the more conservative way, keeping the five criteria, one could do the following: a) clarify that relevance to the topic is in one sense a prerequisite for a good essay, b) specify that the power of argumentation does not include persuasiveness but includes validity and soundness of arguments, c) specify that coherence applies both to the exposition of the essay (its structure) and to the use of terms, d) specify that philosophical understanding does not require but may include knowledge of the history of philosophy and, in the case of a quote, does not require a correct interpretation of the quote, e) specify that originality means that the author develops his or her own thoughts rather than repeating course material (even if it may be hard to know whether this is the case or not), and f) leave the relative weight of the criteria open or, better, determine the relative weight. See the appendix for a more detailed possible specification of the criteria within the given system of evaluation with the five criteria (going the conservative way).

The more progressive way would be to design a new list of criteria. Inspiration can be found in the literature. In an early article, James Campbell (1988) mentions four criteria he takes to be present, consciously or not, in our actual grading of philosophy papers: (1) the student's conformity with our position or the adoption of a sensible conclusion, (2) the student's correct reproduction of position or demonstration of a clear and critical understanding, (3) the ability of the student to present and defend his or her position, (4) the amount of work rendered (Campbell 1988, Part One: 7-8). Campbell argues that we should use the first criterion as little

as possible and aim at neutrality in grading (Campbell 1988, Part Two: 4). Similarly, Jim Pryor writes the following at the attention of the students in his "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper" (2012): "We do not judge your paper by whether we agree with its conclusion. In fact, we may not agree amongst ourselves about what the correct conclusion is. But we will have no trouble agreeing about whether you do a good job arguing for your conclusion." Pryor uses three basic criteria that he formulates at the attention of the students:

> You'll be graded on three basic criteria:
> 1. How well do you understand the issues you're writing about?
> 2. How good are the arguments you offer?
> 3. Is your writing clear and well-organized?

These three criteria roughly correspond to those from the IPO: philosophical understanding of the topic, power of argumentation, and coherence, understood as a coherent structure of the text. But Pryor's list is superior to it, first, because it does not include persuasiveness (see Pryor's comment about agreeing with the conclusion above), second, because the criteria do not overlap, and third, because it additionally includes an important aspect of a philosophical text: clarity.

Can these criteria be justified? Yes, first, by what we consider to be a good philosophy essay (see above). Second, viewing the competition of high school students in the broader context of education, they can also be justified by our understanding of what education is and should be. James Campbell argues that the criterion of being able to correctly reproduce and critically engage with a given position justified because it represents the capacity to "open up to the ideas and perspectives of other individuals" and that the criterion of being able to defend one's position is justified because it represents the intellectual capacities to solve problems. Both of these capacities are part of the view of education as preparing human beings for "an independent yet cooperative adulthood" (Campbell 1988, Part Two: 3-4). I would argue that the third criterion is justified because it represents the intellectual capacity of clear thinking, and this is part of an independent adult life as well.

If this list of only three criteria (or any other list) is to be used, all of the criteria need to be specified so that they can be applied consistently. The application of the criteria to reach grades raises further challenges.

4. Grading

How should the criteria of evaluation be applied to reach grades? To answer this question, I start with some remarks about the application of criteria in the evaluation of student achievement in general. Before applying criteria of evaluation in order to reach and assign a grade to a student, one should have, according to Thomas Haladyna (1999: ix):

> 1. an idea about what a grade means,
> 2. an understanding of the purposes of grading,
> 3. a set of personal beliefs and proven principles that we will use in teaching and grading,

4. a set of criteria on which the grade is based, and, finally,
5. a grading method, which is a set of procedures that we consistently follow in arriving at each student's grade.

At the IPO, the grading process is divided into three stages: the first and second stages are carried out by the International Jury, the third stage by the Steering Board who is in charge of the distribution of prizes and medals. Grades are given from 1 to 10 using intervals of .5. They are given the following meaning:[4]

- 7.5-10 points means: I suggest this essay for the next stage.
- 6-7 points means: I myself don't suggest this essay, but I will agree if somebody else selects this essay.
- 1-5 points means: I suggest that this essay should not be accepted for the next stage.

There are at least two problems with these meanings. First, a minor problem of phrasing. The formulation "I will agree if somebody else selects this essay" is confused. If only one person out of four selects the essay and the others do not, there is no reason to agree with suggesting this essay for the next stage. And if the average of the grades is above a certain level – 7 in the first stage – I need not agree *in the matter* with the judgment that this particular essay should reach the next stage; I will agree that it should reach the next stage *because of the rule that an essay having an average grade of 7 reaches the second stage*. And whether or not I personally agree with this rule is irrelevant. This minor problem of formulation can easily be solved by deleting the phrase.

Second, a problem of greater importance. The transitions from the first to the second stage and from the second to the third stage are remarkably different. Going on to the second stage only means that the essay receives additional gradings. Going on the third stage means that the essay will be read by the Steering board and be taken into consideration for a medal. These are two different things. I might for example come to the judgement that an essay should receive additional readings without believing that it should be a candidate for a medal. What grade should I then give to the essay in the first round? Additionally, for some essays, it can be quite difficult and cumbersome to reach a precise grade, for example to be able to clearly decide between 7.5 or 8. Requiring at the first stage an exact grade diminishes the efficiency (or the reliability) of the general grading process.

A possible solution to this second problem is to have separate procedures for the two transitions. In the first transition, the purpose is to find out which essays should get additional readings. This can be done with a simple "triage" method using three grades: 1 for pass, 2 for undecided, 3 for not pass. One would then have to install a rule for how many "passing" individual grades the essay would need to go on to the second stage. Such a triage method can be used for grading in general, as suggested by William Rapaport: for each item or criterion, full credit is given if and only if it is substantially correct, minimal credit if and only if it is substantially incorrect, and partial credit if it is neither (Rapaport 2011: 347).

[4] See the statutes at: http://www.philosophy-olympiad.org/

In the second transition, from the second to the third stage, the purpose is to find the candidates for medals. For this, *all* of the essays of the second stage should be read again. And it is only after this second reading that the precise grades should be given.

What are the purposes of the evaluation and grading of the essays at the IPO? The primary purpose is to determine who receives awards. This means that the evaluation is clearly *summative*, expressing a judgment of the achievement, as opposed to a *formative* evaluation, giving feedback to the students in order to improve their achievement (see Scriven 1967). The handing out of an award communicates the achievement to the student, to the community of the IPO, to the local school, to regional and national communities in the home country of the student, and to the universities and employers that may accept the young laureate in the future.

What principles do we follow in grading philosophy papers? The arguably most basic principle in grading student achievement is this: grades should be fair! As a minimal requirement for a fair grade for an achievement by a student, one can say that a) each student was able to show his or her capacities, b) the grade reflects the student's capacities, c) the grade is arrived at through the application of objective criteria, d) these criteria are known to all students, e) these same criteria are used for the evaluation of the achievements of all students, and f) each of the students receives the same tasks or at least tasks of the same difficulty (Pfister 2014: 81; see also Haladyna 2019: 6; Weis 1995; Close 2009; McCrickerd 2012; Burkholder 2015).

There should be a list of criteria, and these criteria should be as objective as possible. That means, in the case of the criteria of the IPO, that these need to be specified (see above). The criteria and their specification should be communicated to the participants.

Criteria by themselves do not state how they are to be applied. For this, a grading method needs to be designed, that means a set of procedures to be consistently followed to arrive at the students' grades. The central concepts in the grading of student achievement are *validity* and *reliability*, where validity is the accuracy of a grade's reflection of student achievement and reliability is the degree of random error that might affect validity (Haladyna 2019: 1). The grading method should thus aspire to valid and reliable grades.

