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Journal of Didactics of Philosophy 2 (2018)

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Dear readers!

We are happy to present the second issue of the second volume. You will find a research article by Matthias Tichy, who takes up new developments in online communication technologies and discusses its philosophical and didactical consequences.

The issue includes three country reports. Christine Martin presents the main format of philosophical examination in France, the socalled "dissertation". You will also find another example of the global diversity in teaching philosophy/ethics at schools in the country report about South Korea by Minkyung Kim. Klaus Feldmann and Nils Höppner present a short outline about the education and training of teachers of philosophy in Germany.

In this issue you will also find three reviews of books. Mechthild Ralla reviews a German schoolbook edited by Eva Marsal. Bianca Schreiber reviews a didactical study on the relation between philosophy and autobiography by Volker Haase. And Jürgen Braun provides information about Helge Kminek's empirical study of philosophy education in Germany and Switzerland, following the socalled objective hermeneutical approach.

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

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The Editors

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ON FILTER BUBBLES, ECHO CHAMBERS, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

In the light of changes caused by digital media, some media scientists are speaking of an "epochal" or "structural break" leading to a challenge for education. Using the examples of so-called filter bubbles and echo chambers, this article shows that digitalization reveals some well known problems in new clothes and thereby offers them a new topicality. The present article calls attention to specific limits of the media studies' viewpoint (1), it shows what contribution philosophy can bring to the mentioned problems (2), it connects the approaches of media studies and philosophy (3), and it draws some didactical conclusions (4).

Keywords: Digital Media, Filter Bubble, Echo Chambers, Allegory of the Cave

The spread of digital media has profoundly changed the forms of social interaction and public discourse. The assessment of these changes, however, remains controversial. For example, Internet platforms enable fast communication in social networks, so that individual participants can maintain a large number of contacts. Although these are declared to be "friendships," media critics suggest they often only serve new forms of self-presentation. In terms of public discourse, the Internet initially seemed to expand the possibilities for political participation, though it is now regarded as a typical medium of a "postdemocratic" society. Communication and media studies are confronted with a broad spectrum of questions. Many of these, according to media scientists, should be addressed in school. Roberto Simanowski calls for digital media not only to be used as teaching aids and to teach how to use them effectively, but also to make the media a separate topic and to investigate the changes they

bring about in the way we see ourselves and the world (Simanowski 2018: 204). Bernhard Pörksen proposes the goal of "media literacy," an "interdisciplinary subject" that should function as a "laboratory of the editorial society" and in which "the mechanisms of the public are studied" and the "journalistic ability of those involved" can be trained (Pörksen 2018: 205-206).

From a viewpoint of didactics of philosophy, this constellation raises the question of whether the topics addressed should be left to media studies, i.e. to a new school subject, or whether philosophical questions, albeit under different titles and in different contexts, are not also hidden here. This question has urgency. The call for a new subject in schools draws attention to itself in education policy discourse and, as a consequence, the concerns and potentials of traditional subjects, including philosophy, are diminished. However, it must be admitted that "the way educational institutions deal with the new media is not only characterised by frightening ignorance, but also by a disappointing lack of imagination, exaggerated fear, and considerable opportunism" (Simanowski 2018: 12). A look at the effects of digital media on forms of interaction and public discourse shows that a mere introduction in how to use media effectively, known in Germany under the title "*Informationstechnische Grundbildung*" ("Basic Education in Information Technology"), excludes important aspects from the outset. The same applies, however, to a socially and culturally critical approach of describing individual problems - such as the increasing dependence of media users on the number of likes on social platforms - and discussing possible remedies. These developments only form the surface under which fundamental problems are hidden. It is the task of philosophy to uncover these and put them in relation to current developments. It is important to look beyond the boundaries of the current discourse on digital media, which is kept in motion by considerations of expediency on the one hand, and by cultural-critical fears on the other.

This article is limited to questions that can be found under the keywords "filter bubble" and "echo chamber" in media and communication studies. These problems can be explained by a comparison with classical mass media. Newspapers, radio and television are aimed at a broad audience and represent a relatively broad spectrum of opinions, so that recipients are confronted with different views and, ideally, are encouraged to test their own convictions against recognised standards of rationality. In addition, information and reports have already been checked for relevance and reliability by professional editors or scientific experts, so that they can generally be considered trustworthy. In social networks, on the other hand,

information is personalized – and thus "filtered" – with regard to a user's preferences.[1] This creates filter bubbles and echo chambers in which one can live as if in one's own world, without having to endure cognitive dissonances and putting personal convictions to the test.

According to Eli Pariser, filter bubbles create a "unique universe of information for each of us [...] which fundamentally alters the way we encounter ideas and information" (Pariser 2011: 9). C. Thi Nguyen speaks instead of "epistemic bubbles," defined as "informational networks from which relevant voices have been excluded by omission" (Nguyen 2018). The danger is that no "sufficiently broad and representative coverage of all the relevant information" is available and that the participants, due to the recurring confirmation by like-minded people, develop an "excessive self-confidence." However, if those involved are open-minded about new information, epistemic bubbles – according to Nguyen – can easily burst: "We can pop an epistemic bubble simply by exposing its members to the information and arguments that they've missed." Echo chambers, "social structures from which other relevant voices have been actively discredited," are more difficult. In these, the affirmative comments of like-minded people serve as justification for ignoring conflicting views by disqualifying their supporters as unbelievable from the outset. The mere confrontation with new information or divergent views is therefore not sufficient for a liberation from an echo chamber.

The distinction between filter bubbles and echo chambers is important in order to classify the arguments of media scientists appropriately. Pörksen, for example, believes that the thesis of closed filter bubbles is simply wrong; rather, the flood of information leads to a "filter clash," since bubbles can easily break up in an "intensively networked society and be flooded by news of all kinds" (Pörksen 2018: 118-119). Pörksen's argument does not apply to echo chambers, however, since distrust of certain sources already prevents the knowledge of corresponding information. No irritations or cognitive dissonances arise that could become the starting point of an educational process. It seems that the phenomena of flood of information and segregation in particular communities can coexist.

The shift of opinion formation from the public to particular communities ultimately leads to a dissolution of "facts" and "truth." In completely closed filter bubbles or echo chambers, a fact is what the members of their own community accept and disseminate as such. However,

[1] Personalization of websites was initially a strategy of search engine providers in order to make available suitable search results to users; these techniques were later adopted by social networks, cf. Stalder 2016: 188-189.

that knowledge about reality is gained not through one's own perception, but through listening to or reading other people's statements is not new. In fact, most of a person's current knowledge is based on hearsay and not on his or her own observation or on the acceptance of a proof. For reasons of efficiency, there is hardly any other way of dealing with knowledge in the scientific and technical world. Measured against epistemological standards of rationality, this way of dealing with knowledge is quite legitimate as long as the system of knowledge generation and distribution fulfils its task, especially in the sciences and journalism. However, the influence of these fields has been significantly reduced, according to media sciences, due to the increase in the direct exchange of information on the Internet. Social networks therefore endanger the critical handling of knowledge and also for deliberative democracy, which is dependent on rational opinion formation.[2]

This sketch of the problem shows that "filter bubbles" and echo chambers" are by no means fundamentally new problems, but developments whose quality and extent have been changed by the spread of digital media (1). Ultimately, it is also a question of whether or how direct access to reality, which is not predetermined or distorted by media, is possible, i.e. the basic problem of epistemology (2). This consideration leads to the conclusion that, with didactic intent, several questions or perspectives regarding the "prisoners" in filter bubbles and their observers have to be distinguished (3). Against this background, the approaches critical of the media are proving incomplete, and the contribution of philosophy is also indispensable from a didactic point of view (4).

1. Classical and digital media

Some analyses of digital media's social effects recall motifs from cultural criticism of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Increasing dependence on new machines, namely computers and smartphones, is also lamented for the the tendencies to experience the present less and to fixate present moments for the purpose of dissemination instead (Simanowski 2016: 40-47 and 60–70). The growing incapacity for longer concentration and the superficiality of the contacts, which are determined by the number of likes in social networks rather than by the meaning of shared interests and viewpoints is also criticized. From a didactic point of view, however, a mere collection of cultural and media-critical considerations remains unproductive

[2] According to Habermas, the "deliberative paradigm" is an ideal model for democracy, particularly in view of the "electronic communications revolution", in order both to retain the basic idea of legitimation through rational opinion-forming and to take account of the empirically ascertainable changes in complex societies (cf. Habermas 2008: 143). In the shorter English Version, this remark is missing (cf. Habermas 2006).

until it is clear which basic problems are hidden behind these criticisms, which exemplary insights are to be gained in the debate, and which options for action are open.

