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The shortcomings of the methodical approach in teaching philosophy and the human sciences

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Abstract

Romanian pedagogical theory rests on the assumption that any educational content can be taught and learned faster and better by recourse to a battery of teaching methods. In the present study we question that assumption and show that the methods generally recommended have no didactic merits when it comes to teaching philosophy and the human sciences. In order to prove that we commence by rendering manifest the origins, the specificity and the presuppositions of the teaching methods described in the literature. Afterwards we determine the specificity of the objects of study of philosophy and the human sciences in general. On these bases we develop a series of three arguments that show why, given the particularity of both, the recourse to methods for teaching philosophy and the human sciences is inadequate.

Keywords: method; teaching method; didactics of philosophy; didactics of human sciences; the task of the teacher.

Introduction

In Romania, the idea that teaching should be guided by methods seems self-evident. The matter is attested by the most diverse facts. For instance, in the curriculum of teacher education programs the two mandatory courses of pedagogy are subtitled "The theory and methodology of instruction," respectively "The theory and methodology of evaluation." Also, in all treatises, textbooks and university courses of didactics[1] the chapters dealing with the methods of teaching are the most extensive and span most of the book. But, perhaps most notably, the matter is attested by the fact that in everyday speech „didactică" [didactics] and „metodică" [methodology] are used interchangeably, as perfect synonyms. And that semantic

overlap is also sanctioned institutionally for the senior teachers charged with the professional development of their younger peers are called "metodiști" [literally, methodists], while the administrative structures in which they are organized within school inspectorates "cabinete metodice" [literally, method offices].

In the present study we submit this tenet to a careful examination and try to demonstrate that the recourse to methods for teaching philosophy and human sciences cannot and does not lead to any educational gains, except by chance. The great promise of teaching methods is that they would help students learn anything faster and better. We show that in these fields teaching methods do not keep their promise.

In this sense we begin with some clarifications. First of all, we establish the meaning of the concept of method, the specificity of the methods of teaching described in the pedagogical literature and then the assumptions on which these methods rest. Afterwards, we turn our attention to the specificity of the objects of study of philosophy and human sciences in general. And, on these foundations, we put forth three arguments meant to show why the recourse to the battery of methods generally recommended in the pedagogical literature in teaching philosophy and the human sciences cannot and do not facilitate the educational endeavor.

We will close our study with the sketch of a different, in our opinion more suitable mode of approaching philosophy and the human sciences in the classroom.

1. The Origins of the Concept of Method

Although "method" and its counterpart in different languages has its origin in Ancient Greek in "methodos" which means, as is well known, "path," the concept signified by this word is eminently modern, appearing for the first time in Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* in 1620. There "method" designates a set of rules meant to guide the mind in its approach to experience, thereby making it possible to gain true knowledge.[2] Nevertheless that is not the sense with which the concept of method becomes ubiquitous in modernity. That sense is the one with which it was endowed by René Descartes.

Just like for Bacon, for Descartes the method is a set of rules meant to guide the mind but this in general, not only in its approach to experience. Cartesian method asks to decompose any difficulty one might encounter in ever simpler parts until the simplest are reached and to deal with them in reverse order until the initial difficulty disappears. In Rules for the Direction of the Intellect Descartes writes:

> "By 'a method' […] I understand certain and easy rules—rules such that, if one has followed them exactly, then one will never suppose anything false to be true, and, not having uselessly wasted any mental effort, but always gradually increasing knowledge, one will arrive at the true knowledge of all those things of which one will be capable." (Descartes 1998b, 85)

And further on he adds:

> "The whole method consists in the order and arrangement of the things on which the vision of the mind has to be focused in order that we might discover any truth. Any yet we shall be following this method exactly if, step by step, we reduce complicated and obscure propositions to simpler ones, and we then try to ascend, through the same steps, from the intuition of the simplest ones of all to a knowledge of all the others." (Descartes 1998b, 99)

As one can see from these passages, Cartesian method is independent of both the object to which it is applied and the aims it is employed to serve. Although Descartes approaches the matter in the context of an epistemological investigation and his only interest is the acquisition of true knowledge, his method can serve any other. It can be used to deal with both theoretical matters as well as practical ones. That is why, in his wake, the recourse to method has proliferated not only in science but in virtually all spheres of our lives.[3] And that is why it has been embraced in education.

