Philosophizing dialogically in an e-Learning Setup

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Abstract

This article shows how digital teaching can be implemented in the subjects of ethics and philosophy. Philosophizing as a multifaceted dialogical process comes with specific challenges. We focus on teaching formats in digital-only situations and explore the question of how teaching will be impacted by virtual seminars. Based on this, the e-learning seminar developed in the winter semester 2020/2021 that serves as the introduction to didactics of philosophy and its philosophical problems will be presented, focusing on the specific advantages of the digital format for dialogical philosophizing.

1. Characteristics and challenges of teaching philosophy: the concept of dialogue

A didactical concept is probably best characterized by its aims and methods. In this article, we want to present a seminar conception that we developed to implement dialogical forms of doing philosophy in a remote way as a reaction to the COVID-19 crisis. We first present a general understanding of doing and teaching philosophy as dialogical and then show, how we achieved to foster this form of dialogical philosophy in an online seminar. We want to argue, that the setup of our seminar helped our students to do philosophy, or in other words, philosophize about central principles concerning the profession of didactics. However, we do not claim that the concept is fully developed yet. We rather see this article as an invitation to a dialogue about the question, how digital environments can be used to do philosophy. The idea of doing philosophy as a process is central to us because classrooms as well as seminars are environments where collective and collaborative learning takes place. In the following sections, we argue that this kind of learning can be described as one form of dialogue, and we suggest some means on how to implement various ways of dialogue in an online setting.

In contrast to other university disciplines like engineering or the natural sciences and in contrast to teaching history of philosophy, we see knowledge transfer not as the primary aim in philosophical seminars. Knowledge is rather a vehicle for students to acquire the relevant attitudes and practices, which together constitute the process of doing philosophy. In this line of reasoning, we understand philosophy as a process in which participation is achieved by active reasoning in the realm of thoughts and arguments. Therefore, students should learn to orient themselves in processes of thinking. Part of this orientation process is to realize that the formulation of problems is the starting point of philosophical thinking and its ambiguities: "A philosophical problem has

the form: 'I don´t know my way out'." (Wittgenstein 1997: 49). Being involved or being trapped in a philosophical problem can lead to a feeling of astonishment, in which the need for reasoning starts: "[W]ondering in the first place at obvious perplexities" (Aristotle, 982b) means to be astonished about the boundaries and lack of one's own knowledge. This astonishment is the starting point of the philosophical working process which begins with the formulation of a philosophical problem. This formulation is the first step in gaining theoretical insights, it opens the space and marks the corridor where conflicting concepts and arguments can be found. Doing philosophy means "thinking about [...] thinking about the world. Such results as there are, then, do not take the form of new facts but rather, at best, consist in a new clarity about what are and what aren't the old facts, and about their modes of legitimization." (Rosenberg 1996: 7) Not only the world can be the object of consideration, but also the process of cognition itself ("thinking about thinking"). To bring this basic understanding of the process of doing philosophy together: Practicing philosophy is based on uncertainty (Wittgenstein) and wondering (Aristotle) and constitutes itself by pondering on controversial arguments („thinking about the world"). Our first point is to argue that in this process, philosophy is inherently dialogical, and that this negotiation process can lead to the formation of a conclusion. Doing philosophy means to ponder about the world in the space of reasons (Brandom 2000). The negotiation process, i.e., the pondering and judging of reasons, can take place as an inner dialogue (monologue), in discussion with others (dialogue) or in the examination or production of philosophical texts (dialogical reading). In didactics of philosophy, all three possibilities have been discussed as a form of dialogue.

Philosophy is characterized as the dialogical practice of a problem-oriented process of understanding. (Martens 2019: 27). These dialogical negotiation processes then lead to "new clarity" and offer orientation in relation to the philosophical problem. Based on the three forms of dialogue several options arise for the arrangement of seminars. We can outline three corresponding ways to do philosophy:

1) In an argumentation with oneself, e.g., by reflecting own thoughts and following arguments to their very last consequences. Own attitudes must be reflected, and other perspectives should be taken to start a philosophical thinking process and proving own thoughts (verbalized or recorded in written form).