"Filter bubbles" and "echo chambers" must be placed in a broader context and understood as a specific manifestation of a general problem. First of all, the phenomenon of isolation in a separate information universe has increased due to the spread of social networks, but is by no means new. Oswald Spengler, for example, wrote that the "people" only read the "one, 'their' newspaper" and so truth coincides with "what one constantly reads and hears" (Spengler 1920/22: 1139). Theodor W. Adorno, in reference to this observation, criticized the "expropriation of people's consciousness through the centralized means of public communication" (Adorno 1950: 56), i.e. through newspapers and radio. While the analogy between classical and digital media has its limits, especially with regard to the role of the so-called gatekeepers – journalists who weight information according to its relevance and decide on its publication,[3] the reference to historical parallels can protect against exaggerated conclusions concerning the effects of the distribution of digital media. Pörksen, for example, argues that this is an "epochal break," since so far "every medium [...] has itself limited its reach" (Pörksen 2018: 16). Reckwitz, moreover, speaks of a "structural break," since digital technology by no means merely "increases [...] the old, industrial paradigms" with their tendency towards mechanization and standardization, but (despite its uniformity in the form of a "cultural machine") enables, stimulates and even forces a "singularization of objects and subjects" (Reckwitz 2017: 228-229). A closer look behind the alleged rupture, however, reveals continuities that must not be ignored if the change triggered by the digital media is to be adequately assessed. This applies both to the optimistic interpretation that the digital media have opened up new freedoms and political participation opportunities for people as well as the pessimistic assessment that digitisation, and the Internet in particular, is leading to a flattening, a loss of understanding and depth in experiencing and dealing with important issues. For example, Reckwitz judges the social effects of the spread of digital media predominantly positively, because the subject is socially perceived and valued in the digitized world in its "uniqueness" (Reckwitz 2017: 59). But the uniformity with which many people look spellbound at the display of their smartphones and forget about their environment is reminiscent of the standardization of behaviors that Adorno and Horkheimer had criticized under the banner of the culture industry. What Reckwitz describes as a "background structure

[3] Habermas speaks in this context in a positive way of "filters", namely as "filters of a discursive opinion formation" (Habermas 2008: 144).

for the production of singularities" (Reckwitz 2017: 229), namely the economic and technical instruments of a digitized society, ultimately prevails in standardized behaviors of people and goes beyond the "uniqueness" of their digital profiles (cf. Simanowski 2016: 39). The tendencies already criticized by critics of society and culture, namely the pressure of conformity and the disappearance of the individual in the masses, have only changed form and continue to be effective.

The talk of an "epochal" or "structural break" apparently (also) serves as an argument for the thesis that the spread of digital media represents a new "educational challenge" (Pörksen 2018: 21). However, the connection between social-technical changes and the goal and form of education is by no means as close as is assumed in this argument. The example of the now almost forgotten didactic concept of "*epochaltypischen Schlüsselprobleme*" ("key epochal-typical problems") shows that the transition from the identification of a socio-technical change to the determination of corresponding educational content requires additional reasons. Among other things, it must be clarified what position the new educational content should take in a comprehensive and general educational concept that starts, for example, with the basic idea of education as a mutual self- and world-disclosure, and therefore initially distinguishes elementary forms in which this disclosure can take place. Therefore, the reference to the distribution of digital media alone is not sufficient to justify the demand to declare digital media and corresponding forms of communication as an independent and indispensable element in an educational concept. Conversely, some of the media science topics could prove to be examples of fundamental questions that are already taken into account in the comprehensive educational concept. Then the alleged "educational challenge" could be reduced to concretizing these general questions in relation to the changed reality.

2. The old and the new look through "green glasses"

An important difference between traditional and digital media is that the choice of a particular newspaper or radio station is based on a decision of one's own, which can be said to be rational on the condition that one knows how the information and opinions offered were produced. This condition of "filter sovereignty" (Pörksen 2018: 215) is probably met to a greater extent by the classical media than by social platforms and search engines whose algorithms work in secret. Pörksen describes the choice of a certain newspaper or a certain television station "as if one were consciously putting on tinted glasses," an "analogy" he borrowed from Eli Pariser's book *Filter Bubble* (Pörksen 2018: 215 and 255, note 249).

However, Pariser speaks of filter bubbles precisely in those cases in which those affected are not aware that the information offered is personalized, i.e. selected and arranged with regard to presumed interests and opinions of those affected (Pariser 2011: 9f.). Furthermore, it is doubtful whether newspaper buyers and television viewers will *remain* permanently aware of the extent to which the reality conveyed by the media is also a product of their own decision. More important, however, is that these are epistemological questions, not questions of media studies, as can be seen from the fact that the comparison with "tinted glasses" comes from this context. Heinrich von Kleist described a corresponding thought experiment, namely that "all men had green glasses instead of the eyes" and therefore "must judge that the objects [...] *are* green [...]" (Kleist 1801: 1280).[4] Kleist wanted to explain the basic idea of Kant's critique of knowledge (which he understood as a skeptical position), namely that the objects of knowledge are merely phenomena, and that therefore truth "*Bildung*" ("education") remain unattainable to humans forever. Against the background of this epistemological question, the problem of filter bubbles now appears as a special manifestation of a general problem, from which the solution (or resolution) should offer something to be learned for the media studies problem.

In a media-critical context, a filter bubble does not distort or restrict the perception of all people (or all perceptive and rational beings), but only individuals or members of a group of like-minded people. This limitation makes it necessary to describe the situation of the wearer of tinted glasses from (at least) two different perspectives, namely from that of this wearer, for whom "all objects are green," and from that of the observers, who do not wear tinted glasses and who therefore make the distinction between a world that appears green and the world as they themselves perceive it. This distinction, which media science assumes to be empirical, can appear in the context of epistemology only in hypothetical form, because the conditions of the possibility of human knowledge and its objects cannot be changed in reality, but only in abstract hypothetical terms, such as by a mental comparison between the finite knowledge of human beings and the infinite knowledge of an omniscient, godlike being.

Despite this difference, the reference to epistemology is meaningful and useful because it brings out a precondition of media criticism more clearly. Media criticism presupposes an external point of view from which it is possible to observe media consumers and the world as it appears to them in its difference to the "real" world. Only from such a point of view can media critics describe the behaviour of other people in a way that is typical for their

[4] Letter of March 22nd 1801 to Wilhelmine Zenge, emphasis in the original.

investigations, namely in its facilitation, but also in its limitation by the media. This raises the question of the very possibility of such a position or second-order observation. That this condition of media criticism is problematic[5] arises from Luhmann's thesis that every observation of the media and media users also shows its "blind spot," from which a fundamental limit results for every media criticism. It cannot claim to have "media-free" access to reality beyond all media. Luhmann, for example, speaks of the "reality of the mass media" in the double sense that (1) newspapers are actually printed in large editions and television programmes are broadcast, and (2) in this way reality is created, as it is known to media consumers (Luhmann 1996: 12-14). But observers can only observe how reality is constructed, which is why the question: "How do the mass media distort reality [...]" loses its meaning (Luhmann 1996: 20).

Accordingly, criticism of the bias in filter bubbles and echo chambers seems to lack basis if it is to provide not only a description of different reality constructions, but also an assessment of their appropriateness. It is impossible, as Luhmann claims, for an external observer to have a criterion that allows him to judge the appropriateness of a construction of reality. This consideration should be applied to the media-critical description of filter bubbles and echo chambers: an external observer can detect different modes of perception, but cannot claim to distort perception in the sense that it amounts to a deviation from a reality not conveyed by the media.

If it should be easy, as Nguyen claims, "[to] pop an epistemic bubble simply by exposing its members to the information and arguments that they've missed," this process should not be understood as if confrontation with information and arguments would give those affected access to the reality not conveyed by the media. However, a situation that psychologists call cognitive conflict – namely the conflict between incompatible perceptions of the same part of reality – is conceivable. In the best case, a cognitive conflict can be resolved at a higher level of abstraction through the construction of new patterns of perception, which is tantamount to a learning process. The "bursting" of a filter bubble is then to be understood as reaching an equilibrium, so that cognitive conflicts of a certain type no longer occur.

A cognitive conflict is described from the perspective of an external observer. The affected persons themselves can report on the origin and resolution of a cognitive conflict only retrospectively, since they take up a suitable perspective only at the newly gained level of

[5] With his constructivist account, Pörksen tries to do without this precondition, cf. Pörksen 2015. But results from media sciences are often understood and dissiminated as if they presuppose a naive-realistic standpoint.

abstraction. During their involvement in the conflict, such a description is not possible because an essential cause of the conflict is that they are trapped in a filter bubble or echo chamber and are unable to absorb and evaluate external information. Filter bubbles or echo chambers cannot be seen by those trapped in it. There may be borderline cases, such as a Facebook user who also learns about world politics through classical media but who nevertheless remains uncritically connected to his community and to a degree that makes the talk of a filter bubble seem meaningful. Many users of social platforms also obtain information from other sources, as empirical studies have shown (Dubois/Blank 2018: 732-733). This only means, however, that there may be incongruencies and inconsistencies in the description of media use and that it is often not clear which of two meaningful descriptions is to be preferred. The filter bubble or echo chamber models do not lose their value simply because in some cases it is debatable whether they can be used adequately.

