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CREATIVITY IN THE PHILOSOPHY CLASS. CONCRETE RESEARCH

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Abstract *The issue of creativity among teachers and pupils in terms of the dialogical praxis represented a real challenge concerning the research that we have done in high school classes in which philosophy is being taught.*
We have come to the conclusion that there is a direct linking between the diversity of the dialogical forms which pupils and teachers use and the forms of expression of creativity that are used during philosophy classes. Philosophical themes seem more attractive and interesting if the working methods in classes are modified and if pupils have to evaluate critically their own knowledge.
Keywords: *creativity, interdisciplinary relations, forms of creativity, levels of creativity*

Preliminary statements

The preoccupation for creativity in the Dialogical Praxis context is directly correlated with the fact that in dialogue, participants' speech is rather spontaneous, original, that the solutions reached are marked by the personality of those addressing questions to others and to themselves, regardless of the knowledge experience, culture and statute. Each participant comes into dialogue not only with scientific knowledge elements, acquired during study, but also with his own personality, which seldom gives a very original form to the solution of the philosophical problem.

We structured this part of our research around two points of interest in mutual interaction and intensification: teachers' creativity and pupils' creativity.

A. Teachers' creativity

The diversity of the manifestations of creativity on the teachers' part can be integrated in a few significant levels from the point of view of the correlation we followed across this research, correlation that stated, by one of the hypothesis, the existence of a causal connection from the DP quality towards the diversity of the manifestations of creativity.

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Levels of materialization of teachers' creativity

1.   The levels of manifestation of teachers' creativity

The levels of manifestation of teachers' creativity (the one of the planning, of didactic methodology and communication) are tight connected with DP quality;

-      This correlation can be a direct one, when originality elements are provoked by various situations characteristic of DP;

-      It can be about a correlation mediated between the DP and creativity by different elements involved in the teaching-learning process (such is the case of different stereotypes of mutual reception, different blockings in communication etc.);

-      It can also be about a feed-back type correlation between creativity intensified by DP and a high quality of the DP itself.

The analysis of the levels of manifestation of teachers' creativity shaped the following **conclusions**:

1.1.   The didactic planning

The didactic planning marked by the frames contained in the schedule of teaching philosophy in high school, permits various combinations of themes (on the conditions of going through the entire schedule).The methodic consequence of this approach is grouping and properly interrelating the themes that are about to be taught, on the one hand, and on the other hand, using this planning way as a good premises for a wider understanding, from themes' perspective. The consequence at the level of planning creativity of the teachers is not just the way they choose to group the themes, but also the way it is conceived to serve better the purposes of teaching philosophy in high school. It is known the fact, that we mentioned in the theoretical part of the paper, that the philosophical speech, unlike the scientific one, does not have a 0 degree of reception: the fact has positive following ups upon the possibility to group the themes, that would favor, by mutual support, the themes and to establish a common meaning, in an authentic questioning perspective. *The findings we have at this level indicate the* **conclusion** *that the teachers chosen for the experiment used in a very personal manner the invitation to creativity offered by the curriculum. The common feature of diversity we've talked about is the intention to cover as well as possible the objectives of teaching philosophy in high school, as well as matching the theme groups to the types of classes.* We have also noticed a few themes re-grouping presented as revisions towards the end of the year, such as "Freedom and responsibility" (Ch. III), "Right and wrong" (Ch. IV) and "Philosophy and life" (Ch. I), brought together in such a way as to revaluate the importance of philosophy for man, in a more generous manner than it was done by the time of the first presentation of each chapter; another re-grouping example for revision themes, among the various we noticed, is the one made of the themes "The sense of being and culture" (Ch. II), "Power and legitimacy in

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modern political theories" (Ch. IV) and elements of applied ethics that presume formulating a personal point of view starting from a media source, related to the theme "the value of philosophy to life" (Ch. I). *Out of the given examples, as well as from the general findings we have presented, we can draw the wider* **conclusion** *that even from the planning stage we can see the teachers' creative need to adapt to the purposes of teaching philosophy, to the themes contents that are to be taught, as well as to the long term behaviors, that go beyond the school area, that pupils will acquire by philosophical exercise.*

1.2.   Creativity at the methodological level

We can notice two trends: the first of them is about pre-meditation of some original moments in the DP context which can be derived from:

- appealing to methodological combinations that were used up to a certain point;

- appealing in various ways to questioning, historical and hermeneutical aspects;

- the way of operating with introductory kinds of dialogue (questioning the themes), insertive dialogues (as a passage alternatively – contradictory for the sequences already taught) and conclusive dialogues, in order to formulate a common meaning and a possible "solution";

- the way the triadic dialogue combines with the spiral and the pyramidal one in the DP context;

- the way to relate in anticipation to the behaviors pupils are about to acquire (or to strengthen): argumentative, interpretative, critical examination of data, integrating personal resolutions in classical solutions in philosophy, thinking autonomy, reflexivity etc.