In the passages above three terms at least must have caught the attention of educators. First of all, "always" in "…always gradually increasing knowledge…" Through this term Descartes' definition of method makes an unconditional promise and presents the process of knowledge immune to any interference and free of the context in which it is undertaken. This must have grabbed the attention of educators because a transfer of the Cartesian method in their field announces the possibility of displacing it from its natural setting and moving it

into a new one, more fitted to the needs and possibility of society. "Always" announces the possibility to teach agriculture, for instance, in a heated classroom, sheltered from the elements, rather than in the field.

The second thing to note in the passages above are the impersonal terms in which the concept of method is described: if "one" follows exactly the rules proposed by his method, "one" will gradually arrive at true knowledge. With this Descartes places method at everyone's disposal and opens the domain to knowledge for anyone interested, not just for those possessed by daimons (as was Socrates) or those smiled on by Providence. In the sphere of education this promises us that anyone can become a teacher so long as they want to, no special talent or natural gift being required.

And third of all, in the passages above worth noticing for educators is the emphasis on efficiency, the claim that the recourse to method prevents us from "wasting uselessly any mental effort". Efficiency is one of the central values of modern science and technics and the principal criterion used to evaluate practice in our times. Certainly, it is a central value in modern schools. For when education is limited to a number of years it cannot be done in any way. It must be accomplished with a minimum of resources for maximum results.

2. The Specificity of Teaching Methods

In the previous section we found several reasons why the concept of method could have sparked the interest of the educators. That, though, does not mean that it did. From the fact that it could be adopted in the sphere of education does not follow that it actually was. For that reason, we have to establish whether teaching methods really Cartesian and if not, what is their specificity.

In Romanian pedagogical literature the above question is answered in the negative. Aside from Ioan Cerghit, who, granted, constitutes a significant exception, given that his *Metode de predare* [Teaching Methods] is the most comprehensive analysis of the subject, no one attributes them a Cartesian origin. And Cerghit simply proclaims it, without substantiating his claim in any way (Cerghit 2006, 19).

On the one hand, when it comes to the specificity of teaching methods the literature contents itself with reminding us of the Greek etymology of the term, mentioned above. Teaching methods are methods because they represent paths toward educational objectives.

At first sight, the stance of the literature appears to be justified in both regards. A quick glance at the descriptions teaching methods receive in the treatises, textbooks and university courses of pedagogy and didactics is enough to notice that they do not seem to involve that movement from complex to simple and back again presupposed by the Cartesian concept of method.

On the other hand, the recourse to the Greek meaning of the term in order to indicate the specificity of teaching methods seems appropriate given that this seems to be their only common denominator. Indeed, the differences between these are so great so that some are in direct opposition with the others. Let's take, for instance, the couple lecture – heuristic conversation. The former is a method of transfer of knowledge involving exclusively the teacher, the students as recipients being a free variable in the process. They can be present by listening with understanding to the teacher's speech, or de facto absent, daydreaming or thinking about something else. And that has no bearing on how the method is applied. In contrast, heuristic conversation is a method of discovery of knowledge in which the students are not only actively engaged but playing a central role. For their answers shape the teacher's questioning directly.

However, a careful analysis reveals the literature to be wrong on both accounts. The specificity of teaching methods does not derive from the primary, Greek meaning of "methodos" for that is much too broad. If teaching methods were what they are just because they represent paths toward educational objectives, then there would be as many methods as actual original teaching approaches there are. Obviously, this is unacceptable. To say that any particular didactic approach constitutes a teaching method comes to say that there are no teaching methods.

In what concerns the second point, even though the descriptions of the teaching methods in the literature do not capture that movement from complex to simple and back

presupposed by Cartesian method, it is nevertheless carefully followed in the classroom by every teacher who knows what she's doing. In this regard, the literature simply does not rise up to the level of the didactic practice it is supposed to theorize.