Even if empirical studies do not provide clear results regarding the distribution and degree of media isolation, filter bubbles and echo chambers remain a cause for concern. A special challenge is connected with the mere thought that one's own conception of reality could be determined and distorted by algorithms without being able to know about it and influence it.[6] The increasing power of Internet and search engine operators is not the only reason for concern. Another is the possibility that this power will no longer be experienced as such, that one thus lives as if in a prison without knowing it. Without such knowledge, a prisoner could not develop any idea of a reality outside of prison, and so there would be no motive to work on one's own liberation.

Thus described, the problem of the filter bubbles or echo chambers is of course not new. Socrates described it in his *allegory of the cave*. As is well known, the "strange prisoners" (Plato: Politeia 515a) live in their own world and are not even aware of their seclusion. Expressed in the media studies idiom, they are in a perfect echo chamber; the prisoners mutually confirm their convictions regarding the classification of the shadow images, and they fend off from the outset from the outsider's attempts to inform them about their situation, with reference to his "spoiled eyes" (Plato: Politeia 571a). Because their conception of reality

[6] Recently, the concept of the algorithm has also aroused interest among social and cultural scientists, which is probably due to fears triggered by recent discussions about artificial intelligence and self-learning systems (cf. Stalder 2016: 164-202). The classical concept of the algorithm is much older than modern computer technology; it is the central concept of computer sciences and does not describe anything to be afraid of. From this point of view, computer science lessons could certainly contribute to the development of the ability to realistically assess current developments.

is completely closed, the prisoners cannot even consider that the information brought into the cave from outside could be accurate and useful. The basic problem, as Hans Blumenberg put it, lies in the fact that "one cannot depict in a cave what a cave is" (Blumenberg 1989: 89). As horizons that limit the sphere of perceivable objects, the filter bubble and the echo chamber likewise do not constitute any objects that can be perceived and described *inside* this framework.

This fundamental limitation results in behaviours that Socrates and his interlocutor, Glaucon, referred to in the course of their dialogue on "human nature in relation to education and illiteracy" (Plato: Politeia 514a). For example, the mere liberation of a cave dweller from his chains does not yet lead him to tackle the ascent from the cave in order to be able to see through his previous world as a world of shadows. He must be forced to work his way up to a point of view from which a superior knowledge of reality becomes possible.[7] The fact that it is impossible for the prisoners to adequately assess their situation becomes evident even after the freed man returns to the cave. The prisoners laugh at his inability to keep up with the competition for the correct prognosis of the passing shadows. He has the superior insight, but fails to make the cave dwellers understand the possibility of such insight (Plato: Politeia 517a). No communication is possible between the returnee and those left behind.

Plato's thought experiment can serve as a warning against overlooking or underestimating the difficulties associated with imprisonment in filter bubbles or echo chambers. These begin with the appropriate description. The perspective of the freed cave dweller must be distinguished from the perspective of those who appear to him as prisoners but are by no means so according to their own criteria. There can be no comprehensive perspective that allows the perception of the prisoners, the view of the process of their liberation, and finally the view from the position of insight into the unfortunate prisoners.

However, the form of the parable makes it possible to combine the perspectives of the observer and the (potentially) affected person. At first - on the pictorial level of the parable - Socrates represented the process of liberation from the perspective of the external observer, whereby he could not take the perspective of a captured cave dweller. Similarly, talking about filter bubbles is initially associated with the assumption that one is not caught in the bubbles discussed. The change from the pictorial to the content level of the parable, however, allowed Socrates and Glaucon to assume that they were somehow enclosed in a "cave," thus similar to

[7] Platon: *Politeia*, 515c and 515e. Waldenfels uses the accurate formula: „*Politeía* is not an *Émile*.“ (Waldenfels 2017: 89).

the prisoners (Plato: Politeia 515a). However, this similarity can only be asserted in an abstract-hypothetical sense, not by describing one's own "cave" as a limited part of reality. Socrates' own interpretation of the parable, in which the cave is to be equated with the area of the perceptible and the world outside the cave with the area of the visible (Plato: Politeia 517b), does not change the fact that the cave in which Socrates himself could be trapped cannot be represented. On the other hand, it could be objected that the area of the perceptible becomes recognizable in its limitations under the condition of insight into the idea of the good (Plato: Politeia 517c). However, Socrates and Glaucon spoke of this insight only hypothetically and did not claim to have already arrived at this insight themselves. As far as the description of the cave is concerned, there are only two possibilities: Either "the others" are enclosed in a cave (or echo chamber), and in this case both the cave and the "reality constructions" of its inhabitants can be described from the position of an observer, or it can be hypothetically assumed that you yourself are enclosed in a cave in some sense, but without being able to describe this cave as part of your own world.

Despite these limitations, it is still possible to indicate what needs to be done to get out of a cave. The way out is not to wait for an experience of revival through which one reaches a higher insight.[8] Rather, one's own modes of perception and concepts must be subjected to a test of the kind that Socrates exemplified in his dialogues. His knowledge did not consist of a knowledge of a special kind, for example of ideas in another area of reality, but of the ability to examine claims and clarify terms.[9] Even if those concerned are not aware of exactly what the limitations of their perceptions and convictions are (and what causes them), they can nevertheless expect that an understanding beyond the boundaries of particular echo chambers becomes possible if they test their conceptual instruments for their reliability.

Philosophy's contribution to the media studies discussion of filter bubbles and echo chambers thus comprises four points, namely (1) that the perspective of a "prisoner" must be consistently distinguished from the perspective of an observer, but that (2) the observer can hypothetically assume of himself to be a prisoner, from which (3) the demand arises to subject his own perceptions, concepts, and principles to an examination, just as the prisoners in Plato's cave or users of certain media would also have to conduct in order to be prepared for a possible "cave exit." Finally, (4) this process can be understood as education in a sense that

[8] Waldenfels draws attention to the parallel between the insight into the idea of the good and a proces of religious conversion (Waldenfels 2017: 90).

[9] Such is the interpretation of the talk of platonic "ideas" by Stemmer, following Wolfgang Wieland (Stemmer 1992, 220-221).

goes beyond mere knowledge of media use, but also beyond a culturally critical rejection of digital media.

3. Possible perspectives and didactical situations

It is didactically significant that caves and filter bubbles can only be spoken of from certain perspectives. In relation to one's own situation, they can only be spoken of hypothetically. There are several positions that learners and teachers can take up or can attribute to people whose handling of the media is the subject of discussion. Each of these positions provides certain ways of accessing the problem, requires specific assumptions to be fulfilled, and is subject to certain restrictions:

(1) Learners and teachers can take the position of media critics and think together on how to recognise when *other* people are trapped in a bubble, and what possible consequences that has.
(2) Learners and teachers could investigate a particular filter bubble, such as the one of the *followers* of a particular platform on the Internet, and try to determine what it is like for *other* people to live in it. Of particular importance would be the question of whether it makes sense to attribute a motive to these "others" to leave their cave. This does not seem possible (in the case of a completely closed cave world), because it presupposes the reference to reality outside the cave, which cannot be imagined inside.
(3) The teacher could (mis-)understand the didactic asymmetry in relation to the learners in the sense of seeing himself in the role of the philosopher who frees the enclosed learners from their prison.
(4) In view of the inescapability of media mediation and the resulting distortion, learners and teachers could agree on the sceptical position that education and truth remain fundamentally unattainable to them.
(5) Learners and teachers may attempt to combine the two perspectives of the included and the observers by hypothetically considering themselves as included.

ad (1): Many media critics suggest the description from the position of the external critic, who judges the limitations of the view of others. This undoubtedly has its justification. However, it has limitations in that the relationship with the "others" is designed from the outset in such a way that it is not possible to see how communication with the "others," which is regularly

called for, should still be possible. For cultural or media criticism, it may be indispensable to take an external standpoint from which the consumers of certain television programmes or the users of some Internet platforms appear like inhabitants of Plato's cave.[10] However, this demarcation carries the risk of not generally understanding the problem of filter bubbles as a problem of the media or the appropriate handling of information, but rather projecting it onto a limited group of people. In this case, this approach becomes counterproductive because it no longer contributes to the search for definitions and principles that can serve as a basis for understanding. The cave dwellers left behind cannot be given any understandable reason to grant the freed returnee special status and to give priority to his judgment over their own judgements. Similarly, it cannot be guaranteed that a group of media users will be given a reason to accept the opinion of external observers and assume the role of the blinded. Ultimately, the external approach leads to mutual accusations by members of different groups that they do not perceive the "thing" properly and apply useless concepts, or leads to lamenting the fate of the "uneducated" cave dwellers (Plato: Politeia 516c).

ad (2): Whether there is even an answer to the question of what it is to be another is controversial. Still, a change of perspective is possible in the sense of a reconstruction of views and experiences, for example as it is carried out in literature lessons investigating the representation of various figures and their views. It is also possible to subsequently report how one has made a mistake and how one has freed oneself from it. In retrospect, a cognitive conflict can be presented as an occasion to have gone through an educational process. A currently experienced conflict, however, will be experienced as a problem that should be solved as quickly as possible. It is not possible to know what it is like to be a prisoner in a filter bubble or cave if it is as comprehensive and total as Plato assumed in his representation.

