The Problem Method in Teaching Philosophy:
A Praxiologic Educology

Jurate Morkuniene, Law University of
Lithuania, Vilnius, Lithuania

Introduction by Co-Editors

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The intention of the introduction by the co-editors adheres to the meaning of the following statement from the first paragraph in the Recurring Editorial that started in the 2005 issue of cd-IJE.

"The format for future content recognizes the existence of the newly forming body of knowledge, i.e. philosophy of educology, as knowledge about educology, and the existence of the already developing body of knowledge, i.e. educology, as knowledge about education."

Professor Morkuniene's paper, in accord with the Recurring Editorial, represents directly one aspect of and indirectly two aspects of the domain of educology, and indirectly the domain of philosophy of educology, specifically the aspect of experiential philosophy of educology, in contrast to rationalistic, analytical, and phenomenological philosophies of educology. From the perspective of the editorial, the paper directly inquires with the experiential praxiologic educological question:

What is the most effective way to teach philosophy involving educative experiences organically inhering in educational processes in developing democracies in the world?

not, directly with the experiential axiologic and scientific educological questions, respectively, as:

Ought philosophy be taught involving educative experiences organically inhering in educational processes in developing democracies in the world?

and

Is philosophy being taught involving educative experiences organically inhering in educational processes in developing democracies in the world?

nor, directly with the experiential philosophy of educology questions:

What is experiential knowledge about educative experiences organically inhering in educational processes, i.e. what is experiential educology?

and

What is the significance of experiential educology?

Professor Morkuniene's answer to the experiential praxiologic educological question, presupposes the answer to the experiential axiologic educological question, i.e. the "ought" question, as being that philosophy ought to be taught to students in a way that involves them in educatively experiencing

"independence in . . . critical thinking and decisions-making,"

i.e. in educative experiences that organically inhere in educational processes conducted in schools in developing democracies in the world.

As to the experiential scientific educological question, i.e. the "is" question, Professor Morkuniene alludes to the fact of how philosophy teaching is conducted in non-democratic countries in the world by saying:

> *"In a society in which the official and commonly accepted truth is or should be predominant, the problem of freedom of creation, of thinking never arises. Philosophers in such a society encounter a clear and a single task – to relate this single truth, "to hammer" its principles, rules and definitions into the student's head. There is not, and can not be, a problem, because there can not be a difference, somebody's own opinion (e. g., in the former philosophy of Marxism)."*

With the experiential axiologic and scientific educologial questions indirectly answered, then, Professor Morkuniene, in essence, directly answers the experiential praxiologic educological question, i.e. the "effectiveness" question, by accounting for a "problem solving method" of teaching philosophy. In this account, she says:

> *"Teaching, by solving problems, is a combination of images, creation of hypotheses, and creation of strategies."*

From the perspective of the Recurring Editorial, the combination of images and the creation of hypotheses and corresponding strategies involved in solving problems are necessary, though not sufficient, aspects, quoting from the editorial, of

> *"the conjunction of the logic and psychology of reflective thinking experiences, functioning as a* **model** *for the conjunction of the logic and psychology of educative experiences,"*

that

> *"***ought*** *to be better integrated into the organization of conditions in which the educational process is conducted."*

Interpreting these quotes, the "combination of images" and the "creation of hypotheses and corresponding strategies" involved in solving problems are necessary, though not sufficient, aspects of

> *the conjunction of the logic and psychology of* **reflective thinking experiences** *organically inhering in knowing processes, functioning as a* **model** *for the conjunction of the logic and psychology of* **educative experiences** *organically inhering in educational processes that* **ought** *to be better integrated into the organization of conditions, i.e. into schools, in which educational processes are conducted in developing democracies in the world.*

From the perspective of the editorial, then, Professor Morkuniene's experiential praxiologic educology of philosophy teaching is clearly in accord with this **"ought."**

Abstract by Author

This is an attempt to clarify principally some fundamental ideas clustered around the concept of the formal conditions which would constitute a fruitful studying of philosophy. First, an ideal study situation would require the student to participate in the object-subject dialogue; philosophical studies

are an active dialogue between the text and the subject. Next, philosophy is a paradigmatically and historically oriented institution, grounded on the notions of discipline, autonomy, and authority. The idea is that we are currently facing a crisis in philosophy, and this crisis constitutes a major problem for the studies of philosophy. The metamorphosis of the concept of philosophy in contemporary philosophy is related to the new problem of the dialogue and interconnections between the object and the subject, new ways of conceiving the truth and a renewed social force of philosophy. New perceptions of the interconnections of the student and philosophical knowledge raise anew the problems of objectivity. Philosophy has lost its autonomy and strict authority.

