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The Role of Identity in Teaching Philosophy

Abstract

The article deals with different roles of identity in teaching philosophy. The first part of the discussion focuses on identity as a subject to be taught, i.e. identity as the content of philosophical theories that are taught at school. The second deals with identity as a subject of investigation, which pertains foremost to the students' everyday lives and the identities they take on or are ascribed to them. The third part concerns an identity that is not there – an identity that is absent, leaving a void that is yet to be filled. All these different aspects highlight the multi-faceted nature of the concept of identity, so one of the aims of this discussion is to provide an answer to the question whether identity can nowadays still be considered one of the key concepts of philosophy or has it been reduced to a marginal aspect in understanding the human condition today.

Key words

identity, philosophy, philosophy for children, didactics of philosophy, difference

I

The traditional concept of teaching philosophy in Slovenian high schools and elsewhere has featured teaching about philosophers and their works as its integral part. It seems that this teaching method had been well established and that new teachers merely stayed faithful to this tradition. They perpetuated the tradition that the aim of philosophy education is conveying the tradition of philosophy.

Of course, this teaching tradition as such is also closely linked to an identity – the identity of philosophy. It is the story of philosophy including a beginning, protagonists, a plot and an ending that provides the philosophical tradition with an identity. This story of tradition is characterised by a particular inner tension due to the fact that that the key element of it is the story about breaking with traditions. The story of Socrates, one of the founders of philosophy, who promoted the transition from *mythos* to *logos*, is a good example. A discipline that has established itself as a criticism of the tradition is nowadays acquiring its identity in school by assuming the role of the tradition itself.

This tradition was considered to be a treasury of ideas by past philosophers. The knowledge of this wealth of ideas was believed to be a significant part of general education. And being an element of general education, philosophy has been able to retain its status of a high school subject.

Nevertheless, philosophy teachers were often faced with problems. Their students did learn the names of philosophers, when and where they had lived and what they had written, but they had considerable difficulties understanding philosophical arguments. This was not entirely unexpected, particularly since

the main focus was not on understanding philosophical thought, but rather on providing an overview of the rich array of traditions. Nevertheless, high school philosophy teachers were still convinced that philosophy education actually had an important role to play: it should teach students how to think and should introduce at least some elements of philosophical reflection into the students' lives. However, these two aspects – i.e. the established teaching methods and the expected effects of these methods that had both been taken for granted – are in no way complementary and it was this incoherence that provided one of the impulses for further considerations in the field of teaching philosophy and for developing new teaching methods.

When it comes to identity, conveying tradition would mainly involve becoming acquainted with philosophers who had dealt with personal identity – i.e. the question how a person who changes through the course of time can nevertheless be an identical person, as the question was phrased in philosophical tradition. Among others, the answers to this question included Descartes' claim that self-identity depends on thinking substance, Locke's view that the identity of a person is related to the continuity of consciousness and Hume's reasoning that there is no enduring self, that is that self is »nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions«.

Identity can thus be a subject taught in philosophy courses. Throughout the philosophical tradition, personal identity has been one of the major issues. In the course of learning about the tradition, students might have learnt something about it. Yet, as mentioned before, teachers wanted their students to truly comprehend the ideas explained in the classroom, so they found the teaching of traditional ideas more and more unsatisfactory. On the other hand, identity has become such a popular concept that Stuart Hall in 1996 even wrote about a "discursive explosion in recent years around the 'concept of identity'".[1] In addition to that, the focus of considerations on identity has shifted somewhat in recent times, which is also reflected in the different use of the concept of identity. As noted by Kwame A. Appiah:

> "The contemporary use of 'identity' to refer to such features of people as their race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, or sexuality first achieved prominence in the social psychology of the 1950s (…) This use of the term reflects the conviction that each person's identity – in the older sense of who he or she truly is – is deeply influenced by such social features."[2]

This change in the theory corresponds to a process that is underway in the period of late modernity and is described by Giddens: in the post-traditional world of modernity self becomes a project, "which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives".[3] Identity is thus not only related to a group, it is strongly linked to the individual, and with identity becoming a personal project of each individual, it also becomes a project that is increasingly difficult to realise due to the internal dilemmas of the contemporary world. According to Giddens, there are two issues for each individual to resolve in order for them to maintain the coherence of their self-identity.

The first issue has to do with the unification of self-identity in a world of quick and continuous change. The modern world is an open sphere providing the individual with countless opportunities, exposing the life of the individual to influences from "near and far and thus engaging him or her in a number of social roles in a "divergent context of interaction". Faced with this complex field of forces that the individual is part of, he or she will find it difficult to maintain a uniform self.