The more objective the criteria are, the more valid and reliable the grades will be. A subjective element will always remain, be it only because the essay has to be evaluated as a whole text, as one single product of a creative human mind. It would therefore be wrong to exclude subjective elements altogether. But the criteria should be as objective as possible.

Striving for validity also means that the relative weight of the criteria should be determined. This can be done by the simple indication of a percentage, the weight of all criteria adding up to one hundred percent.

Once this is done, one could design a rating grid and rubric. Inspiration can be found in Linda Farmer's list: clear thesis, thesis support, accurate exegesis, critical reasoning, objections & replies, original contribution (see Farmer 2003) and Maralee Harrell's list: argument (thesis, premises, support, counterarguments), understanding, analysis, synthesis, and creation (see Harrell 2005).

Reliability can be augmented by minimizing cognitive biases. Among the known biases are the primacy-effect (the first impression is carried over to the rest), the halo-effect (the

personality traits of the author are carried over to the essay), the effect of eating and breaks (we tend to be more lenient/less severe after a break). Furthermore, evaluators may be too severe (underrating) or too lenient (overrating) or tend to compression (giving all the essays the same grade). If we want the grades to be reliable, the effects of such biases need to be minimized. Being aware of them can already help, as well as small changes such as reading the essays in a different order and taking breaks regularly.

5. Reply to some objections

Against the proposed specifications of the criteria (or a possible new list of precise criteria) and the design of a grading method to reach valid and reliable grades, one might have some objections. One of the main objections that one might have is that such precise criteria and such a grading method would lead the students to a mechanical way of writing the essay, and the contest would lose what is precisely so special and worth preserving about it, namely that the essay is an expression of the author's thoughts unconstrained by formal requirements. One might fear that the specified criteria would constrain the thinking process of the students and that their application would lead to a uniformity in the products, thus leading to essays of lower quality and much less fun, both for the students and the evaluators.

This objection is in part based on wrong premises. The specification of criteria of evaluation cannot constrain the expression of one's thoughts. The freedom to express any thought whatsoever remains even if one would require a very specific form of its expression. Following certain rules does not impair one's thinking but rather supports it. The objection, it seems to me, also underestimates the potential of creation inherent to language. The specification of the criteria would not preclude, but rather encourage the designing of new examples, cases, and thought experiments. It is therefore unlikely that the specification of the criteria would lead to less interesting essays. However, a certain uniformity in the structuring of the essays would probably be achieved – but that would be very welcome for it would increase the quality of the essays.

Another objection that one might have is that the system of the criteria and their specifications could become too complex for the evaluators to handle, and the disagreement among the evaluators could still remain, thus not improving the process of grading.[5]

The danger mentioned by this objection is real. It is possible that a list of precise criteria gets so complex that it requires too many aspects for the evaluators to consider at the same time. This is not only a problem because of cognitive effort and time, but also because the important aspects of an essay – in particular the clear development of an argument – might get submersed under a multitude of minor issues. But the danger can be avoided by designing a list of basic criteria and specifications that can be handled by the evaluators. A list of for example three criteria and three specifications for each in a rubric would seem to me to be a reasonable proposal. Of course, there still could be disagreement among different evaluators about the meaning of these criteria. But it would concern a narrower meaning. And of course, there still will be disagreements among different evaluators about the correct application of these criteria in the particular case. But it would definitely be an improvement compared to the present list

[5] I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this objection.

because the range of applications is limited by the specification of the criteria.

I hope to have shown that the criteria of evaluation of the IPO need to be improved in three respects: they need to be specified, their status has to be clarified, and a grading method needs to be developed. If the grades of the essays in the competition are to have a high degree of validity and reliability, then this is a necessary step to take.

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Appendix

How to Evaluate a Philosophy Essay at the International Philosophy Olympiad
A Very Short Guide for Evaluators

This is a very short guide for evaluators (delegation leaders and teachers) who are members of the International Jury at the International Philosophy Olympiad (IPO) and especially for those who are members for the first time. This guide is not part of the official regulations and it does not state rules. First, it explains some of the fundamentals of the competition and the evaluation procedure. Second, it elucidates the meaning of the five criteria of evaluation. Third, it ends with some remarks about discussing essays with other evaluators.

1. Fundamentals of the competition and evaluation procedure

The IPO has among its objectives to promote philosophical education at secondary level around the world and to increase the interest of high school students in philosophy. The awarding of medals and honorable mentions to the best contestants of the competition serves these objectives. It gives a motivating feedback to the winners and it helps to promote philosophy education in the countries to which the winners return.

As part of the International Jury, you will be asked to assess a number of essays in order to help determine who will be awarded a medal or honorable mention. You will only read a very small number of all the essays in the competition. The vast majority of the essays you will not get to read. And this leads to an important point to keep in mind: The essays you will not read might be of lower or of better quality than the essays you will read, and you will not know whether the first or the second applies.

The statutes of the IPO determine that the Steering Board decides on the distribution of prizes. Since the time for the evaluation of the essays by the members of the Steering Board is limited the number of medals is limited to a maximum of about 20 essays. In the later years, it has been a practice for the International Jury to make a proposal about which essays should be taken into consideration for a medal and also a proposal about which essays should be awarded an honorable mention.

2. The five criteria of evaluation

The essays are to be evaluated according to the following five criteria of evaluation: relevance to the topic, philosophical understanding of the topic, persuasive power of argumentation, coherence, and originality. Their status is different. And each of them may be interpreted differently.

Relevance. The criterion of relevance is in some sense the most fundamental. If an essay is off topic, then it should not get an award even if it satisfies the other criteria perfectly. For example, if the quotation is about a topic in political philosophy and the essay is only about epistemology, then it is off topic. This does not mean, of course, that an essay about a topic in political philosophy may not also contain epistemological arguments.

The criterion has another, less fundamental application: An essay that is on topic may still contain parts which are less relevant or not relevant to the question the author has chosen to answer. Ceteris paribus, the less irrelevant parts the essay contains, the better it is.

Coherence. The criterion of coherence may mean different things. First, it can mean that the essay has a clear and logical structure. Second, it can mean that the terms are clear and used consistently throughout the essay. Third, it can mean that the essay contains claims that are coherent with each other, i.e. which do not contradict each other. The criterion should arguably be considered in all three of these meanings.

Philosophical understanding of the topic: The criterion of philosophical understanding of the topic is allegedly the one about which there are most disagreements among members of the International Jury because it is based on one's understanding of philosophy, and such understanding, as we know, can differ more or less strongly amongst philosophers. Nevertheless, there is consensus among members of the International Jury about some points. First, this criterion applies to the student's understanding of the topic, not necessarily to the topic as it is understood by the author or by the contemporaries of the author. The student may give a correct interpretation of the quotation and this will count as philosophical understanding. But the student may also develop her own thoughts based on the quotation which are not in accordance with what the author of the quotation may have originally meant, and the student may thereby very well show philosophical understanding. Second, knowledge of philosophical claims from the history of philosophy may show philosophical understanding of the topic only if these claims fit into the argumentation of the essay. Superficially reproducing well known philosophical claims or, worse, simple "name dropping" does not, by itself, show philosophical understanding. It is only when the claims are part of an argumentation that they count as philosophical understanding of the topic. Deeper philosophical understanding is shown by the correct and detailed explanation of philosophical claims as well as by the introduction and analysis of concepts relevant to the topic.

