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CRITICAL ELUCIDATION OF CONCEPTS AS A PHILOSOPHICAL COMPETENCE

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Abstract

The starting point of this article is the didactic question of the relationship between conceptual knowledge and competencies in the education of philosophy and ethics. Against the background of the philosophical debate on the conception of concepts, a conception of concepts as abilities is outlined. With this conception, in a first step, the disjunction between conceptual knowledge on the one hand and competencies on the other hand is dissolved. In a second step, a learning-theoretical framework of the formation of philosophical concepts is developed through a critical examination of the so-called conceptual change. As a result, critical elucidation of concepts presents itself as a fundamental goal of ethics and philosophy teaching.

Keywords: Concept Formation, Conceptual Knowledge, Competencies, Conceptual Change, Concepts as Abilities

1. Competencies versus Conceptual Knowledge

The teaching of philosophy at school is widely regarded as an undogmatic introduction into the practice and methods of thinking and reasoning. In this sense the focus of teaching is usually on the acquisition of methodological skills, which are practised above all in discursive practices with the aim to answer philosophical questions which relate to our material world. Such methodological skills are, for example, the competence to argue and judge or the competence to perceive and interpret. Arguing and judging describes the competence to deal critically with one's own and other people's positions on philosophical or ethical questions, to argue without contradictions, to judge positions in a differentiated way and to make one's own reflected judgement. Perceiving and interpreting describes the competence to perceive, describe and classify facts from a philosophical or ethical perspective on the basis of sensory experience. In contrast to the importance of such competencies, the teaching of specific philosophical knowledge (that is conceptual knowledge such as e.g. a concept of justice) is often seen as a subordinate goal of ethics and philosophy lessons. But do we actually have to decide to either foster competencies or to educate students in philosophical knowledge? In the following it will be argued that this decision is not necessary since the disjunction is misleading if we accept that knowledge of philosophical concepts is an ability.

To show this, answers to two interrelated questions will be developed. The first question is: What does it mean to have a philosophical concept? The second question is: How is the

formation of philosophical concepts to be didactically grasped? In answer to these questions, two theses will be developed in the following. The first thesis states that the disjunction between concepts and competencies is dissolved on closer examination. In order to develop this thesis (within chapters 2 to 4), an understanding of concepts as abilities is outlined. This will be done by reference to the philosophical debate on the conception of concepts. This understanding of concepts is linked to a second thesis (which is developed in chapters 5 and 6): From the specific understanding of concepts as abilities, it is possible to draw conclusions about the learning-theoretical framework of philosophical concept formation. This will be done through a reflection on the so-called conceptual change as a practical teaching tool. This ultimately leads to a conception of critical elucidation of concepts as a specific philosophical competence (chapter 7). Such a conception of critical elucidation of concepts serves (as this article will conclude in chapter 8) in an integral process both the education of competencies and the formation of philosophical concepts.

To develop the aforementioned theses, we first take a step back and consider the connection between concepts and the activity of philosophy in somewhat more general terms. In doing so, we assume that concepts are at the center of philosophical activity. But why is it the case that the core business of philosophy (whether at school or in academia) can be understood as working on and with concepts? In order to clarify this connection, it is worth taking a look at the philosophical debate on the conception of concepts. We thus enter a meta-perspective that can also be understood as a reflection on the conditions of the practice of philosophy.

2. The Philosophical Debate on the Conception of Concepts

The conception of concepts is one of the notoriously contested topics in the philosophical tradition from antiquity to contemporary debate. Despite manifold disagreements about what a concept is, from the perspective of the philosophy of language, concepts can be understood as the meaning of certain words in a language (Demmerling & Schröder, 2021; Nimtz & Langkau, 2010). Mostly, general terms are thought of here, but conjunctions (such as 'and'/'or') and singular terms are also sometimes understood as concepts.[1] The distinction between concepts and words should be emphasized here. When we speak of concepts in the following, we do not mean the words of a language, but the meaning associated with them, or the conception or object marked with them. Thus, in different languages, different words are used to designate the same concepts or objects. Learning a language means, among other things, learning which words are used to denote which concepts or objects. For example, if a person knows how to use the linguistic expression 'justice' correctly, it is usually appropriate to state that this person has a concept of justice.[2]

[1] Singular terms (e.g. proper names) are used to refer to individual objects, situations or entities that can be determined as something individual. General terms are used to form classifications of objects. In the following, no distinction is made between descriptive terms (such as 'yellow') and normative terms (such as 'good').