Let's tackle the matters in order and begin with the group of expository methods composed of explanation, description, didactic narrative, logical demonstration, and lecture. All of these are eminently descriptive in nature, the differences between them being given by two things. First, by the type of language they employ. Some, such as the lecture, explanation and demonstration use a predominantly scientific language, characterized by monosemy and referentiality, while others such as narration and the description per se use a predominantly literary language, characterized by polysemy and auto-referentiality. We say "predominantly" because, even the most rigorous scientific discourses are figurative to a certain degree insofar as natural language is metaphorical in its constitution (Gadamer 2004, 428).[4] Just as the most poetic descriptions and narratives retain a certain degree of monosemy if the reader is to be able to identify the thing described or to follow the story told.

Secondly, and more relevant for us, the differences between the expository methods come from the depth, the level of detail of their descriptions. The descriptive method remains at the surface of things, trying simply to show how they are. The explanation and the logical demonstration aim to show why things are the way they are, what makes them so. While the didactic narrative falls somewhere in between, for as it always begins by presenting a situation, which constitutes its intrigue, and goes on to unveil either the causes leading to it or its consequences (or both).

Didactic explanations and demonstrations do not actually explain or demonstrate anything. They merely describe already existing explanations and demonstrations. The teacher is rarely also a researcher, and, in any case, she is not or, at least, she should not be, when she is in front of the class if she wants to help her students learn. This is apparent in that didactic explanations always have more steps than necessary to arrive at the laws, the first causes or the basic principles governing the thing explained. These are intertwined with additional steps, so

many as it is needed to make the explanation graspable, comprehensible to the students. In like manner, didactic demonstrations are never completed when the matter was proven, but only when they are also clear enough for their audience.

Any description though is, in essence, an analytic process whereby a whole, the thing described, is taken apart, disassembled into constitutive parts, its features, properties, qualities and so on. And this holds true for all the teaching methods discussed above. Although it might not be readily apparent, the object of a demonstration or an explanation functions de facto like a whole, while their steps are the parts of these endeavors. In the case of the didactic narrative the whole is the intrigue and the parts, the events recounted. Insomuch as what happens in the story is related to its intrigue, the events recounted are contained in nuce within it as is the part in the whole. But, as we have seen in the previous section of this study, the process of taking apart of a whole into simpler parts to treat them individually constitutes the core of the Cartesian method. That is why the teaching methods discussed so far are Cartesian methods.

Let's pass now to the heuristic methods. The diversity within this group is so great that they cannot be dealt with collectively as before. In fact, their diversity is so great that not all the methods usually placed by the literature under this heading find here their rightful place. Some are simply not teaching methods but rather strategies of classroom management, aiming to facilitate the educational.

That is the case of brainstorming or synectics. Through these methods nothing is actually taught or learned. They merely help put the students in a certain state of mind, meant to help them engage in the activities proposed by their teachers. Taken in this sense, brainstorming is much older than it is believed by some, who place its birth in the second half of the 20th century,[5] its roots going back to medieval thought and the "rousing of the mind" undertaken by scholars prior to engaging in study. The most famous example for this is the one offered by Anselm of Canterbury in his *Proslogion* (Anselm 1995, 97).

The main goal of other methods such as Philips 6-6, focus-group, fishbowl, jigsaw or cube is to organize the classroom in

such a way to determine as many students as possible to engage in the conversation initiated by the teacher. The core of these methods is always the discussion of a theme, and that is actually what leads to learning. Their so-called steps of method, detailed sometimes in the literature, are simply directions the teacher must follow to create the appropriate setting for discussion, and they impact the educational results of the process only indirectly, if at all.

