



Philosophy as a Civilized Dialogue (Didactics of Philosophy)

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Abstract

Philosophy has undergone many different crises, both in terms of its epistemological content and its teaching methods, especially after it entered the walls of universities and schools. Teaching philosophy without a rigorous, orderly, and functionally organized methodology makes it impossible for both the teacher and the learner to reach the highest levels of thinking and awareness. This means that the teacher becomes merely a transmitter of information while the learner becomes a passive listener and consumer of knowledge, unaware of its logic and unable to uncover its mechanisms to develop their abilities. Philosophy is not merely knowledge passed from one generation to another; rather, it is a way of engaging with ideas based on analytical and critical study. Thus, it is not an easily grasped concept but rather a rational field of knowledge and a civilized dialogue that requires continuous development of its content and rigorous educational methodology. This necessitates contemplating the didactics of philosophy to convey and deconstruct its rational discourse with precision, integrity, and objectivity.

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1. Introduction

The teaching of philosophy worldwide is witnessing significant transformations on multiple levels due to its functional capacity to shape and address the mind, aiming to build the future human creative, capable of carrying the message of their society or humanity at large, as the great philosophers did. Philosophy enables an individual to think freely, make decisions independently, and rely on personal capacities, including the ability to philosophize. This ability is defined as a critical process that questions the value and meaning of truths, including those linked to human realities, placing the individual in situations that require questioning and searching for causes through self-reflective thinking.

Thus, it has become necessary to devise an effective method for teaching philosophy, referred to as philosophy didactics. Philosophy is not merely a body of knowledge transferred from one generation to another; rather, it is a method of engaging with ideas analytically, focusing on the interaction between the knowing self and the object of knowledge, as well as the cognitive, social, and political conditions surrounding them. This indicates that philosophy is not easily grasped; it is a complex field of knowledge requiring continual development in both content and methods.

The research problem addressed in this paper is: What do we mean by philosophy didactics, and is there a successful approach that enables philosophy teachers to stimulate students' minds, placing them in a learning situation that creates

intellectual tension, compelling them to seek solutions to various posed problems?

2. The Concept of Didactics

2.1 Linguistic Definition

The term didactics¹ is a translation of the Greek-origin word didaskō (διδάσκειν), meaning teaching or instruction. Over time, its meaning has evolved to denote a specialized field that studies teaching methods and tools. Didactics has become closely related to pedagogy, which focuses on learners and their concerns, although didactics emphasizes the content of knowledge more heavily. Some linguistic dictionaries equate didactics with pedagogy, defining it as the art of teaching². In French, it has many synonyms, including *educatif* (educational), *culturel* (cultural), *pédagogique* (pedagogical), and *instructif* (instructional).³

In Arabic, several overlapping terms are used, such as didactics (ديداكتيك), ta'limiyya (تعليمية), ta'limiyyat (تعليميات), 'ilm al-tadris (علم التدريس), and tadrisiyya (تدرسية).

The most commonly used term is the Latin didactics, followed by the Arabic equivalent ta'limiyya, which is a translation of didactics. Some scholars prefer translating it as ta'limiyyat (تعليميات)⁴, modeled after terms like mathematics or linguistics.

2.2 Conceptual Definition

One of the primary challenges in defining didactics lies in the absence of a precise, universally agreed-upon definition among specialists, as well as their differing perspectives on its relationship with

pedagogy. However, some notable definitions include:

Lalande's Definition: Didactics is seen as a branch of pedagogy focused specifically on teaching.⁵

La Combe's Definition: Didactics is conceptualized as a reflection on the subject matter for the purpose of teaching it. This process involves addressing two types of problems:

- Issues related to the structure and logic of the knowledge itself.
- Issues concerning the learner in the learning process, primarily psychological in nature.⁶

From these definitions, it becomes evident that didactics, as a distinct field of knowledge, seeks to establish a scientific framework capable of synthesizing both old and new knowledge into an integrated system that can be applied across various contexts. It aims to address all forms of challenges in diverse situations, focusing on the educational process regardless of the specific subject matter while also considering broader educational concerns.

3. The Relationship Between Didactics and Pedagogy

Some scholars argue that pedagogy is broader and more encompassing than didactics, with didactics considered a subset of pedagogy focused on teaching⁷. Others regard didactics as synonymous with pedagogy⁸ or as a supportive discipline to pedagogy⁹. To clarify this issue, it is useful to first define pedagogy:

3.1 Definition of Pedagogy

The term pedagogy originates from the Greek words *paida* (child) and *gogic* (guidance or direction). Historically, it referred to a tutor responsible for accompanying children to moral lessons to shape them into good citizens. Over time, its meaning evolved to refer to teachers through a shift in semantic usage.

