ASSESSMENT IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The paper contains an elaboration of the assessment issue within the history of philosophy. The author strives to present the specifics of assessment in this area. They mainly consist in the almost complete absence of overcoming one philosopher by another. The main implement of the paper is the introduction of the division of the assessment approach. We recognize three assessment approaches in philosophy: formal - deductive, knowledge and skills assessment approach. The most used in the history of philosophy is the knowledge assessment approach. We present examples of good and bad practice in the implementation of knowledge verification. We consider a good knowledge verification structure to be the type of questions that will not mislead the student, and at the same time verify not only the philosopher's basic philosophical theses, but also various other ties (to contemporaries and subsequent philosophers, to science, to art, etc.). Please note that evaluating the history of philosophy is not an isolated examination of the biographies, written works, and theses of philosophers, but of theories conceived in the context of facts that respond to and influence other facts and theories.

Keywords

Assessment, History of Philosophy, Education, Teaching

1. Introduction

Perhaps the destiny of every philosophy course is to become a workshop of thinking, a space for joint reflection (Cerletti 2012). "Eliminating the teaching of philosophy and philosophizing in the educational system would mean the creation of a mechanized community, unable to raise its voice to express disagreement" (Acevedo et al. 2023, p. 38). This also applies to the history of philosophy course. There is an obvious difference between the history of philosophy and the history of science. Also, it is good to explain the history of science within the framework of an introduction to the questions of a separate science (chemistry, physics, mathematics, etc.). Development (cf. Skalsky 1986). In the history of philosophy, it is practically impossible to talk about cumulative development. It would be senseless to elevate Husserl over Hobbes, Lyotard over Comte on the grounds that one surpasses the other. Although Comte speaks about the famous stages of the human spirit, no philosophy of the history of philosophy — neither Comte, nor Hegel, Marx, etc. — generally not applicable. We, of course, cannot talk about progress in the sense of victory over one philosopher and another philosopher. This is possible, for example, in chemistry, in a famous theory that introduced phlogiston as an essence into chemistry. The term was introduced into science by Georg Ernst Stahl. "Phlogiston is a chimeric stuff that could be exchanged between various substances" (Vančik 2021, p. 15). Today, this approach has long been overcome, mainly thanks to the experiments of Pierre Bayen, who disproved the existence of phlogiston as a real chemical compound. We can talk about theories that are no longer valid in the sense of science, but not in the sense of the development of philosophy. This fundamental difference between philosophy and science must be taken into account both when teaching philosophy and, of course, when assessing. There is simply no universal or even currently relevant philosophical theory that the philosophical community can agree on. Nothing that philosophers say as theories is said in unison. It can be required both vertically and horizontally. At the same time, geographical cultural features greatly reveal the topics and solutions interpreted within the corresponding cultural circle, as can be seen by reading philosophy journals from East Asia, from India, or by attending philosophy conferences in these regions. Philosophical solutions that we perceive only marginally in European and American cultural circles resonate quite strongly in

other regions. Despite the mentioned facts, there must not be methodological pluralism in the history of philosophy, because this would lead to the questioning of the scientific status of the history of philosophy (Nikiforov and Sokolova 2018).

2. Philosophy and Cultural Circles

It is also necessary to remember the territorial division of philosophy and the fact that certain cultural circles did not influence each other, while others were, on the contrary, interconnected. Indian and Chinese philosophical circles had significant mutual contact. We can talk primarily about the Indian influence on the Chinese philosophical circle. We can see this especially in Buddhism. As a good example, we can cite Bodhidharma's arrival in China and his influence on the development of Chan in China. Original Chinese culture was primarily a written culture. Indian culture has long relied on genius memory. And vice versa was only a marginal philosophical movement. The Euro-American circle was also slightly influenced by the thinking of Jews and Arabs. There were rare intersections between Indian and Euro-American philosophy, detected e.g. in early Christian philosophy, or in Schopenhauer. There are occasional mentions of a strong connection between Christian gnosis and Indian philosophy, but in reality these are only marginal contacts. Hellenistic culture was really only minimally influenced by Indian culture, we cannot talk about taking over thought schemes, leitmotifs. The Aztec cultural circle can be considered independent, Aztec philosophy was not affected by any philosophical cultural circle and did not influence any other (León-Portilla 2003). The autonomy of philosophical circles, especially Indian and Aztec, is a determining indicator in the history of philosophy. It is also important to remember that in the field of Buddhism, Indian culture influenced Chinese culture and thus penetrated Chinese philosophy as well. These important facts need to be kept in mind when evaluating in the history of philosophy, especially in the area of focus of questions. The assessment should also check these realities.