In conclusion, if we leave aside the ones above, the only real heuristic methods of teaching are heuristic conversation, debate, problem learning and case study. The first three have an important thing in common, namely all start from a certain type of problem. In the case of the heuristic conversation, the problem takes the form of a question students can answer only insofar as they engage in research and reflection. In that of the debate, the starting point is a practical problem which require the parties to find an acceptable solution or, if that is not possible, to recognize the main acceptability of the other's position. While in the case of problem learning, the problem takes the form of a "problem situation," as it is called, of a cognitive dissonance between the experience and/or the stock of knowledge of the students and what the teacher says or brings in front of their mind's eyes.

The resolution of these problems though requires one and the same strategy, precisely that strategy detailed by the Cartesian concept of method: they need to be decomposed into simpler parts and dealt with in order from the simplest to the most complex afterwards. Precisely that is the task of the teacher in working with these methods, to make sure that students identify all the parts of the problem under discussion and study them carefully and in order. That is generally meant in the literature when the teacher is called upon to "guide" the conversation, the debate or the students' reflection on the problem situation. Thus, these methods too are essentially Cartesian.

But such an endeavor to decompose a difficulty into parts and treat them in order from the simplest to the most complex under the guidance of the teacher is involved also in case study. That is precisely what takes place in the classroom when the teacher turns his students' attention to a particular situation

with the hope to determine them to draw general, theoretical conclusions from it. So, case study too is a Cartesian method.

3. The Basic Assumptions of the Cartesian Concept of Method

Now, after having established that the teaching methods discussed by the various treatises, textbooks and university courses of pedagogy and didactics are Cartesian in a rigorous sense, we can take a step further and try to determine whether they should be used in teaching philosophy and the human sciences. For that we have to turn our attention first to the basic assumptions of the Cartesian concept of method.

These assumptions announce themselves in Descartes' descriptions of the concept of method quoted above. For, to say that method can always lead anyone to true knowledge amounts to saying that the knowing subject does not have a particular relation with the object; that their relation is purely objective in the primary, Latin, sense of the term. We recall, in Latin, the object, "obiectum," is simply that which stands in front of the subject, "subiectum."

For Descartes, for a rational being or, a "thinking substance" (*res cogitans*) as he says, the object proper of the methodical approach is the material thing, the "extended substance" (*res extensa*). Res extensa is the only one to which res cogitans can relate in an objective manner. To the best of our knowledge, Descartes does not mention anywhere in his work as objects of knowledge anything except material things. From his point of view spiritual objects such as the texts and the works of art, the rituals, the laws, the customs and so on simply do not exist.

The second assumption on which the Cartesian concept of method relies is that the objects of knowledge and extended substance in general can always be decomposed into simple parts in a two-fold sense: simple as "further indecomposable" and simple as "easily graspable," "comprehensible at once". In fact, for Descartes, that is one of the main differences between thinking and extended substance, between mind and body, a thing he states explicitly: "… there is a great difference between the mind and the body, inasmuch as the body is by its very

nature always divisible, while the mind is utterly indivisible" (Descartes 1996, 59). It is only in virtue of the divisibility of the extended substance that the thinking subject can "divide each of the difficulties […] [she] examines into as many parts as possible and as was required in order to better resolve them" and then to "conduct […] [her] thoughts in an orderly fashion, by commencing with those objects that are simplest and easiest to know, in order to ascend little by little, as by degrees, to the knowledge of the most composite things" (Descartes 1998a, 11).

4. Are Descartes' Assumptions Shared by the Human Sciences?

In order to establish whether the assumptions of the Cartesian concept of method are shared by the class of things with which philosophy and the human sciences deal such as texts, laws, customs, rituals, works of art and so on, we first need to determine their specificity, what gives this class its unity beyond the obvious differences between them.

The unity of this class comes from two things. First, from the fact that all the objects mentioned above are hermeneutic objects, they all exist through understanding and in order to be understood. That can be easily seen. A text whose signs are not recognized as writing is not a text; it does not exist as text. A law whose prescriptions cannot be grasped, cannot be obeyed and does not work as law. So, it is not a law. A custom which does not embody a convention between the members of the community is simply a behavioral reflex. If a work of art is not understood at least in the artworld as work of art, then it is not. While the past exists only insomuch as it is known—a fact generally recognized and attested by the common use of language which labels those whose past remains a mystery as "people with no past."