- the way the teachers, through specific methodological approaches provoke in pupils a genuine creativity exercise: we are talking now about inductive and deductive approaches creating productivity of ideas, ways of selecting, commenting, interpreting and evaluating pupils' essays, considered as genuine creativity exercises, involving pupils in making didactic materials, as well as involving them in various exercises and trainings in the activity framework of philosophy study groups;

The second trend is about spontaneous creative behavior of teachers and inside this trend we can notice the following directions:

- methodological combinations operated in a spontaneous manner in order to increase pupils' curiosity, to rise the argumentative flux, to adapt in a profitable manner the theoretical and methodological approaches to the types of classes and to the concrete learning situations;

- spontaneous appeal to interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary correlations which would enlighten and involve the audience;

- giving examples from the interest area of pupils, together with statements from the texts studied in class;

- appeal to the way of thinking practiced with priority by the type of class or high school itself in order to provoke an active participation of pupils in DP;

- participating to the DP with different roles, from that of *magister* to that of moderator; of course, not all teachers manage to lightly and creatively pass from one role to another, but what matters, on our opinion, is that most of the chosen teachers assume in the same time more roles, which means that pupils will be well involved, alert and better distributed in the DP of lessons.

*Also at a methodological level we can formulate the **conclusion** according to which the chosen teachers develop some grading styles that do not lack creativity: they are directly correlated with the educative and formative purposes and with the type of classes and high schools. Thus, there are original variations in the grading elements built from the DP of the art class we have chosen, comparing to grading elements built from the DP of the IT or philology type of class; we would like to underline the fact that these elements are of stimulating nature related to the types of classes, not going under the minimal acceptability standard, on the contrary, provoking a rise of standards by transforming grading in an inner - motivational factor in pupils' participation to DP and getting them familiar with philosophy.*

1.3.   Teachers' creativity at the language level

The language used by the chosen teachers reflects in an adequate manner the management of the specific philosophical vocabulary: the difference in the creativity area is given by their personal spontaneity, their preferences for metaphorical speech, for concise speech, close sometimes to the lapidary style or sometimes the preference for a "loose" style, where the main interest is represented by the idea of genuine communication. Rhetorical elements included also make the difference from one teacher to another; there is a diversity of forms and tones in the rhetorical "luggage" of each teacher, diversity that varies according to the learning situation, type of classes, the fatigue and stress degree of pupils and teachers themselves. We mention that these creativity elements have, most of the time, a stimulating contextual connotation even when persuading changes into persuasion.

1.4.   Creativity in communication

Creativity in communication has stating – conclusive approaches on the following levels:

- the one of the addressing the questions, where there are enough creativity elements such as the way of constructing the questions, the alternation of heuristic questions and stating questions, as well as closed and opened

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questions, the rhythm assured by the questions addressed to all the pupils and those addressed to certain pupils etc; the common feature of these approaches is the systematic pursuit of the structure on an epistemological level, which prevents the interrogation to slip into facile and primitive;

- in the DP context there are built ways of communication characteristic to the philosophy class due to the alternation between questioning, historical and hermeneutical aspects, alternation that is manifested in various ways from teacher to teacher and from class to class; a free exchange of ideas associated and related to comments and text interpretation makes specific teachers' communication with pupils, sending sometimes to original interrogative – assertive structures;

- the (differentiated) involvement of teachers in the communication process, as well as the need to open the communication field makes possible the invention of new methods, where interrogation and self interrogation have a mutual sense and in whose context the knowledge experience is reinforced by several elements of motivational-affective participation; this fact is three times layered: it is in the first place about the virtues of philosophical issues which permit and even call for such insertions of subjectivity, it is also about the fact that the chosen teachers "translate" this possibility in various forms and ways (spontaneous or premeditated) and it is, finally, about the fact that they engender a real echo and a genuine provocation among pupils;

