



The Hermeneutic Reading of the Philosophical Text

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Abstract:

Reading and learning philosophy is not about repeating or memorizing its ideas, but rather about reading its texts hermeneutically to understand the fundamental principles and foundations upon which philosophers built their philosophies. The philosophical text is a message from the philosopher to the reader, consisting of a complex network of concepts and meanings, and a set of ideas formulated in specific historical contexts. The philosopher presents these to express his opinion on a particular issue. When we read it (the philosophical text), we attempt to extract definitions and intentions from it, meaning that the text is not complete without a critical hermeneutic reading to present a new philosophical text that reveals the underlying truth.

Keywords: philosophical text, reading, hermeneutics.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Philosophy has faced rejection and siege since its inception, and its history bears witness to the persecution of many philosophers and thinkers throughout different eras; first among them Socrates, who was executed on the charge of corrupting the minds of Athenian youth. This was due to the existence of religious, political, economic, and epistemological barriers, among others, that subjected philosophy to crises and tribulations that hindered its growth and directed its course.

Aristotle noticed this problem 300 years before Christ, which led him to advocate for a life of philosophy and contemplation, the only life worthy of a human being. He began his call to philosophy by highlighting its importance, represented in questioning goodness, virtue, and knowledge in both its practical and theoretical forms. He then considered it the highest good a person can achieve. Since the goal of a human being is the practice of thinking, and thinking is philosophy, this means that a person should philosophize and dedicate their life to philosophy. This latter is what brings them happiness by ensuring a good and reassuring psychological state, free from the fear and anxiety created by ignorance, and free from vice, which makes their existence contrary to their essence represented in the practice of virtue.

However, this does not mean that the problem was solved by Aristotle in his time and ended, but rather it still exists to this day, and has extended across different eras - as previously mentioned - and the evidence for that is that the presence of philosophy in educational systems, universities and various societies and the ambiguity of its content, role and objectives, especially in the underdeveloped world, led to the raising of a question of denunciation about the existence of philosophy and its importance, whether by the general public or by some thinkers such as the positivists.

This indicates that philosophy is in crisis and has lost its role in the modern era because science can provide reliable cognitive answers in all fields, which has led some to view it as offering obscure and imprecise metaphysical concepts and ideas that do not resonate with readers, who themselves struggle to understand them. On the one hand, this is due to the absence of a methodological dimension in its teaching that aligns with its peculiarities and various objectives.

Because reading and teaching philosophy without a rigorous, orderly, and functionally organized methodology makes it impossible for neither the reader nor the learner to reach the highest levels of thinking and awareness. Merely receiving and gathering information makes the person unaware of its logic and unable to uncover its mechanisms to develop their abilities. This contradicts the nature of philosophy, which is based on the ability to analyze, synthesize, prove, and critique, etc. To transform the reader or learner into a component of mental skills and a practitioner of deductive reasoning, aware of the logic of philosophy, and engaged in thinking, questioning, interpretation, and critique, one must adopt the method of reading philosophy through texts taken from sources. Therefore, we pose a set of questions to better define this method.

2-Statement of the Problem:

What are the conditions for selecting a philosophical text? What method do we follow to read and utilize it?

- Is there a precise and agreed-upon methodology for addressing the philosophical text? Because despite the considerable attention given to the issue of the text in the intellectual arena, especially in linguistics, it remains an ambiguous matter in the philosophical field due to the lack of a unified conception of the text among researchers.

It seems that reading philosophy and learning it through texts has become a necessary requirement for all those engaged in it, whether they are scholars in the didactics of philosophy or its students, because it should be a means to immerse the reader and learner in the experience of philosophizing.

3-Concept of the text:

The word “text” is linked in its Latin root *textus* to the meaning of the fabric and cohesion that connects a group of threads to each other¹, but behind this precise definition of the word we find a great diversity in texts, a religious text, a legal text, a scientific text and a philosophical text...etc., but the latter is distinguished from the rest of the texts by basic aspects:

- A. The presence of concepts that determine the text's direction and stance on a particular issue, so it is not necessary for the author to explicitly state their position.
- B. Arguments and proofs: The text can either be a proof, which can be logical or mathematical, or the text can be argumentative, becoming an arrangement of a system of evidence and the construction of inferences that establish the validity of every philosophical issue presented.
- C. Every philosophical text is an examination of a specific problem, supported by arguments and proofs. What we notice is that all three of these aspects are specific to the philosophical text and are not found in other texts. What concerns us is the inferential philosophical text, which is defined as follows:

A- Textual structure: Every text is composed of a set of words, terms, or concepts that the author chooses to present in the form of sentences or propositions linked to each other by linguistic and logical relationships in two ways:

-Dual linkage: It is a relationship between two sentences.