Second of all, the unity of the class of objects studied by philosophy and the human sciences is given, as Hans-Georg Gadamer has shown, by the fact that all have a "lingual" [*sprachlich*] constitution (Gadamer 2004, 440). Due to that lingual nature, for simplicity, Gadamer proposes to call all these objects "text" (Gadamer 1982, 330), a convention we ourselves will adopt in what follows.

Indeed, irrespective of the medium in which they subsist—the canvas and the oil, the stone, the paper and the ink, the celluloid roll of film, the byte of information and so forth—works of art exist because people can talk about them and agree that they are what they claim to be. Their being, the thing that makes them what they are, resides in the narrative accompanying them, in the "story" that can be told about them. The more complex this story is and the more important for the community the one telling it, the greater their value.

Things are the same with laws, customs and rituals. As conventions, they are always born through a dialogue between the members of the community and are obeyed because of the speeches incessantly repeated in their defense by authority figures such as parents, teachers, politicians, the elderly, journalists and other public figures.

In its turn, the past, as object of study of history, is handed down to us mainly through written sources, be they chronicles, codes of laws, literary works of art, or inscriptions (on coins, insignia, coats of arms and other things of the kind). Of course, some of these are sources of historical knowledge also simply as objects or because of their decorations. On the other hand, granted, written sources must be corroborated as much as possible with unwritten ones. But this has no bearing on the fact that the former are the primary sources of historical knowledge. The matter can be settled if we approach the issue from the other end. Unwritten sources can tell us something about the past only insomuch as they can be corroborated with written sources. If they cannot, they add to the mystery surrounding the past rather than dispel it.

If we keep in mind these two aspects, the conclusion that imposes itself upon us is that the objects of study of philosophy and the human sciences do not share the basic assumptions of the Cartesian concept of method. And, as a consequence, that philosophy and the human sciences can be neither done, nor taught methodically. In these disciplines, the process of the constitution of knowledge cannot and does not follow the prescriptions of the Cartesian concept of method. And neither does the correlative process of its transmission in schools to the new generations.

Of course, teachers can always resort to methods in their teaching, but this does not bring about any educational gains. The recourse to methods does not increase the efficacy and/or efficiency of the educational endeavor. In defense of this tenet one can put forth three arguments.

5. Why the Recourse to Methods Lacks Educational Value

First of all, insofar as the hermeneutic object exists through understanding, it does not simply stand in front of the knowing subject. Here, subject and object are not independent and indifferent to one another. The subject is part of the object, just as, once understood, the object becomes part of the subject. That is why, as Hans-Georg Gadamer shows, the relation between them is best described in terms of "belongingness" (Gadamer 2004, 278).

This belongingness of the subject to the object and vice-versa is what opens the possibility of knowing other minds and, thus, of the human sciences in general. We can understand a text written by somebody else only insofar as it is written in a familiar language. We can understand the text of an other only by projecting ourselves meaning onto its pages. That belongingness of the subject and the object though is also what prohibits the human sciences from ever becoming objective sciences. Because we ourselves bestow meaning onto the signs in front of us, the text understood is never the expression of a pure otherness, a truly strange text, but, up to a point, always also our own. But that belongingness of the object to the knowing subject also ruins the notion of simplicity in the sense of "easily graspable" on which the Cartesian concept of method relies. And, along with it, it ruins the didactic efficacy of the teaching methods built upon it.

If the text is always also our text, the simple notions at which the teacher arrives through the process of decomposition involved by the methodical approach will be simple just for her. Or they could be simple for her and for some of her students. The point is that nothing allows us to assume that they could be simple for all of them. The notion of simplicity at play here, just like the correlative one of complexity, are relative to the stock of

knowledge, on the one hand and, on the other, to the cognitive abilities of the individual. And these vary greatly from person to person. But insofar as the simple notions discovered by the teacher are simple just for her, the didactic endeavor built upon them can have no educational relevance to her students. Or it would prove relevant to some of them at best. And that not because of the didactic endeavor itself and, thus, because of the method employed, not because of how the teacher conducts its class, but by chance, due to the particular endowments of the students. That is why the recourse to a methodical approach in teaching philosophy and the human sciences is not recommended.