Power of argumentation: The criterion of the power of argumentation presupposes that the essay argues for a claim (or for several claims). If the essay does not present a strong philosophical argument it is not worthy of an award unless it has some other striking feature such as a finely worked out original viewpoint or a careful conceptual analysis. Given that the essay argues for a claim, the power of the argumentation may vary quite strongly. The power of argumentation is shown in how well the student develops the arguments and in how good the arguments as such are. Furthermore, it can also be seen in the introduction of possible objections and counter arguments, and in how well these are discussed.

Originality: The criterion of originality is allegedly the most subjective of the five criteria. It means that the essay shows the development of the thoughts of the author and is not simply a repetition of what one can find in textbooks. The criterion of originality does not mean that the essay needs to argue for an unexpected or novel claim.

As has been explicated above, the criteria cannot be applied independently of each other. You are not required to give equal weight to all five of them. When evaluating an essay, it is important to keep in mind the essay as a whole. One useful heuristic method for the general

assessment as well as for remembering the content of the essay is to state its main question and to summarize the answer it gives in one sentence.

3. Discussing essays with other evaluators

It is worth discussing the essay with other evaluators. First, because it allows you to put your own assessment into perspective. Second, because it may help you to see aspects of the essay you may have overlooked. Third, because it is fun to exchange your thoughts with other philosophers.

It is possible that you will disagree on the correct assessment of an essay with another member of the jury. In general, this will be a disagreement among peers as you are both trained philosophers and the arguments of the essays usually do not require detailed knowledge of a particular field of philosophy – although it has to be mentioned that there are exceptions to this, as some previous medal essays have shown. It is itself a philosophical question of how to understand disagreements among peers. There are two opposing views. According to the first one, two parties may disagree and retain their rationality, and according to the second one, any rational disagreement indicates an error on at least one side. This epistemological debate cannot be settled here. As practical advice, I would suggest this: be open-minded, and take the disagreement as an opportunity to learn about the other, yourself, and philosophy!

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EXTRACTING A VOICE: A SUGGESTION FOR TEACHING IPO ESSAY WRITING

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Abstract
In this article, I suggest a process for teaching writing to the students preparing for the IPO (the International Philosophy Olympiad) essay competition. My teaching process is based on Peter Elbow's theory of writing, which emphasizes that writing should contain the writer's real voice and respects both the writer and reader. Elbow's strategy is also called the binary strategy, as it focuses on the two primary skills behind all writing: creating and criticizing. These two skills work in separate ways and require different steps. I employ Elbow's writing strategy when teaching IPO essay writing. The IPO essay competition aims to develop creative and critical thinking, which also requires two types of writing: philosophical writing and second-language writing. Elbow's binary strategy, specifically his focus on the creating skill and criticizing skill, will be helpful for the aim of the IPO essay writing competition.

Keywords: Teaching, Peter Elbow, voice, philosophical writing, second-language writing

ARNOLD. When I was first working on your mind, I had a theory of consciousness...
I thought it was a pyramid you needed to scale,
so I gave you a voice, my voice, to guide you along the way.
- (Nolan 2016: 00:09:56, *Westworld* S01E10)

DOLORES. It was you. Talking to me. Guiding me. So I followed you. At last, I arrived here.
DOLORES PRIME. The center of the maze.
DOLORES. And now I finally understand what you were trying to tell me.
DOLORES PRIME. The thing you've wanted since that very first day ...
DOLORES. To confront – after this long and vivid nightmare – myself.
And who I must become.
- (Nolan 2016: 01:20:20, *Westworld* S01E10)

1. Finding Your Real Self: A Voice from Your Inner Mind

In the TV series, *Westworld*, there is a theme park named Westworld featuring androids in a "wild wild west" setting. These androids are called hosts and serve the same role as NPCs (non-player characters) in video games to the customers in the park. Later on in the show, some of them find their real selves, achieve self-consciousness, and try to escape from the park.

There are numerous TV series and movies featuring a main character who is an android with a human-like mind and self-consciousness. Though this is a very common story in science fiction, what strikes me about *Westworld* is the metaphor of inner voices. In the journey of finding their real selves, the androids first discover their inner voices, which represent their self-consciousness. Arnold, one of the founders of the park, wanted his androids to develop self-consciousness and embedded his voice into them when he was working with their minds. Some of them started to listen to his voice as they develop their minds. At first, the androids believed this was the voice of God. Later, when developing a full human-like mind with self-consciousness, they recognized the voices as their own inner voices from their own minds. Dolores, one of the oldest androids in the park, is the first android to recognize her voice. She realizes that the voice, which she thought of as Arnold's, is the inner voice of her mind. The voice she heard in her head is in fact a dialogue with Dolores Prime, another version of herself. These two voices, of Dolores and Dolores Prime, finally combine to form one full consciousness. Being able to recognize the voice of one's inner mind is the most important condition for the androids to attain human-like minds. This is the way to escape the maze on the journey of mental development and find one's true self.

2. Voice and Writing

If discovering one's inner voice is akin to finding one's true self, then writing, which expresses one's thoughts, should contain one's inner voice. We remember, ponder, sort out, and organize what we have experienced and what we have in mind through talking to ourselves. Through this inner voice, we give meaning to what is in our mind, just as we do when keeping a diary. When writing, we try to psychically express our inner voices and, afterward, we read our writings with our inner voices. In short, writing is the process of translating one's inner voice into written words. It is a journey to express what you want to say with your inner voice.

However, putting the inner voice into writing is not an easy job. Sometimes, there are too many thoughts in one's mind to the point that one cannot figure out what one wants to say or one cannot decide one's own position. There are also times when one cares too much for the future reader, selecting words too carefully, and cannot properly concentrate on the personal act of writing. Other times, after all the agony of the writing process, one rereads the piece and realizes that what is on the page simply does not make sense. We all have this kind of experience. So, what sort of writing shows one's true self and one's real inner voice?

> Now spoken sounds are symbols of affections in the soul, and written marks symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place signs of – affections of the soul are the same for all, and what these affections are likenesses of – actual things are also the same. (Aristotle 2002: 16 a3)

The above quote from Aristotle affords us a glimpse into the relationship between voice and writing.[1] Spoken sounds are one's voice, including one's inner voice and actual speech. These

[1] This quote was one of the four quotations from the 24th International Philosophy Olympiad essay competition

expressions are about what is in one's mind, as they are symbols of "affections in the soul", containing one's emotions, thoughts, and experiences. Written marks represent one's voice and what is in one's mind. Thus, one's inner voice reflects what is in one's mind. In turn, writings reflect the inner voice of the writer. The three are all connected and different from person to person, as everyone has different inner voices and thoughts.

In the field of writing education, Peter Elbow theoretically developed the above idea of the relationship between voice and writing. He is often classified as an expressivist (Ward 1994). As an expressivist, focusing on the writer in the writing process, Elbow considers writing to be the process of expressing the writer's inner space, experiences, and self. Writing with the writer's real voice is, Elbow argues, writing with the experiences of the writer (Elbow 1998). Whether the experiences are direct or indirect is not important. What is important is for the writer to *experience* the thoughts and experiences *again* in her head, when she is writing.

Furthermore, while many expressivists focus only on the writer, Elbow takes both the writer and reader into consideration, which distinguishes him from some of his contemporaries (Ward 1994). In addition to the writer's journey of finding her real self, the reader is another important part of writing. If writing represents the real inner voice of the writer, then writing not only makes the writer experience her thoughts again, but also makes the reader engage with the writer's experience. Writing with one's real voice and power is what makes the writer experience what is in her mind again, delivers her experience to the reader, and involves the reader in the journey.