As a consequence, it does not seem possible to have a motive for the ascent from the cave world or to imagine the mere possibility of an ascent in a meaningful way. This idea would have to take place within the framework of the forms of perception and categories that make up the cave world, but also present this world as an object. What is possible, however, is the abstract idea of a cave itself. In this way, however, the hypothetical description of one's own inclusion is detached from the perspective of certain "others." Their situation is not presented in order to put oneself in their place, but serves as a starting point for hypothetical considerations of one's own inclusion.

[10] Cf. for example Fleischhauer 2016.

ad (3): A strict asymmetry between the "educated" returnee and the "uneducated" prisoners is not suitable for describing the process of gradual liberation from bias as a process of understanding. In Plato's portrayal, this is shown in the use of coercion and violence by the "liberator" and in the complete incomprehension of the cave dwellers left behind. The question of how a cave dweller freed from his chains can be motivated to tackle the arduous ascent from the cave remains open (cf. Blumenberg 1989: 88). As the situation of the cave dwellers is described, one cannot make out where a dialogue could begin through which contradictions would become clear and a learning process would thus be set in motion.

The reference to the (hypothetical) killing of the returnee is often interpreted as allusion to Socrates' condemnation by the Athenians (e.g. Blumenberg 1989: 147), and the depiction invites us to identify with the misunderstood philosopher, i.e. to assume the position of the knowing person but without really having completed the arduous ascent from the cave. It would therefore be an illusion to assume that understanding what is happening in Plato's description is sufficient to eliminate the aforementioned asymmetry between teachers and learners.

Of didactic interest is precisely what is excluded in the cave parable: a learning process as a process of communication between learners and teachers. Such a process of communication is possible between the cave inhabitants (about the moving shadow images) or between Socrates and Glaucon, when they discuss their situation with regard to education and illiteracy, precisely because there is a common horizon of understanding.

ad (4): The sceptical view fits well with a generalized critique of culture and media that no longer believes it is necessary to explain its own viewpoint. It is also the view often taken up by young people to whom knowledge and firm convictions seem to contradict what they understand by philosophy. From a didactic point of view, the sceptical view is unproductive if it is associated with the position that any (as always preliminary) result in the course of an investigation must be doubted even without a specific reason. Moreover, the sceptic avoids the interesting question of what to do in view of the possibility of being locked in a cave.

ad (5): Even if Blumenberg's assertion that "one cannot depict in a cave what a cave is" (Blumenberg 1989: 89) applies, it is nevertheless possible to start from one's own imprisonment in a cave and to examine the possibilities of one's own liberation in the form of

a thought experiment. Socrates asked Glaucon (Plato: Politeia 514a) to consider what those who suspect they might be in a cave or in a state of illiteracy could do. In contrast to the mutual incomprehension between returnees and cave dwellers mentioned in the parable, an understanding about the hypothetical case of one's own inclusion is possible in the conversation between Socrates and Glaucon. Neither Socrates nor Glaucon pretended to have already come to an understanding of the idea of the good, so that the hypothesis of one's own bias cannot be rejected from the outset. It therefore makes sense to investigate how liberation from imprisonment would be possible, namely liberation from unclear ideas and concepts.

The difference to the approach of media studies is obvious: media scientists investigate empirical facts, such as the closed perception structure of the members of a certain Facebook group. Such an examination cannot take place by asking people, who are already affected by a filter bubble, how it is like to be affected by this filter bubble. Of course, media scientists (and possibly sociologists and psychologists) will indirectly try to find out something about their specific perception structure by asking clever questions, for example about the special characteristics of the Facebook group to which the interviewees belong. But a direct communication *with* the "prisoners" about the situation of these "prisoners" would presuppose that those affected would be able to portray in the "cave" what this "cave" is all about.

The limitation of this position is that it is not possible to specify exactly where the path out of the cave begins and where it leads. The point of view of an external observer, which can compare the views of those still included with the reality not conveyed by the media, cannot be taken.

4. Consequences for philosophical education

Positions (1) and (5) are the main points of reference for dealing with the subject in class. Both are, as already mentioned, associated with restrictions and risks. The second approach (2) invites speculations that can at first stimulate teaching and offer some methodological possibilities, but ultimately does not lead far; the question of the perspective of the "other", who is enclosed, transforms into the question of enclosement in general, so that the second approach changes into the fifth. Approach (3) seems like a model from the didactic moth box because this position spells out the didactic difference between teacher and pupil in a one-sided way and gives the teacher a kind of higher insight, which even Socrates or Glaucon did not claim for themselves. The judgment that this model is useless should not be confused with

a denial of any didactic difference. (4) probably meets some sceptical convictions that are often encountered among young people, but proves to be sterile in the long run.

Media studies' treatment of the topic follows the lines given under (1) and (2). The approach to specific cases, such as a specific network, undoubtedly offers didactic advantages. There is also a demand to familiarise pupils with basic rules for the preparation and dissemination of information. However, when the demand is justified to make "fundamental questions of journalism [...] an element of general education" (Pörksen 2018: 21), questions of truth and trust as well as of the foundations of knowledge that fall within the realm of philosophy, are necessarily raised. It is therefore an important task of didactics of philosophy to redefine these classical questions with reference to the digitized society and to present their topicality.

Another area in which a contribution of philosophy would be meaningful and desirable is media ethics. Classical questions such as the responsible handling of truth gain new topicality through the dissemination of digital media. Compiled lesson plans in German can be found in didactic journals, for example in the special issue on media ethics of the journal *Ethik & Unterricht* (3/2016). In this context, too, the above distinction between different perspectives also proves useful if one does not want to fall into the trap that it is always "the others" who spread fake news.

In student-oriented teaching, of course, not only thoughts and arguments will be expressed which correspond to the preferred approaches (1) and (5). Moreover, the aim of this article was not to define what a philosophical treatment of the problem of filter bubbles and echo chambers should look like, but to draw attention to the limitation of a purely media studies approach (1) and to point out the path of a philosophical supplement (5). The purpose instead was to clarify which constellations are possible concerning the relationships between learners, teachers, and others, when dealing with premises for the perception of the description of reality. While specific guidelines should be derived from this article for how the problems the new media present are to be treated in the teaching of philosophy, criteria can be derived for a sufficient solution for dealing with them.[11]

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Country Report: The stricter the rules, the freer the thinking? The dissertation in philosophy teaching – three teaching examples from France

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The so called *dissertation* is an indispensable part of philosophy teaching in France. Already in the first lessons the teacher presents the rules of the method: How do I formulate a thesis? A counter thesis? How do I distinguish between a question and a problem? How should a text be analyzed? How to formulate an argument? What can the outline look like? How is the introduction structured? In each teaching unit different problems are addressed and solutions are discussed by the teacher.[1] For this purpose, texts by authors can be used. The only thing that doesn't change is the task for the students: *dissertation* or *explication de texte* (text explanation). Up to the written final examinations of high school (the *baccalauréat*) in the subject philosophy the students have one year time to acquire the rules of the *dissertation*. There is no evasion from it. Philosophy lessons are still compulsory for all high school students.[2]

Apart from the *dissertation* and the *explication de texte* no other form of task is provided for in the curriculum: "The written forms of expression that are best suited for the assessment of students' performance in the subject philosophy are the dissertation and the text explanation."[3] They enable the student to "apply" the knowledge of notions and works acquired during the lessons and to translate it independently into his or her own "living and personal philosophical work." And: "By building his lecture accordingly, the teacher gives an example of these procedures, an example that inspires the student in the trains of thought to be developed by him, and in the approaching of the texts to be explained."[4] The *dissertation* is more than just a form of examination. It lays down the rules for teaching philosophy and expresses how it is thought and is performed.

How is the *dissertation* used in the classroom in every day teaching? Three examples may give a first impression, but certainly not a complete answer.

Example 1

Penser par soi-même est-ce penser seul? – "Is thinking for yourself thinking alone?" Or, translated differently: "Can we only think for ourselves if we do it alone ?" This is the

[1] The French curriculum is formulated along central philosophical notions.

[2] The number of lessons depends on the branches chosen by the students: *série technologique* (STG, technological branch), 2 hours a week, *série scientifique* (S, scientific branch), 3 hours a week, *série économique et sociale* (ES, economic and social branch), 4 hours a week, *série littéraire* (L, literary branch), 8 hours a week.

[3] ″Les formes de discours écrit les plus appropriées pour évaluer le travail des élèves en philosophie sont la dissertation et l'explication de texte.″ in: programme de philosophie en classe terminale des séries générales, 2003, bulletin officiel.