- we also talk about the personal ways, and sometimes original, through which the chosen teachers intervene in minimizing certain factors blocking the didactic communication: not all of them as efficient, teachers usually intervene during the class in order to establish a medium of genuine communication, where personal opinions of pupils could be expressed without the risk of being ignored; the medium established in classes DP may vary from one class to another, even in the context where the teaching is assured by the same teacher: this fact indicates a double determination of communication, according to class type and according to the nature of the relations established between the groups inside the class and the teacher; this double determination has as one of the consequences the necessity of the teacher to creatively adapt to the reality and to classes communicational potential; sometimes enough, sometimes not quite, these reactions of teachers at a communicational level are true inventions either taking a spontaneous shape or, by repetition, become stereotypes of provocation, support, orientation etc.

The conclusion we can draw according to the mention above is that an active and dynamic DP, lacking boundaries and futile rigidities belongs to the communicational talent of teachers: the classes react, usually, receptively to the invitation to communicate, even more when the knowledge elements exchanged have personal touches and connotations; in the encounter between the option for genuine communication of teachers and classes communicational

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potential there are seldom shaped specific structures of communication and sometimes true inventions.

If this conclusion covers the sphere of the activity of the big majority of teachers, the necessity to respect the truth makes us admit that there are teachers (two out of seven) that do not manage to successfully pass the communication exam with the pupils, either by lack of experience, or by an option for an antiquated perspective on teaching philosophy, where the argument belongs only to the teacher. *Overcoming the conflict between free speech vs. text comments by activating the questioning dialogue, involved in the experiment proposed by us provoked a change at a communicational level, but not consistent enough to be classified as modification.*

We can say that in the quality of the DP and in the diversity of the communicational relations involved in it originate, most of the time, the elements of a

 genuine communicational creativity.

B. Pupils' creativity

The findings of our research allow us to draw the following conclusions concerning pupils' creativity:

1.   The level of expressional creativity

The level of expressional creativity is illustrated through the presence of some spontaneous intervention, based on unexpected comparisons and bringing together of less invocated fields in current argumentation: the intensification of the questioning, by the experiment we conducted, led to a better correlation of free speech with texts study and, starting from here, to the possibility of connecting original aspects of experience with the ideas proposed in texts;

-    the same level is populated by original interventions derived from re-examination of knowledge data acquired during the high school years in the new light of a philosophical theory, which engender surprise and amazement, as well as sudden "enlightening" concerning the new meanings;

-    cultivating in DP of free involvement in discussions of pupils and engaging a big number of pupils and debates, as well as the consistency of these approaches made together provoke, generate, lead to melting some communicational blockings between pupils and between them and the teachers, which make place in certain intellectual contexts for argumentative and conclusive spontaneity and a certain preference for originality in interpretation;

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- we cannot say that all pupils from the chosen classes registered progresses in this sense, during our research; we cannot, again, say that the improvements brought in DP bring along improvements at the expressional creativity level of pupils; what we can say, without risking to exaggerate, is that the democratization and the methodological and communicational improvement in DP context of classes has among the results the increase of creative-expressional manifestations on pupils' part.

2.   The level of the productive creativity

The level of the productive creativity is represented, mainly, by the production of arguments and ideas in each lesson's economy.

2.1.   *The first **conclusion** that we should draw is that of a direct connection between methodological complex involved in classes DP and the ideas productivity: the more varied and adapted to the learning situations is the methodology, the more it grows the argumentative and idea flux; this direct causal link mustn't be read in a mechanical manner, meaning that there are group behavioral exceptions (classes that are difficult to handle) where pupils' creativity is incorporated in approaches characterized by spirit of rebellion and premeditated non-adaptation.* Between the quality of the methodology used and pupils' reactions there are a series of factors blocking the good communication and which detour the constructive intentionality of teachers: we are talking, mainly, about elite clichés of receiving teachers' work and group projections built in the area of some fake values outside the school area, but extremely active inside it. We cannot say that these pupils are not creative: but we can say that their creative potential is incorporated in ideas whose actions are directed against the lesson and studying. Till the end of the research these pupils refused to get converted unless in the proximity of a practical intention related to passing the exam.