3. Peter Elbow's Binary Strategy of Writing

So, how can one write with one's real voice? Elbow emphasizes the mutual operation of two skills: the skill of creating and the skill of criticizing. The creating skill is a skill for free writing and brainstorming, producing as many sentences from the writer's mind as possible. The criticizing skill is a skill for revising, editing, proofreading, and self-censoring one's own writing in terms of form and content. These two skills are equally important in writing. What Elbow discourages, however, is trying to force both skills to work at the same time.

During the brainstorming stage, when the writer is getting ideas, if the writer is also revising, she will be unable to write what she wants to say because of self-censorship. *Should I write this sentence? Can I use this word? Can I get a good grade if I defend this position?* When the writer obsesses over these sorts of cautions, she is too careful to write what she really wants to say. Many obstacles are blocking her from raising her real voice. On the other hand, if the writer freely puts what is in her head onto the page, the writing will probably become a mess with a lot of grammatical errors, less logical structures, and lose concepts. Without proper revision, the writing will not even attract the reader's attention. Hence, Elbow suggests dividing each skill.

The early stage of writing requires the creating skill. In this stage, Elbow suggests free writing. He advises doing writing exercises "at least three times a week" without stopping (Elbow 1973: 3). The writer can even write a sentence like "I do not have any thoughts right now" or "I do not know what to do." Freewriting exercises help the writer figure out what she

held in Ghent, Belgium in 2016.

is most interested in and choose a topic. When freely writing what is in her mind, according to what her inner voice says, the writer can naturally think of what interests her. Moreover, as there is no censorship or restriction, the writer can allow herself to be absorbed in her thoughts so that she can experience them vividly again. This will lead to expressions and sentences coming out in her real voice. Even if her line of thought is sometimes off track, the writer can keep a record of those "outlying" thoughts and rewrite what she produces in the process. This stage of writing is about "the believing game" (Elbow 1973: 147). When playing this game, the writer must believe that the various ideas in her mind are all true, which helps her avoid excluding any position without careful examination before deciding which to defend. In the believing game, the writer can choose her position among many different ones or create her own viewpoint by combining the merits of several different standpoints. Freewriting exercises help enrich the writer's voice.

After these freewriting exercises, during the stage of revising, the skill of editing takes the forefront. In this stage, Elbow suggests using the writer's outer voice. The writer should try to project herself into the reader's mind. Reading one's writing aloud actually helps the writer to understand how the reader will think and to find errors that were dismissed during the writing process. Reading aloud also helps the writer revise the punctuation, as the writer can imagine the reader's voice by concentrating on the rhythm and breathing. At this stage, unlike the believing game, "the doubting game" is at play. In the doubting game, the writer detaches her position, reconstructs her arguments, and takes the opposite position to criticize her arguments. In contrast to raising her voice during the freewriting exercises, taking the voice of the other party needs to be done in this stage. The writer's voice is changed to the imagined reader's voice. Through this stage, the writer can revise the writing's structure and strengthens her arguments. Nevertheless, taking the reader's voice does not mean suppressing the writer's own voice. Instead, through imagining the reader's voice, the writer's voice becomes clear and easier to deliver.

Furthermore, though it is essential to distinguish the stage of creating and the stage of revising, Elbow does not deny that writing is a recursive process. Writing is not linear. The writer can write the second chapter of a book while writing the first chapter, perform freewriting exercises for the third chapter while revising the second chapter, or go back to the first chapter and revise it. However, the writer must concentrate only on one stage: creating or criticizing.

Elbow's notions of "growing" and "cooking" demonstrate the recursive process of writing. Growing corresponds to the creating stage, while cooking corresponds to the revising stage. Both the growing and cooking stages occur in repetition until the piece of writing is completed. Growing refers to the early stage of writing (freewriting exercises), as well as all stages of developing ideas. Thus, growing can be called "a developmental process" (Elbow 1973: 42).

> You believe X. You write out your belief or perception or argument that X is the case. By the time you have finished you see something you didn't see before: X is incorrect or you see you no longer believe X. Now you keep writing about your perplexity and uncertainty. Then you begin to see Y. You start to write about Y. You finally see that Y is correct or you believe Y. And then finally you write out Y as fully as you can and you are satisfied

with it. (Elbow 1973: 22–23)

At first, the writing process begins with the belief of X. Then, it ends with Y. This does not mean you were initially wrong or that something went off track during the process. X has just developed into Y. Through this process, the writer can discover how her idea evolved. In growing, it is good for the writer to do as many freewriting exercises as possible. It is also helpful for the writer to have conversations with herself, using her inner voice. For example, when the writer feels the word she has just written is not the right one, it can be useful to ask herself why she feels this way and how she discovered that she does.

The process of cooking requires "getting material to interact" (Elbow 1973: 73). It is a process of connecting ideas to words. In cooking, Elbow advises the writer to make a distinction between the time for thinking and the time for choosing words and typing them onto the page. After ten minutes of thinking, for the next ten minutes, the writer must only type her thoughts.

In writing education, a teacher who teaches writing also takes on a specific role as the reader in each stage to offer proper responses to the students. Elbow suggests three specific kinds of reader responses: "sharing, but no response", "response, but no criticism or evaluation", and "criticism or evaluation" (Elbow 2000: 29). In the early stages of writing, the teacher can engage in the believing game and take the role of a reader who supports the students. Though she has the authority in the class, as an audience member, the teacher becomes an ally in this stage. Her responses in this stage are "sharing, but no response" and "response, but no criticism or evaluation." This will help the students develop their own ideas in a free and safe setting. In the later stage of writing, the proper response of the teacher is "criticism or evaluation", as she is a participant in the doubting game at this point. However, participating in the doubting game does not mean discouraging the voice of a student nor intervening in the writing process. The teacher's role is only to offer the voice of an imaginary reader.

Elbow's binary writing strategy takes both the writer and the reader into account: the writer can develop her voice through the creative aspect of writing while ensuring the final piece of writing will have the proper readability for the reader. The writer can figure out what she wants to say and revise her writing by imagining the voice of the reader. In the end, the writing will allow the reader to combine her own voice with that of the writer. Just like Dolores's voice joins with Dolores Prime's voice to allow her to become complete.

4. The Meaning of Teaching IPO Essay Writing

I think, with some supplementations, Elbow's binary strategy for writing can provide us with a useful method for teaching writing for the International Philosophy Olympiad (henceforth, IPO) essay competition. This is the case because Elbow's strategy incorporates some of the characteristics required by the IPO essay.

The IPO essay competition is a contest of philosophical writing on the high school level. The competition requires one of the most challenging types of writing. Each student needs to choose one of four given quotations and begin writing. To do this, each student first must fully understand at least one of the quotations. Based on the selected quotation, the student should decide which philosophical issue she will discuss and what her own position is on that issue.

She then must offer logical grounds for her position. The writing should be done in the allotted four hours. After that, the international jury will evaluate her final piece of writing under the five main criteria of "relevance to the topic, philosophical understanding of the topic, persuasive power of argumentation, coherence, and originality" (International Federation of Philosophical Societies and UNESCO 2019). To make things more challenging, IPO requires each student to write in a language other than her native one, among the following four official languages: English, French, German, and Spanish.