[4] ″Le professeur doit lui-même donner dans l'agencement de son cours l'exemple de ces diverses démarches, exemple dont l'élève pourra s'inspirer dans les développements qu'il aura à construire et dans l'approche des textes qu'il aura à expliquer.″

question students will encounter in the first few lessons after the start of the school year. Apart from one text (Plato, *Apology of Socrates*) which is read and explained together in class, they have no prior knowledge that they could bring in here. This first example shows that students are able to structure their thoughts even without knowledge and to argue conclusively.

The lesson starts with a discussion of the question. Some students like to warn against negative influences of society and against manipulation. Others point out that it is important to deal with fellow human beings and their opinions – for only in this way can one question preconceived opinions and form one's own opinion. Now, how does the discussion become a dissertation?

(a) The thesis and the counter thesis are juxtaposed: *Self-thinking is thinking alone / Self-thinking is not thinking alone.* The contradiction between both statements leads to the problem that needs to be formulated in the introduction of the dissertation: "What role do others (family, friends, society) play? Are they a danger for free thinking or rather a prerequisite without which freedom of thought does not exist at all? Is the freedom of thinking natural? And does it follow from this that the withdrawal from society is the only way to preserve it? Or does this withdrawal include the danger of staying with the prejudices we have? Freedom of thinking would then not be natural, but rather a goal, which can only be achieved in the exchange with others." It is not enough to simply repeat the question posed in the introduction, rephrase it, or, in the worst case, replace it with another question (e.g. what is thinking?), which is off-topic (*hors-sujet*). The students should be able to see the difference between a question that can be answered without detours and a problem to which a solution must be worked out. This is done in the main part of the *dissertation*, divided into two, three or four parts.

(b) What does an outline (*le plan*) look like? A model outline (plan type), which one could take over blindly does not exist. It is important that each part makes a statement that relates directly to the question and gives a possible answer. Here is a possible outline: Part I: One can only think for oneself alone. Part II: Self-thinking is not thinking alone. Thinking is always an inner or outer dialogue. A third part can complement and deepen what has already been said. Part III: The presence of another is not enough. Self-thinking is not thinking alone but thinking with (many) others. Dialogue with others opens up the way to culture.

(c) At the end of the dissertation there is an ending (*conclusion*) in which the student answers the question and takes a stand: "Self-thinking is not a thinking alone. Self-thinking is not thinking without others, against others, but with others. The answer could have been different." Not the content, what the student thinks, is important but only the form, how the student thinks, whether he is ordering his thoughts in a logical way and argues conclusively.

Example 2

What is the role of the knowledge that students acquire during the year in class? How do they deal with it in a dissertation? The following example was part of a teaching unit on culture. During the autumn holidays the students read a text by Claude Lévi-Strauss (*Race and History*) in which he pays tribute to the diversity of cultures and criticises various forms of 'ethnocentrism'. In class the students watched the film *The Wild Child* (*L'enfant sauvage*) by François Truffaut, in which one of the topics is the role of human education. Subsequently, the

class discussed the design of a 'state of nature', and why such a design is necessary for a critique of society. For this purpose, the *Discourse on Inequality* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau was presented. In the test the students should comment on the following question: "Can you rightly speak of a cultureless person ?" (*Peut-on parler à bon droit d'un homme sans culture?*)

(a) In the introduction the problem is formulated without any reference o knowledge. For example: "The 'culturless' human being is a contradiction in itself. With what 'right' is he mentioned again and again event though he does not exist? Shall we stop mentioning because he does not exist? Or is it because he does not exist that we have to invent him, a kind of thought experiment by which we can measure man in society, helping us to better understand the culture in which we live?"

(b) The main part too should not start with a quote from a text. Every thought, every argument should first be formulated by the student. For example: "It happens again and again that someone speaks about 'wild people' or 'barbarians' ... Thus the impression is created that culture is only a matter for a few people, other people still live in nature ... In the treatise *Race and History*, Claude Levi-Strauss introduces the term 'ethnocentrism' for this thought." Only those who have really understood a text or an example will be able to introduce it meaningfully into the context. So it can't be a matter of memorizing a text or of unreflectedly reproducing teaching material. Is the wild child a culturless person? A better way to use this example would be: "Is a cultureless person not a contradiction in terms? A child that grows up in nature behaves like an animal, it can neither think nor speak, it does not lead a real 'human' life. A culturless 'human being' is at best a child who has the innate abilities to think and speak but who cannot apply them as long as it survives isolated from other people in the forest. To educate these abilities is the role of culture…. "

(c) The structure of the dissertation should therefore continue to stand on its own feet. The acquired knowledge does not change this. It can be used to deepen a thought, which can then be questioned again. The authors are companions whom the students encounters in thought without having to continue following them. To determine the way by himself is the task of the student which he cannot pass on to any other philosopher.

Example 3

A third example is the following question: "Is there a right to disobedience?" (*Y a-t-il un droit de désobéissance?*) In order to prepare for the written final examinations, most schools organize a trial run (*bac blanc*). The students have four hours time.

(a) A possible outline looks like this: (Part I) Disobedience is not a right but a crime. (Part II) In some cases, disobedience is not only a right but a duty. (Part III) The contradiction between legality and legitimacy founds the tragedy of human happenings. Disobedience is right and wrong at the same time.

(b) In the transition from one part of the *dissertation* to the other it must be said very clearly why it is necessary to question the guiding idea. Under no circumstances should the impression be created that the various parts are in a random order and could possibly be exchanged. A possible transition from part I to part II could be: "Disobedience is not a right. Who violates the law, claims to be able to make an exception which is denied to other people. One violates the principle that all persons are equal before the law. What happens when the

law itself violates this principle and some people are deprived of their rights? Is disobedience then not only a right but also a duty?" The second main part should focus on this question.

(c) It is advisable to focus on a few examples, not to change them arbitrarily, but rather in order to deepen the analysis. A good example can also be cited several times if it becomes clear how the answer to the question has been further developed. Thus Antigone can be quoted in part II to show that there is a right to disobedience: "Antigone is acting against Creon's ban and buries her brother Polynices, who died in the battle against the city of Thebes. She invokes an unwritten and eternal right of the Gods, which contradicts the laws of Creon. From this conflict of rights follows a right to disobedience." In the following part of the main body of the dissertation on can expand: "Every right to disobedience is right and wrong at the same time. Antigone is not a heroine who fights against a tyrant. With the ban on burying Polynices, Creon distinguishes between enemy and friend and stands for a right which holds together the political community. As a king's daughter and fiancée of Haimon, Antigone knows about this right. But Creon, her uncle, should be equally sensitive to the commandment of the gods and the right of the family, for which Antigone stands, because it is according to this right that he succeeded Laios and ascended the throne of Thebes. It is tragic that both Antigone and Creon are blind to the right of the other. Which state can insist on a right that is against the moral and religious beliefs of its citizens? This tension between legality and legitimacy has not yet been resolved by any society."

The *dissertation* still being the main task for students, there has also been criticism: (1) Does the *dissertation* in fact train free thinking, as stated in the curriculum, or is it drying it up? (2) Is it a guarantee for the equal treatment of all students or, on the contrary, a tool of social reproduction? (3) How should the results of the final examinations in philosophy, which are always below average, be interpreted? Do they show that the dissertation is "outdated" or that it is needed more than ever? In 2021, the *baccalauréat* will be reformed. The discussion about the dissertation continues.

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Country Report: Teaching Philosophy/Ethics in South Korea

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General information about South Korea and its educational system

The school system in Korea is structured as follows: every Child in South Korea has to attend elementary school for 6 years and middle school for 3 years. After these 9 obligatory years of education, Korean pupils might attend high school for 3 more years. Most elementary and middle schools are public schools. High schools, however, tend to be more often private than public. As of yet, Korea isn't a multicultural society like Germany even though more foreigners came to Korea in the last decade (in 2015, registered foreigners living in Korea were just 2% of the general population). According to National Statistical Office in Korea, in 2015, about 42% of Korean are religious, estimated 16% are Buddhists, 20% protestants, 8% Catholics, 0,2% Confucians. Nevertheless, despite the fact, that most Koreans aren't Confucians by religion, the values of Confucianism perpetuate daily life in Korea as well as the curricula in school.

Compared to Germany, the school system is much more competitive among pupils due to the reputation of a few elite universities in South Korea. Being admitted to one of these universities is crucial in order to succeed professionally either in the corporate, governmental or academic sector. Thus, every November, a daylong exam takes place, determining which university pupils may attend after finishing high-school. There are also alternative ways to get access to university, for example, the total rating of the three years in high school and an interview at the university can replace the examination. But most pupils access the university through the final exam. Because of the importance and prestige of attending a good university in Korean society, a huge private school market has been established, which prepare pupils for the final exam. In contrast to Germany, the aim of most private schools is not to merely support underachieving students. Instead, most of the pupils in Korea attend private schools, where they often learn the material for the next years in advance. The educational system in Korea is centralized and so is the curriculum. While the curriculum of a subject like philosophy/ethics in Germany varies from state to state, there is just one standardized curriculum for ethics (in Korea: Morality) for all schools in Korea.