2.2.   A going through the data coming from the research indicate the fact that, generally, the alternation of connections types: intra, inter and trans-disciplinary amplifies the pupils' production of ideas, as area as well as depth. The accumulations during the initial period of the research (which was the same with the first school semester), as well as the changes in the relation between connections operated in the DP, in the direction of their diversification, led to an increase analysis and synthesis capacity of pupils, growth reflected by the statistic data presented. The consequence of these correlated approaches is reflected in the productivity of ideas and arguments, from pupils' answers and from their written papers. The most productive written answers, concerning pupils' creativity, are the essays: the freedom initially confirmed of picking the theme (often, but not always) makes their implication in the argumentative area to be doubled by affective-emotional resorts, which gives a certain color to these productions. Their originality comes, generally, from ideas unexpectedly combined, original argumentations, combinations of knowledge elements

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coming from various sources invested with personal values and from the way classical philosophical solutions are integrated in personal resolutions. We can even find, rarely, explicit critique of classical philosophical solutions, but we can talk about a selective reading of these, frequently reflected in the argumentative system present in papers;

2.3. Cultivating the critical spirit and reflexivity considered as necessary approaches in getting pupils familiar with philosophy does not lead to automatic structures at the behavior level: it is necessary not only to accommodate pupils with the critical exercise, reasonable and argued, but also its usage in personal constructions of arguments and ideas; they can become very personal and sometimes original approaches, fact shown, mostly during the experiment we conducted. In comparison to the reference classes where we did not intervene in the DP, in the classes initially chosen it was noticed a stable correlation and slightly ascendant between using the critical spirit and original contribution of pupils to solving problems. We must say once again that the originality invoked does not assume overcoming the level of philosophical theory, but the revealing and connecting aspects which, in its generality, the theory comprises without detailing them. We are talking, so, about different generality and complexity degrees between the philosophical theory and pupils' makings out of theories, as well as about the originality of pupils' answers comparing to their general tone coming from the average answers.

Cultivating reflexivity is one of the most complex exercises that getting familiar with philosophy assumes. Critical examination of one's knowledge coming form self reflective knowledge is, as we noticed during this research, a difficult approach, inconvenient and sometimes restless, as a result of which the self limitations appear so clearly. *Overcoming them is a process dependent not only with reading and acquiring knowledge, but also with creative productivity: this time, it is not about a productivity increased by ideas, but of productivity oriented towards finding new solutions, through which overcoming the mentioned limitations would be easier. The experiment we made, registered, once the last tests applied, the existence more and more frequently of certain productive creativity elements situated in this area of trying to get away from the understandings and self-appreciation stereotypes by pupils. For sure they are not due mainly to the nature of the intervention, but are somehow correlated, while the questioning and the historical aspect build together a new sense in the area of some philosophical issues that make thinking to be self reflective.*

3.   The inventive creativity level

3.1.   In the context of the research and especially in the experiment's context it has been proven the possibility of finding by pupils of some intra-disciplinary

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correlations, in whose context shapes the need to build concepts. Inventing concepts is not a frequently met aspect, but it exists and can be signaled among the pupils who, paradoxically, have philosophical readings and passion for philosophy: they feel the need to enlarge the conceptual frame they operate with looking for explanations and a personal resolution, which makes them invent, re-formulate, have the intuition of "something" to bring extra light in the ideas context personally assumed.

3.2. The level of inventive creativity is represented mostly in the pupils' essays, given the theme and structuring freedom. Of course, not all pupils' essays contain elements of inventive creativity, but in some of them, even the speech construction is invented; also, serious and systematic reading gives a certain freedom of thinking and expressing, fact that reflects at the level of argumentation and remarkable resolutions pupils set to page.

3.3. This level of creativity also reflects in the didactic material made by pupils. Of course, not all pupils' contributions are original, at this level, but some of them reflect not only themes understanding and their good illustration, but are true originality and invention proofs in "translating" them on a visual level.