-Collective linkage: It is a relationship between more than two sentences (paragraph).

In both cases, the connection is either direct, that is, between two sentences close to each other, or indirect, that is, between two sentences far apart from each other. Within each text, there is a general coupling and connection through which the elements of the text are held together, from sentences, relationships, and links. On the basis of this coupling, the text has a logical structure with a specific form, which is either a transition from the premises to the

conclusion or the opposite, which is a transition from the conclusion to the premises², meaning that the text is divided into three sections of statements, the statement without a structure, the statement with a structure, the statement with a simple structure, and the statement with a structure of the structure. The first is the word and its opposite is the concept, the second is the sentence or proposition and its opposite is the definition, and the third is what is above the sentence or proposition, and its opposite is the evidence or what philosophers called the philosophical text, which is a group of sentences or propositions that are logically linked together, so that the text is ultimately composed of sentences or propositions and a group of relationships, and the latter is what determines the nature of the text.

In this way, the philosophical material is presented in the form of a text, and it is given to the reader and the learner, who must search for the manner in which the text is constructed, directing their thinking towards understanding the logic of these relationships and the terms used.

If we go back to the history of philosophy, we find that the birth of the philosophical text was with Socrates as an oral text, and by Plato as a written text. The text then became a fertile field for research, especially in the field of linguistics, to the extent that theories about the text were established, or as some called it - the science of the text³. However, what we observe is that these studies did not give the philosophical text much importance, meaning there is an unjustified exclusion of it in the field of research. This exclusion has reflected on the process of teaching philosophy, when compared to language teaching, which has long relied on texts.

Such a situation was raised by Paul Ricoeur in his theory that started from the text, emphasizing a very important element, which is writing, saying (the text is any discourse fixed by writing)⁴. The relationship between philosophy and writing is a close one because the emergence of philosophy was linked to writing. The spread of writing among the Greeks was a fundamental condition for the emergence of philosophy. Therefore, philosophical ideas are never separate from textual written expression, and philosophical texts have their role in the emergence of philosophy. They should also have their role in teaching it, and philosophical ideas are never separate from how to express them.

4-Characteristics of the philosophical text and how to choose it

Some thinkers in the field of the didactics of the philosophical text believe that there are three criteria for determining the specificity of the philosophical text, which are:

A. The Philosopher:

The classical view of the specificity of philosophical texts lies in the mere attribution of the text to a well-known philosopher to be considered philosophical, such as Plato, Hegel, Kant, etc. This is what contemporary theories reject, as they see that the author alone is not sufficient, because a philosopher can write things other than philosophy. For example, Avicenna is not considered a philosopher except through his philosophical texts; when we take his medical texts, he is a doctor. Therefore, we can find philosophical texts outside

philosophical works and vice versa. Thus, philosophical texts can be read independently of their authors in philosophical language.

B-Philosophical language:

Philosophy is written in a natural human language, not in a mathematical or symbolic language, and this natural language consists of multiple and different patterns of expressions, which cannot be separated from the content, so we cannot talk about a philosophical language without forming the text, but it is also not sufficient because there is no specific, precise and technical philosophical language, despite the existence of some philosophical dictionaries, for example, Lalande's Philosophical Dictionary. What we notice in this dictionary is that Lalande provides several explanations for the same term, indicating the difference between philosophers about it, and this means that each philosopher creates certain terms related to his philosophical system. Jean Louchat says (there is no technical term for philosophy as a whole... The philosophical term does not carry its meaning in itself. It can be transferred from one system to another, and from one philosophical analysis to another or from one doctrine to another, such as mathematical terms that retain the same meaning. Therefore, the philosophical language is not of the lexical type, but of the intellectual type. The dictionary does not relieve us from searching for the meaning of terms from During the philosopher's thought).⁵

C. Subject:

If neither philosophical language alone is sufficient, nor the philosopher alone is the criterion for the philosophical text, does this mean that the philosophical subject is the criterion for determining the specificity of the philosophical text? The issues of existence, values, and knowledge are all philosophical topics that have received considerable attention and are regarded as philosophical issues. However, this does not mean that they are exclusive to philosophy; rather, we find that religion and science also address these issues. Therefore, the philosophy teacher should be mindful of this when selecting the text.