With the requirements of the IPO essay competition in mind, teaching students how to prepare for the competition has a few distinctive characteristics. First of all, what distinguishes an IPO essay from other essays is that it requires two aspects: philosophical writing and second-language writing. For each aspect, a teacher who helps the students prepare for the IPO essay competition must also prepare a proper method of instruction. Above all, the teacher must teach philosophical writing. That is, she must help the students understand quotations from various pieces of philosophical literature, develop their critical minds to choose a philosophical issue as a writing topic, and offer exercises to boost their logical skills. On the whole, the teacher's guidance should help the students develop their philosophical, logical, and critical thinking. Next, the teacher must also be able to offer guidance for second-language writing. For students whose native language is not English, their second language is typically English. In this case, unless the students who qualified as IPO participants are bilingual, the teacher must know how to teach English as a second language (henceforth, ESL) writing.[2]

Moreover, the students are representatives of the delegation of each participating country. This means that the students already passed their national competition and have the necessary skills in both philosophical writing and ESL writing. Each of them is one of the most exceptional students from each country. In other words, the teacher who guides them must be able to help them excel even further in both types of writing. In addition, the students preparing to participate in the IPO are likely dealing with particular and unique situations. As they are the representatives of each delegation, qualified in a national competition, each student likely lives in different areas of the country. Sometimes a student lives in one region, but goes to school in a different region (or even in a different country in a different time zone) and lives in a dormitory during the school year. The IPO rules allow each delegation to have only two participating students and each host country may have up to ten students. Thus, a small number of students are likely scattered across different areas in a single country. These spatiotemporal conditions make it hard for teachers to educate them in the form of a class, as it is difficult for the teachers and students to gather, read each other's writings, and give each other comments.

These characteristics create a unique situation for teaching IPO essay writing. In other words, teaching IPO essay writing should be a high-level educational opportunity for a few excellent students, but, at the same time, the process has spatiotemporal restrictions. Nevertheless, there is an advantage to these circumstances. As the number of students per nation is at most ten, the teacher can more carefully focus on each student's writing. Also, after the national competition, the teacher has three to six months to prepare the students, which is plenty

[2] In this article, I will restrict the discussion on second-language writing to ESL writing. I believe, however, the suggestion I offer below will be effective in second-language writing in languages other than English.

of time to offer the students thorough feedback to develop their writing skills.

Finally, there is the most important characteristic of teaching IPO essay writing: it should respect the spirit of IPO, which is to offer an opportunity for a valuable writing experience. "To contribute to the development of critical, inquisitive, and creative thinking" is one of the official objectives of the IPO essay competition (International Federation of Philosophical Societies and UNESCO 2019). Though some students just want to receive a medal from IPO and improve their chances of university admission, there are many experiences that IPO can offer the participating students, including the tour program from the hosting country, meeting new friends from around the world, and special high-quality lectures. Experiencing the entire process of developing and finishing a piece of philosophical writing, above all things, is the most valuable part of the IPO competition. If a student prepares to participate in the IPO competition, she will have the opportunity to develop her own ideas and complete a philosophical article. To participate in IPO is a rare experience and, through this rare experience, a student can have an opportunity and freedom to reflect on her own philosophies, think freely and critically, and engage in the self-discovery process. From the beginning of the preparation process to the moment each student disembarks from the plane in his or her homeland after the competition, I wish for every participating student to have the experience of writing with her or his own voice.

5. A Way of Teaching IPO Essay Writing

Elbow's writing strategy corresponds to the objective and characteristics of IPO essay writing. I suggest that the two aspects of IPO essay writing, the philosophical side, and the ESL side, should employ Elbow's binary strategy. On the whole, the complete essay should contain the student's real voice – what she wants to say and why she thinks that way. In the process of teaching writing, specifically philosophical writing, the believing game and creating skill should first work, followed by the doubting game and criticizing skill. For ESL writing, it is helpful to use the doubting game and criticizing skill. In this section, I show you how to employ Elbow's binary strategy to the actual process of teaching IPO essay writing.

5.1 For Philosophical Writing

To decide the topic of the essay, the student needs to figure out what kind of philosophical issue she is most interested in and what her position is on that issue. In this brainstorming stage, the teacher needs to help the student develop philosophical ideas. The teacher's role is to be "a safe audience" that does not criticize, but engages in dialogues and conversations with the students. The teacher should act as a supporting ally in the believing game. Meanwhile, the student should be working towards developing the creative skill.

The teacher can assign as many freewriting exercises as the student can handle. These exercises do not need to be lengthy, complete essays, nor do they need to be done in a second language. It is okay for the student to write only a few sentences every day in her native language. It is also okay for her to text short messages about her ideas to the teacher. As the student likely lives far away from the teacher, conversations can happen through email, online chat, or video chat. However, these exercises should be done regularly. For example, the student

should write down her ideas every day, then collect and send them to the teacher two or three times per week. After receiving these freewritings, the teacher can give the student feedback without correcting or criticizing them. Though it is okay to start with everyday subjects or other fields outside of philosophy, the freewriting exercises need to continue until the student finally narrows down her philosophical interest to two or three issues. This process can last from two or three weeks to maximally a month.

The two crucial things are to (1) create a safe zone for the student to think freely and feel safe enough to say whatever is on her mind and (2) for the teacher to have actual conversations with the student. The interaction between teacher and student should be like free texting with a friend. Instead of correcting sentences or refuting the student's ideas, the teacher should respond only by throwing new ideas to the student, encouraging her, and letting her know about other reading materials to expand and develop her thoughts. For example, one of my students asked me via text what the meaning of my life would be if God or some other superior being determined my life. Another teacher and student joined our group chat and our conversation expanded to discuss many different topics. Our list of topics was: whether free will is a necessary condition for a happy life, whether free will is one of the natural characteristics of human beings, how to define a happy life, how to define a meaningful life, and what the relationship is between free will and knowledge about the consequences of life. While the student started the conversation with a discussion of free will and determinism, I started by discussing the meaning of life and happiness. At the end of our conversation, we figured out how we each started our lines of thought and the teachers suggested some reading materials to the students, including ones about free will. The example list of the reading materials is the following.

1. For starters, as our discussion included many subjects, I recommended some dictionaries of philosophy and some books on the history of philosophy.
   - Audi, Robert, ed. (1995), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
   - Blackburn, Simon, ed. (2005), *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University.
   - Craig, Edward, ed. (2005), *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge.
   - Korean Society of Modern Western Philosophy, ed. (2001), *Modern Western Philosophy*. Paju: Changbi. (in Korean)
   - Korean Society of Modern Western Philosophy, ed. (2004), *Ten Issues of Modern Western Philosophy*. Paju: Changbi. (in Korean)
   - Honderich, Ted, ed. (2005), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
   - Scruton, Roger (1994), *Modern Philosophy: An Introduction and Survey*. London: Bloomsbury Reader.
   - Urmson, J.O. and Jonathan Rée, ed. (2005), *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy*. London: Routledge.

2. For the subject of free will and the happiness of life in general,
   - Kane, Robert, ed. (2011), *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
   - O'Connor, Timothy and Franklin, Christopher (2020), "Free Will," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/freewill/.

3. Some references mentioned during our discussion are
   - *Ethica Nicomachea* by Aristotle
   - *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* by Immanuel Kant

(There are several translated versions of these books. I recommend the ones translated into the students' native language.)

After deciding upon a topic, the student started to write the actual essay. In this stage, both the growing and cooking elements of Elbow's strategy are at work. For growing, the first thing the student should do is freely write down whatever is in her mind. But, in this stage, unlike the brainstorming stage, she needs to write down at least one page within the range of the topic she chooses and send that writing to the teacher at least once per week. In this phase, there are more time intervals and more writing than during the brainstorming stage.