[2] However, the constitutive dependency between concepts, language and thought is also disputed (Barth, 2013). It is furthermore argued that concepts (and thinking) - for example in the case of certain animals - are not necessarily bound to language (Wild, 2021).

In terms of their ontological status, concepts can be understood (along with two other common understandings[3]) as abilities (Laurence & Margolis, 2021). According to this conception, to have a concept is to have a (rational[4]) ability (and vice versa). This offers an alternative to the two other common approaches to the ontological status of concepts, namely both the subjectivist approach (concepts as mental representations) and the objectivist approach (concepts as abstract entities) (Glock, 2010). Within the history of philosophy, the conception of concepts as abilities is still quite young and goes back to the late Wittgenstein[5]. Exactly which abilities are associated with having concepts or are identified with concepts themselves is a matter of dispute in contemporary debate. However, the ability (a) to categorize or discriminate respectively to make judgements and the ability (b) to draw conclusions are often considered essential (Brandom, 1994).

The epistemological significance of the categorization or classification of objects lies in the fact that individual things cannot be directly recognized or understood as such. Only when something is considered in relation to other things can it be understood as something specific. It thus becomes understandable as something that is different from and similar to something else. Concepts are thus essential in order to be able to understand something. Concepts open up the possibility to cognitively understand not only individual things, but also generalities and especially individual things as instances of generalities. Only concepts allow us to understand something as something specific (Schröder & Demmerling, 2013). In this respect, concepts determine the way something is thought. One could also say that concepts are the medium, means or tools of thinking (and thus fundamental to the practice of philosophy). Concepts constitute thinking, whereby thinking can also be understood as the capacity to judge. Someone who has a concept of (in)justice can judge a person, institution or thing by thinking that it is (in)just. Concepts are thus essential for judgements.

Conclusions in thinking, in addition, are possible due to the fact that thoughts are inferentially related to each other via their conceptual components. Anyone who understands the sentences 'This application procedure is just' and 'This tax system is unjust' is in principle also able to form the sentences or thoughts 'This tax system is just' and 'This application procedure is unjust'. The fact that linguistic meaning and thoughts are structured

[3] Concepts can also be understood as *abstract entities* or *mental representations*. As *abstract entities*, concepts have an independent existence, that means independent of the acts of individual thinkers. In the history of philosophy, this goes back to Plato's theory of ideas. In the contemporary debate, this conception of concepts is mostly spelled out with reference to Frege, who distinguishes concepts both from subjective ideas or mental states and from objects in the external world (Frege, 1892b, 1892a). As *mental representations*, concepts exist in the mind or in the brain of thinking living beings. In terms of the history of philosophy, this view goes back to Locke and Hume. In the current debate, this position is mainly held in connection with representational theories of the mind as well as in the cognitive science (Carey, 2009). In this context, concepts as representations are often understood as physical or neuronal entities whose content emerges due to causal contact with the external world (Fodor, 2010).

[4] Although this article will not explicitly speak of the concept of rationality, many of the lines of thought developed here could also be expressed by a specific concept of rationality (Brandom, 1994; Brödner, 2021; Lauer, 2014; McDowell, 1996).

[5] The distinction between Wittgenstein's early and late works will be discussed below.

compositionally in this way serves to explain the "productivity" and "systematicity" of thought and language (Liptow, 2013). Different thoughts can be thought with the same concepts. Inferential relations also make it possible to infer from one thought to another or to understand certain thoughts as the precondition or consequence of other thoughts (Brandom, 1994). For example, from the notion of an unjust tax system, it is possible to conclude that this system does not fulfil specific criteria of justice. Or, in a stricter normative sense, it could also be concluded that there is a need to change this system because it does not realize its own claim to fulfil specific criteria of justice (for reasons to be determined).

3. Concepts as Abilities

For the aims of this article which lie within the area of didactics of philosophy, concepts are to be understood as abilities.[6] Before elaborating on why it makes sense to understand concepts as abilities within a didactic framework, we will introduce the conception of concepts as abilities more detailed. To have a concept is equivalent to have an ability (and vice versa). However, it is argued that concepts are not identical with abilities, even if to possess a concept is to possess an ability (Glock, 2008). For instance, in so far as to have a concept is to be able to classify things, the concept itself is not the ability to classify, but involves certain rules, standards, or criteria according to which someone who possesses the ability can classify. Within this conception the abilities that are connected with having concepts do not only include the ability to classify things, judge and draw conclusions, but are to be understood more comprehensively. In the following, it will be explained to what extent concepts not only have a central function for the activity of thinking (judging and drawing conclusions), but also for perceptions and certain actions. An excerpt from the contemporary debate on this topic illustrates how fundamentally the function of concepts (beyond their constitutive function for thinking) is discussed.[7] It is argued that the ability to acquire language and thus the acquisition and possession of concepts fundamentally changes the human mind and ultimately the human being as a whole, also in relation to his or her physical condition (Demmerling, 2021). Concepts thus structure not only thinking, but also our perception and a certain way of acting (as well as