We conclude, therefore, that to select a philosophical text and understand its specificity, one must rely on these three criteria: philosophical language, the philosopher, and the subject. However, in addition to this, it is essential to mention some fundamental elements that must be present in the text, which are conceptualization, problematization, and argumentation, etc. It requires a careful examination to understand how the professor presents their text, and it takes various forms depending on the nature of the philosopher's textual practice. For example, if argumentation takes the form of defending a thesis or refuting a set of ideas as arguments for some philosophers, other philosophers use sarcasm as a means of refutation, as Socrates did with his ironic method against his opponents.

This indicates that whether the goal of reading and teaching philosophy is to philosophize or to learn philosophy, this goal can only be achieved by learning philosophy through a textual approach. Because if philosophy is never separate from textual writing, it means that philosophy cannot be taught by merely repeating what philosophers have said. Instead, it must be through engaging with philosophical texts. This is what Paul Ricoeur attempted to demonstrate through the hermeneutic-interpretive practice of the philosophical text.

5-Approach to the philosophical text:

The approach to a philosophical text varies from one reader to another, depending on their competencies and the philosophical texts chosen, and the lack of a unified methodology. All these issues are considered difficulties faced by both the teacher and the student of philosophy when dealing with texts. Therefore, it is necessary to search for a single and clearly defined methodology to address the philosophical text, in order to avoid discrepancies in the evaluation and assessment process. This methodology consists of:

A. The moment of the philosophical reading of the text:

The origin of the process of reading a philosophical text is inspired by hermeneutics, as it is a method for reading various texts, whether sacred (religious), philosophical, or literary, with the aim of reaching high levels of understanding, that is, interpreting them. Therefore, the philosophical text is a subject for reading, but why read the text?

The goal of reading the text is to create a cognitive connection between the learner and philosophical discourse. Michel Touzi says, "Reading the text in the classroom also means that students immediately enter into a new relationship, a relationship different from the one they can establish either among themselves or with their teacher within the communication experience... and the main concern of both the teacher and the learner becomes the text⁶." Here lies the teacher's role in engaging the learner in the act of reading and practicing it, creating a state of attention towards the philosophical text, which is defined by punctuation marks such as periods and their roles, commas, question marks, exclamation marks, etc. This attention is what makes reading meaningful and drives the learner to work with the text and attempt to understand it by grasping its contents, because reading...

Analytical reading is the one that delves into the meaning of words. It eliminates the distance between the learner and the text and goes through two stages:

- 1- Interpretation Stage:** The aim of reading at this stage is to grasp what the text says, that is, to understand the collection of ideas that formed the text, whether in an overt or implicit manner. Then, to examine the method the author relied on to present these ideas, as well as the various linguistic and logical tools employed to provide us with the text in its logical and cognitive form. Therefore, the interpretation stage is a type of systematic reading focused on:

A. The understanding

We mean by this the identification of concepts and the most important terms used by the author of the text and understanding their intellectual content. Since philosophical language is not a technical language—as we mentioned earlier—the term "essence," for example, has different meanings from one philosopher to another, from one school of thought to another, and from one era to another. Both the philosophy teacher and the learner should be aware that concepts cannot be defined precisely and absolutely, and that these concepts belong to a network of ideas that may extend beyond the narrow confines of the text.

B- The problem:

We mean extracting the general problem of the text and extracting the ideas it contains, as there is no doubt that the problem holds an important place within the strategies of philosophical text analysis. Socrates dedicated central importance to the philosophical question in his Socratic dialogue, considering it the best means for generating ideas. Therefore, it is necessary to place the learner in a situation where they recognize the existence of a real problem to stimulate their research and thinking and train them in philosophy, as the French philosopher Alain de Botton says. The practice of philosophy indeed requires intentionality present in the question itself... and no question can be philosophical in itself without this intentionality.⁷ The issue raised in the text is what drives the learner to seek an answer rooted in the question that generates the desire for knowledge or doubt in possessing knowledge. This is clearly evident in the Platonic dialogue, as Girardville says, (where we find Socrates asking those who present themselves as possessors of knowledge, revealing their actual absence... The person to whom the philosophical question is posed is the one who believes they possess knowledge, and the philosophical question shatters this naive belief.⁸) After identifying the thesis defended by the author of the text, and clarifying his reasoning and how it is constructed, we move on to the next step, which is:

C-Argumentation:

Jamil Saliba defines argumentation by saying (it is a set of arguments presented to prove or refute an opinion, or it is the method of presenting arguments and benefiting from them, or the argument is ultimately the evidence, and among them is the saying: "the burden of proof is on the claimant," which means that the burden of proof falls on the claimant, not the denier ⁹.)