From this, we conclude that while there is overlap between didactics and pedagogy, there are distinctions. Pedagogy focuses on the learner, whereas didactics emphasizes the knowledge. However, defining pedagogy comprehensively is difficult due to its multiple meanings and its connections to related concepts like education and instruction. This has led many specialists to view pedagogy as an art of education and teaching based on experience and practice, distinct from didactics.

3.2 General and Specific Didactics

Didactics can be divided into two levels:

General Didactics:

This branch applies its principles and findings across all educational subjects and is further subdivided into:

First Section: Concerned with the pedagogical situation, addressing the various factors that organize the subject matter.

Second Section: Focused on the general rules and principles of teaching, independent of specific content.

3.3 Didactics of Philosophy (Didactique de la Philosophie)

Philosophy, as a complex and ever-evolving field, requires continuous development in its content, methods, and

teaching tools. The emergence of philosophical didactics seeks to address this need by transferring the critical, rational philosophical discourse, with its various concepts and perspectives, from one generation to another.

a. Definition

Philosophical didactics refers to the field of study concerned with the situations and processes involved in teaching and learning philosophy. Its goal is to improve and develop the teaching of philosophy by addressing the pedagogical challenges that arise in this domain. This field intersects with several disciplines, such as the nature of the subject matter, the process of philosophical thinking, and its strategies and mechanisms.¹⁰

b. History of Philosophical Didactics

It is essential to distinguish between the teaching of philosophy, a practice as old as education itself, and the didactics of philosophy, which is a modern specialization dedicated to enhancing the teaching of philosophy¹¹. Michel Tozzi¹² emphasized this point, stating: *"The establishment of philosophical didactics in the modern sense learning philosophy is a very recent phenomenon, only emerging in France in the 1990s¹³, unlike the didactics of other subjects, which appeared much earlier."*

c. The Necessity of Philosophical Didactics

The nature of philosophy inherently demands a close relationship with its teaching methods. Looking back to ancient Greek philosophy, philosophical thinking was deeply tied to self-practice, as

exemplified by Socrates' famous maxim: *"Know thyself."* This statement encapsulates a high philosophical spirit with educational and pedagogical goals.

Plato's philosophy, on the other hand, was characterized by dialogues rooted in critical questioning, where answers were built on evidence and reasoning to guide interlocutors toward logical conclusions. This demonstrates that the success of philosophical practice, and pedagogy in general, depends on well-defined methodologies and educational principles that determine how philosophy should be taught.

Philosophical didactics does not merely reflect on philosophy itself but focuses on its teaching methodology, encompassing aspects such as problem formulation, analysis, synthesis, argumentation, and critique. These activities engage both the teacher and the learner during philosophical lessons, reinforcing the idea that philosophical thinking is a subjective practice that is far from simple.

Historically, great philosophers not only developed philosophical systems but also thought deeply about how to effectively convey their ideas to audiences.

d. The Role of Didactics in Philosophy and Other Sciences

In other sciences, each discipline has a specific methodology and didactics that define how its content is taught and the ethical, cognitive, and behavioral objectives to be achieved. Philosophy, with its unique characteristics, has increasingly recognized the need for these tools.

This recognition has prompted many philosophy educators and researchers to raise the issue of philosophical didactics.

The debate led to the emergence of two opposing perspectives:

- **Proponents** argue for the legitimacy and necessity of philosophical didactics, advocating for the integration of educational sciences to make philosophy accessible to all. They highlight that philosophy has transitioned from being an exclusive domain of aristocrats and nobles in ancient and medieval times to a universal subject in modern education.
- **Opponents** reject the idea of philosophical didactics, viewing it as unnecessary or incompatible with the nature of philosophy.

Michel Tozzi notes: *"In the context of democratic, ethical, and practical aspirations, most subjects have established their own didactics for over 20 years. It was only in 1988 that some modest attempts began to appear in philosophy."*¹⁴

From the above, it can be concluded that without a didactic framework for philosophy and without pedagogical research, teachers may find themselves unable to convey a rational, critical discourse to students or learners, enabling them to reach a level of independent thinking. This intellectual engagement stimulates tension and curiosity, pushing learners to ask questions and seek solutions by relying on their own abilities. Without such a framework, learners lack the ability to philosophize and are limited to passively receiving ideas without understanding, applying, or evaluating them. This is evident in poor training, simplistic thinking, and the absence of inquiry,

underscoring the necessity of a didactic approach to philosophy to overcome barriers that hinder understanding and dissemination of the subject in society. Descartes himself viewed philosophy as a distinguishing factor between civilized and uncivilized nations.

On the other hand, opponents of integrating pedagogical or educational methods into philosophy lessons argue that philosophy is unique among academic disciplines, as it inherently possesses its own pedagogy, didactics, and instructional methods. Therefore, it does not require external tools or methods that other sciences may need.