As we have seen though, the notion of simplicity has also another sense, independent of the knowledge and the cognitive abilities of the individual, thus one that escapes the argument formulated above. And, one could argue, precisely this is the sense on which relies Descartes' concept of method. Simple also means "indivisible," "further indecomposable." From the point of view of this second sense though, the recourse to method for teaching philosophy and the human sciences is simply impossible. For, insomuch as their object of study is hermeneutic and lingual in nature, insofar as it is text, it can never be decomposed into indivisible parts that could be treated individually afterwards. And that, regardless of whether it is approached from a semiotic or a semantic point of view. Let's take tackle them in order.

As a meaningful whole, the text is not a sum of individual words it cannot be decomposed into such "elements." The word or, to employ of a more rigorous terminology, the linguistic sign cannot be regarded as the final element of such an analytic endeavor because, as Ferdinand de Saussure has shown, it is "differential" in nature (Saussure 1959, 117-118).[6] A sign has a certain signification because all the other significations possible are tied to the other signs of the language to which it belongs. That is why, for instance, in uttering "sister" one does not send to one thing, simple in nature and graspable at once, but to a complex nexus of relations and phenomena. In uttering "sister" one sends to the idea of sister but also to those of brother, mother, father, cousin, uncle and so on. By uttering "sister" one

affirms all these other significations and the entire nexus of relations among them.

At the semantic level, on the other hand, the text cannot be decomposed into propositions and the proposition cannot be taken as its final, simplest, element because it does not carry meaning in itself. The meaning of a proposition is relative to its context, just as this context itself is relative to a larger context but, as Jacques Derrida has argued, also to the very concept of context (Derrida 1998, 136-137).[7] That is why one and the same proposition can mean one thing when it appears in the beginning of the text and a completely in the end. It is a hypothesis when it appears in the beginning of a school essay or a scientific article and a thesis when it appears in the conclusions. Similarly, one and the same proposition will have a sense when uttered by an actor on stage, and a different one when said by politician in a radio or TV interview.

Taken independently from one another and treated as intelligible in themselves the propositions of a text say something completely different than the text itself. Texts are nonadditive whole. Thus, they have no simple, indivisible parts. Whenever one finds such parts in a text, that is because one has projected them oneself. They are the products of the act of reading and a reflection of the interests of the reader.

6. Sketch of a Nonmethodical Didactic Approach to Philosophy and the Human Sciences

If the recourse to methods for teaching philosophy and the human sciences lacks any didactic advantages, then how should they be taught? How can they be taught? What does a teacher have to do to help her students understand the great theories about man and society put forth throughout time? How can she help them become familiar with the way in which—to paraphrase the title of well-known work by Wilhelm Dilthey[8] — the historical world is formed in the human sciences?

In our opinion, philosophy and human sciences teachers are faced with two basic types of tasks. On the one hand, they need, first of all, to create the appropriate setting for their students to confront themselves with the great texts of these disciplines. For that, they need to help them become familiar

with the context in which these texts were born, with the world that gave birth to them. Every text is the expression of the thought of its author just as much as it is of the dominant worldview in the time and place in which it the author lived and worked. Such anchoring of the text in a given time and place ensures its intelligibility for its original public but also what makes it opaque with the passing of time. And that opacity is deepened the further we get from the moment and the place in which the text originated. The task of the teacher is to disperse it as much as possible.

Second of all, philosophy and human sciences teachers must bring to light for their students the problem dealt with in the text in front of them, the particular aspect of the world the text aims to clarify. In philosophy and the human sciences theory always appears as a response to a particular need, and its constitution is always guided by an interest. Even history which, it is said (Veyne 1971, 63-88), is born out of sheer curiosity about the past, fulfills a societal need and is done for the satisfaction of that. It contributes to the formation of a collective identity.