3. Assessment Approaches in the History of Philosophy

In principle, different assessment approaches are used in various philosophical disciplines, as well as in the history of philosophy. Within them, closed and open questions are represented differently. It is possible to say that closed questions can mostly be solved in only one way, they are convergent tasks. Open questions requiring combination and heuristics can be

characterized as tasks of a divergent nature. Due to its specificities, especially the absence of historical progress, the history of philosophy must use the system of convergent and divergent tasks very sensitively.

In principle, a distinction can be made between three assessment approaches in philosophy. The first of these concerns formal logic. It does not concern the assessment of other problems, which, although they are sometimes passed off as logic, actually belong more to metaphysics. Under the term logic, we understand exclusively formal logic. Here it is necessary to realize that logic is extremely close to exact sciences. It is the most exact of the disciplines that are considered philosophical in the traditional sense. When evaluating, it is therefore necessary to choose an approach that closely corresponds to assessment in formal sciences (mathematics, computer science). It can be called a formal - deductive assessment approach. It is the most exact of all approaches. It consists of specific tasks such as the correct entry of a formula in the calculus of a logical system, negation of a statement, identification of quantifiers, identification of tautologies, neutrals and contradictions, etc. There are also several attempts to use formal methods in philosophy - e.g. Spinoza, to which there are mutually telling echoes in philosophy (Hansson 2022).

Another of the possible approaches is the evaluative approach typical of classical philosophical disciplines, in addition to logic, as well as the history of philosophy. Here, the knowledge of realities and the depth of understanding of parallel philosophical theories can be evaluated. It is not possible to favor a specific theory within the philosophical discipline in the sense of its interpretation and practice, and thus not even within the assessment. It is also possible to evaluate the knowledge of connections - historical, interdisciplinary. We will thus verify the degree of understanding of various structural contexts that are intrinsically connected with the history of philosophy. It can be called a knowledge assessment approach. In the history of philosophy, this is the most frequently used assessment approach.

The third assessment approach is connected with creativity. It is rather applicable to philosophical disciplines and can only be used to a limited extent in the history of philosophy, where the realities are simply given. Above all, within the framework of the history of philosophy, this applies to the higher cycles of the history of philosophy, which follow already after completing the basic course. It is about verifying independent philosophical thinking, the ability to autonomously argue philosophically. This method of assessment is partially usable in historically-

philosophically oriented teaching of philosophy. We can call it a skills assessment approach. The application is possible through open questions such as how a specific philosopher or his epigones would approach that problem. We can use it, for example, in the verification of creative skills in epistemology, in the philosophy of history, and the like.

4. Examples of Good and Bad Practice for Verification Questions

The history of philosophy, especially when it comes to the cycle, which is the second or third continuation (after the basic course of the history of philosophy, which takes place mostly in secondary schools), has, in addition to the priority task of mastering the realities of the history of philosophy, also the task of mastering the competence to philosophize, to solve tasks on a general, philosophical level. Such sophisticated courses are already a space for the possibility to evaluate the basics of the mentioned competences.

There are several examples of good practice in the framework of two assessment approaches (knowledge-based and skills-based) that can be used in the framework of assessment in the teaching of the history of philosophy.