The second issue is the general process of "commodification" in contemporary capitalist societies, which also affects the project of the "constitution of self-identity". "The consumption of ever-novel goods becomes in some part a substitute for the genuine development of self" and what is even more important, "self-actualisation is packaged and distributed according to market criteria."[4] With these models of identity that are on offer and imposed upon the individual, the individual finds it increasingly difficult to form an identity that is truly his or her own. The media are more than happy to help out and do the job for them.

The same problem seen from a slightly different perspective is described by Richard Sennet.[5] In an era of flexible capitalism with its fragmented present, it is no longer possible to maintain an identity over the course of time. Flexibility as a universal principle provides no guidance for the life of the individual and the formation of his or her identity. A flexible identity that meets the demands of a rapidly changing world and a life of insecurity is in fact not even an identity, but a collage of heterogeneous elements that is very accurately described by the writer Salman Rushdie: "A shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved."[6] In the contemporary world, self-identity thus becomes both a project as well as a problem of each individual. And in such circumstances, reducing teaching philosophy to lectures on traditional philosophical conceptions of personal identity becomes more and more inadequate.

This external change is accompanied by the internal philosophical consideration that philosophy had traditionally been a way of reflecting upon and making sense of the world. This is also why philosophy teachers strive to provide their students with a more thorough understanding and try to make sure that they at least attempt to reflect on things in a philosophical way. One of the models that is committed to conveying philosophy by centring on understanding philosophy is philosophy for children. Philosophy for children represents a shift from talking about philosophy towards doing philosophy. It is no longer the tradition of philosophy, but rather philosophy as an activity that plays the central role. To be more precise, philosophy for children aims at establishing a community of inquiry where students can collectively examine philosophical issues that appear to them in the form of questions.

II

Laurence Splitter, one of the most influential authors in the field of philosophy for children, has pointed out a particularly important aspect of philosophy for

1
Stuart Hall, "Who needs 'identity'?", in: Stuart Hall (ed.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Sage, London 1996, p. 1.

2
Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ) 2005, p. 65.

3
Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1991, p. 5.

4
Ibid., p. 198.

5
Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York 1998.

6
Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, Granta Books, London 1991, p. 12.

children or rather of its crucial structure, the community of inquiry. Students nowadays are condemned to a "struggle to define themselves". "Finding oneself" these days is particularly daunting because of the links between who we are and the groups we belong to, especially since these groups very much affect an individual's "sense of identity".[7]

Students feel the need to be members of various groups. These can be very beneficial on their path towards finding themselves and forming their own identities. But for students, all this comes at a price. It could be said that groups exert pressure on their members and this pressure is something young people find difficult to face up to. Groups can provide an identity, but this is an identity that is ready-made and allows the individual virtually no say in its formation. Certain groups allow the individual very little possibility to reflect upon this acquired group identity, which makes it very difficult for the individual to give it up. This identity thus acts as a pitfall the individual gets caught into. The group blinds the maturing and therefore vulnerable individual who is vulnerable precisely because he or she does not yet know who he or she is. And it is precisely this desire to find out who they are that makes them susceptible for any group identification. This dynamic that is typical of the search for identity through a membership in groups thus opens the door to manipulation. Identity is achieved at the price of alienation. This is a price that individuals are willing to pay, since in the insecure and rapidly changing world where there is no given identity that would be provided for life, the prospect of a quick and simple solution that group membership can offer is very appealing.

This fact is particularly significant because group identifications can pave the way for explicit and overt connections between membership in a certain group and violence over other groups, as Amartya Sen points out in his study *Identity and Violence*.[8] For the individual, a sense of identity can be the source of pride and confidence, but it can also be lethal. A strong sense of belonging to a certain group increases the cohesiveness of the group, but it can also intensify the sense of remoteness and alienation towards other groups. Furthermore, membership in a certain group does not only provide a potentiality for aggression towards others and other groups, it can also be aggressively forced upon group members as the one and only right identity.

In order to achieve "a kind of vaccination against pressures they do and will face"[9] Splitter stakes his hopes on philosophy for children and the community of inquiry. The community of inquiry is an extraordinary group. Membership in this group does not provide a fixed identity, it opens up possibilities, it allows the individual to distance him- or herself and reflect upon his or her identification and it establishes a reflective relationship between the individual and the community. Not only does this community teach its members to acquire critical thinking tools and dispositions which are helpful when deciding about membership in different groups; the discussion that takes place in the community of inquiry also provides a plurality of views and opinions, making it less likely for the individual to become blinded by the opinions of any particular group. Furthermore, the dialogic nature of this community enables its members to understand that any identity is relational, that it is related to the "identities of others". The community thus offers a means of reflecting upon the identity of its members but also provides an insight into the nature of identity as such.