[6] This article does not aim to enrich the philosophical debate on the conception of concepts with systematic arguments or even decide in favour of a particular conception of concepts. Nevertheless, certain meta-questions about the foundation of philosophical reflection come to mind at this point: What is the relationship between philosophy on the one hand and methods of its didactics on the other? For example, must philosophy (first) systematically establish the one correct conception of the concept and then derive the appropriate didactics from this? Or, conversely, can didactics of philosophy - due to the fact that certain methods of concept formation work in practice - also give reasons for certain conceptions of the concept to be favoured?

[7] This article can only show part of the overall debate. For the most part, there are also counter-positions to all the positions referred to here (Dreyfus, 2007; Schildknecht, 2003). Important and philosophically fundamental questions of the debate, such as the propositional or non-propositional constitution of concepts (Ginsborg, 2021), are excluded here.

our emotions[8]). To have certain concepts means to have the ability to perceive or act in certain ways. In the following perceiving and acting will be used to further illustrate what it means to connect concepts and abilities.

With regard to the connection between perception and concepts, it is prominently argued by John McDowell that sensory perception or experience of living beings that have concepts always already contains concepts (McDowell, 1996). In the background of this argument is, among other things, the Kantian dictum that sensible intuitions without concepts are blind and concepts without sensible intuitions are empty. According to McDowell, sensory experience can only serve to justify our beliefs because it is conceptually structured. Concepts do not stand between us and the sensuously given, nor do they serve as additive conceptual schemes. Human perception as such is a capacity transformed by concepts and thus conceptual. This means that concepts or conceptually structured perception constitute our (sensual) relationship to the world (Lauer, 2014). Through concepts, we feel an object as rough with our fingertips or perceive a situation we observe as unjust. In this sense concepts are epistemological or hermeneutic resources with the help of which experiences (and ways of thinking) are classified by certain rules, standards, or criteria (Giesinger, 2021). For example, a specific form of unequal treatment within society can (only) be perceived through a concept of sexism. To have a concept of sexism is equivalent with having the ability to perceive sexism within society.

It is also argued that there is a constitutive connection between concepts and certain actions (Schröder & Demmerling, 2013). According to this, concepts guide our actions. Concepts enable us to act in an intelligent way.[9] Intelligent activities can only be understood as intelligent activities because their execution involves the exercise of conceptual abilities. To be capable of intelligent activities means two things in particular: first, it means tending to perform certain actions correctly, efficiently, or successfully according to certain rules, standards, or criteria. And it means, secondly, to apply these rules and criteria in the actions and not to act only according to them. For intelligent activities require the possibility of recognizing errors and learning from them. Bacteria that move due to different concentrations of substances do not have concepts, just as little as iron that rusts in moist environments and not in dry ones or a thermostat that successfully controls the heating depending on the outside temperature. Something does not already perform an intelligent action if it can register differences with the help of which it reliably reacts to changes in environmental conditions. Being able to recognize possible errors in the application of concepts is a prerequisite for intelligent actions. In order to be able to differentiate between correct and incorrect behavior, conceptual criteria of

[8] In addition to perceptions and actions, it is argued that emotions also represent a conceptually structured phenomenon (Slaby, 2021). The central thesis here is that emotions not only refer to the world, but manifest a specific form of self-relation. A reflexive reference to oneself requires concepts that structure emotions. Through concepts an emotional self-relation is thus opened up.

[9] The conception of "knowledge-how" coined by Gilbert Ryle might here be instructive as well. Knowledge-how describes the kind of knowledge a person has when she knows how to do something, be it how to ride a bicycle, box, argue or play chess (Ryle, 1946). In this context, know-how is not knowledge about activities, but is directly effective within these activities. With regard to this kind of practical knowledge, it is also argued that it is conceptually constituted (Löwenstein, 2021).

classification (as 'reasons' for the behavior) are necessary.[10] Intelligent actions are thus conceptually composed, which means intelligent actions are internally guided by concepts (Schröder & Demmerling, 2013). For example, to be able to play chess is only possible through a concept of the game of chess. To have a concept of chess is equivalent with having the ability to play chess.