At this point, the teacher's role should also be different than it was during the earlier stage. The teacher should now become a criticizing reader to help the student develop the thought into a proper argument. The teacher should advocate for the opposite position of what the student is defending without discouraging the student's voice or making the student feel embarrassed. This stage corresponds to the cooking process and the criticizing skill.

In this stage, providing feedback in the form of a letter is helpful. Finkel (2000) says that writing a letter to evaluate and criticize student's essays has some advantages. The letter contains both the advantages and disadvantages of the essay. Starting with the advantages makes the student believe that the teacher is faithful and the evaluation is fair. In addition, writing a letter is a form of conversation, just like texting in the earlier stage. Unlike mere proofreading, writing a letter makes the teacher mindful of the student. The student who receives the letter will feel relatively comfortable reading the letter, compared to reading proofreading notes. I also believe that writing a letter to the student has a few more advantages specific to teaching IPO essay writing. First, writing the letter as an email does not have spatiotemporal restrictions. Second, as Elbow strongly suggests that the stage of the creating skill and the stage of the criticizing skill should be separated, writing a letter to the student helps separate these two stages. Unlike corrections made directly on the essay with a red pen, a letter with feedback is physically separated from the essay itself. Feedback in the form of a letter does not intervene in the essay. This will give the student time and space to think about the essay before the revising stage.

Then, what should the letter contain? The letter should guide the student to build a logical

argument. If there is not an explicit form of argument in the student's essay, the teacher can help the student form an argument from the draft. With the earlier example of the conversations about free will, I showed my students how to extract an argument from one of our conversations.

(1) If *S* can make free decisions in her life, then her life is meaningful to her.
(2) As long as *S* does not know whether her life is determined and, if it is, how her life is determined, *S* can make free decisions even if her life is fully determined.
(3) *S* does not know whether her life is determined and, if it is, how her life is determined.
(4) (from 2 and 3) *S* can make free decisions.
(5) (from 1 and 4) *S*'s life is meaningful to her.

The first premise is about how free will and the meaning of life are related to one another. The second premise connects the range of one's knowledge to one's free will. It seems there is a relationship between the range of one's knowledge about one's life and exercising free will. The third premise is a new claim that one's knowledge about one's life is limited. The fourth premise uses the second and third premises to form a conclusion.

Notice that it is not important whether the argument is valid or persuasive. The important result is that constructing our conversations into the form of an argument led to additional questions. For example, the teacher can ask the student if the argument is the one that she wants to defend. The argument can also trigger other questions. As the first premise is a conditional sentence, one of the students asked about a person who is living a meaningful life but does not make free decisions, and how we can define "a meaningful life." As for the second and third premises, another question popped up about whether it is *good* to have epistemic limitations on our lives. The point is, showing how to construct an argument offers the students an opportunity to clarify the notions they are discussing and helps them to specify their own position on the issue.

Next, if there is an explicit form of an argument that the teacher can find in the student's essay, the teacher can check the logical structure of the argument. Mogck (2008) offers us a useful guideline for philosophical writing. The teacher can also share this kind of checklist with the students.

- What is the conclusion you want to demonstrate?
- What are the premises from which your conclusion follows?
- How are you going to show that your conclusion follows from those premises?
- How are you going to show that your premises are true? (Mogck 2008: 12)

The teacher can ask these four questions directly to the student, but can also point out if one of the premises of the student's argument seems untrue or does not follow the other premises.

Mogck (2008) provides us with four ways to criticize an argument: (1) "show that the conclusion does not follow from the premises", (2) "show that one or more of the premises is false", (3) show that the argument is valid, but that "its validity is uninteresting because the

argument is circular", (Mogck 2008: 25) and (4) show that the premises of the argument are so restricted that only those who are "perhaps too closely related to its ultimate conclusion" accept the argument (Mogck 2008: 27). These strategies are effective for criticizing an argument. Notice that directly defeating the student's argument is not the teacher's job. Instead, the teacher's job is to point out the possible strategies that can defeat the argument.

All of these procedures are part of Elbow's cooking process. They are meant to help the student strengthen her argument and make her voice louder and clearer. The entire process of receiving the student's essay and writing a letter to the student as feedback can be repeated until the essay is completed.

5.2 For Second-Language Writing

For second-language writing, the cooking process and criticizing skill are essential during the final stage. If the teacher criticizes the linguistic aspects of the essay, such as sentences, words, grammar, and style, during the growing and cooking process of the philosophical writing stage, the student might feel so embarrassed or intimidated that she cannot comfortably express what she wants to say nor develop creative and critical thinking. Thus, proofreading for second-language writing should be saved for the very last stage, temporally separate from all other exchanges on content, even though the student started writing in her second language in the first place. It would also be useful for another teacher, who is more capable of second-language writing, to take the responsibility of proofreading the student's essay at this point. In this way, the processes of philosophical writing and second-language writing can be more clearly separated. Either way, proofreading by correcting grammatical errors and providing comments on the sentence structure is the most basic job of the teacher who assists with the second-language writing portion.

Besides teaching basic-level second-language writing, during this last stage of writing, I suggest that the teacher instruct the students in various theories of style in the English language. There are two reasons for this. First, as I mentioned earlier, the students who prepare to participate in the IPO are qualified, exceptional students who passed their national competitions. This means that they understand the basics of second-language writing, including grammar and sentence structure. Thus, they need more than grammatical corrections for their second-language writing. Second, style makes the essay more readable. Learning about styles is a part of taking on the role of the reader. To place oneself in the reader's position is a valuable experience for the students, as doing so can stimulate the students' own creative thought processes. As mentioned in the earlier section, to imagine the reader's position is helpful during the logical exercise of philosophical writing. This practice is also helpful during the stylistic exercise of second-language writing and makes the students thoughtfully consider their readers.

By teaching various theories of style, I intend to let the students know there are many options and offer them many sources to consult. Many prominent materials for teaching style are neither absolute nor perfect. For example, some of the students are used to taking the advice of style education from guides like *The Elements of Style* (Strunk and White 2000) or *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace* (Williams and Bizup 2015). Many of the students have encountered those materials in their writing classes before preparing for the IPO essay writing competition. Those

materials offer some useful tips for writing in English, such as avoiding nominalization and passive voice, finding a verb's hidden subject, and putting new information in the last part of the sentence. But Williams himself found that teachers actually prefer the nominal style to the verbal style when they evaluate students' writings (Hake and Williams 1981). This means that to get a good grade in school, it is usually a better strategy *not to follow* Williams's advice on style.

I am not saying that those prominent materials are wrong. Instead, I insist that the teacher should lead the students to meta-criticisms on those materials, so that they can choose their own style for their own reasons. To do this, the teacher may introduce some other materials on style and rhetoric or offer precise feedback on specific sentences with more than two alternative sentences. The best teaching method at this point would be a combination of the earlier processes: writing a letter to the student and performing traditional direct proofreading using the "red pen" method. Basic proofreading can be provided with the latter method, while, with the former, the teacher can offer the students a list of references for style and rhetoric. Through this process, the student can expand her choices of style and choose the right one for her essay.

Finally, Elbow's strategy of reading the essay aloud with one's actual voice is also helpful in second-language writing because doing so helps the student find the rhythm of the sentences and determine the proper punctuation. During the final stage of writing, the teacher can ask the student to read her essay aloud, record it, listen to it, and send it to the teacher. Through this exercise, the student can figure out how her sentences flow and revise the essay to be more readable.