The specificity of the knowledge assessment approach is the verification of the historical context of the emergence and operation of philosophical theories. It is necessary to verify this not only in accordance with the stream of epigones, opponents and those who from the ranks of philosophers influenced the specific theory that is the subject of assessment, but also in the sense of the context of the history of science. Direct connections with scientific theories will often help to gain a deeper understanding of the interrelationships between the development of philosophy and science, as well as to gain a more comprehensive picture of the various schemes, approaches and concepts used by special sciences. Therefore, the topic of assessment questions should be enriched with connections connected with the history of sciences within the framework of the history of philosophy. The history of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, sociology are in many cases intrinsically connected with the history of philosophy - compare (Krempaský 2016).

We can cite several examples of good practice. We will divide them according to the approaches that can be applied in the history of philosophy. 1. Knowledge assessment approach: Convergent task: Who is the author of the work Analysis of feelings? What did Bodhidharma bring to China? Draw Plato's Parable of the Line and interpret it. Which four basic metaphysical causes does Aristotle recognize? Which classical ancient Indian school of philosophy deals largely with

logic? Which ontological position did Tertullian hold and use in his works? Which philosopher shows connections with infinitesimal and differential calculus in his metaphysics? With which philosophical direction is the name Malanaga Vatsyayana associated? 2. Knowledge assessment approach: Divergent task: Evaluate the relationship between the concept of monad and differential calculus. Explain why the contemporary history of ancient philosophy deviates from Aristotle's interpretation of the Pre-Socratics? Explain what aspects of the scientific approach and what aspects of the anthropological approach Husserl's phenomenology has.

Skills assessment approach: Divergent task: Write a brief reflection on the impact of the enlightenment on positivism. Write your opinion on the causes of Schopenhauer's negative reaction to Hegel. State who you consider to be the most important scholastic ethicist and justify your opinion. Do you agree with the opinion that Lenin and his philosophy is a degradation of Marxism or not? Justify the opinion. We are of the opinion that convergent tasks are not applicable when evaluating the results of the skills assessment approach. In this case, skills are the applications of the philosophical knowledge in practice. Philosophizing is intrinsically connected with not favoring one current, direction, position, especially in the field of studying philosophy. Therefore, the philosopher's creative approach must not be rigidly dogmatic, especially at the stage of study, to one single theory.

Let's also give examples of bad practice, some are fictional, others the author knows from experience: Questions that are based on an outdated interpretation of the history of philosophy, which has already been overcome. For example questions that would implicitly contain Irene's and Hypollyt's perception of Gnostic trends as historically plausible. Questions implicitly containing peripatetic misinterpretations concerning the Pre-Socratics. For example: assign an ontological foundation to an individual Pre-Socratic philosopher. Today's interpretations have already abandoned Aristotle's image of assigning the elements to the pre-Socratic ones in the sense of ontological essence (Kočandrle 2009). Questions influenced by the philosophy of the history of philosophy (e.g. Hegel, Marx). Questions focused on materialism and idealism before Plato. Questions with a problematic and ambiguous statement, aimed at the "founders" of schools and at pupils and their teachers, where this relationship is not documented (Xenophanes and Parmenides as teacher and pupil, the person of the founder of medieval philosophy, the father of law, etc.). Questions that implicitly contain problematic material that was used in the interpretation. For example, the division of philosophy XX. century on some scientific and

anthropological line, while this division is problematic and only approximate already in the XIX. century. Nonsensical questions: for example, state which dimensions of the manifestation of substance exist in Spinoza. He himself states that there are an infinite number of them. The questions are inherently divergent, but present in a form that requires a clear answer. For example, name the most important ethicist of scholasticism. If it is a closed question, it should be associated with one unequivocal answer. It is especially confusing if a divergent question is present in the form of a test, where one correct answer is required, but at least two of the options offered can be considered. For example, state only one of the correct options: Aquinas mainly developed this philosophical discipline in his works: a) cosmogony, b) metaphysics, c) ethics, d) logic. Everything can be marked here except logic, because Aquinas added nothing to logic as a discipline. This question confuses the student.