Current situation of philosophy at school in South Korea

While in Korea, there is no religious instruction in public schools, ethics is being taught from third class onwards in elementary school. Even in the first class, there is a combined subject, which includes ethical contents which is being called the morally right life, wise life and pleasant life. As the title of the subject indicates, ethics education is mostly perceived through the lens of character education. Accordingly, character education is considered as a central aim on every educational level (primary, secondary, upper secondary). Furthermore, unlike in Germany, from elementary school on, ethics is a mandatory subject, which every pupil has to attend.

More precisely put, the Korean approach in ethics education can be described as follows: its central aim is to foster a virtuous character. The central idea is to help pupils to internalize what might be conceived as the four core values of a good character. These are sincerity/faithfulness, consideration, justice, and responsibility. Moreover, fostering autonomy and accountability are also considered as prerequisites in order to lead a moral life. Each of the four core values are divided into four areas: relationship with myself, relationship with others, relationship with the community and society, relationship with nature. The underlying character model stems from the Confucian and Buddhist tradition. For instance, the concept of sincerity is based on the Confucian tradition and also has its origins in Buddhism, which stresses the inseparable relationship between oneself and others. One specific feature of the Korean curriculum of ethics is that it puts a large emphasis on the development of good manners (in Korean: ye-sul). Again, this emphasis on manners, also traces back to the Confucian tradition. For example, pupils learn that they should take something with both hands if they receive something from older people. Furthermore, the thankfulness for having a familiy and the good relationship between membership of own family are highlighted. Relevant values like family or piety for one´s parents are conceived as the important in Confucianism. In contrast to that, great Western thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle or Kant only occur in the upper secondary level. Here, the ethics education also incorporates controversial topics from applied ethics, such as abortion rights or euthanasia.

With regards to the didactical approach, teachers are assumed to make use of a wide range of methods. Whereas in the Korean school system, ex cathedra teaching is still the default, in ethics, group work, open discussions, the writing of short essays, discussing short stories or role-plays are common methods of teaching. Also noteworthy, comparative philosophy is a common didactical method in ethics education. For example, pupils will learn how the Western and Eastern greats tackle philosophical problems differently. At last, it might be worth pointing out, that ethical problems stemming from the digital sphere, such as cyber mobbing or online addiction, play a large role in the Korean curriculum.

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Country Report: Practice and Theory of Teaching Teachers of Philosophy in Germany – a short outline

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In the following, the German educational system with regard to the status and understanding of philosophical *Bildung* and education will be presented in two steps. In a first step we want to give a general overview of the current situation of teacher education and training in philosophy (1). In a second step, we want to present some of the didactic principles of teaching philosophy in school, that are connected with the practical education mentioned above (2).

1. Teacher education and training in philosophy

Teacher education in Germany is basically divided into two phases: the first phase, in almost all parts of Germany, usually includes studies for a Bachelor's degree followed by a Masters-of-Education program and a second phase that consists of a traineeship of 1.5 to 2 years, depending on the province (federal state).

The course of studies structured as a Bachelors and Masters was introduced several years ago after the so-called Bologna Reforms in Europe which were supposed to lead to international equivalency between academic degrees. This course of studies includes a Bachelors course for prospective teachers that already entails some course content relevant to the teaching profession, as well as practical training in schools (*Schulpraktika*) accompanied by seminars. In the Master's phase, where the graduates decide for a main focus on schools, they study, besides so-called educational sciences or pedagogics in their respective discipline, roughly proportionate disciplinary and didactic components.

In the second phase of teacher education that follows after the successful completion of the university studies, the preparatory service (*Vorbereitungsdienst*), the traineeship is taken, where the main educational focus for the prospective teachers is on the teaching work in specific school types. Alongside their activities in the schools, the future teachers attend supplementary seminars that are directed by experienced teachers and coaches (*Fachleiter*). These are teachers that are assigned by the administration for practical education to a corresponding *Centre for School Based Practical Teacher Training* (*Studienseminar*).

Traditionally, there are few structural and institutional links between the two educational phases of teacher education. The university, which is responsible for the first phase of teacher education, sees itself as a scientific institution that is guided by theory in its teaching and research practices while on the other hand the *Centres for School Based Practical Teacher Training* are to be understood as more strongly lead by practice, accompanying and educating prospective teachers in their concrete and individual reflection on their respective experience in schools and in teaching. This difference also results in a different organizational structure and work culture. This becomes especially evident in the "Praxissemester" that was arranged in recent years wherein activities are supported by both the university as well as by the

centres. In the *Praxissemester*, the student spends half a year visiting, carrying out and reflecting upon teaching in a specific school for the duration of six months.

The situation of the subject of philosophy in German schools is a special one because of its relationship to the discipline of Catholic or Protestant religious doctrine, which is compulsory in almost all provinces in Germany, as this is guaranteed by an agreement with the churches in the German constitution (*Grundgesetz*). At the same time, all students have the right to take leave of participation in religious education by their own choice after the age of 14. This then entails the obligation for them to take a replacement subject (*Ersatzunterricht*). This generally consists in a subject with an affinity to philosophy. This is designed very differently in the sixteen different German provinces. It ranges from the subject *Ethics, Values and Norms*, to *Philosophizing with Children*, to *Practical Philosophy* right up to the subject of *Philosophy*. In addition to the replacement subject, the subject of philosophy is presented as a subject in its own right at the highest level of high school (*Gymnasium*).

2. Didactic principles of teaching philosophy in school Why should philosophy be taught and learnt in school? This question regarding the educational purpose of teaching philosophy is one of the central challenges of didactics of philosophy. This question of the purpose of teaching philosophy is also always at the same time a question concerning the self-understanding and the legitimacy of disciplinary didactics. Unfortunately, we can not go into the differentiated debates and positions below. In the following, we will at least briefly outline the central features of philosophical education that have been established in the course of the history of didactic theory (see Nida-Rümelin, Spiegel and Tiedemann 2015; Pfister and Zimmermann 2016).

Generally speaking, one can say that in German speaking realm the promotion of critical thinking, that is independent thinking in the sense of epistemic autonomy, the ability to justify beliefs plausibly, the capacity for critical judgment, is held to be the epitome of philosophical education. In other words: the pupils should be enabled to reflectively examine philosophical problems concerning their personal and social environment – and form their own judgment. (Didactic keywords are e.g.: *Selbstdenken, Urteilsbildung, Philosophieren.*) The goal is thus learning to *philosophize, philosophizing* as an activity.

In general, it is assumed that this understanding originally goes back to Kant's account of philosophical education. Kant's introduction of this fundamental Enlightenment principle has experienced a sustained reception and, indeed, a wide resonance in disciplinary didactics since its institutional beginnings in the 1970s. Today it has a paradigm-forming value – and is (mindful of all modifications) almost undisputed.[12] This goal is directly related to the

[12] In passing it should be mentioned that it is surprising that the concept of *critical thinking*, deeply rooted in Anglo-Saxon *philosophy of education*, is almost unnoticed in German language research. There are, of course, fundamental institutional and curricular differences - for instance, that critical thinking is said to be a trans-disciplinary educational approach, while philosophical *Bildung* or education is generally the task of the teaching discipline of philosophy. But a fleeting glance already shows that the representatives of this concept arrive at quite comparable pedagogical-didactic goals: namely to promote reflective, critically independent thinking of the pupils.

principle of the socalled *Problemorientierung mit Lebensweltbezug* (see Thein 2017; Tiedemann 2013). This principle accentuates an orientation in problems with regard to the life-world of the pupils; this means that motives and knowledge relevant to the life-world of the pupils hold as the point of reference for legitimizing the topics of instruction. The teaching topics must present a problem that can be discussed in conflicting ways and that leads to an independent judgment and positioning. An example would be: *Should the state be allowed to subject its citizens to digital surveillance*? This means: questions concerning material and knowledge of the specialist academic discipline are in no way brought into view as an archive of self-defined problems or invariant inventory of truths. The importance of expert knowledge and the legitimacy of philosophy is not of course disputed. On the contrary, what is concretized is the extent to which that specialist knowledge is also relevant to teaching, the process of teaching and learning and the pupils. To put it somewhat more precisely, knowledge of the tradition forms an interpretive horizon in consideration of the motives and challenges of the pupils' life-world. The pupils are thus put in the situation of *reflectively* appropriating and adapting the informative and meaningful answers of the tradition and applying them in a context sensitive manner to the challenges of the life-world. The pupils thus enter into a fruitful dialogue with the tradition (see e.g. Steenblock 2016; Torkler 2015).

It is also connected with these principles that philosophizing in school is understood as a methodically controlled and philosophically qualified activity. There are pertinent theories in which specific methods of philosophy (for example, hermeneutics, analytic philosophical, phenomenology) have been transformed into teaching methods for philosophy teaching (see Martens 2003; Rohbeck 2008). Of course, this does not mean that the the subject matter of instruction in philosophy is inevitably arbitrary; it rather shows that a philosophical content must be qualified in accordance with philosophical procedures and methods.