Introduction by Author

The importance of the problem method in teaching philosophy is evident. The very nature of philosophy as a humanitarian science implies a dialogue between the object under study and the subject (student). What is it –"philosophical training", "philosophical teaching"? This is not simply information on the history of ideas. It is rather developing the individual's thinking. Every opportunity of developing our personal abilities to make decisions means the attainment of a new level in our philosophical education. Whenever we show more independence in our critical thinking and decisions-making we have made progress in our philosophical education. There are two tendencies in applying the problem method in teaching. First, in natural and exact sciences solution of a problem means an instrumental conditioning when the subject chooses from two or more alternatives, himself raises questions and deals with them. In the second tendency the problem is considered to be contained in the matter of study itself, and the formulation of the problem and the structure of its solution should be found in the content of the matter. Thus, in this case the problem has no instrumental limitations, the subject can not invent the problem himself, the problem is partially "thrust on". So, in the humanities (philosophy) the problem method (teaching) depends on the both parts of the "dialogue": on the matter of study and on the researcher. We shall consider only some aspects of the problem method that are of significance in teaching philosophy.

Philosophy as a Technique

In teaching philosophy the peculiarities of the matter are often neglected and automatically the routine "technical" rules are preferred. This means that the scope of philosophical themes, "problems", tasks is strictly regulated or even determined a priori (depending on the institution, its teaching traditions).

In a society in which the official and commonly accepted truth is or should be predominant, the problem of freedom of creation, of thinking never arises. Philosophers in such a society encounter a clear and a single task – to relate this single truth, "to hammer" its principles, rules and definitions into the student's head. There is not, and can not be, a problem, because there can not be a difference, somebody's own opinion (e. g., in the former philosophy of Marxism). In a society guided by the ideology of monologism, philosophy and its teaching can and must be strictly regulated. Technical rules can be applied there, and the problem method itself is perceived as a technique. This means that the problems that should be answered by the teacher can be strictly listed. A problem is understood as an alien thing brought into philosophy from the outside.

The problems are "presented". In such a kind of philosophy, the object of study – or rather "analysis" – is the sum total of knowledge or the totality of fragments (citations), it is the knowledge which is understood as something finite, a certain intellectual datum.
The philosophical truth is explained exclusively through the meaning of a term, and the term is explained through its usage and the affirmation of its application. The fact of the presence of a term in a philosophical dictionary is considered an adequate proof of its strictly limited sphere of application. One should only learn it. On learning many terms, those "basic" in particular, one can ostensibly understand the general problems of philosophy. The task is ostensibly fulfilled: the student has been "acquainted" with philosophy.

Importance of Studying a Text in Raising a Problem

The specific nature of philosophy resists its regulation by methods of technical sciences. Philosophy, being an uninterrupted creative process, a continuous solution of fundamental questions devoid of commonly accepted technical rules, allows no regulation. One of specific features of philosophy is its "working" with the text which should be read and understood. The text is the tool of philosophical thinking. The tool of philosophy is concepts, language which develops in time. As M. Bakhtin puts it, "text is the primary datum (reality) and starting point of any humanitarian science" (2: 292). There is everywhere a real or an implied text. An investigation becomes asking and answering questions, i.e. a dialogue. We ask no questions from nature, and it gives no answers. A naturalist questions himself and in a certain way organizes his observation or experiment, whereas in the study of man and society (humanitarian and social sciences) we constantly deal with the questions that are already there, expressed in the form of signs, notions, metaphors, texts, and we do our best to perceive them. Thus, philosophy *studies a text* as an expression of thought. Such a way of study means a dialogue, because we ask the author (philosopher) questions and find answers in the text. The text and its understanding (not a description or explanation) is exactly the "axis" on which all methodological problems of philosophy are centered.