In *Identity in Democracy*,[10] Amy Gutmann sets out four types of identity groups: cultural identity groups, voluntary groups, ascriptive identity groups

and religious identity groups. Cultural and religious identity groups are groups people are usually born into, so they are not chosen by them; ascriptive identity groups (which are based on "involuntary characteristic, such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, physical handicap…"[11]) and particularly voluntary identity groups, on the other hand, are groups we can choose ourselves.

According to Splitter, even in choosing among these groups, children are subjected to severe peer pressure, so their choices in terms of group membership are regulated by social coercion. Furthermore, when it comes to children, membership often precedes the content. This means that at a certain stage, the desire for the affiliation to a group in children is so strong that they do not chose the group they want to join based on the characteristics of the group, but they first want to join to only later find out what type of group they belong to. That is why it takes an extraordinary group, the community of inquiry, to enable the students to make their membership in various groups a matter of their own choosing, at least subsequently, and to thus make the students' identity truly their own and not so much dictated by society.

What is also extraordinary about the community of inquiry is that it does not create divisions or provoke conflicts with other groups. If two sports teams meet, they remain separate, whereas a meeting of two communities of inquiry can blur or even completely remove the border between them. The community of inquiry is therefore a unique group that does not separate its members from other groups, but rather acts integratively. The same is true of the identity acquired by the members of the community of inquiry: it is not based on exclusion, but on integration within the group and between groups.

The essential role of the community of inquiry does not lie merely in the reflection of identities already acquired; what is crucial is the new form of life in the group which provides practical and to a certain extent pre-reflective insight into the issue of identity. This new form of life brings with it a new mode of membership in a group, which – at a practical level – enables one's identity to start a new life. This, in turn, results in a new way of experiencing identity and paves the way for a more comprehensive reflection on what identity is.

The community of inquiry thus serves a very practical purpose. It contributes to the "formation of individual identity" and to "personal development".[12] The community of inquiry is an extraordinary group that does not assign a fixed identity, but rather enables the individual to develop a new identity that has its source in philosophy – in the Socratic approach to philosophy as an investigation of one's own life, to be more precise. Or, to put it in other words: the group is not based so much on a group identity, but more so on providing an open space for reflecting upon the group identity.

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Laurence J. Splitter, "Do the Groups to Which I Belong Make Me *Me*? Reflections on Community and Identity", *Theory and Research in Education* 3/2007, pp. 263–264.

8
Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York 2006.

9
L. Splitter, "Do the Groups to Which I Belong Make Me *Me*? Reflections on Community and Identity", p. 274.

10
Amy Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2003.

11
Ibid., p. 117.

12
L. Splitter, "Do the Groups to Which I Belong Make Me *Me*? Reflections on Community and Identity", p. 273.

Splitter believes the community of inquiry and, indirectly, philosophy education to be of particular importance because they contribute to the formation of critical thinkers and personal identity. This emphasis of Splitter's matches that of Ekkehard Martens, a German expert in the didactics of philosophy, who has proclaimed philosophy to be the fourth cultural technique of humanity. He thus ascribes philosophy with the same role for civilization as that of reading, writing and arithmetic. As he puts it:

"In a culture where no citizen of legal age without the capacity for speech, argumentation and criticism can establish an individual lifestyle and take part in democratic processes, philosophy as an explicitly and professionally conducted teaching of such faculties represents the fourth essential cultural technique."[13]

Martens does not deal with the formation of a personal identity, but he talks about the establishment of an individual lifestyle which is similar in terms of content. There are a number of other authors in the field of PFC who have noted the positive role philosophy can play in the formation of students' personal identity. In *Philosophy with Teenagers*,[14] Hannam and Echeverria devote an entire chapter to identity development in adolescence, where they link the "development of a healthy identity during adolescence" with the "participation in a community of philosophical enquiry". Based on the theory by Gerald Adams and on his "*Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status*", they provide a detailed analysis of how the community of inquiry can be beneficial in the "four ideological aspects and four interpersonal aspects of identity development", that were identified by Adams.

Philosophy and philosophy education are therefore important because they can be of assistance at several stages of the students' personal development as identified by one of the psychological theories on the development of the individual. With this argument in mind, it is clear that philosophy education is indispensable. On the one hand, this role earns philosophy a special status, but on the other hand, it seems that philosophy is actually losing its status as philosophy. Let us analyse the reasons why.

III

As long as a philosophy course is designed in such a way that it enables students to acquire certain qualities, capacities and skills, it can be said that philosophy is being put to instrumental use. It is not philosophy in itself that matters; what matters is philosophy as a means to achieving a goal that had been set in advance.