6. Conclusion

I have suggested a new way of teaching IPO essay writing, based on Peter Elbow's binary strategy of writing. I employed Elbow's strategy because it is apt for the two characteristics of the IPO essay: philosophical writing and second-language writing. Elbow's definition of writing (finding one's real voice) is also a proper method for the aim of IPO essay writing. For Elbow, writing is an inner conversation through one's voice. In the growing process, with the creative skill working, the writer enhances her voice. In the cooking process, with the criticizing skill working, the writer takes on the role of the reader by imagining the reader's voice. When teaching IPO essay writing, the teacher can take the reader's voice and help the student develop their creative and critical thinking. Through philosophical reflections and diverse conversations with the teacher, students can figure out what their philosophical interests are, develop their voice on philosophical issues, construct arguments around their positions, find the flaws of those arguments, and strengthen those arguments. As for second-language writing, the teacher can offer the students many options for the style of their essays so that they can expand their stylistic options for writing and edit their own essays.

I came up with this suggestion because I hope that the whole experience of participating in the IPO essay competition will be a valuable and useful experience for all the partaking students. I also hope that, thanks to this rare opportunity, I can provide them with as much knowledge as possible that they could not get through other forms of education.

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Country Report:
The Teaching of Philosophy in Singapore Schools

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1. Overview of Singapore's education system

Singapore's education system is widely regarded as one of the best in the world.[1] In this report, we will focus on education at the primary, secondary, and junior college levels, and will not discuss the education offered in polytechnics (vocational colleges) and universities. We will also focus exclusively on Singapore's public school system, which Singapore citizens are required to attend unless they are granted a special exemption. In addition to public schools, there are also international schools, which cater to the relatively large expatriate population in Singapore and typically offer a curriculum leading to the IB diploma.[2]

All public schools in Singapore are administered by the Ministry of Education (MOE). English is the main language of instruction, although there are also compulsory "mother tongue" classes taught in either Malay, Mandarin, or Tamil. The public education system begins with six years of compulsory primary schooling. Based on their performance in the standardised Primary School Leaving Examination, students are then streamed into either four years ("Express" stream) or five years ("Normal" stream) of secondary education.[3]

Secondary schools offer a standardised curriculum that culminates with the "GCE-O Level" examination, which is jointly administered by MOE and Cambridge Assessments. After completing their O-Levels, most students will either enter a junior college or start a diploma course at a polytechnic. Junior Colleges provide an additional two years of pre-university education based on a standard curriculum that culminates with the "GCE-A Level" examination, which is also jointly administered by MOE and Cambridge Assessments. Performance in this exam is one of the key factors considered in university admissions (although, for students who do not go to junior college, there are alternative pathways to university).

One exception to this general model is that, since 2004, selected schools have combined secondary education and junior college into a single six-year "Integrated Programme" (IP). Students in the IP skip the GCE-O Level and instead work towards achieving either the GCE-A Level or the IB at the end of their secondary schooling. Institutions offering the IP have a significantly higher level of autonomy in both the curriculum/subjects they offer and the forms of assessment they employ.[4]

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[1] For example, see Singapore's high Pisa ranking reported in Coughlan 2016.

[2] However, some international schools also cater to particular national groups by offering the curriculum of their national school system. As of January 2020, there were 58 international schools in Singapore. By contrast, there were 186 primary and 153 secondary schools in Singapore's public education system; see https://beta.moe.gov.sg/schoolfinder.

[3] Further sub-streams are available; for a summary of all the options, see https://www.moe.gov.sg/docs/default-source/document/education/landscape/print/singapore-education-overview.pdf.

[4] A list of schools offering the IP (currently 17) is available here: https://www.moe.gov.sg/microsites/whats-next/for-psle-students/where-do-i-want-to-go/integrated-programme-ip/index.html.

2. Philosophy in primary and "standard" secondary schools

Philosophy is not formally included in either the primary school or the standard secondary school curriculum. However, two subjects that are compulsory at both levels could be described as including some philosophical themes and methods. These subjects are Citizenship and Character Education (CCE) and Social Studies (SS). CCE aims to help students cultivate a "good character", which is conceptualized as involving six core virtues – respect, responsibility, resilience, integrity, care, and harmony. To achieve this, it gets students to engage with questions about self-identity, national-identity, ethics, multiculturalism, and globalisation. The teaching methods used in primary schools for teaching CCE include role-playing, personal reflections, group dialogues, and open-ended questioning.

Social Studies aims to develop "informed, concerned and participative citizens" (CPDD, 2016). Its syllabus focuses on three key issues: "Exploring Citizenship and Governance", "Living in a Diverse Society", and "Being Part of a Globalised World". Some of the questions covered in the SS secondary school syllabus include: "what constitutes citizenship?", "what constitutes social good?", "how do we respond in [sic!] a diverse society?", and "how do we respond to the economic/cultural/security impacts of globalization?". The pedagogy employed is "inquiry-based learning", in which students initiate investigations into social phenomena, seek and evaluate relevant evidence, and synthesise such evidence into hypotheses.

3. Philosophy in the "integrated program" and junior colleges

Singapore's MOE has identified critical thinking as one of three broad emerging "21st century competencies" that it aims to develop in all students. Because critical thinking is closely connected with philosophical thinking, the focus on the former has also led to more of the latter in the school curriculum.

Four schools in Singapore that offer the "integrated program" incorporate the IB Diploma Programme into the final two years (five and six). The course "Theory of Knowledge" (TOK) is one of three core components of the IB Diploma, and hence is taken by all students in their final two years at these schools. It follows the standard IB syllabus and is primarily an epistemology course that examines the nature of knowledge and its application in various disciplines.

Sixteen junior colleges and "integrated program" schools in Singapore offer the GCE-A Level. In seven of these schools, students are given the option of either taking the "General Paper" (GP), which is a one-unit course, or taking "Knowledge and Inquiry" (KI), which is a two-unit course. In the remaining nine schools KI is not offered and all students must take GP.

Like TOK, KI is primarily an epistemology course. It examines the nature of knowledge, its applications in various disciplines, and ethical questions that relate to it. Its assessment consists of three components: an essay, a critical thinking assignment, and a 6-month independent study project.

GP is not explicitly a philosophy course in the way that KI is. Nonetheless, it incorporates philosophical thinking into its syllabus. According to MOE, it "aims to develop in students the ability to think critically, to construct cogent arguments and to communicate ideas using clear,

accurate and effective language".[5] Furthermore, some of the questions that it tackles are philosophical. Examples include: "Assess the view that scientific research should not be constrained by ethical concerns", "Should the advancement of artificial intelligence be a cause for concern?", "Considering the increasing threat of terrorism, are governments justified in limiting people's rights?", and "Is diversity necessarily a good thing?".

Although anecdotal evidence suggests that a very small minority of students opt for KI, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in doing philosophy informally amongst JC and IP students. This has led to a number of student philosophy clubs being organized. Also, since 2018 Hwa Chong Institution has organized an annual philosophy event – The Hwa Chong Invitational Olympiad – open to all senior secondary and JC students in Singapore.[6]

4. Elective philosophy research projects in secondary schools

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Programme (HSSRP) is a special program that caters to gifted students with an interest in the humanities and social sciences. It launched in 1994 and was initially open to both secondary and JC level students. However, from 2006 it has only been open to Secondary 3 and 4 students from gifted education programs or IP schools.