To study a text of natural and technical sciences means just obtaining information, whereas reading philosophical texts is a dialogue, a discussion between the philosopher's
text, author's experience on the one hand and the student's knowledge on the other. However, this is not just an individual interaction between the student and the text. The
student comes with all his store of knowledge gained from his social medium. In this case, of significance is also the students' specialty. "I find what I know." First, he understands the things that are already known to him. However, the stock of knowledge (at least of a student) is not large. Philosophical texts, both those belonging to the past and present, in many cases are "alien" to the student, because his knowledge and experience has been accumulated even on a lower level of generalization, in another "paradigm" of teaching. It is here that a conflict appears first of all, i.e. a problem arises.

How should I understand a strange experience and of what use is it to me? In general, is this strange text worth being understood by me? Maybe I should only learn it (to pass the exam)? The student encounters the dilemma: first, is the text worth studying if it is not worth understanding? Second, if it is worth understanding, how should I do it? And here again approaches of natural sciences and philosophy are at variance. The natural scientist sees an objective fact or regularity behind the text. The philosopher is interested in the meaning of a fact or a regularity: he wants to understand *what* it is that makes the text meaningful, turns it into knowledge*, how* this knowledge shapes itself and develops. A philosophical text is a process that develops in time, reveals its meaning in time, in the continuity and therefore is

perceived consistently, in time, and in development. An interrupted, "broken" philosophical text or its fragment (excerpt) "begrudges" information, it is devoid of argumentation and lacks meaning.

Understanding, while reading a text, is not only a means, but also the very matter of cognition. Thus, a philosophical text has a dual meaning: it is both the matter of understanding and the means of understanding. Philosophical knowledge (cognition) is the awareness of what thinking had done in the past. However, it is also relevant for the present. Therefore philosophical knowledge is not just an object (of study) on which a sum of data and facts must be memorized. This is the very activity of thinking, which can be cognized to the extent to which the cognizing mind reproduces it, assimilates, and accepts it as a matter of significance to him (subject) at present. Therefore a philosophical text should be complete. The studying mind works following the logic of thinking imposed by the author, it begins to understand the connections revealed by the author; even the style of thinking is of importance. This is the way to acquire knowledge, but at the same time the tool of thinking undergoes training – habits are being formed in it. This is why philosophical problems could be understood only gradually, passing from one philosopher to another, and with the growing complexity of the problems.

Relation between Teaching and Solving a Problem

A problem arises when there is a conflict between the present situation and the goal. The subject (student) tries to attain the goal (to understand), but he does not know the ways and means to attain it. Therefore he is in a difficulty, and faces a conflicting situation: the problem of understanding, memorizing, and assimilating the philosophical text arises. (The situation as such is certainly created by the teacher since he teaches a new and unknown subject.) The conflict is removed when the problem is solved. However, it is a long and tedious process. While solving the problem, the student first of all goes beyond the limits of the already known information. In the initial stages of teaching, instructions and verbal confirmations are essential. However, later, they lose their primary function and become auxiliary (e. g., explanation of terms). From teaching in the narrow sense of the word (explanation of terms, verbal definitions) we pass on to the consolidation of associations (the richer the knowledge, the more associations), to the explanation of a conception, which involves an active participation of the student. "Teaching, by solving problems, is a combination of images, creation of hypotheses, and creation of strategies" (4: 586, 625). Thus, we consider *solving a problem* as a process that proceeds in time. We think that in philosophy the processes of solving problems are essentially identical to the processes of teaching.