This given goal, the goal of developing certain capacities of a person and forming his or her identity, is the second contentious point of such an approach to philosophy. If philosophy presupposes the answer to the question what it is that makes the nature or the essence of a person, this excludes this issue from philosophy which results in philosophy limiting itself. Furthermore, by doing so, philosophy subscribes to the tradition of humanism that had determined the essence of the human being in advance.

In an attempt to transcend such a way of understanding philosophy and humanity, Gert Biesta bases his considerations on Levinas.

"From an educational point of view the problem with humanism is that it specifies a norm of what it means to be human *before* the actual manifestation of 'instances' of humanity. It specifies what the child, student or newcomer must become before giving them an opportunity to show who they are and who they will be. This form of humanism thus seems to be unable to be open

to the possibility that newcomers might radically alter our understandings of what it means to be human. The upshot of this, to put it briefly, is that education becomes focused on the 'production' of a particular kind of subjectivity – and I have shown above how this manifests itself in the educational use of philosophy."[15]

Biesta advocates a different understanding of humanity, an understanding that does not specify any given essential elements a student should achieve and that does not list the qualities that should be provided in the course of education (for instance, rational autonomy), nor does it prescribe an identity the student should assume in school. The role of education is to provide the space for students as "unique individuals to come 'into presence'", as Biesta puts it.

With this approach, it is no longer identity but difference that is given the central role. This emphasis on otherness introduces a rupture, a discontinuance. Students must face the radically different which interrupts their state of being. The interruption of being thus becomes a central concept of education.

"This is the case when we prevent our students from difficult encounters with otherness and difference; this is the case when we prevent our students from any encounter that might interrupt their state of being. The choice, therefore, is between education that makes our students immune for interruptions, that makes our students immune for what might interrupt and trouble them, and education that interrupts and exposes students to what is other and different – with no guarantee, of course, for any unique response to emerge."[16]

The quote above gives the impression that Biesta is a proponent of a very one-sided understanding of education that has very little in common with established views. But that is not the case. Biesta advocates an education that pursues three goals: qualification, socialisation and individuation. Qualification refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and dispositions that allow us to perform different tasks. Socialisation is related to the students' integration into the society they live in – examples of this function include values education, religious education or citizenship education.

However, there is a third function to education that cannot be derived from the first two. This function is related to the freedom of the individual and the fact that new members of society only partly accept the existing arrangement while also partly transcending it.

"This function has to do with the ways in which education contributes to the individuation – or, as I prefer to call it for a number of philosophical reasons, the subjectification – of children and young people. The individuation or subjectification function might perhaps best be understood as the opposite of the socialisation function. It is not about the insertion of 'newcomers' into existing orders, but about ways of being that hint at independence from such orders; ways of being in which the individual is not simply a 'specimen' of a more encompassing order. It is, to

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Ekkehard Martens, "Philosophie als vierte Kulturtechnik humaner Lebensgestaltung", *Zeitschrift fur Didaktik der Philosophie und Ethik* 1/1995, p. 3.

14
Patricia Hannam & Eugenio Echeverria, *Philosophy with Teenagers: Nurturing a Moral Imagination for the 21st Century*, Network Continuum, London 2009.

15
Gert Biesta, "Philosophy, Exposure – and Children: How to Resist the Instrumentalisation of Philosophy in Education", http://www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/documents/Philosophyexposure-andchildren_Howtoresisttheinstrumentalismofphilospohyineducation.pdf, accessed on December 30, 2010.

16
Ibid., pp. 9–10. When making his case for a pedagogy of interruption Biesta is following Levinas and his point that the experience of the interruption of his being is essential for the constitution of the subject.

put a big and complex concept against it, about the ways in which education makes a contribution to human freedom."[17]

Because of the ever more prevailing tendency towards reducing the goals of education to one single goal, socialisation, Biesta places most emphasis on the third goal, i.e. individuation.

From this perspective, it is quite clear that Splitter's view of philosophy education as being instrumental in the formation of personal identity subscribes to the humanistic tradition. We know what students have to achieve and philosophy education can help them reach this goal. Because the concept of healthy development originates from psychology, this can be described as psychologisation of philosophy. And since philosophy is used as a means in the search for identity, this is clearly a case of philosophy being put to instrumental use.