5. The Focus of Assessment in the History of Philosophy

"Understanding and improving the quality of the educational process critically depends on two interrelated fields of study: epistemology and philosophy of education" (Alcívar-Loor 2023, p. 20). The focus in the history of philosophy, in the sense of assessment, should be primarily oriented towards understanding the ideas, the system of a particular philosopher. If a philosopher's philosophical system is complete, it essentially contains a conglomeration of opinions across the entire spectrum of philosophical disciplines. Such a comprehensive approach cannot be found in every philosopher. A positive example can be Plato, Aristotle, Hegel. On the contrary, an opposite example can be Kierkegaard, who showed no interest in logic, epistemology, metaphysics and many other philosophical disciplines at all. Most of his interests were ethics and anthropology. The assessment should focus on understanding the ideas, basic theses of a particular philosopher, or a philosophical system, if it was created. In any case, the teacher should avoid the system of "telephone lists", that is, the method of knowledge verification, where the focus of assessment would be the philosopher's biography, the chronological dating of his life and the list of written works. Such an approach has nothing to do with the actual teaching of philosophy. Reducing the history of philosophy to lists of written works is an unnecessary burden on the student's memory.

Just as in the history of literature, it is also true in the history of philosophy that isolated knowledge about the ideas, theses of philosophers, about possible philosophical systems is far from a comprehensive understanding of the problem. In the history of literature, there is certainly

a link to the history of art. For example, Hegel plays a major role in Slovak literature (Dupkala and Perný 2021). The history of philosophy shows several connections. These are primarily various reactions: adoption, variations, epigonism, rejection, criticism of the theses of predecessors and contemporaries. Another important connection is ties to the history of art and literature. There are also many common areas between the history of philosophy and the history of science. The history of philosophy is definitely not a collection of statements about who said and wrote what. A good teacher also focuses on the mentioned connections within the assessment. It compiles questions in such a way as to verify not only the understanding and knowledge of the basic theses of philosophers, but also the relational realities within the history of philosophy, and relations with literature, science and art. The absence of this connection within the student's knowledge would mean a significant deficiency in the understanding of the history of philosophy. There are researches and surveys that focus on students' mindfulness (Khonamri, Azizi and Králik 2020). It is known that the attentiveness of students is different, individual, but even a less attentive student should acquire basic orientation in contexts.

Assessment in the history of philosophy must therefore be aimed at understanding the basic realities, theses, concepts of philosophers, and on the other hand, it must also include verification of orientation in relational contexts. Each individual topic must be verified not only from the point of view of content knowledge, but also from the point of view of context and wider context. Oral verification of knowledge is an excellent way to assess contexts and relationships. Its advantage is a high degree of flexibility. The oral form of knowledge verification can focus attention both on a systematic cross-section of the basic theses of the philosopher, the system, as well as the expression of sessions within the history of philosophy, history of sciences, literature and art. In our case, the oral form of knowledge verification can be connected with both the knowledge and the skills assessment approach. When formulating oral questions, we can ask both convergent and divergent tasks, which can be adjusted and refined ad hoc (Lokšová 2002).

The written form of verification of knowledge from the history of philosophy requires asking precise questions. As for convergent questions and the knowledge value approach, we must ask them in this form only if the answer is not ambiguous, if the truth value corresponds to exactly one answer. Therefore, it is not permissible to ask about ambiguous, debatable connections in this form (convergently, with the expectation of a single answer). For example, it is very difficult to ask a question in terms of the father of Indian philosophy, the father of patristics, the teacher

Parmenides, the ontological essence in the teachings of individual Pre-Socratics, and so on. We can ask a definite question, for example, in which century did Hume live, who wrote the Parmenides dialogue, but not ask questions that require discussion. Convergent tasks can be assigned in the sense of explaining individual interpretations in the history of philosophy, for example aimed at explaining Aristotle's interpretation of Pre-Socratic ontology. The discussion itself is of course also possible in the ambiguous problems of the history of philosophy, which still have many open questions in the process of investigation (the form of the teachings of the historical Socrates, the real wording of the real theses of the Milesians, the problematic relationship between Xenophanes and Parmenides, etc.). In such a case, during the assessment, the teacher must not favor one scientific position and impose it on the student. Here it is possible to give divergent tasks for thinking, arguing. In the basic course of philosophy, this possibility is relatively limited in terms of the history of philosophy, it can be applied to the most prominent problems. More divergently oriented problems of the history of philosophy can be analyzed in the second or third course (usually in higher education) and verified with divergent questions, for which the student must be given adequate space in written form. Even such a form of questions is thus possible in the sense of a knowledge approach. The level of difficulty of the questions must correspond to the level of study. For example, the question to what extent all affects in Spinoza depend on some kind of beliefs (Aktas 2018) first belongs to the third level of higher education.