-       The level of inventive creativity correlates, as proved by the research, firstly with pupils' interest for philosophy and with the passion they invest in what they assume. Without a doubt, when these pupils' teachers prove themselves to be efficient organizers of an involving, interesting and participative process, it assures not only further motivation of these pupils, but also the frame of public validation of their efforts and passion. However, we cannot establish a mechanical dependence between the quality of teacher's work and the DP initiated and promoted by them and that of pupils' inventive creativity: there are teachers among the chosen ones who always appeal to text work and who conscientiously ignore the relation between text comments and free speech. In this context, there are though pupils of real creativity and thinking autonomy. They are some of the winners of national contests, where, it is known, creativity and thinking independence are important criteria. Given the findings, *we can draw the* **conclusion** *that we cannot establish a linear determination relation between the quality of DP and inventive creativity of pupils, but we can say that a good dialogical practice established with consistency motivates pupils and reinforce their will to read, to reflect and to personally assume ideas developing.*

-       *One last conclusion we draw is that of the invoked familiarity of pupils with philosophy is itself a creative way, with ups and downs, hesitations, temporary pauses and overcoming them moments. On this complex route the involvement of teachers and pupils is not limited to keeping score of school grade, but rises to a different level, that of the "Socratic partnership" in whose context the meditation upon right, just, beauty etc is an attribute of anyone's thinking. In the context of this strong partnership, marked with subjectivity notes,*

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the teachers' experience and pupils' innocence meet in an adapting-creative common process, with obvious good results for both parties. The research we made indicates an uncontested fact: when we do not stagnate in a methodological formula that has nothing to do with pupils' interest, when the reflexive approach of one's own speech is occasional and missing echo, as well as when the access to philosophy only knows the conceptual axis, ignoring its relation with life and its significance to man, the invoked "partnership" is established not only as a good context to study philosophy, but also to get involved and creatively participate to it, pupils and teachers as well.

C. Teaching philosophy as a teaching and learning activity

The research we conducted underlined the fact that teaching and learning philosophy is not a purpose in itself, but is an understanding process oriented by problems. In this sense the philosophy does not aspire to final and a priori truths, but tries to meet and bring together conflict conceptions and interests in a community by rational meanings that are compared to truth. In this sense, the method of dialogue is composed of:

- open dialogue, situated under the self-reflexivity need;
- dialogue as revision of older approaches (texts, discussions etc.)
- dialogue as exam of personal thinking approaches and of those taken as accomplishment of dialogue.

Thus, philosophy becomes an activity: *it does not dissolve in a cumulus of sterile statements, but is a new experience in each ideas situation given.*

This approach assumes:

- using intelligible and clear concepts;
- examining the relationship between given methods and proposed purposes;
- the control of immediate consequences (notions, judgments, reasoning, categories, concepts etc.);
- control of collateral consequences (by involving knowledge acquired studying different subjects);
- evaluating success chances (establishing the common direction of the debates, drawing the resolutions and the conclusions);
- Acknowledging and implementing a unifying moral direction.

The approaches we mentioned can be realized only in a communication medium, with the following requests:

- opening towards argumentation (in the sense of the will to listen to the other and to answer to him);

- honest argumentation;

- the discussion partners have equal rights (the other must be accepted as responsible subject, able to see the truth);

- interdiction of immunization (no taboo should function upon the issues involved);

- speech equality (rejection of discriminations, prejudices, detesting the repressive means etc.).

The atmosphere concerning ideas and communication established in the DP context is associated with creativity elements with regard to the activity of both teachers and pupils.

D. General conclusions

A synthetic bird's eye view upon the data of our research indicates the following general conclusions:

- the actuality of the dialogue method in teaching and educating the pupils, in establishing behaviors of independent, reflexive, flexible critic-constructive and conclusive thinking;

- structural matching of different dialogue forms (questioning, historical, hermeneutical, Hegelian, pyramidal, spiral etc.) to the structure of themes from the curriculum of teaching philosophy in high school and from the manual;

- the intrinsic correlation between interrogative-dialogic speech of philosophy and the praxis based on a dialogical approach of themes, on questioning the issues and on common solutions established by teachers and pupils together;

- the existence of a consequence type of being between the DP established in the philosophy class and the epistemological level, of structuring pupils' knowledge, as well as its qualities;

- the existence of a direct connection between the quality of DP and pupils' way of thinking, of their capacity to interrogate from the philosophical ideas perspective, of the examining and (re)interpreting way of the knowledge already acquired, as well as participating to the dialogical philosophy issues-oriented;

- the DP facilitates, when alive, real and open to new knowledge, communication, methodology etc. experiences, the conditions of creative manifestation of participants (pupils and teachers) to dialogue;

- the necessity of perpetual adaptation of high school teachers to the level and type of competences acquired by pupils through the study of different subjects, as well as to their problems and preoccupations: thus, teaching is

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oriented towards an "applied philosophy", area from which comes the system of the purposes accompanying the teaching of this subject in high school.

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