Students who undertake a HSSRP research project are paired with an academic mentor from a Singapore University, who they regularly meet with. They also participate in research workshops, present their projects at a HSSRP symposium, and eventually publish them in a HSSRP yearbook.

Philosophical topics are a good match for the HSSRP as they give students an important chance to develop their research and argumentation skills, and to explore an issue critically from different angles. Since 1997 there has been an average of 3-4 HSSRP projects per year that are philosophy based. A wide range of philosophical topics have been covered. Some recent examples include "A Study of the Moral Arguments Invoked by Political Parties in Singapore" and "To Alter or Not to Alter? An Examination of Whether it is Morally Permissible for Social Media Companies to Alter Users' News Feeds".

5. Conclusion

In recent decades, more avenues for thinking philosophically have been incorporated into Singapore's education system. This reflects Singapore's positioning of itself as a leader in the knowledge economy and an acknowledgement within policy making circles that the higher-order thinking skills that philosophy inculcates are crucial to such leadership. We are hopeful that in the decades ahead, this trend will continue and students in Singapore will have more opportunities to engage in philosophical thinking and reflection.

However, since Philosophy is not an official subject in the Singapore school system, teachers do not receive any specialized training in how to teach philosophy. Learning is on the job (through mentoring by seniors) or through ad hoc training. For example, MOE occasionally organises professional development courses, and inter-school teacher meetings to help those

[5] https://www.moe.gov.sg/docs/default-source/document/education/syllabuses/english-language-and-literature/files/2012-general-paper-syllabus-(pre-university)-h1.pdf

[6] For more information see: https://hcipo.wordpress.com

teaching Knowledge and Inquiry to develop their philosophical teaching abilities. We expect that as the interest in studying philosophy expands, teaching teachers to teach philosophy will also become more structured and formalised.[7]

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[7] We would like to thank Singapore's Ministry of Education, Wong Yew Leng from the National Institute of Education, and Goh Lei Ying from HSSRP for answering several of our queries. We also thank Kalpana Vignehsa for providing helpful comments on an earlier draft of this report.

Short Questions, Short Answers: The IPO and the Teaching of Philosophy

1. What is the most important aspect to consider in teaching philosophy?

Shinji Kajitani: It is to encourage people (not only young people but everyone from all generations) to think by themselves and express what they think.

Gad Prudovsky: I understand the question as relating to the practice of teaching philosophy. My primary goal as a practitioner is to foster students' joyous engagement in philosophical conversations. By philosophical conversations I mean not only the discourse that occurs in class but the continuous conversation that forms the philosophical cultural heritage. Therefore, I see my role as that of inviting the students to partake in an ongoing dialogue. As we all know, participation in a conversation demands attentive listening and sincere contribution. Based on this I formulate the two important aspects of teaching philosophy:

a) insistence on close and generous reading of philosophical texts (as well as the oral and written contributions of peers); and
b) encouragement of active participation in which the student expresses his or her authentic perception on the matters discussed.

Thor Steinar Grødal: To nourish the curiosity of the students.

Ji-Aeh Lee: I think, it is to guide students into the way of "doing philosophy" for themselves; in order to do this, the first step is that they find "genuine questions" in their everyday life.

2. What is the role of the IPO for the teaching of philosophy?

Grødal: To nourish the teachers through interaction with international colleagues.

Lee: My starting point of training delegation students for IPO is asking for their own interests and questions. From their own questions, the "real inquiry" of philosophical issues begins. Before reading any philosophical texts, finding out in an authentic manner about philosophical questions is very important to dig into further philosophical issues. Therefore, I think IPO can be a good motivation to "do philosophy" for the students who have not any chance to study philosophy in schools.

Prudovsky: The IPO emphasis on philosophical essays is in complete harmony with the aspects of teaching philosophy that I value most. Thus, preparing my students for the IPO is a wonderful opportunity to practice good teaching. The national competition is a chance to create an important bonding between teachers and students, proving to them that they are not alone in this strange endeavor. The actual meeting in the international event, with teachers and students from around the world adds another dimension. The fact that there is an international

community that is committed to perpetuating the philosophical tradition and to do so in an atmosphere of academic excellence, is very reassuring for both students and teachers.

Kajitani: It is a wonderful opportunity for both students and teachers to learn how closely we can be connected with each other and to develop our solidarity and friendship through philosophy.

3. What is the relation between the teaching of philosophy and the idea of competition?

Prudovsky: For me, there is no direct relation. As I emphasize the joy of learning, it seems that competition may generate it. Another peripheral advantage lies in boosting the prestige of philosophy, given widespread public dismissal of its value.

Kajitani: It is really like sports or Olympiad. We can respect and praise each other because we make a lot of efforts for the competition as an opportunity to construct our philosophical thought, not only for students but also for teachers (just as we are doing now).

Lee: In fact, I do not think IPO is a competition. IPO is just a chance to do philosophy for young adults. However, the format of competition can help to encourage to do philosophy; sometimes, the experience of participating in IPO itself can make the students enter the new world of doing philosophy.

Grødal: The competition is a necessary meeting point, in order for all the other important things to take place.

4. What are the most important aspects in the evaluation of essays?

Prudovsky: The important aspects in the evaluation mirror my opinion on the important aspects of teaching philosophy. *Relevance* reflects the virtue of attentive listening. In my understanding of this evaluation criterion, it has to do with the ability of the student to discern the deep concerns that drives the quotation to which he or she relates. *Originality* reflects the virtue of commitment to sustain the philosophical community through sincere contribution to its ongoing inquiry. In my reading of this criterion, we do not expect that high school students will present novel philosophical ideas, but that they will manifest their commitment to be a part of the philosophical conversation by laying on the table *their own* considered opinion.
It is important to note that the criterion of relevance cannot be met without some philosophical understanding; and originality also demands a measure of knowledge as well as the power of argumentation, or else the expression "*considered* opinion" is vacuous.

Lee: For me, the most important aspect is whether the essay is the authentic inquiry of the students' own questions based on a logically well-formed argument.

Kajitani: How students meet the philosophical essence in the topic with their interest and how they can construct their thought philosophically (in a logically coherent way with deep insights).

Grødal: Philosophical understanding expressed through the power of argumentation and/or originality. What this means? It is not easily definable, but it does not entail namedropping.

5. What should be taken up from the e-IPO 2020 for future IPO's?

Lee: I think that e-IPO 2020 suggested to us a good way of saving money and time, and of a new experience to open the "unexpected" world. However, I hope for our "face-to-face" meeting and discussion in future IPO's.

Prudovsky: The 2020 e-IPO was a great success. The physical encounter is indispensable, but we did witness the possible efficiency of virtual meetings. In future IPO's it will be possible to invite luminary guest speakers for a unique experience like the one we enjoyed with Michael Sandel. Or we could create many Zoom sessions on the chosen topic with experts from all over the world. Another option to use video technologies is to conduct meetings of IPO institutions in this manner. In this way these technical matters will not demand precious time during the physical IPO. The preparations of the juries may also be done in Zoom. We may envision prolonged preparations that are conducted as online workshops. In such sessions, groups of teachers may be given past essays for assessment and then discuss the way in which they applied the criteria. Such workshops can be offered to wider audiences of philosophy teachers as means of improving the quality of evaluations in regular teaching practice.

Grødal: The continuation of the focus on engaging the students in meaningful and stimulating ways.

Kajitani: It was great that former IPO students joined like alumni do (we can make it!), and many people (teachers, guest speakers) could participate through the internet. We should make use of such online participation as much as possible.

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