The problems dealt with by the great texts of philosophy and the human sciences are problems of the world in which they were born as well as of the ones that followed. The answers they give always transcend the horizon of their genesis. Precisely that is why the great texts of philosophy and the human sciences are great. That is what makes them relevant and worthy of our attention today.

By familiarizing their students with the problems that gave birth to the texts studied teachers offer them motivation to learn. The possibility to gain a clearer sight of the world or to come to see it differently, to better understand yourself, to be able to put your life in perspective, to compare your way of life to others' are among the few reasons strong enough to determine us to renounce ourselves and learn something new. For learning requires self-renunciation. At the very least, it asks us to invest our time and energy, things everyone, at every age, always knows how to spend in a more pleasurable, albeit not necessarily a more fruitful, manner. At most, it asks us to abandon what we already know and do, to give up some of those habitudes that

constitute our being.[9] Both things are hard, and one never does them except with good reason.

Third of all, teachers must show their students why the texts to be studied are important and how they proved and prove useful for themselves. The process of education is mimetic at any age. We want to learn because we want to be like the ones who already have the abilities and knowledge, because we hope that at one point in time we could lead, at least under certain aspects, a similar life. That is one of the main reasons why one might renounce oneself when the things to learn have no gains for the moment.

On the other hand, philosophy and human science teachers must concentrate their efforts to help their students in their confrontation with the texts studied. From this point of view, teachers should embrace allegorically the condition of the ancient pedagogue whose job it was to accompany children to school.

In this sense, teachers must make themselves available to their students; they must offer them all the supplemental information they might need in order to understand the texts studied or to direct them toward the books where they could find that information themselves. The latter option is the one desirable from a didactic standpoint because it contributes to the formation of the intellectual autonomy of the students. But this option is not available all the time. Sometimes an incursion into other texts entraps the student into a labyrinth or the detour is too long and makes her lose sight of the problem from which she started.

And second of all, philosophy and human sciences teachers must incessantly question their students understanding of the texts studied as well as their understanding of the matter at hand in order to provoke them, to determine them to confront their own worldview and become aware of the habitudes constitutive of their being. Such questions would offer students the opportunity to demonstrate the progress of their learning. And they provide the ground for a true formative and summative evaluation. But they also reveal to the students their limitations and give them another impulse for self-transcendence.

But this nonmethodical approach to teaching philosophy and the human sciences proves better not only for the students, but also for the teachers themselves. For it shelters them from one of the great dangers they face: routine. That is why we encourage them to use it.

NOTES

[1] Ian Westbury et al.'s *Teaching as a Reflective Practice* made us aware that the term "didactics" requires clarifications because it is virtually unknown in the Anglo-Saxon world. In Europe didactics is a theoretical discipline charged with the study of teaching. For a detailed discussion of the history and role of didactics see Westbury et al. (2000). For a concise clarification of the epistemological status of this discipline see my "The Didactic Status of Problem-Learning and Its Conditions of Application" (Costache 2009).
[2] See in this sense Bacon (2003, 28, 33 & 36).
[3] All those books of personal development which dominate the shelves of the bookstores promising us the possibility to transform for the better virtually every aspect of ourselves and our lives are in essence collections of methods.
[4] In the same vein in "White Mythology" Jacques Derrida shows that the very concept of metaphor is a metaphor for metaphor (Derrida 1972, 302).
[5] According to Ioan Cerghit brainstorming was developed by A. Osborn in 1953 (Cerghit 2006, 153). Cerghit does not give a precise reference and this date does not figure in any other work, so we could not verify it.
[6] For a detailed discussion of this matter see our book *Gadamer and the Question of Understanding* (Costache 2016, 111-118).
[7] For a detailed discussion see Costache (2016, 123-128).
[8] Wilhelm Dilthey is arguably the most important philosopher of the human sciences. The work to which we are alluding here is *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (Dilthey 2002).
[9] For a detailed discussion of this matter see Deleuze (1994, 70-128).

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