The Ways of "Removing" the Problem, or the Process of Solution

According to the definition of R. L. Ackoff and F. E. Emery, "the problem is a state of striving for a goal, which does not satisfy the striving individual" (1: 115). In the process of cognition the cognizing subject encounters – a problem which he must resolve in one or another way. Two alternatives of solution are possible: 1) the individual facing a problem (and this implies dissatisfaction, "discomfort" of thinking) can "change his striving" (1: 115), i.e. reject the problem, refuse to solve it; or 2) the individual can substitute the state of dissatisfaction by a "state of managing" (1: 123), i.e. to face the problem and to solve it (to attain the state of satisfaction). First, the student realizes the problem and searches in his memory for the elements of knowledge that could be helpful in solving it. If he finds enough of them, the solution begins. If not enough – two ways are open: either to reject the

problem (or merely to learn it in order to pass the exam) or to start acting, to search, to acquire new knowledge in order to solve it. The teacher's task is to raise gradually the level of the complexity of the problems according to the acquired level of philosophical knowledge. Thus, to encourage the subject (a student) to tackle the problem (to turn the obtained however still dead information into his own) three conditions are required: first – a sufficient context of knowledge (information) to provide material for considering, explaining and understanding the problem (in this relation, it is very important to present as much of systemic knowledge as possible); second – the subject's intention "to improve the situation" (M. Wertheimer, 7: 293) or desire to know, and third – the sufficiently trained abstract thinking of the subject (this is also one of the tasks of the delivered course of philosophy).

The Importance of Disposition

The level of the complexity and universality of the problem, its open or reserved character propose the ways of its solution. Usually two ways of solution are specified: 1) solution through trial and error, i.e. a random, unfounded and sometimes even useless series of actions; 2) solution based on a consistent analysis, systematic and purposeful investigation. Searching *for means to solve the problem* is of essential importance. The search is a *disposition* to the final result. The disposition (one of the core individual features trained through teaching philosophy) in the processes of cognition acts as an organizing factor. *The disposition* can act in two ways: 1) as a merely fixing factor, when there is a statement: "things are like this." In this case, the disposition acts as a factor impeding a creative solution. (The student learns some series of facts, statements and definitions, because he has to pass the exam); 2) as a tendency to complete the cognitive activities. In this case the disposition is also a precondition of search. The process of solving the problem, depending on the prevailing tendency, can proceed either stereotypically when the facts, and notions presented by the teacher are accepted passively, by "learning", "cramming", or in a creative way, by searching for an independent, heuristic solution important to the studying subject.

Ways to Stimulate Thinking

How can thinking be stimulated? In general terms, this can be achieved by means of thinking of problems of the most diverse levels by singling them out from a philosophical text. However, only an active thinking disposed to "change the situation in the direction of its improvement" (M. Wertheimer) is capable of doing this. If a man *is not inclined* to and *does not know* (a little stock of knowledge) how to organize his mental activities, he usually fails to attain a high level of the development of thinking, even within the context of the availability of best preconditions and good conditions ("social niche"), and even when the quality of teaching is high. One should master the stages of thinking such as *raising a task, creation of an optimal motivation, regulation of the purposefulness of associations, maximal involvement of both visual and symbolic metaphoric components, training of conceptual thinking.*

Creation and Strengthening of Motivation

Creation of motivation is one of the most important preconditions of the enhancement of thinking. While studying a subject, the questions arise: What is it good for? Why should I know this? Will I ever need it in my life? The motive of studying can be a vital necessity (to pass the exam) or intellectual satisfaction ("I've made a discovery"). To encourage the second motive is the first and most important task of the teacher. The second case implies

independent thinking, initiative, individuality. Even if the student is "reinventing the wheel," even if he makes essential mistakes because of his poor stock of knowledge, the problem under consideration becomes his own problem. And even if he fails, he gains practice in independent thinking and arrives to the next problem which he will manage to solve. N. Blake calls it "an ideal speech situation" or "an ideal speech conditions" (3: 357; 356), when the participants can freely exchange opinions, desires and views, when only a "stronger argument" is searched for.