Their evidence lies in the fact that great philosophers, both ancient and modern, constructed profound philosophical systems and theories that have shaped history and continue to do so, all without relying on any specific pedagogy or didactics. On the contrary, they argue that such frameworks could have hindered their free thinking and limited the scope of their intellectual activity. For instance, Kant, one of the greatest philosophy instructors, developed one of the most profound philosophical systems in history. Similarly, Socrates and Plato epitomized the art of rational dialogue without depending on any formal techniques, relying instead on their own intellectual abilities and the inherent elements of philosophy in their practice.

Additionally, critics believe that introducing educational or pedagogical practices into philosophy distorts its unique nature, reducing it to rigid, technical methods that could obstruct the success of philosophical lessons, whether theoretical or practical. They argue that philosophy lessons reflect the teacher's intellectual

personality and abilities, allowing freedom and independence in thought, unrestricted by any imposed framework or rules. For them, philosophy teaching requires no predetermined educational goals set by the educational system, which might align with specific social, political, cultural, or religious factors. In their view, philosophical practice is a free intellectual act, unbound by pedagogical, political, or social constraints. Hence, they conclude that philosophy does not need dedicated didactics.

Amid this debate between supporters and opponents of philosophical didactics, a new perspective has emerged that reconciles the two positions. This approach emphasizes the necessity of incorporating didactics into philosophy teaching while preserving its unique nature. This compromise has inspired numerous studies and specialized works in this field, particularly since the 1980s. One notable example is the French thinker Francine Rolland's 1982 book, *Philosophical Awakening*. Rolland advocated for integrating pedagogical and didactic aspects into philosophy lessons while maintaining its distinct focus on critical, free thinking, grounded in respect for the other as an essential participant in philosophical dialogue.

Thus, philosophical didactics has become essential for the success of philosophical lessons, whether theoretical or practical, as it overcomes issues of rote learning, disorder, improvisation, and superficiality that may characterize such lessons in the absence of pedagogical standards and evaluation criteria. This has prompted reforms and reconsideration in philosophy

teaching, leading to methods and approaches that enable learners to develop the ability to generate ideas, formulate problems, and argue for or against philosophical theses, among other skills. These capabilities can only be achieved through dedicated didactics for philosophy that respects its unique nature.

e. Goals and Prospects of Philosophical Didactics

Philosophy, often referred to as the "mother of sciences," remains a source of comprehensive vision and profound questioning. Without it, humanity risks being enslaved to immediate, narrow technical solutions, oblivious to its multifaceted nature and the ideas, knowledge, and systems it produces or consumes. This absence renders human existence passive and the intellect confined to what others produce, imposing their theories and systems upon it.

Professor Ya'qubi argues that the philosophical decline affecting the teaching of philosophy, due to poor or insufficient philosophical nourishment, poses a serious threat to shaping generations¹⁵. Philosophy, he contends, creates innovative, critical, and productive minds capable of contributing to multifaceted civilizational projects educational, social, political, and beyond. Philosophy occupies a distinguished position within the map of academic disciplines, arguably providing these disciplines with the methodological tools for thinking and advancement. This underscores the importance of integrating philosophy didactics, not merely within the classroom but also through setting clear objectives, assessing pedagogical

performance, and elevating philosophical instruction from rote learning to authentic philosophical engagement. According to Michel Tozzi, this engagement hinges on three essential capacities:

- The ability to read philosophically
- The ability to write philosophically
- The ability to discuss philosophically

These foundational skills demand that philosophy teachers move beyond merely transmitting philosophical theories and ideas. Instead, they must train students in sound reasoning, objective critique, problem construction, and the defense or refutation of philosophical theses with evidence and argumentation. Achieving this requires collaboration between philosophy and other disciplines such as mathematics, physics, art, religious studies, and language. For example, developing philosophical writing skills necessitates linguistic proficiency, while knowledge from sciences and humanities provides the material for philosophical reflection. Philosophy, as the study of knowledge itself, thrives on the diversity and plurality of intellectual perspectives.

The inevitable conclusion is that rational training in philosophical thinking through pedagogical tools and educational strategies is indispensable. This ensures the successful transmission of educational projects and the accurate communication of philosophical ideas, serving as a foundation for generating new thoughts with visions for humanity and society. These efforts yield several outcomes:

- Enabling learners to practice free and independent thinking through questioning, critique, and substantiated argumentation.
- Promoting openness founded on respect for others and engaging in dialogue with a spirit of tolerance.
- Empowering learners to apply philosophical knowledge in life by making decisions free from negative influences, unlocking their potential, and nurturing their abilities to carry forward a civilizational mission for their communities or humanity at large.