Philosophy can serve the first two goals, but it would turn its back on itself if it did not also serve the third goal. Conveying the knowledge of philosophical tradition, providing skills such as critical thinking or philosophy-related identities such as rational autonomy – all these can be important elements of philosophy education, but they can never constitute its only goal. In order for philosophy to live up to its name, philosophy education must also consist in opening up a space for encounters with otherness, with what is new and non-identical. In this case, the emphasis is not on identity, but rather on the subject before the identity and on the exposure to otherness and difference.[18]

Looking at things from this new perspective with the emphasis put on the pedagogy of interruption, a new connection to the didactics of philosophy opens up. Of course otherness and difference are also part of philosophy for children, but that is beside the point. Because even traditional philosophy education, i.e. education that conveys the knowledge of tradition, does not only mean becoming acquainted with the past and learning certain mental skills. At least to a certain extent, what philosophy represents for students is an encounter with the unknown, the alien, the different. Students' reactions to such encounters can vary and range from rejection to enthusiasm. It is the teacher's job to prepare an appropriate space so that philosophy lessons can become a place where students can encounter otherness.

In his conception of the didactics of philosophy, Martens treats otherness as a special momentum in education; it could even be said that his didactics are all about the relationship between the identical and the other. His concept of a philosophy course consists of three successive steps or, to put it differently, of dialogue that includes the unity of three moments:

"1. an open discussion in the classroom in order to clear up the interests and interim opinions of participants; 2. the inclusion of other partners into the dialogue via listening or reading a text; and finally 3. carrying out the dialogue that arises in such a way by asking questions, pointing out problems and referring to one's own initial questions."[19]

It is evident that the first stage is quite Socratic in nature and is to a certain extent related to the discussion taking place in the community of inquiry in PFC. However, the second stage, i.e. the introduction of a new interlocutor, already supplies an element of difference, of otherness. Of course this otherness can quickly be reduced to identical; but nevertheless, this otherness still bring with it a certain challenge for the students. Not only is it an answer to the students' questions, this otherness itself can also ask questions of the students. This can lead to a situation where the way of life students had known

thus far is questioned. As such, it can be related to the process that, based on Ranciere, Biesta refers to as emancipation.

"Emancipation rather entails a 'rupture in the order of things' – a rupture, moreover, that makes the appearance of subjectivity possible or, to be more precise, a rupture that is the appearance of subjectivity. In this way, emancipation can be understood as a process of subjectification."[20]

If this dialogue is to be understood more like a form of exposure to otherness rather than an encounter with it, then Martens' conception of the didactics of philosophy actually complies with Biesta's requirements. According to Biesta, a rupture can be said to emerge between the second and third stage of Martens' conception. The exposure to otherness does not necessarily end in a dialogue with the other, as foreseen in Martens' scheme, particularly if the other is truly radically other.

This reflection upon the identity that sets a limit for identity and emphasises primacy of the other in the construction of a subject thus exposes the question of limits to reflection in philosophy courses and questions the concept of philosophy education based solely on dialogue. It points out that philosophy education should provide a possibility for reality to enter into the situation in the classroom in such a way that it cannot be immediately intercepted and removed. Philosophy teachers should provide their students with an opportunity to encounter all those others in the philosophical tradition that resist being quickly subsumed into dialogue.

Of course, radical otherness in school does not only come in the form of the content that is being discussed. Such a description of a classroom would be far too simplistic, particularly since – if Levinas is to be believed – for the teacher, each student has to have in him or her at least a modicum of that radical otherness that the teacher will never thoroughly comprehend. This is the only possibility for students to introduce something new in to the classroom world. It is all about the different positions of the teacher and the student: to the student, it is philosophy that represents the radical otherness, whereas to the teacher, it is the student him- or herself. Nevertheless, as long as the other maintains this incomprehensible surplus, he or she will remain a challenge even for the teacher. In this way philosophy reminds both teachers and students of the opaqueness of their own existence. According to the Socratic motto, one should strive to reflectively capture his or her life, whereas the experience of philosophy shows that existence will always maintain an element of otherness that cannot be reduced to the images we have of ourselves and of others.

17
Gert Biesta, "Good Education: What It Is and Why We Need It", http://www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/documents/goodeducation--whatitisandwhyweneeditInauguralLectureProfGertBiest.pdf, p. 8, accessed on December 30, 2010,

18
Interruption of being, otherness, difference – these concepts are all related to the constitution of the subject in the ethical space: "Ethics occurs as the putting into question of the ego, the knowing subject, (…) the Same. (…) The Same is called into question by the other (l'Autre; to heteron); or, to use Levinas' word, the 'alterity' (altérité) of that which cannot be reduced to the Same." Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction*, Blackwell, Oxford 1992, p. 4.

19
Ekkehard Martens, "Didaktik der Philosophie", in: Ekkehard Martens, Herbert Schnädalbach (eds.), *Philosophie. Ein Grundkurs*, Rowohlt, Reinbek 1985, p. 571.