However, he stresses that such a situation is always difficult to attain, because it implies a certain knowledge of the subject under discussion. Otherwise, on the basis of "common knowledge" alone, a person can speak and say whatever comes to his mind: "Yet unstructured speech situation can kill rationality" (3: 357). To maintain optimal motivation, of use are a gradual increase in the complexity of the problems in accordance with the man's abilities. The student moves from success to success, his self-confidence augments, thus increasing his potential to overcome greater and greater obstacles. Overly complicated tasks should be avoided. Therefore teaching philosophy should start "from the beginning:" without Socrates one cannot understand Plato, without Plato one will fail to understand Aristotle, etc., but one should never start with an insuperable problem. How should the optimal motivation be encouraged? Sometimes the student must be challenged to encourage him to overcome difficulties, to check his strength. Sometimes he must be praised to encourage his attempts to experience the joy of discovery again, to plunge into work, to experience this emotional state once more. Praise (augmentation of one's personal significance) raises the creative potential of the individual. Sometimes the student's ambitions must be stimulated. When the individual is solving a problem, he inevitably makes a broader use of information and reaches far beyond the limits of the problem (and compulsory literature). It has been proven experimentally that when a problem is accepted as interesting, the probability of its *solution* is essentially higher.

However, a failure in solving the problem may change the student's attitude for the worse: he will tend to consider it not interesting and useless. He may even reject it. Therefore it is reasonable to define the sphere of his interests in which he will realize his abilities and only in this relation to turn his attention to the philosophical problem (i.e. to elucidate in the course of philosophy the problems that are of interest to the students of a concrete specialty or urgent for our time; to relate the problems of cognition, social problems to the practical problems of the present). The process of thinking contains in itself the conscious and unconscious components. It is a well-known fact that the process of solving a problem is not interrupted when the subject ceases to think about it consciously. If the process of solution "fails" despite a keen desire to perceive, it is useful to put the problem aside for some time and "to switch" to another one. Such a "switch", with the introduction of a collateral information (in philosophy this is an excursion into the history of philosophy) helps to concentrate on the new aspects of the problem, which will actually turn helpful in solving it.

When after such an "excursion" into the history of philosophy the subject returns to the primary formulation of the problem, it becomes easily understood and thus solved. This happens because of the thinking activity which has been incessantly going on in the sub-consciousness and the accumulated new content of cognition. An unsuccessful attempt to solve a difficult problem should be postponed in due time, before the desire comes to reject it for good, because in this way one can escape a decline in the level of motivation and an appearance of a constantly negative (repulsive) attitude to the problem (or even to the whole discipline). Exactly here the role of the teacher comes forth by regulating the direction of associations, i.e. causing the students to take interest in the problem.

The Role of Posing Questions in Solving a Problem

The process of thinking is also stimulated by the ability to raise the appropriate questions, since questions help to concentrate attention and limit the "shaking up" of the hypotheses in one's memory. Thinkers in Ancient Greece searched for the ways to encourage the pupil's attempts to solve a problem. They (Socrates) did it by asking questions. Socrates called his discourses-dialogues "the midwife's art," because he not only raised interest in his pupil, but also created the illusion that the pupil himself found the solution of the problem. It is desirable to drive the student to the solution, however, so as to force the student to make the last step himself. Questions provide guidelines for the process of thinking, prevent the thought from distraction, for example, from "slipping away" from the philosophical level of thinking to the level of special sciences or common sense.

Which is the way to develop the ability of raising necessary (right) questions? This is what the method of problem teaching under discussion is intended for. It renders the student the status of a discoverer. However, if a man gets the answer to the question too soon, i.e. when he knows only the statement but does not know the history, argumentation, etc., the knowledge contained in the answer is poorly assimilated, because there is no goal, not even the urge to know the answer (the only goal remains – to pass the exam).

The Tasks of Problem Teaching

The process of teaching with the use of problems provides a student with the opportunity to *repeat, seemingly independently*, *the way covered by the philosopher* to his discovery. Each stage of teaching offers a new stock of information. However, it is not so much the information itself that matters, but rather stressing going beyond its boundaries, to relate it to the contemporary level of cognition or to the contemporary social or other problems. In problem teaching, hazards or barriers can be hardly escaped. These are the specific obstacles of thinking. The inertness and stereotypes of thinking are connected with the former philosophical school, with the prevailing ideology of society, philosophical fashion, with the "traditions" of a higher school, the teacher's competence. The atavism of monological thinking manifests itself in worshiping the "authorities," depreciation of the non-authorities, rubberstamping in the evaluation of philosophers. The taboos of thinking are still practiced by higher schools or departments. The student, even without noticing it, becomes involved in a traditional way of thinking.