Learning philosophy, which we consider as reading the philosophical text, is a lesson in thinking. Therefore, it must be carried out by following methods and techniques that align with the nature of its philosophical subject. Among these methods is the argumentative-deductive style, which makes the student's mind work like that of the philosopher by creating a direct connection between the learner and the thinking mechanisms in the philosophical subject, in terms of its logic, style, and systematic structure. Thus, the argumentative-deductive style forms part of the pedagogical aspect, which seeks to transfer a method considered one of the most important methods of philosophical thinking and writing from the philosopher's practice to the teacher's practice and then to the learner's practice ¹⁰.

Philosophy has always been about thinking, reasoning, and argumentation, where a set of evidence, proofs, and arguments are presented in the philosophical text. All philosophical discourses, such as refutation, contradiction, response, and rebuttal, are based on the argumentative reasoning style, which calls for philosophical thinking activity and the construction of arguments. The entire philosophical text is built on a foundation of logical legitimacy, thus becoming a coordination of a system of evidence and the construction of inferences that establish the validity of every philosophical issue presented in it. It also establishes a position against other positions, where the argument acts as a means to prove or disprove a certain idea. The entire history of philosophy bears witnesses to being a history of argumentative discourses that possess validity making them credible. The Socratic dialogue is

considered a living example of the argumentative style, but some may wonder about the difference between proof and argumentation.

A- The difference between proof and argumentation:

The argumentative dimension pertains to the coherent and organized presentation by the teacher of the ideas in the philosophical text, arranging the ideas according to their relationships and positions within the context to which they belong.

The argumentative dimension: We mean revealing the type of arguments contained in the text by the teacher or reader, and the context in which those arguments appear. Thus, each new step becomes a transition to a stronger argument until the teacher reaches the final argument that directly leads to the conclusion.

We conclude from the above that learning argumentative philosophy involves dealing with the philosophical text as an argumentative ladder, where the teacher transforms from a mere informant of information to one concerned with developing and nurturing intellectual skills through the practice of deductive reasoning. This transformation leads the learner to become a thinker who understands the logic and mechanisms of the text. Additionally, the body of knowledge shifts from a mere accumulation of ready-to-memorize and repeat information to a subject for thinking, questioning, and criticism. As for the method, it transforms from lecturing and rote memorization to critical thinking education. These changes, from an educational perspective, evolve into a pedagogical communication suitable for the subject of philosophy in general and the philosophical text in particular, leading to critical thinking education.

B- Critical Thinking Education:

The philosophical subject allows for the cultivation of the act of thinking, as its abstract issues and the logical nature of reasoning and philosophical thought in general, and the philosophical text in particular, stimulate the learner's ability to engage in mental activities such as analysis, synthesis, criticism, questioning, argumentation, taking a stance, and idea categorization. These are considered the objectives of the philosophical text produced by the philosopher, which is regarded as a thinking text because it employs many different methods, including conceptual, problematic, analytical, synthetic, argumentative, and demonstrative approaches. All these methods embody the critical thinking approach in teaching philosophy, enabling the learner to become both a producer and a critic. If that is achieved, it means we have surpassed that informative method that relies on rote learning, transferring ideas in complete language and thought that the learner hears and memorizes as they are given without knowing how they were constructed or shaped, which makes the learner unable to possess the ability to philosophize.

C- The Interpretation Stage: Although interpretation is a fundamental step in reading a philosophical text, it is not sufficient as there must be a second stage in reading, which is the interpretation stage. By this, we mean following the intellectual direction that the text opens up and thinking for ourselves so that the learner can understand themselves and their world through their possession of the text, which gives the text relevance and narrows the gap between its time [the time of writing the text] and the moment of reading ¹¹.