20
Gert Biesta, Charles Bingham, *Jacques Ranciere: Education, Truth, Emancipation*, Continuum, London 2010, p. 33.

IV

In his review of contemporary didactics,[21] Jonas Pfister has identified four systematic approaches aiming at providing an answer to the fundamental issues of didactics.

The first of those is the dialogue-oriented pragmatic conceptualisation of philosophy education by Ekkehard Martens that has already been introduced. Roland Henke has based his conception of the didactics of philosophy on Hegel's dialectics.[22] The third approach is related to the development of philosophical competences.[23] The fourth is referred to by Pfister as the *Bildung* and identity theory approach (*bildungstheoretisch-identitätstheoretischer Ansatz*) and has been developed by Wulff D. Rehfus. All four approaches deal with the issue of the subject and the subject's identity indirectly, but it is only Rehfus that puts identity at the forefront, which is also why his approach is of interest to this discussion.

Rehfus' fundamental thesis is that a theory of education (*Bildung*) has to fit the society it has been developed for. This is why the starting point for his didactics is the description of the state of the society in question. The contemporary society is marked by a crisis of orientation. Traditional descriptions of the world have become questionable; the world has plunged into a culture crisis.[24] The loss of the most sacred values and the lack of a uniform explanation of the world have lead to a loss of orientation for the subject. The disorientation of the subject results in an identity crisis.[25] In Rehfus' description of the state of society, it is the concept of *self-identity* (*Ich-Identität*) that plays the central role, while the aim of education is the formation of an autonomous *self-identity*. The constitution of the self-identity consists in the subject intellectually appropriating the world. Since philosophy is an intellectual appropriation of the world, the student appropriates the world through philosophy, which makes philosophy a key element in the formation of an individual's identity.

Rehfus' approach is fleshed out by Volker Steenblock, who not only upgrades Rehfus' conception of didactics, but in fact establishes a critical dialogue with it. For Steenblock, philosophy is a historical product of culture. The emphasis is therefore on the Other, on history, culture, tradition. Steenblock agrees that what is characteristic of the contemporary, post-traditional world, which philosophy has helped create with its criticism of tradition, is the absence of a given identity and a crisis of orientation. Philosophy is a realm for appropriating culture and creating an individually considered and adapted identity. Philosophical issues are fundamental issues for humankind, so anyone who is establishing a relationship with him- or herself and the world and who is in search of orientation is potentially a philosopher.

Bildung as the mediation of tradition and culture is a "mode of individual acquisition of identity",[26] while the individual formation of identity is also a subjective mode of the existence of culture. This means that culture intervenes in the formation of an individual identity while also establishing itself again and again in this process. The other of the subject (culture) is dynamic and should be seen as a relationship and a process.

In the establishment of an individual's identity, two false conceptions are possible. The first places a strong emphasis on subjectivity, the pure and authentic experience of the subject, and therefore leads to a psychologisation of the subject. This means that the subject is cut off from the tradition and from philosophical content that can provide an orientation in life. The other

extreme focuses solely on the content side of *Bildung* and allows the living tradition to be subsumed into fixed content that the subject has to internalise. The subject of learning thus becomes the object of teaching.

According to Steenblock, this is Rehfus' biggest error: he focuses solely on the objective aspect of *Bildung* and turns the subject into a mere recipient of philosophical tradition. He criticises Rehfus for emphasising the content, which means that in spite of the prominent role of mediation in his conception and despite emphasising that *Bildung* is a simultaneous constitution of both the subject and the object, his didactics maintains an opposition between the contents of philosophical tradition and the interest of the students. Due to this one-sided focus on the objective aspect, philosophical tradition is also seen foremost as a series of objective contents.

In the case of Steenblock, the key is always the mutual constitution of the subject and the object, of identity and tradition. *Bildung* can be degenerative, if it only stresses one side. Mediation is more than connecting and intertwining elements; in the mediation of "the subject, the object, the tradition and the present, the history of philosophy and the individual in search of orientation",[27] the two opposing poles constitute themselves again and again.

It seems that the fear of overemphasising one of the two poles causes Steenblock to commit a third error, namely focusing solely on the mediation. This emphasis on the mediation in Steenblock's conception causes the subjective aspect to be so closely linked to the objective one that one never gets to deal with the subject as such. Steenblock is clearly on the path towards an isolation of pure subjectivity when he defines the subject as the establishment of a place where "an identity is modelled without it ever acquiring a final shape (*Gestalt*)".[28]

The conception of teaching philosophy as *Bildung*, according to which the world is reflected upon in culture and the subject appropriates culture, thereby establishing his identity, establishes a strong connection between teaching philosophy (its tradition) and identity. In fact, this connection is too strong, which makes the concept of identity based on it too strong too.

