

Runtenberg, Christa (2016): *Philosophiedidaktik. Lehren und Lernen*, Paderborn: Fink/UTB.

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Lately, there has been growing interest in theories about teaching philosophy and teacher training in Germany. Following this trend the recent book by Professor Runtenberg aims for a brief overview of academic reasoning in didactics of philosophy considering the last decades in German speaking academia; the book is meant to be an introduction into theories and practical methods of teaching philosophy, mainly focusing on the works of the editors, editorial board and debates in *Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Philosophie und Ethik* (= ZDPE).¹ Overall, the intention of the book is to offer lots of material and different perspectives to develop one's own concept of teaching philosophy in class (p. 9 and 11-12). Students in bachelor programs aiming to qualify themselves as philosophy teachers might find the book helpful, especially for its big variety of proposals for different activities and tasks to practice at school.

Runtenberg starts by presenting some classical positions on teaching and practicing philosophy (e.g. Socrates, Kant). In Chapter II she recaps positions (Martens, Rohbeck, Steenblock) and issues from the discussion in German *Fachdidaktik der Philosophie* (= didactics of philosophy). The following chapter highlights some marginalized approaches of teaching philosophy, for example philosophizing by using images, by playing theatre or by using so called production oriented methods (engaging students in creative tasks like writing or drawing etc.). Chapter IV provides an overview of recently discussed issues in German speaking didactics of philosophy, which according to Runtenberg could be seen as items that necessitate a rethinking of philosophical education (empirical approaches; political claims and new laws). Chapter V offers information and advice concerning methods in creative reading of different types of texts to provoke philosophical thoughts in class (besides philosophical texts, there is a focus on literary genres like fairytales and aphorisms). The author moves on to describe practical methods of creative writing in Chapter VI (e.g. essays, letters, and autobiographical texts) and also methods of philosophizing by musical inspiration. Chapter VII reconsiders pictorial approaches in teaching philosophy by pointing out ways of how to make use of photographs, comic books, movies, games and video games in teaching philosophy. After reading about this interesting variety of practical activities, chapter VIII is somehow disappointing, since it re-narrates some general concepts of organizing, planning and evaluating philosophy lessons, praising only their achievements but not focusing on open questions or any problems.

Overall the book by Christa Runtenberg is to be seen as a collection of information about selected theoretical approaches in didactics and lots of practical ideas of teaching philosophy.

¹ The journal exists since several decades: 1979-1993 as *Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Philosophie*, since 1994 *Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Philosophie und Ethik*. Since 2000 there is also an adjoining yearbook *Jahrbuch für Didaktik der Philosophie und Ethik* by Johannes Rohbeck and others. There is another journal in German language *Ethik und Unterricht*, which focuses more on practical advices and material for teaching practice.

In fact, a more systematic and structured overall composition would have been helpful to grasp all these interesting practical ideas for the sake of further reasoning and its use in practice (for example Runtenberg's discussion of pictorial methods is divided into three parts without offering any interconnection, starting from p. 38, p. 53, p. 111). While the description of practical methods is very inspiring (V-VII), the outcome of the first two chapters about philosophy and the didactics of philosophy is indeed questionable. It seems that these chapters were supposed to function as a theoretical background to develop the leading assumptions of what practicing philosophy is and should be: But, what exactly do we learn from reflecting on our concepts of practicing philosophy following Hegel, Nietzsche or Foucault? Furthermore, why should we for instance follow Johannes Rohbeck's concept of transforming academic methods of philosophizing into practices at school – or why shouldn't we? Readers might also ask according to which principles or concepts they should dig deeper into the recommended further reading (at the end of each chapter) to develop their own concept of teaching philosophy.

However, it seems to be a major deficiency of the book that there is no attempt to unfold its own position on teaching philosophy. Runtenberg does neither develop an explicit concept of practicing philosophy nor a coherent theory about how to teach it. Furthermore, it is left to the reader to reveal the reasoning which led the author to her conclusions guided by an implicit theory of philosophy teaching. If one follows Runtenberg's selection of the cited literature, the glossary and the chosen emphases in the chapters, it seems that for her philosophy is mainly an activity. To be more precise, it is a group of activities, which are means to elaborate the lifeform of critical thinking. But what this exactly means and how this ties in with authors as diverse as Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Foucault on the one hand and phenomenological approaches to body and embodiment, or sensual-somatic ways of self-reflection on the other hand, does not become clear. According to Runtenberg further research can only be successful if philosophical means are supported by qualitative social research (p. 74-75). But in her book there is no elaboration of the theoretical and empirical foundations of a science-based didactic of teaching philosophy at all.

Let me explain, why I put that much emphasis on this last point; I have to explain myself since I am about to leave immanent criticism of the book discussed. In my opinion, an introduction into a certain field of theory and practice should present ways of how to get into the certain kind of reasoning. It should also provide help, which readers would need to develop their own theory based position in the considered field and to do further research by themselves. Therefore, it seems necessary that the author of an introduction into teaching philosophy begins with explaining herself to the reader: The starting point should be a reflection and critical evaluation of the "state of the art" and a theoretical and empirical well-informed explanation why readers should follow the author and finally convince themselves that the author's position on teaching philosophy is a good one – acknowledging both its achievements and its limits. As mentioned before, Runtenberg's book is a collection of what in her opinion is important in teaching philosophy. But she does not tell us why the collected items are important and how we – with or against her implicit position – should develop further reasoning about teaching philosophy. However, it seems that this is exactly what an introduction should offer.