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Tozzi, Michel (ed.) (2019): Perspectives de didactique en philosophie. Eclairages théoriques et historiques, pistes pratiques, Limoges: Lambert-Lucas.

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In France, the didactics of philosophy is a relatively new field that began to emerge in the 1990 and was mainly initiated by Michel Tozzi. The purpose of the new book edited by Tozzi,

Perspectives de didactique en philosophie. Eclairages théoriques et historiques, pistes pratiques,

is to report on the results and developments in the research on the teaching and learning of

philosophy in the past thirty years. It unites a number of contributions on different topics (problematization, conceptualization, argumentation, interpretation, reading and writing) by researchers

from different countries (France, Belgium, Canada (Quebec) and Switzerland).

The preface by Abdennour Bidar very clearly points out some of the main weaknesses of the

traditional approach to teaching philosophy still prevalent in France. This method of teaching, which is based on the view that it already contains its didactics and that the teacher therefore need not take into account anything else except the philosophy that they lecture, leads the students to imitate the rhetoric of the professor and not to think for themselves. The philosophy that is professed *ex cathedra* by the teacher makes of it a "catechism without God" (p. 12). The students do not philosophize themselves, and therefore do not acquire the abilities to think for themselves. This also has social and political consequences, for it is only the critical thinker that can become an active citizen in the republic. According to the author, the major challenge faced by schools today is that they seem to become obsolete given the general access to information in the internet. However, according to the author, there are two reasons why the schools are here to stay: to develop critical thinking and to develop the ability to deal with existential questions. In the first chapter, Tozzi (Montpellier) explains what didactics of philosophy is and presents the three main approaches to the didactics of philosophy in France: first, the traditional view that philosophy needs no didactics; secondly, the view that didactics consists of methods for helping students to better learn within the traditional way of teaching philosophy; and finally, the view that philosophy needs a proper normative didactics which leads to some major changes as compared

to the traditional way of teaching philosophy. Tozzi explains what other sciences and what the didactics of other school subjects can contribute to the didactics of philosophy. He then describes developments in the didactics of philosophy in other countries such as the movement for the philosophy for children started in the USA and continued in Canada by Michel Sasseville and Marie-France Daniel, the ethics education in Quebec and Belgium as well as the didactical approaches in Germany (Rehfus, Martens, Henke) and in Switzerland (Frieden). Finally, Tozzi briefly describes some of the institutional aspects in France that influence the development of the teaching of philosophy. In general, this chapter gives a good introduction to what didactics of philosophy is and a good, brief description of some of the developments in other countries.

In the second chapter, Tozzi presents some of the major contributions to the didactics of

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philosophy in the past forty years, starting with the Greph (*Groupe de recherche sur l'enseignement de la philosophie*) founded in 1975 by Jacques Derrida. Other contributors include the Gfen (Groupe français d'éducation nouvelle), the Acireph, an association of professors aiming at the creation of institutes for the research on philosophy education, the international journal *Diotime* created by Tozzi in 1999, and finally Tozzi's own approach of philosophizing, including the processes of problematization, conceptualization, and argumentation. This chapter gives a

good overview of the main developments within France. However, it does not include an exposition of the major contributions to the didactics of philosophy outside of France. This is a pity, for it keeps the research in different countries apart, instead of helping to build a basis for uniting them.

The next four chapters discuss philosophical competencies: problematization, conceptualization, argumentation and critical thinking, and interpretation. In the third chapter, Gaëlle Jeanmart

(Leuven, Belgium) discusses the competence of problematization. She starts out by presenting the strength of problem-based learning, a didactical method developed since the 1970s. She explains the way in which it can be used in the teaching of philosophy, but also the way in which the application of this method differs in philosophy. In philosophy, we may start with practical problems of everyday life, but the aim in philosophy is not to solve this problem; since philosophy starts only when a *philosophical* problem appears. The solving of such a problem may well lead to other philosophical problems. In philosophy, we learn to “love” problems (p. 66) because they are what initiates our thinking. The author also presents some methods for starting with personal experiences and emotions and of how to deal with them in the way proposed by Stoic philosophers.

In the fourth chapter, Tozzi takes up the topic of conceptualization – a process which takes up a major part in his own approach. He points out how important it is for students to have examples

in order for them to start a process of abstraction. One didactical method is to start with the personal experiences of the students, and their differences will lead them almost naturally to compare and contrast them. Another didactical method is to start with language and what it "says," comparing words with other words that have the same or a different meaning, thereby requiring the difference to be spelled out. Tozzi also explains some of the challenges one faces in conceptualization, such as transitioning from a representation to a meaning, and transitioning from something concrete to something abstract.