In summary, with regard to the understanding of concepts as abilities, we can state that in this conception having a concept is equivalent to having an ability (and vice versa). Concepts are a kind of knowledge that involves its capable application in variable situations. The type of application or the type of ability that can be identified with concepts is manifold. The one who is capable of a thinking (judging and drawing conclusions), perceiving and/or otherwise intelligent execution of a concept possesses the respective concept.

4. Reflection on the Disjunction between Concepts and Competencies

Against the background of the outlined understanding of concepts as abilities, it can be argued that the exercise of competencies corresponds to the exercise of concepts. This will be illustrated in the following by means of an exemplary lesson series. The focus of this series of lessons in ethics for an 8th grade is the topic of distributive justice.[11] The topic is made tangible for the students by means of a problem from their own sphere of life (Sistermann, 2016; Tiedemann, 2013): Especially in big cities, housing shortages often lead to a distribution struggle in which those who cannot pay high rents lose out. In this respect, the issue arises: How should living space for families be distributed justly in our society? We plan this series of lessons competence-oriented, which means we want to foster the competencies of perceiving and interpreting as well as arguing and judging.

Arguing and judging describes the competence to deal critically with one's own and other people's positions on philosophical or ethical questions, to argue without contradictions, to judge positions in a differentiated way and to make one's own reflected judgement. Accordingly, the students should be enabled to assess certain positions on the topic of distributive justice in a comparative way, and ultimately be able to form their own judgement. According to the above explanations on the relationship between concepts and thinking, it follows immediately (and trivially) that concepts are necessary for the competence of arguing and judging: Concepts are constitutive for judgements. In relation to the specific topic, it can furthermore be stated that a concept of justice that is as differentiated as possible is necessary in order to be able to competently answer the question of the series of lessons ('How should living space for families be distributed justly in our society?'). The knowledge of a differentiated concept of justice, which includes not only one but various principles of justice[12], is what makes

[10] According to Schröder & Demmerling (2013), these criteria do not have to take the form of explicit propositional rules or formulations. However, the discussion about this will be left aside here.

[11] For a more detailed description of such a teaching series on distributive justice and related teaching material, see Brödner & Steiger (2023).

[12] Such principles of justice are, for example, the principle of equality, the principle of need, the principle of merit or the principle of chance (Perelman, 1967).

a reflected judgement possible in the first place. Without such principles as philosophical knowledge, the (normative) criteria for a reflected judgement are lacking.[13] Knowledge of conceptual principles of justice enables a differentiated positioning (from different perspectives) and ultimately one's own judgement.

Perceiving and interpreting describes the competence to perceive, describe and classify facts from a philosophical or ethical perspective on the basis of sensory experience. Accordingly, at the end of the series, the students should be able to perceive facts in relation to ethical questions of distributive justice and interpret them in a context-sensitive way. According to the above explanations on the conceptual structure of perception, this competence also requires (philosophical) concepts. Being able to perceive questions and problems in relation to the topic of distributive justice is conditioned by the conceptual structure of perception and that means by the possession of a concept of justice. Only through the realisation of this concept within (sensual) perception can something be perceived as an (un)just situation. Conversely, it can be said that only those who possess a differentiated concept of justice are able to perceive and context-sensitively interpret injustice in relation to the distribution of living space. The differentiated concept of justice enables the perception of (in)justice.

At this point we can draw an interim conclusion regarding the first thesis argued here. With the understanding of concepts as abilities, the connection between concepts and competencies is as follows: On the one hand, a competence (e.g. perceiving injustice) is conditioned by a concept (e.g. a philosophical concept of justice). On the other hand, a concept (e.g. a concept of justice) is conditioned by the competence to apply it (e.g. within the execution of a judgement). To have a concept of justice therefore means to be able to make judgements about (in)justice competently or to be able to perceive (in)justice competently. Those who are not able to do this have no concept of justice. With an understanding of concepts as abilities, competencies and conceptual knowledge are interlocked within their execution through a necessary interplay. In this interplay, the disjunction between concepts and competences is dissolved.

5. Learning-theoretical Framework of Philosophical Concept Formation

If the disjunction between concepts and competencies is dissolved, it is all the more decisive with regard to philosophy and ethics education to answer the question of how the formation of philosophical concepts is to be didactically grasped. This is crucial because it resolves a possible learning-theoretical dilemma, which consists in the fact that students should actually already have mastered what they are supposed to learn, namely philosophical concepts, in order

[13] For the distinction between rudimentary principles and a differentiated and reflected concept of justice, Rawls' (1999) distinction between “concept of justice” and “specific conceptions of justice” (corresponds to principles) is instructive. Rawls defines the concept of justice as “a proper balance between competing claims from a conception of justice as a set of related principles for identifying the relevant considerations that determine this balance.” (page 9). In this sense, the principles (principle of merit, principle of need, etc.) represent different normative foundations, from which perspective a judgment on justice can be made differently in each case. A differentiated and reflected concept of justice takes - as far as possible - all principles into a balanced account.

to be able to deal competently with philosophical issues (while dealing with which they are supposed to learn philosophical concepts). For an answer to this dilemma, in the following the understanding of concepts as abilities will be used to draw conclusions about the learning-theoretical framework of philosophical concept formation.