It should be emphasized that problem teaching means the beginning of the assimilation of new material not from "familiarity" with the conventional ways how to solve the problem (what has been written on the subject by several philosophers, often with no relations with their specific epochs, without any historical or even theoretical context), but from *providing the conditions which urge to solve exactly this problem* just in the present-day historical period.

These conditions imply assimilation of the entire "phylogenesis" of philosophy, moving from epoch to epoch, from philosopher to philosopher. And this means more than merely learning some fragments. This is the only condition for the student to assimilate knowledge not because it was delivered, "reported" or dictated by the teacher, but because he has got an **inner stimulus to know it**. By solving the arising problems which have already become of

personal importance to him, the student assimilates new material deeper and sooner – because he cares!

Conclusions

1. Philosophical problems can be perceived only gradually, passing from one philosopher to another, from one epoch to another. Therefore fragmentary teaching of principles, definitions, "general" questions does not create a "problem field."

2. The knowledge delivered while lecturing philosophy should be systematized as much as possible. Therefore it is impossible to offer a problem presentation of knowledge in such a vast discipline as philosophy in a short course.

3. It is necessary to provide a continuous tension of solving the problems, an uninterrupted connection between lectures and discussions, because discussions are the
place where the aroused "conflict" of cognition is directed towards creative approach, the student is inspired with the desire to know, "to discover."

4. Discussions should ensure the atmosphere of "relaxed mind" allowing any nonsense to be said, without demanding immediately "the only correct" answer. The student, as a self-regulating system, comes to see his mistakes by himself, he himself "makes a discovery" while trying to solve a problem that is of importance to him, under the non-obtrusive guidance of the teacher, who without force, but with a deep knowledge of the
matter, implants associations.

5. The whole method of problem teaching is based on knowledge. Therefore studying the original sources (not only descriptions or, even worse, questionable manuals),
should become an indispensable requirement.

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What Motivates Students to Choose the Teachers' Profession

A Scientific Educology of University Students

Manefa Miskiniene, Professsor, and Emilija Rodzeviciute, Graduate Student
Vilnius Pedagogical University, Lithuania

Introduction by Co-Editors

The intention of the introduction by the co-editors adheres to the meaning of the following statement from the first paragraph in the Recurring Editorial that started in the 2005 issue of cd-IJE.

"The format for future content recognizes the existence of the newly forming body of knowledge, i.e. philosophy of educology, as knowledge about educology, and the existence of the already developing body of knowledge, i.e. educology, as knowledge about education."

The authors' paper, in accord with the Recurring Editorial, is in educology and directly inquires, using quantitative methods of research, with the scientific educological question:

"What motivates students to enroll in the educative experiences that organically inhere in the teacher education program at Vilnius Pedagogical University?"

The authors, from the editorial's perspective, do not directly inquire with the axiologic and praxiologic educological questions, respectively, as:

"Ought students be motivated to enroll in educative experiences that organically inhere in the teacher education program at Vilnius Pedagogical University?"

nor

"How can students be effectively motivated to enroll in educative experiences that organically inhere in the teacher education program at Vilnius Pedagogical University?"

Also, from this perspective, they do not directly inquire with the philosophy of educology questions:

What is knowledge about educative experiences organically inhering in educational processes, i.e. what is educology?

and

What is the significance of educology?

Introduction by Authors

Relevance of the Topic. Youth, its objectives, readiness for life, education are the future of Lithuania. One of the major solutions of a young person is related to the choice of a future profession, and this solution is influenced by many factors: certain demands, calls and interests, capabilities and intellect, character and temperament, goals and values.

The results of professional activities of a human being depend on his/her attitude towards the chosen profession and the motivation behind that choice. The motives of learning through which