The issue is not only that in a period of a crisis of traditions and of social insecurity, such an identity is impossible to establish. Steenblock is aware of this and recalls that this is a process that is never completed. But this source of this incompleteness is external and does not stem from the very nature of

21
Jonas Pfister, *Fachdidaktik Philosophie*, Haupt Verlag, Bern 2010.

22
His main claim is that teaching of philosophy should include as an important element dialectical development of different philosophical positions.

23
The main representatives of this approach are France Rollin and Michel Tozzi. Kotnik (Rudi Kotnik, "Teaching the Elements of Philosophical Thinking", *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 26 (1/2009), pp. 233–241) provides an interesting analysis of the issue of competences in the field of teaching philosophy.

24
Wulff D. Rehfus, *Didaktik der Philosophie*, Schwann, Dusseldorf 1980, p. 13.

25
Ibid., p. 23.

26
Volker Steenblock, "Philosophische Bildung als 'Arbeit am Logos'", in: Johannes Rohbeck (ed.), *Methoden des Philosophierens*, Thelem, Dresden 2000, p. 15.

27
Ibid., p. 20.

28
Ibid., p. 16.

culture, the identity of an individual and philosophy. It lacks this very internal source of the impossibility of a fixed identity.

In order not to remain at an abstract level, let us consider how an internal non-identity is present in culture and in the individual. In his analysis *The Idea of Culture*, Terry Eagleton points out an internal externality of nature (the non-identical) in culture:

"There are forces at work within culture – desire, dominion, violence, vindictiveness – which threaten to unravel our meanings, capsize our projects, draw us inexorably back into darkness. These forces do not exactly fall outside culture; they up, rather, at its troubled interface with nature… Nature is not just the Other of culture. It is also a kind of inert weight within it, opening up an inner fracture which runs all the way through the human subject."[29]

A similar indelible presence of the Other in the self is noted by Charles Taylor. Our fundamental beliefs, our innermost motivation, our essential identity are rooted so deeply within us that they remain at the level of a feeling as our "deepest unstructured sense of what is important".[30] This is not something one could capture reflectively, so in a sense, we remain strangers to ourselves. One's

"… deepest evaluations which are least clear, least articulated, most easily subject to illusion and distortion. It is those which are the closest to what I am as a subject, in the sense that shorn of them I would break down as a person, which are the hardest for me to be clear about."[31]

If culture and the self both retain a certain constitutive alienness, philosophy as such does not actually contribute directly to the formation of an identity. Upon first encounter, philosophy is most often an "unsettling experience": in a philosophical discussion "both the world and one's identity within it seem threatened and undermined".[32] Philosophy pulls the rug from under one's feet, criticism of what is taken for granted every day has a destructive effect on the subject. It not only shakes up the subject's world, but also his identity. If the core of philosophical practice is preparing subjects to "critically investigate their own secure meanings and conventional norms,"[33] philosophy takes courage to be "standing in the openness". This attitude "unfreezes" our understanding of the world and allows us to see the world with our eyes open. This aspect of philosophy is not a result of dialogue with tradition, even though this attitude could in fact be described as philosophical wonder, which has been considered a fundamental source of philosophy since ancient Greece.

However, this is not the only aspect of engaging in philosophy. Along with the negative aspect of criticising our everyday understanding, philosophy also entails a positive aspect. The new insights require an existential engagement and, as a whole, lead to a "transformation of the subject"[34] which is a synonym for the German *Bildung*. So if the two aspects are considered together, it is clear that philosophy contributed to the self-appropriation of the subject, it helps make the subject's identity truly his own, and it is also instrumental in making sure that at a certain point, the subject is there on his own and not as part of a complex mediation structure that had just been unravelled thanks to philosophical wonder. This division between the subject and the Other is not present with Steenblock.

Steenblock does not pay enough attention to the element of otherness in the subject and in culture, which is why the criticism by Gert Biesta aimed at philosophy for children can also be applied to him. Philosophy education does not entail the formation of an identity. The key element of philosophical reflection is the openness that enables something radically new to arise. Philosophy is thus not simply about acquiring a new identity – the identity

of a philosopher, for example – it is (also) about stepping out of the logic of identity.

Stepping out of the logic of identity may prove to only be the first step on the path towards forming a new identity. By its very nature, identity as such is part of the stream of life and, as such, is constantly changing and is never complete. However, stepping out of the logic of identity can also be a permanent fact rather than a temporary phase, a break in terms of identity. If understood this way, this would change the very concept of identity, leaving identity as such imperfect, lame, always failing. Looking at things from this angle, the change does not come from outside identity, but from within. The source of the change is not the ever-changing world or the flow of experiences bringing more and more new events; the change stems from inner incongruities and inarticulacies, which are inherent to identity. This means that the non-identical is a key part of identity.