In the understanding of concepts as abilities, the acquisition and possession of concepts is connected with the acquisition of a language: Learning a language means, among other things, learning which words are used to designate which concepts. Learning a language means mastering the respective concepts and being able to use them correctly.[14] For example, if a person knows how to use the concept 'just' correctly in the context of judgement or perception, it is usually appropriate to state that this person has a concept of just.

However, the first language we learn is not a technical or specialized philosophical language, but one or another kind of colloquial or everyday language. This raises the question of the relationship between everyday concepts and philosophical concepts. In order to answer this question, we will take a step back and look at the starting point of analytical philosophy or the so-called linguistic turn. In this way, we continue our considerations on a meta-level of reflection on the conditions of the practice of philosophy in a certain way.

On the basis of the distinction between Wittgenstein's early and late work, different trends within analytic philosophy can be identified.[15] The reference to late Wittgenstein is meant to mark the so-called 'ordinary language' approach, as pursued by Ryle or Austin, and not the so-called 'ideal language' approach pursued by Frege, Russell and early Wittgenstein (Hügli, 2013). In his late work, the Philosophical Investigations (1953), Wittgenstein, and subsequently Ryle and Austin, rejected the idea of developing a purely logical formal language to remove the ambiguities from language and philosophy. Instead, the focus was on the analysis and critical description of everyday language in its respective use as a philosophical method. Accordingly, doing philosophy means (critically) examining ways of everyday language as an expression of human activity and social practice.

Behind this understanding of linguistic philosophy is the approach that the medium of philosophy is the practice of public speech. Systematically, this approach is justified by the assumption that everyday language has a transcendental status as a condition of possibility for specialized philosophical discourses. Public speech practice thus constitutes an inescapable basis for specialized or technical philosophical language. Geert Keil sums this up with regard to philosophical language as a didactic problem as follows:

> Specialized or technical languages are not subsistent linguistic varieties that can be placed on an equal footing with everyday or colloquial language. Rather, all technical languages share the majority of their sign and rule inventory with everyday language; they are *dependent* on it in syntax, semantics and pragmatics. [... It is important] in teaching of philosophy [...] to make the philosophical technical language understandable not as

[14] From the perspective of educational theory, this process can also be understood - following McDowell - as initiation into a space of reasons (Thein, 2015).

[15] The distinction between an early and late Wittgenstein and correspondingly different currents within analytical philosophy is also criticised (Conant, 2020).

> completely different to the everyday language, but as a linguistic *subsystem* differentiated for certain pragmatic purposes. (Keil, 1988, 194; emphasis by the author himself, insertion and translation A.B.)

If one follows these explanations, the question of the relationship between everyday concepts and technical philosophical concepts is answered by a constitutive relationship of dependency of philosophical language on everyday language. Most of the fundamental concepts of philosophy, such as truth, the common good, justice, freedom, beauty or space and time (as well as many other less prominent terms) already occur in their literal use in everyday language. Now, it is not a matter of splitting off from this worldly practice of public speech and the conceptual understandings implicit and explicit therein, but - on the contrary - it is a matter of reaching the theoretically reflexive and specialized philosophical conceptual level from everyday language and the practice surrounding it (as a starting point) (Rentsch, 2003). The concepts used in everyday life are not only the starting point, but remain a basis to which the philosophical-theoretical concepts must constantly refer back.[16] The learning-theoretical dilemma mentioned above is thus resolved in that everyday language, which all pupils master (more or less well[17]) before their first contact with the subjects of philosophy or ethics, can and must serve both as an introduction to the study of philosophical issues and as a bridge to specific philosophical concepts. The framework of philosophical conceptualization is represented by everyday language. From the perspective of learning theory, one could formulate this in accordance with a cognitive-constructivist understanding of learning (Aebli, 1994) as follows: Philosophical conceptualization must necessarily build on (conceptual) prior knowledge.