Thus, incorporating philosophy didactics into instruction has become imperative for fostering meaningful philosophical experiences, an idea encapsulated by Kant's assertion: "We cannot learn philosophy; we can only learn to philosophize."¹⁶

4. Philosophy Didactics in Algeria

Philosophy, as a hallmark of societal development and progress, faces rejection, marginalization, and exclusion in Algeria specifically and the Arab world generally, as if there is a cultural incapacity for free and rational thinking. This issue, which Abdelmajid Qassoum describes as the "philosophical affliction" or a "sick philosophical reality,"¹⁷ results in fragile individuals ill-equipped to withstand intellectual crises, cultural upheavals, or ideological currents. In such contexts, rational thinking is absent, and free thought is suppressed.

Despite these challenges, Algeria has made and continues to make efforts to bring

about significant reforms in its educational system, particularly in philosophy didactics. Key initiatives include revising the content of philosophy curricula and adopting a competency-based approach to teaching. These reforms reflect a growing awareness of the critical role of philosophy in education. Schools and universities, through philosophy, are pivotal in shaping and building human capacities, which have become the most valuable resources in modern societies.

Philosophy enables individuals to address contemporary issues across knowledge, social, political, and economic domains. However, this transformative potential can only be realized if philosophy occupies a special place among other disciplines. Its ability to engage and liberate the mind from illusions, superstitions, and constraints, while guiding it toward sound understanding and intellectual creativity, makes it indispensable.

Yet, a pressing question arises: Are Algeria's institutions fully aware of the significance of philosophy, and are they taking adequate measures to restore its rightful place among other disciplines?

Numerous studies have strived, using diverse intellectual tools, to advocate for the discipline of philosophy. However, obstacles persist, potentially due to the absence or deliberate omission of essential conditions and an enabling environment for its success. Some notable efforts include Professor Ya'qubi's work on the foundations of philosophical discourse, ministerial initiatives introducing competency-based teaching in secondary education, and various conferences and

seminars aimed at shedding light on the challenges of teaching philosophy.

Despite these commendable endeavors, they remain insufficient when compared to neighboring countries such as Tunisia or advanced nations like France, Finland, and Sweden. Consequently, philosophical education in Algeria particularly at the secondary level continues to suffer from randomness, rote learning, and a lack of systematic approaches. This has led to significant aversion and open rejection of philosophy by students and society at large. Addressing this phenomenon demands a thorough and objective analysis to identify solutions and foster an environment conducive to advancing research in philosophy didactics. It is imperative to understand the reasons behind this aversion; otherwise, philosophy, with its inherently universal and comprehensive nature, risks descending into a debilitating isolation.

5. Objectives

Any study addressing the issue of teaching philosophy generally, and its didactics specifically, aims to achieve several future-oriented goals, including:

Understanding the Relationship Between Philosophy and Didactics:

Exploring this relatively nascent field of study helps establish its legitimacy. Philosophy, often referred to as the "mother of sciences," remains a source of comprehensive visions and profound inquiries. Without philosophy, as Descartes noted, humanity would have remained uncivilized.

1. **Facilitating the Teaching of Philosophy:** By identifying precise techniques and methodologies, educators can structure philosophy lessons to achieve predetermined objectives effectively.
2. **Enhancing the Evaluation Process:** Evaluation is a pivotal mechanism in teaching, especially in philosophy. It objectively assesses the learner's comprehension and engagement with the lesson.
3. **Addressing Deficiencies in Philosophy Instruction:** By clarifying concepts and uncovering relationships among ideas within specific knowledge contexts, teaching philosophy can overcome existing shortcomings and challenges.
4. **Encouraging Philosophical Thinking Grounded in Solid Knowledge:** Philosophy should stem from well-defined and accurate knowledge, avoiding isolated or contextually irrelevant questions.
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6. **Transforming Questions into Authentic Problems:** Philosophy instruction should enable learners to

experience the philosophical lesson as a deeply personal and internal struggle, rather than an external imposition. This participatory approach encourages learners to co-construct knowledge. The essence of philosophy lies not in reaching conclusions but in justifying and establishing knowledge.

6. CONCLUSION

The best way to conclude this work is with Aristotle's statement from his book *Invitation to Philosophy*: "Either philosophizing is necessary, in which case we must philosophize, or it is not necessary, in which case we must also philosophize to prove its non-necessity. In both cases, we must philosophize."¹⁸ Most interpreters of Aristotle agree that he raised the question of the necessity of philosophizing to achieve happiness, which is the ultimate goal of human life. If philosophizing is the path to happiness, then we must rationalize this philosophical practice through pedagogical methods and techniques, so that philosophy instructors can assist students in engaging with philosophy, as it is the key to learning and realizing one's humanity. Since philosophizing or thinking is a uniquely human trait, it is more beneficial to embrace and learn philosophy rather than waste energy rejecting it or distancing oneself from it. To facilitate this, educational principles must be integrated into the teaching of philosophy so that it becomes a subject that can be comprehended by everyone, as philosophy has now become a universal intellectual asset.

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