In the fifth chapter, Mathieu Gagnon (Sherbrooke, Canada) and Michel Sasseville (Laval, Canada) discuss argumentation and critical thinking. First, they present the basic aspects of traditional Aristotelian syllogistic logic. Next, they present the competences of critical thinking according to the definition of the *Delphi Report* (1990) as well as two models of how to operationalize the conditions. Here the focus is first on the "dialogical critical thinking" (*pensée critique dialogique*) of Marie-France Daniel, which distinguishes between four aspects (logical, creative, responsible and metacognitive) and sets critical thinking within a schema of psychological development of epistemic cognition, from egocentrism via relativism to intersubjectivity; and secondly on the model of Gagnon that distinguishes ten "constitutive interventions." They also present a table of common fallacies and describe the four types of methods in teaching critical

thinking distinguished by Philip Abrami. This chapter gives a good overview of different aspects of critical thinking. However, it gives little advice on how to teach critical thinking, and even less

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on how to teach argumentation, basing it on Aristotelian logic, which has been outdated since the works of Gottlob Frege.

In the sixth chapter, Francois Galichet (Strasbourg) investigates the philosophical competence

of interpretation. He takes up the four principal characteristics of a concept according Gilles

Deleuze: intensity, historicity, undecidability, and non-discursivity. He applies them to the

interpretation of particular works of art, and he shows how the characteristics can be used in the

teaching of philosophical interpretation.

The next three chapters discuss three philosophical activities that can each involve the aforementioned

philosophical competencies: writing, reading, and discussing. In the seventh chapter,

Nicole Grataloup, one of the founders of Gfen in 1989 and editor of the journal *Pratiques de la*

philosophie, discusses writing in philosophy. She starts out by showing the wide variety of genres

of philosophical texts, and then focuses on the *dissertation*, the only form of examination (besides

the *explication de texte*) accepted in the French system. Each year, the body of teachers almost

unanimously deplores the low quality of the majority of the texts written by the students at the

baccalauréat exams. Grataloup states two explanatory hypotheses. First, the dissertation is seen

as a work on the concept, entirely distinct of the subject of the writer, and of the process of writing, thereby excluding a didactical work on the process of writing. Second, the methods given as advice to the students are based on a "weak conception of learning" (p. 132), that is on a conception which sees learning as the simple application of a method, not related to any method already present in the student, and therefore as not requiring anything more than being stated clearly by the professor in order to be learned by the student (p. 143). Grataloup goes on to explain how philosophical writing can really be taught. A first didactical point is that one should not start with the writing of long texts but rather with very short ones. A second didactical point is that the students should not only write texts that are then corrected by the professor but rather texts that are then read by other students, so that they understand that the aim of writing is (also) to be read. The more fundamental point here is that the use of language should be seen not as the use of words or sentences but rather as statements (*énoncés*); that means, as something that *someone says to someone*. Once one takes this view as a teacher, the field of teaching philosophical writing becomes wide open; one may work on the perspectives, for example, by giving the exercise of writing a dialogue or a letter; one may work on the meta-discursive elements, for example, by asking the students to describe what they are doing (explaining, arguing for, refuting, giving an example, etc.), and this can also be

done by asking them to describe it to each other, giving them the opportunity to learn from their peers. Grataloup's explanation of the poor situation of the teaching of philosophical writing in France is convincing, and her suggestions for how to teach philosophical writing are ingenious and inspiring.

In the eighth chapter, Nathalie Frieden (Fribourg, Switzerland) discusses reading in philosophy.

She writes about the exercises that are used when training future teachers of philosophy. She discusses some of the difficulties that can be faced when reading, and she shows how texts – not only

philosophical texts in the narrow sense, but also literary and journalistic texts – can be used for

teaching. She places reading in the context of teaching independent thinking.

One important point

of her approach to reading and to philosophy in general is the first-person perspective. She writes:

"To find the meaning of a text, its effect on every person is done always in the first-person" (p.

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163).

In the ninth chapter, Tozzi takes up the topic of discussion in philosophy. He first analyzes the

weaknesses of the traditional account of teaching, requiring the students to concentrate on listening

silently for long periods of time to the teacher's lecture. He explains how one of the main aims of

modern didactics of philosophy in France was to rehabilitate the oral as a way of thinking. To

discuss means to think aloud together. In order to do this in the best way, one needs to respect certain conditions and be able to work with certain roles (such as president, secretary, observers, etc.). He also presents formats developed by Gfen, the "colloquium of the philosophers" (*colloques des philosophes*) and the "trial" (*procès*).

The book ends with a concluding remark, in which Tozzi asks whether the philosophers and philosophical institutions will use the opportunity of the reforms in 2019 and 2020 to continue to develop the teaching of philosophy in France, and with a postface by Jean-Charles Pettier (Creteil).

As this review hopefully has made clear, the book offers an excellent overview, both of the development and of the results of research in the didactics of philosophy in France in the last forty years. The book is well structured with initial chapters about didactics of philosophy and its development in general, chapters about philosophical competencies, and finally, chapters about philosophical practices. While most chapters focus on research in French and on the situation in the French system, the group of authors is international, bringing in research and practical experiences from Belgium, Canada and Switzerland. However, many of the topics discussed – and the didactical methods presented – apply to the teaching of philosophy, independent of any particular educational system, as long as the aim is to develop critical and independent thinking. I would like to express my full recommendation: this is a book that every French speaking

philosophy teacher should read.