6. Conceptual Change as Critical Clarification of Everyday Language

In didactic research (mostly of natural science), there is a term that is supposed to capture the transition from everyday concepts to philosophical concepts: the so-called conceptual change. If one follows the above explanations, it is now necessary to explain how conceptual change takes place in a learning environment. In the following, it will be explained how the ordinary-language approach of philosophy can serve to better understand and apply conceptual change as a practical teaching tool, especially for the formation of concepts in philosophy and ethics lessons.

The concept of conceptual change has its roots in the 1980s (Posner et al., 1982) and is widely used in didactics of natural science. For example, didactics of physics determines the learning of physics in such a way that there has to be a change from one concept (namely the so-called everyday conception, also called pre-conception, student conception or also misconception) to a new concept (the correct physical view). Physical everyday concepts or pre-concepts hold by the students are empirically well researched (Schecker et al., 2018). In recent years, didactics of philosophy and ethics has also begun to reflect on the practical

[16] Rohbeck (2003) argues (in addition) that the material for philosophical concepts or theories comes not only from everyday conceptual practice but also essentially from the conceptual practice of other individual science.

[17] Here, the practical issues of heterogeneity of learning groups and necessary differentiation within learning environments become virulent. As far as possible within the framework of this article, this will be discussed below.

significance of conceptual change in teaching environments (Bohlmann, 2014; Thein, 2020; Zimmermann, 2016) and has presented draft programs for empirical research on pre-concepts (Bohlmann, 2016; Burkard & Martena, 2018).

Terminologically, the starting point of the conceptual change will here (still) be referred to as everyday concept.[18] The target point of teaching is the philosophical concept. If we take the ordinary-language approach seriously, then we should not speak of conceptual *change*, because the term change implies that at the end of the process there is a completely new or different concept. In contrast to the formation of concepts in natural science, however, there is no sharp boundary between everyday concepts and technical or specialized philosophical concepts; rather, both conceptual spheres form a continuum.[19] Therefore, we should not speak of a change of concept, but rather of a transformation through reflection on and differentiation of the everyday concept. Everyday language is the basis and remains the basis for the philosophical (technical) concept.[20] One might argue that we should consequently not speak of a distinction between everyday concepts and philosophical concepts at all, but for the aim of this article it is necessary to draw that distinction in an analytic manner. With regard to the systematic assumptions of ordinary-language philosophy, it is helpful at this point to distinguish between a transcendental foundation of the philosophical language by the everyday language in the *weak* and in the *strong* sense.

In a *strong* sense, everyday language contains the necessary material for the philosophical concept in its entirety. In this sense, the constitutive relationship of dependency between the everyday concept and the philosophical concept is one-sided, in that the latter is conditioned by the former. Forming philosophical concepts would then mean finding the necessary linguistic differentiations from everyday practice, in which they are already comprehensively available. Such a position could lead to the assertion that philosophical concepts must follow the same (partly unreflected or uncritical) criteria of everyday concepts and that, accordingly, in the last instance, a philosophical technical language can be dispensed with altogether (Keil, 1988).
In a *weaker* sense, the transcendental foundation does not mean a one-sided conditional relationship, but a reciprocal or co-constitutive relationship between everyday and

[18] For the following considerations, everyday concepts should be distinguished from strictly false knowledge ('Freedom is a city in southern Germany.') and prejudices or bias in a strongly pejorative sense ('People with dark skin are not human beings.'). In contrast, everyday concepts are such e.g. on justice ('It is just if everyone has the same chance to get something.'), on the good life ('Each person may/must decide for themselves in each case what is good for them.') or on ethical principles ('One may kill someone in order to save other people's lives.') (Zimmermann, 2016).

[19] Learning in natural science is not exclusively understood as replacing pre-concepts with scientific concepts, but also as "modifying, enriching and differentiating pre-teaching ideas" (Reinfried et al., 2009; translation A.B.). Accordingly, specifically in didactics of physics, a distinction is made between a discontinuous (confrontation and replacement) and a continuous (bypassing, connecting or reinterpreting) way of learning (Schecker et al., 2018).

[20] From the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics, one can speak in this regard of the positive-constitutive function of prejudices (as a different term of everyday concepts) for processes of understanding. Schmidt (2006) states - following Gadamer - this with regard to the development of ethical judgement.

philosophical concepts.[21] In this context, the capacity to acquire concepts as abilities is rooted in everyday practice and is not possible without it. Nevertheless, individual concepts can be critically examined and corrected if necessary. The image of Neurath's ship is used to illustrate this possibility of critique within a conceptual space to which there is no (epistemological) external standpoint (e.g. McDowell, 1996): On the high seas it is not possible to replace the whole ship as such, but one can repair individual planks at a time. This means that critical engagement with the concepts of everyday language is possible (even if only to a limited extent). The position in the weak sense thus maintains the continuum between everyday concepts and philosophical concepts, but does not claim that philosophical concepts are exclusively dependent on the material and criteria of everyday language. Concepts that predominate in everyday speech practice can and should be reflected upon through philosophical intervention and, if necessary, also criticized and corrected. However, this is not so much a change of concept as a critical clarification of everyday language, resulting in more differentiated or more comprehensively reflected concepts.