It is also possible to enter written questions with the skills approach. These are divergent questions that are supposed to verify the student's creativity, based on the knowledge obtained in our case from the history of philosophy. It is possible to ask attitudinal questions, such as arguing peripatetically in the area of the attitude towards the role of the family in society, or how Plato would approach the problem of infanticide. Here, the teacher's task is to verify to what extent the student controls the views of a particular philosopher and how he can work with them in argumentation.

Assessment should be focused on the content, understanding of a specific philosopher and his theses. The question of understanding is quite important. According to the results of research in Colombia, "students consider philosophical knowledge to be of little utility due to traditional teaching methodologies that rely on rote memorization, a lack of spaces for reflection, academic dogmatism, and insufficient teacher training in delivering philosophical knowledge" (Nieto-Mendoza 2023, p. 2). Fairly good maneuvering space for checking the level of

understanding is provided by oral knowledge verification, as the teacher can ask many questions that verify the said understanding in depth. An experienced teacher should detect a case where a student learns something by heart without understanding. By means of additional questions, it is possible to find out about a basic misunderstanding, which lies in ignorance of basic terms, misunderstanding of structures, lack of grasping the context, etc. Plato will serve us as a classic model example. With Plato, the student should understand the concept of idea, understand the parable of the line, and then connect the mentioned structures with ethics, social philosophy, and the philosophy of education. The understanding should also be verified in terms of the influence and reactions to Plato, for example in the metaphysics of Aristotle, Plotinus, etc. Finally, according to the degree of study, it is desirable to verify other overlaps of Plato in various disciplines, for example, in art, history, religion and elsewhere.

We would like to note that an assessment of the history of philosophy, which would ignore the basic historical lines, but would give more problem-oriented, systematic questions, can confuse the student to a great extent. Questions that focus on systematic philosophy should not be asked when checking knowledge of the history of philosophy. The own knowledge assessment approach can use them, but in a limited way, so as not to cause unnecessary chaos and not to ask about something that the student may not yet know, or is not expected of him due to the level of study. "When students enter higher education, they not only start learning and studying but begin a journey of becoming someone new in relation to themselves and to society" (Nieminen and Yang 2023, p. 2). The same applies to those who have philosophy as a subject of study at various levels. Let the process of their assessment in this field be such that it leads to their permanent knowledge.

6. Conclusion

In our paper, we addressed various assessment issues in the teaching of the history of philosophy. First of all, we have arrived at the division of the evaluative approach in philosophy. This moment is the neuralgic point of paper. We therefore propose dividing this approach into a formal - deductive, knowledge and skills assessment approach. The division in question applies in philosophical disciplines, we do not claim that it can be extrapolated outside of philosophy. The history of philosophy primarily uses a knowledge-based assessment approach. We express the difference in the assessment of philosophical theories and scientific theories, while in philosophy we do not talk about overcoming and replacing one theory with another. This moment is also very

important in the assessment. We tried to map the framework of the focus of the assessment. In addition to its own philosophical theses, it is also the context in the sense of the history of philosophy, the history of science, literature and art. Within this link, the questions themselves should be targeted. We also reflect on the issue of convergent and divergent questions in relation to assessment approaches, as well as in relation to written and oral forms of knowledge verification. In this context, we have given examples of good and bad assessment practice in the sense of asking questions. We also express negative recommendations, which the philosophy teacher should avoid during assessment. It is above all asking clear questions about ambiguous polemical problems, as well as orienting the assessment to biographies and works without connection to different contexts.

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