On one hand, and on the other hand, interpretation also has a didactic validity that lies in issuing critical judgments about the text, in terms of content and form, such as evaluating the ideas of the text and the value of the thesis, and the cognitive tools that established the text. This critical work forms a means of transitioning from the text we read to the text we will build through reading as a new personal text.

This new text is formed from subjective opinions and ideas about the issue, the position, and the arguments, etc. In other words, we are establishing a text about the text, but this does not mean that the new text is established arbitrarily; rather, it is established logically and thoughtfully around the original text, for which we have conducted a sufficient interpretation to understand it. As for the process of interpretation, it expresses the new construction of the text's ideas, by both the teacher and the learner. In this way, each of them reaches the critical and most precise moment, which is called the moment of textual writing.

A- Text writing:

It is the moment of self-expression through writing, which represents an essential aspect of philosophical activity, because philosophical writing is characterized by greater rigor than oral philosophy, as Michel Tosi puts it. It represents an essential aspect of philosophical activity, as it is inconceivable to teach philosophy through reading texts alone. In fact, philosophical writing always begins during the interpretation stage when ideas are recorded, but its crystallization occurs during the hermeneutic process, which focuses on framing the text, identifying the problem and position, then arguments, critique, and evaluation, ultimately expressing what is called philosophical production on the text. This philosophical production requires a set of tools and methods used in philosophical writing, which are represented in:

1. Using proper philosophical language by selecting appropriate and functional concepts.
2. Determining the philosophical context represented by the historical, religious, and epistemological data that led the author to write his text or book.
3. The problem is to formulate the issue presented in the text in a correct and logical manner.
4. Formulating the author's position, which is considered an answer to the issue.
5. Argumentation: It consists of extracting the various arguments that the author of the text relied on.
6. Critique and Evaluation: This involves discussing the thesis of the text and the extent of its legitimacy and value, in addition to the strength of the arguments used to defend or refute this thesis.

In the end, we will produce a new, comprehensive philosophical text that does not represent a rewriting or repetition of the original text, but rather a complete logical analysis of it, following the processes of interpretation and exegesis.

Building on the above, it can be said that the philosophical text is one that provides the teacher and the learner with an appropriate cognitive field to engage in the process of philosophizing and thinking away from rote learning and passive reception, and within a

fertile framework to practice their various intellectual activities in a sound and logical manner.

Thus, they develop the ability for philosophical production and intellectual creativity, meaning that every analysis of the text goes through two essential stages: a stage where the teacher and learner engage with the text as a model for philosophy, and another stage where we go beyond the text to think and philosophize based on our own abilities¹².

We conclude that learning and teaching philosophy through texts is the best way to foster creativity, and that excluding the textual approach in the educational process, compared to linguistics, is a disservice to it.

The neglect of many philosophical writings such as books, dialogues, stories, diaries, confessions, plays, and letters, etc., all of which should find their way into philosophical lessons through the text, which is considered the best means to save the learning of philosophy. The learner has become accustomed to seeking ready-made answers suggested by the teacher in the form of ready-made ideas memorized to be repeated when asked. Sometimes, the learner may not be able to explain what they have memorized and does not grasp its dimensions.

The neglect of the philosophical text has resulted in students' aversion to philosophy, despite the consensus among those working in the field of teaching and reading philosophy that the text is more fertile. However, the misguided perception of teaching philosophy causes both the teacher and the student to shy away from the text, even though keeping up with developments in the field of didactics requires reliance on the text. Reading the text, which primarily aims to place the student at the center of every educational process, where they become the producer of ideas, is more suited to the philosophical text.

6- Conclusion:

Based on our previous analysis, it can be said that the methodology of approaching the philosophical text and reading it hermeneutically is not accurate and uniform in its details, as each text assumes certain skills and methods that are compatible with its nature and type, and the latter is subject to the teacher's competencies and the learner's level, intelligence and personal effort, because learning philosophy through the text is not a ready-made recipe that can be presented to the teacher and the learner to enable them to excel in philosophy, but rather an attempt that stops at the broad outlines of approaching the text, so that everything remains open to creation anew, but the ancient philosophical practices of the Greek philosophers, headed by Socrates, remain the basis of all philosophizing and thinking and the first rule for approaching the text, because they are the ones who brought philosophizing to the public arena and relied on the method of questioning and argumentation, and they also linked philosophizing to practical life, although they did not have a previous philosophical reference except for some ideas that reached them from ancient Eastern civilizations.

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