We can take our considerations one step further at this point: The fact that even in the weaker interpretation the basic capacity to acquire concepts as well as reflexive-critical abilities are rooted in everyday language means that the necessary conceptual competencies for the clarification or elucidation of everyday language as such are already inherent in everyday speech practice. If no conceptual competencies are required for the elucidation of everyday language, which lie entirely outside of it, then one can also speak of a critical self-elucidation of everyday linguistic practice.[22] Through this conception of conceptual self-elucidation, a specifically philosophical competence can be grasped anew, as will be outlined in more detail in the following.

7. Critical Elucidation of Concepts as a Philosophical Competence

At this point, we change our point of view for the last time, namely to the practical level of teaching: What does critical elucidation of everyday linguistic practice mean in the teaching of philosophy and ethics? If one follows the above explanations, then competent speakers of a language are in principle capable of criticizing their everyday concepts. Of course, not every pupil participates in everyday conceptual practice in the same way or in an equally competent way. This is the case especially since younger pupils go to school to become competent

[21] The position in the weaker sense also seems to be taken by Christian Thein: “I would not draw the line between pre-concepts and scientific concepts for philosophical education as sharp as the science of nature do (Bohlmann 2016: 54-56). On the one hand, knowledge and beliefs in lifeworld could surely be influenced by common scientific or philosophical ideas. On the other hand, science itself and its protagonists are part of a society with specific interests and personal points of view that reach beyond the inner circle of the research processes.” (Thein, 2020, 6).

[22] This could in turn mark again a difference to the conceptual change in natural science: Everyday pre-concepts, for example, about electricity ('Electricity is consumed.') cannot be clarified by the students themselves, but require external criticism (by a teacher, learning material, etc.). The result is not a more differentiated concept of electricity, but a different concept ('Electricity is not consumed.').

participants in everyday conceptual practices in the first place.[23] This means that conceptual competencies for critical elucidation of everyday language are acquired and developed to different extents depending on the individual. On the one hand (also with regard to the motivational and cognitive-constructivist components of learning[24]), the existing potential for elucidation of concepts that pupils have already acquired can and should be brought to use: Students can approach the solution of philosophical issues autonomously by drawing on the conceptual potential of everyday language, which they themselves have at their disposal (even if only implicitly in some cases). On the other hand, instructional guidance (as well as differentiated instruction and assessment) from outside remains necessary. At this point philosophical-conceptual knowledge comes into play. Students can become more competent participants in everyday discursive language practice through philosophical concepts. The co-constitutive relationship between everyday language and philosophical concepts denotes a systematic conditional relationship in both directions: On the one hand, it enables pupils to work out philosophical concepts autonomously (to a certain extent) on the basis of everyday language. On the other hand, philosophical concepts can guide students to become (self-)critical and reflective participants in everyday and public speech practice.

Let us recall the issue in ethics lessons in 8th grade on the topic of distributive justice: 'How should living space for families be distributed justly in our society?' In relation to our considerations, it will be the case in a *primarily*[25] intuitive problem-solving phase on this topic that some principles of justice (from everyday language) are already implicitly or explicitly / fully or rudimentarily in play. This could be, for example, a socially widespread principle of merit ('It is just if everyone gets as much as he or she has achieved.') or also a rather unusual principle of chance ('It is just if everyone has the same chance of getting something, e.g. through lottery tickets.')[26]. On the one hand, this is conceptual potential that needs to be built upon in class. On the other hand, the students themselves should experience the vagueness and inadequacy of not yet sufficiently differentiated or unreflected concepts in this phase in the

[23] At this point the question arises at what age children can be considered competent participants in a conceptual (public speech) practice, or at what age they are overburdened with this demand.

[24] According to Deci & Ryan (2008), the motivation for a certain behavior depends on the extent to which three specific basic psychological needs (namely autonomy, experience of competence and relatedness or social inclusion) can be satisfied. Especially the need for autonomy is met by the teaching practice of conceptual elucidation, as pupils can work out philosophical concepts autonomously with their knowledge of everyday language. Since students draw on previous knowledge and competencies from everyday language, it is in principle possible for everyone to be a potential expert in the process of conceptual elucidation, and thus the need to experience competence is also satisfied. Since conceptual elucidation is not at all an exclusively monologic process, but rather a primarily dialogical process in the classroom, the need for social inclusion can also be satisfied.