Of coursethe teaching of philosophy in Germany is also not, of course, immune to the effects and consequences of the results of the international PISA studies. The reaction and reorientation in educational politics in Germany has led to the establishment of so-called *educational standards and competences* (*Bildungsstandards & Kompetenzen*). Very briefly, for instruction in philosophy that means: in the curricula and teaching plans, no canonical and material text-author guidelines are to be found in the teaching content; rather large number of competences are set down in the teaching plans, i.e. abilities that the pupils must have acquired at the end of a learning unit. These include, for example *judgmental, technical and methodological competences* (*Urteilskompetenzen, Sachkompetenzen, Methoden-kompetenzen*). These standards were discussed controversially and differentiated in the didactic debate of recent years (see e.g. Meyer 2015).

Furthermore, it should be considered that empirical research methods have been brought into the focus of the didactic debate in recent years. By that is meant hat there are both approaches and positions that promote philosophically qualified empirical research, as well as a critical reflections on the conditions of empirical research (see e.g. Dietrich, Brand and Cordula2016; Kminek, Thein and Torkler2018).

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Ethik entdecken mit Philo 1/2, ed. by Eva Marsal, Bamberg: Buchner 2014

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For teachers of the school subject "Ethics", now established in most federal states in Germany, high-quality textbooks are essential tools, especially for many teachers who have no teaching diploma for this subject. A textbook like *Ethik entdecken mit Philo 1/2* (Discovering Ethics With Philo) with many colorful photos, children's drawings, other convincing illustrations, and reader-friendly writing, seems to be appropriate. This textbook promises to teach children philosophy with the rat named "Philo". For this purpose six treasures on six islands are to be discovered. The figure on page 3 is a good example for this: "Discovering one's own culture and other cultures - knowing and recognizing oneself - appreciating oneself and others - philosophizing with five tools - admiring, caring for and protecting nature - there is music in it".

The introductory chapter deals with Ekkehard Martens' integrative method paradigm - in short "five-finger method". Since the claim is made to apply this paradigm throughout the textbook, it is repeated here in its original version (translated): "1. Phenomenological method: starting from everyday experiences that have become fragile and taking empirical data into account or: describing in a differentiated and comprehensive manner what I observe, experience, perceive or think about myself, as well as taking into account the results of the particular sciences...; 2. hermeneutic method: use doctrinal opinions and interpretations or knowledge of the history of ideas and one's own views or patterns of interpretation, or read (not only philosophical) texts on how we can understand our observations etc. or which patterns of interpretation ("ideas") exist in history; 3. analytical method: highlight and examine central concepts and arguments, or: uncover and examine premises, contradictions, or definitions that are too narrow or too broad; 4. dialectical method: sharpen and weigh up different positions or: perceive an offer of dialogue (conversations and texts), discuss the pros and cons, and endure aporia; 5. speculative (intuitive-creative) method: allow unprotected ideas and fantasies and playfully test them or: use new ideas or hypotheses.

The following examples illustrate how these methods are understood and applied in *Ethik entdecken mit Philo 1/2*:

For the first method:

(1) "Paint yourself and all the family members around you whom you are similar to. You can also paint them as symbols, for example as a plant or animal" (p. 29) - Comment: Is it an observation, if e.g. the father is "painted" as a symbol?

(2) "Describe how you were as a baby, infant and kindergarten child" (p. 30) - Comment: I can only tell how I was as a baby etc. from stories of others. However, the phenomenological method is oriented towards one's own observations and perceptions.

For the second method:

(3) Added to an illustrated text: "Put yourself into Frederik and name his feelings" (p. 34) - Comment: I cannot know and name his feelings. At best, I only can imagine what feelings he

might have. It is dishonest and irresponsible to teach children that they can look into another person and know what they think and feel. It would be sufficient to use the subjunctive: 'say what Frederik might feel'.

(4) "Tell of situations in which you feel exactly like the children in this picture" (p. 82) - Comment: How should I know exactly how the children in the picture feel? Only they know how they feel. Moreover, it is certainly not enough to cover the hermeneutic approach by naming feelings. Tasks to change perspectives or to take over perspectives of others would be necessary for that.

For the third method:

(5) "Name the rules of the game that you have to follow in team games" (p. 45); and about a sequence of pictures: "Find out how the giraffe tries to settle the dispute with the wolf" (p. 55) - Comment: Which central terms and arguments are examined here? What should an analysis consist of beyond the repetition of the contents of the speech bubbles?

For the fourth method:

(6) "Examine what constitutes a team." (p. 60) - Comment: What is to be examined in this task? What is to be worked on dialectically?

(7) "Examine why it is better to settle a dispute" (p. 61) - Comment: If the result is already known from the outset, a dialectical procedure is unnecessary.

For the fifth method:

(8) "Think of similar situations in which there are disputes. Try to settle the dispute as the giraffe demonstrates" (p. 55) - Comment: If the solution is already given, why should the children still be worried?

(9) "Paint or write a guidebook to one of the animals: 'In such a way I care for my pet'" (p. 96) - Comment: Is this really an example of an application of the speculative method of philosophizing?

In the introductory presentation of the treasures on the islands, the areas of content, methods and incentives are arranged rather arbitrarily. It is ignored that the "names" of the "islands" belong to different logical levels. However, of a textbook focusing in ethics, it can be expected that it is logically consistent. To what extent the promise to "discover" "ethics" is philosophically justifiable may be answered by the reader; it is, to say the least, an unusual way of expressing oneself, analogous to "discovering" epistemology. To discover in the sense of finding something existing cannot be identified with philosophizing in terms of an independent methodically guided thinking about life problems. One elementary aspect of philosophy is the clarification of concepts. In view of the above-mentioned inconsistencies, however, *Ethik entdecken mit Philo 1/2* seems to attach little importance to specify this. The tasks also lack indispensable caution in philosophizing to distinguish descriptions from ascriptions. A comparison of Martens' theory and its application in this book shows a clear discrepancy.

Ethik entdecken mit Philo 1/2 as a textbook for ethics education? Apart from the content, if already suggestions for the clarification of concepts, argumentation and reflection remain deficient, the claims raised for a textbook in ethics are clearly not fulfilled.

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Volker Haase: Philosophie und Autobiografie – Untersuchung in fachdidaktischer Perspektive, Dresden: Thelem 2018

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As the title suggests Volker Haase analyses the connection between philosophy and autobiography from a didactic perspective. The book contributes to a subject-related approach of interpreting the self and the world and it complements previous articles by the author on autobiographical narrative competence and autobiographical interviews ("Betroffenen-Interviews").

The monograph is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is an introduction, chapters two and three deal with theoretical aspects and the last chapter is more practical, focussing on methods and tasks for students.

The introductory chapter helps the reader to understand why the examined issue is of current interest and what the author aims at. Haase diagnoses an increasing interest in autobiographical publications. This seems to be connected with the need for support in crises of orientation and identity. The author derives goals for school education from this diagnosis. Students should be able to reflect critically on autobiographies. This includes skills such as detecting manipulative intentions and recognizing the triviality of self-help literature. Another goal is to make interpretative patterns of the stock of traditional autobiographical narrations available for students. Therefore, it is the aim of the author to investigate suitable sources in order to enrich the canon of texts for teaching philosophy at school and to integrate the techniques extracted from autobiographical narrations into the repertoire of students' skills. Furthermore, the author wants to offer a complementary perspective on established text types used for philosophical writing in class.

In chapter two the author analyses different understandings of the term *autobiography*. The author outlines autobiography as lived life, description, interpretation, strategic self-presentation, and as a medium of philosophical thinking. The understanding of autobiography as description is subdivided into self-responsibility and self-determination. There are also subdivisions for autobiographical texts as interpretation, namely self-knowledge, self-finding, self-invention, and self-love. The author's terms refer to Dieter Thomä's subdivision made in *Erzähle dich selbst.* The strategic self-presentation is divided into self-defence, self-assertion, and self-distance. The author presents one example for every type of autobiography. For example, the *Confessiones* by Augustinus are suggested as an example for self-responsibility. (p. 30f.) This is convincing, but it is not really clear why other types should not apply. So one might wonder why the text is not an example of strategic self-presentation as well, because of the fact that Augustinus was advertising for Christianity and therefore events were selected by him on purpose. To sum up, characteristics of the different types are shown, but questions about the relation between the different types remain.

The last part of the chapter deals with autobiography as a medium of philosophical thinking. Again there are numerous subdivisions. On the one hand, there is the autobiography

as a medium of presentation with a didactic, exemplary, or critical self-reference. On the other hand, there is the autobiography as a medium of philosophical cognition with the following subdivisions: self-reduction, self-projection, self-transformation, self-transcendence, and self-attempt. The author illustrates every type. For instance, self-projection is exemplified by Hobbes' experience and philosophical thinking. Hobbes assumed fear as a feature of human beings and the mutual fear as reason for social alliances because of his own personal fear (p. 80f). So he generalized his own feelings. In that way, the other types are described in order to show a connection between autobiography and philosophical thinking. The examples of the first chapter (e.g. Augustinus) are not taken up again, so the reader does not know whether they are a medium of philosophical thinking or not. It can be misleading that for every "self-term" another autobiographical text is presented because one could assume that one particular text is a prototype.