There are two ways to respond to this. The subject can repress the non-identical and cling to the apparent identity. Or the subject can turn this impossibility of an identity into an openness for the non-identical. Philosophical wonder as the source of philosophy urges one to opt for the second one. Philosophy based on wonder is closely linked to an openness towards the other, the different, the non-identical. That is why the same should be true of teaching philosophy: it should be a process of encountering the other and forming one's self in the process without ever completely subsuming it into identity and always leaving some space for the radically different.

Marjan Šimenc

Uloga identiteta u podučavanju filozofije

Sažetak

Članak se bavi različitim ulogama identiteta u nastavi filozofije. Prvi dio rasprave fokusira se na identitet kao predmet koji se treba naučiti, tj. identitet kao sadržaj filozofskih teorija koje se uče u školi. Drugi dio se bavi identitetom kao predmetom istraživanja, što se prije svega odnosi na svakodnevicu učenika i identitete koje si pripisuju ili su im pripisani. Treći dio razmatra identitet kojeg nema – identitet koji nedostaje, ostavljajući prazninu koju treba popuniti. Svi ovi različiti aspekti naglašuju višeslojnu prirodu pojma identiteta, stoga je jedan od ciljeva rasprave ponuditi odgovor na pitanje može li identitet i danas biti smatran jednim od ključnih pojmova u filozofiji ili je sveden na marginalni aspekt razumijevanja današnjeg ljudskog stanja.

Ključne riječi

identitet, filozofija, filozofija za djecu, didaktika filozofije, razlika

29
Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*, Blackwell, Oxford 2000, p. 110.

30
Charles Taylor, "Responsibility for Self", in: Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *The Identities of Persons*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1976, p. 298.

31
Ibid., p. 296.

32
Michael McGhee, "Wisdom and Virtue: Or What Do Philosopher Teach?", in: Andrea Kenkmann (ed.), *Teaching Philosophy*, Continuum, London 2009, p. 26.

33
Finn Thorbjorn Hansen, "Philosophical Praxis as a Community of Wonder in Education and Philosophical Guidance", in: A. Kenkmann (ed.), *Teaching Philosophy*, p. 203.

34
Ibid., p. 199.

Marjan Šimenc

Die Rolle der Identität beim Lehren der Philosophie

Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel greift verschiedenartige Rollen der Identität im Philosophieunterricht auf. Der erste Teil der Diskussion fokussiert sich auf ein zu lehrendes Fach, d. h. auf die Identität als den Stoff der in der Schule unterrichteten philosophischen Theorien. Der zweite Teil befasst sich mit der Identität als dem Gegenstand der Untersuchung, der zuvorderst zum alltäglichen Schülerleben dazugehört, sowie zu den von den Schülern angenommenen oder ihnen zugeschriebenen Identitäten. Der dritte Passus nimmt die Identität in Augenschein, die es nicht gibt – eine abwesende Identität, die eine noch zu füllende Leere hinterlässt. Alle erwähnten unterschiedlichen Aspekte heben die multifacettierte Natur des Identitätskonzepts heraus, demgemäß heißt eines der Ziele dieser Auseinandersetzung, eine Antwort auf die Frage zu besorgen, ob die Identität heutzutage immer noch als eines der Schlüsselkonzepte der Philosophie berücksichtigt werden kann, oder sie zum Marginalaspekt in der Erfassung der gegenwärtigen menschlichen Umstände herabgesetzt wurde.

Schlüsselwörter

Identität, Philosophie, Philosophie für Kinder, Didaktik der Philosophie, Unterschied

Marjan Šimenc

Le rôle de l'identité dans l'enseignement de la philosophie

Résumé

L'article traite des différents rôles de l'identité dans l'enseignement de la philosophie. La première partie de l'examen se concentre sur l'identité en tant que matière à apprendre, c'est-à-dire l'identité en tant que contenu des théories philosophiques enseignées à l'école. La deuxième partie traite de l'identité en tant qu'objet de recherches, ce qui a trait avant tout au quotidien des élèves et aux identités qu'ils s'assignent ou qu'on leur assigne. La troisième partie examine l'identité qui n'est pas là – une identité absente, qui laisse un vide à combler. Tous ces différents aspects soulignent une nature à multiples facettes du concept d'identité ; c'est pourquoi l'un des objectifs de cet examen est d'offrir une réponse à la question de savoir si l'identité peut encore être considérée aujourd'hui comme l'un des concepts clés de la philosophie ou s'il a été réduit à un aspect marginal de la compréhension de la condition humaine actuelle.

Mots-clés

identité, philosophie, philosophie pour enfants, didactique de la philosophie, différence