[25] A strict separation between a intuitive problem-solving phase and a guided problem-solving phase (Sistermann, 2016) does not make sense against the background of the above explanations on the relationship between everyday and philosophical language. Rather, both phases should proceed without a sharp separation from each other, flowing into each other and thus being able to influence each other.

[26] For an extensive study of everyday concepts of justice (and luck) of students from 1th grade (primary school) to 11th grade (high school) see Teubler (2019).

sense of a cognitive dissonance (Henke, 2017; Meyer et al., 2018). This highlights the need for philosophical-critical reflection on everyday concepts.

The aim of a *primarily* guided problem-solving phase should be to develop a more reflected concept of justice from the already existing conceptual potential. This should be done - with the everyday concept as a starting point - in a methodically transparent and step-by-step comprehensible way: Under guidance, implicit aspects of the everyday concept as well as premises and possibly conclusions that have already taken place must be made explicit and thus established as shared knowledge. In addition, beliefs that are initially perceived as individual must be generalized and, if necessary, there should be an explication of attitudes (desires, preferences, etc.) through the introduction of normative vocabulary (should, law, etc.) (Thein, 2020). This list of necessary methodological elements of reflecting on everyday concepts could be extended depending on the respective topic and the respective learning group. The aim of this phase can and should also be that the pupils acquire these conceptual-analytical skills more and more themselves.

Last but not least, in a primarily guided problem-solving phase, it must also be an aim to further differentiate the content of the rudimentary concept of justice that has been in play so far. This can be done with recourse to the conceptual knowledge of the philosophical tradition. In our exemplary teaching situation, the already (partially) existing principles of justice could be supplemented by a principle of equality ('It is just if everyone gets the same.') and a principle of need ('It is just if those get something first who have less than others and need it urgently.') (Perelman, 1967). The development of these additional content-related aspects of a more differentiated concept of justice should be worked out by the students as autonomously as possible through suitable learning material and with a selection of suitable learning products.[27] The knowledge of a concept of justice, which is now differentiated into four principles of justice (principle of equality, principle of need, principle of merit and principle of chance), ultimately enables a differentiated positioning (from four different perspectives) and a judgement as a statement on and answer to the issue of the lesson.

8. Conclusion

In the above explanations and the exemplary excerpt of the teaching unit on distributive justice, it became clear that the practice of critical elucidation of concepts can meet both the requirement to educate competence and the demand for philosophical knowledge. In the general debate within educational theory, competencies can be understood as skills that enable students to solve certain problems successfully and responsibly in variable situations. Critical elucidation of concepts can be regarded as such a competence and, moreover, as a specifically philosophical competence. Furthermore, such a competence of conceptual elucidation is not only significant for philosophy and ethics education, but can also be used variably in many other everyday public and discursive practices or situations. In the process of conceptual elucidation, the disjunction between competencies on the one hand and philosophical knowledge on the other

[27] For the use of learning products as a supplement to problem-oriented teaching and the associated possibility of deepening the knowledge of concepts based on suitable learning-psychological principles (the so-called change of level of representation), see Brödner (2023).

is dissolves. In this perspective, it turns out to be a fallacy to assume that philosophical concepts are defined or introduced (e.g. from the philosophical tradition) in a first, preparatory step in order to be able to actually do philosophy with them afterwards - in a second and competence-oriented step. Knowing a definition (by heart) is not the same as having a concept of something. Having definitional knowledge is not the same as having conceptual knowledge. Only the one who can for example judge, draw conclusions or perceive within the process of the execution of a concept is in possession of that concept. Being able to do philosophy competently and working with and on concepts are two sides of the same coin.

As a philosophical competence, critical elucidation of concepts can claim to be a (politically) egalitarian and (instructionally) inclusive practice. Potentially equal participants can be all those who share a (more or less) common everyday language. In principle, everyone can be an expert within critical elucidation of everyday language through prior knowledge and competencies brought along from everyday language. In the classroom, it is partly within the students' already existing capabilities to work out philosophical concepts autonomously on the basis of everyday concepts. On the other hand, external instruction is needed so that students can fully acquire such concepts as abilities. The acquirement of the capacity of conceptual elucidation can thus be considered a fundamental goal of the teaching of philosophy and ethics. If such a conception proves itself in theory and practice, the disjunction of competencies and conceptual knowledge as outlined at the beginning of this article could be dissolved.

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