Based on the assumption that autobiographical texts are narrative texts, the third chapter deals with narrative theory in order to focus on the process of producing autobiographical texts. Theoretical aspects like plot and text composition are taken into account when looking at established text types such as letters, literary essays, and philosophical diaries that play a role for philosophical writing in class. The author presents examples of philosophers who wrote one of these particular texts and shows how autobiographical texts can support the understanding or discussion of the respective philosophical theory. Furthermore, the author identifies the following functions of autobiographical narrations: identity formation and consolidation, social integration, reflection on moral issues, and coping with contingency. These functions are relevant for teaching philosophy because of being central issues themselves.

The last chapter deals with the use of autobiographical narrations and autobiographical philosophizing in class. First, preconditions from the perspective of developmental psychology are described with a special attention to narrative competence, the episodic memory and autobiographical consciousness. The author draws an analogy between the autobiographical consciousness and the historical consciousness that is an important concept in the didactics of history. There are four different types of the autobiographical consciousness: the traditional type, the exemplary type, the critical type and the genetic type. Depending on whether one considers the self as more or less static or dynamic or whether one has or has not doubts about the truthfulness of memories, one belongs to one or another type. According to Haase, there is a relation between these four types and the different concepts of self-reference (see chapter 2). For instance, the critical type matches to the concept of self-determination and self-invention.

Next, the author aims at putting the theoretical aspects into practice. Based on Rohbeck's model of *Transformationsdidaktik*, the author identifies techniques that are used in autobiographical-philosophical texts. These techniques are transformed into elementary writing exercises for students. The author suggests tasks for working on these written autobiographical texts. He refers to Rohbeck's article *Ten ways of reading a text.* In order to illustrate this process, one example by the author is given here. In the opinion of Haase, the method of objective hermeneutics can be transformed into the following task: Choose a

personally significant event in your recent past (photos have to be available). Put the photos in the order of the chronological sequence of events. Describe the sequence of events without using your memories from the perspective of a person who sees these photos for the first time. (p. 190) Haase explains that this way of writing an autobiographical text is characteristic for self-determination (see chapter 2) and for the critical type of the autobiographical consciousness. The students get a task for working on this written autobiographical text. This task is derived from one of Rohbeck's suggested ways of reading, namely the students analyse the text in order to find out the intentions of the author (strategy, intended effect). By reflecting critically on this autobiographical text, the students work on one ability that is part of Haase's model of autobiographical narrative competence. While the main focus of the first parts of this chapter is on autobiographical writing of students, the last part of the chapter deals with the treatment of oral narrations of affected people ("Betroffenen-Interviews") and the critical reflection on them.

All in all, the book offers a well-founded guideline for integrating autobiographical narrations into teaching of philosophy. For those teachers who look for material that enables students to philosophize from a first person perspective, the book provides excellent writing tasks for an autobiographical philosophizing. Moreover, the author gives an important contribution to a narrative approach that can inspire the reader to go on with the research of the significance of narrations as a medium of philosophizing.

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Helge Kminek: Philosophie und Philosophieren im Unterricht. Empirische Erschließung einer widersprüchlichen Praxis, Opladen/Berlin/Toronto: Budrich 2018

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How is philosophy taught in school at the beginning of the 21st century? This question should attract the attention of two different disciplines: educational science and didactics of philosophy. In his latest work, Helge Kminek provides a study in which both theoretical perspectives are connected to give a profound answer to that topical question.

The results of Kminek's recent studies could furthermore help teachers in a constructive way to understand how philosophy can be taught in class (how to become familiar with philosophical contents as well as how to practice philosophizing), especially when they teach in the context of high school education. Although the majority of qualitative research on classroom teaching in Germany focuses on lessons in elementary and middle school, this study's nine cases throw light on the secondary school system (*gymnasiale Oberstufe*) with pupils at the age of sixteen to nineteen. This approach targets the still existing desideratum of qualitative empirical studies in the field of didactics of philosophy.

The reviewed book is a truncated version under the same title of the dissertation with which Kminek graduated from the University of Frankfurt/Main with a PhD in educational science. It formally contains seven chapters over almost three hundred pages in which nine case studies constitute the crucial core of the text (41–239).

In addition to expected chapters on empirical method in social science in general (state of research, positioning in a scientific field, question and subquestions, method and methodology, conclusion, outlook for possible further research), Kminek surprises his readership with wide and well-informed philosophical reflections that are loosely connected to the empirical reconstruction of social praxis. Even though his philosophical reflections are distributed over the whole work, one specific chapter can be read as a philosophical research on the question of what philosophy is (23–40). Kminek gives a broad overview of a variety of positions on the history of philosophy – e.g. the standpoints of nominalism and universalism – without giving a final assessment to the controversial issue. The purpose of this chapter mainly refers to two different arguments: On the one hand, the philosophical discussion about the status of the discipline of philosophy sharpens the peculiarity of the school subject. Kminek identifies a certain question in philosophy that differentiates it from all other subjects: the question about what the discipline of philosophy is. Kminek argues that the theoretical discussions about what it really is are never-ending and should ideally be based on a relentless strive for truth.

On the other hand, the chapter reveals the normative presumptions of the study. Kminek mentions explicitly "three dimensions of normativity in philosophy lessons" (39) to identify specific claims. First, he defines as a claim of the school subject that it must represent the controversial discussion in the scientific discipline about what philosophy is or should be. In

addition to that general claim regarding the self-image of philosophy, all philosophical topics raise claims based on the logic and the structure of their content. The third dimension can be found in the communication of the recorded lesson and more precise: in the teachers' speech acts which have the potential to form claims through their pragmatic and semantic structure.

The fundamentally important methodological point for the interpretation of social reality is based on exactly these claims which are now compared by Kminek to what is found in the data. The difference between what should be and what is found forms the main theoretical orientation for the interpretation. This approach outlines the subtitle of the book: "Empirical Study of a Contradictory Practice".

Every case study of Kminek begins with a philosophical analysis of the lesson's topic. The results of that study are independent from the didactical analysis done by the teacher before class. Their purpose is solely to identify the claims raised by the topic although it also has the side effect for the readership of the case studies to be informed and perhaps enlightened about the topic in question.

Interestingly enough, the claims of the teachers' speech acts are identified with the same method with which the social reality in the classroom is reconstructed, namely by what has been introduced by Ulrich Oevermann as "Objective Hermeneutics" (*Objektive Hermeneutik*) in the late 1970s. Kminek is aware of the tenacious discussions about the methodological problems of implicit and explicit normativity when he comprehensibly argues for a pedagogical adaption of the sociological method and openly discusses the terminology and the categories which he decided to use (11–14).

This critical perspective on social reality in classrooms was mainly developed by Andreas Gruschka. Kminek's results can be seen to confirm the findings of Gruschka, whose primary focus was on middle school. According to the study, it is very unlikely for communication in school lessons to be primarily about the topic of the lesson (256). However, every case in Kminek's study and almost every case in Gruschka's research in the past show that the dominance of communication in philosophy lessons is didactics or pedagogical education referring to the moral development of the children – even though Kminek analyzed high school lessons and the subject of philosophy which is generally said to be an important part of higher education. The sequential interpretations can show how motivated and curious speech acts of pupils provide an opportunity for learning through a deep discussion of the topic, and how the situations are missed by the teachers (90).

In this regard it's necessary to state that Kminek doesn't utilize his results for bashing or scolding the teachers. Quite the contrary: he uses the potential of the method to find possible alternatives for teachers' speech acts in certain situations.

Nevertheless, the interpretations of the nine cases (quite a large sampling compared to other studies that apply the same method) very clearly highlight one of the structural characteristics of the subject of philosophy for which every teacher must find a balanced handling: the difference between learning classical philosophical knowledge and philosophizing by oneself.

Kminek doesn't discuss his descriptions of the school subject in the light of other theoretical perspectives in school research, although other perspectives are mentioned (11). These other paradigms in the field of classroom research could aid a better understanding a) of the special normativity of sociological methods used for pedagogical subjects, b) of the peculiarity of the subject of philosophy compared to other subjects and c) why the results of Kminek's observations tend to show a deficient practice. In paradigms where the social theory is unrelated to Critical Theory, it can clearly be shown that Kminek's (and Gruschka's) identification of claims is eclectic, albeit well-founded. It remains doubtful that the claims of the school subject, the philosophical topics and the teachers' speech acts are the only and most relevant for an interpretation of the social process in class – what about the claims of the school's pedagogical agenda, of the education policy or even of the pupils?

After all, it's certain that Helge Kminek's study invites all teachers in philosophy, the field of educational science, and in particular the didactics of philosophy to a further discussion about what philosophy is and how it is taught in school at the beginning of the third millennium.

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