2) In an examination of written text (or other forms like podcasts), read dialogically. That means to question arguments and bring them in connection with arguments from other sources.

3) In confrontation with arguments and perspectives of other students and teaching staff.

These dialogical ways of philosophizing should not be confused with any form of trivial thinking, a normal conversation about any topic or simply reading literature. The process of philosophizing can be described as a hermeneutic spiral that never gets back to its starting point. Starting from own unreflected opinions, philosophical problems show up in confrontation with dialogue partners resulting in the dialogue taking the form of arguing about the problem, reformulating arguments, problematizing other perspectives, and pondering about the topics or formulating new philosophical problems. Subsequently, a long negotiation process takes place. The order of the

dialogue partners is not static but follows the inherent logic of the philosophical problem. It is possible that, for example, literature can offer a philosophical problem while being part of the solution or that in a different situation the consultation of literature is unnecessary.

To be clear: philosophical dialogue doesn't mean mere interaction. Interaction as a social concept can be part of a philosophical dialogue, e.g., in confrontation with arguments of other students. But not every kind of interaction is a philosophical dialogue. It is more than just exchange. It is about developing and arguing philosophical questions. The character of the questions and the whole dialogue is not arbitrary. Dialogically reading and the dialogue with oneself should not be understood as uniliteral. Questioning arguments about their suitability is a process of thinking. To understand a question and its possible solution as a mere list of thoughts is not enough. Instead, a coherent argumentation built on autonomous thinking is the aim. Philosophizing in the form of a dialogue takes place in the head of the person.

The dialogical character of doing philosophy creates multi-perspectivity and intrinsic motivation (astonishment) and promotes conducive learning conditions. In the following, we describe how the principles of doing philosophy dialogically can be implemented in fully digital courses.

The purpose of the course we present in this paper is to introduce didactics in the subjects of Ethics and Philosophy by focusing on philosophical problems. In a didactical double function, the seminar teaches the students basic concepts on how to do philosophy and aims at qualifying them to lead groups in doing philosophy themselves. The seminar is designed according to the principle of the *Pädagogischer Doppeldecker* (Wahl 2013) (pedagogical double-decker): The arrangement and presentation transfers topics from didactical theory into hands-on experience – for example, the central principle of focus on philosophical problems is discussed theoretically and then taken up with several tasks to formulate problems suitable for different groups. This double-decker setup allows many ways of comparison and dialogue including intense active participation by the students. Not least, the concept of the seminar itself can be under permanent supervision by the students; as teaching staff, we encourage discussions about it, as students are involved in the core problem of the course, namely the question of how to support learners in doing philosophy.

In order to promote discussions that improve the students' own thinking, we create an environment in which all the students are initially accepted as independent, critical, and creative. This means getting in touch with different ways of thinking and examining if they are useful for their own (future) teaching practice. The hierarchy is supposed to be flat in discussions between teachers and learners to establish a level playing field between (prospective) colleagues with their different experiences, perspectives, levels of knowledge, and competencies. Stammering and struggling with own and external arguments, as well as "mistakes" can be productively used to make the philosophical problem clearer. According to this conception, students gain competencies (in doing philosophy and in teaching it) by dealing with questions and justifications for attempted solutions intersubjectively. A discussion like this is productive when most of the group are involved and participate in the different types of dialogue – in other words, when they commit to doing philosophy, in this case: together.

To achieve a sense of involvement, the seminar is referring to the student's lifeworld in at least two dimensions: Students can reflect on the didactical frameworks of our seminar and other

philosophical seminars at their department. Furthermore, and in general, the prospective teachers are keen to find ways for their individual teaching of philosophy and ethics in their future careers. Thus, questions about how doing philosophy can be taught are central to the students. The individual experiences they have gained on these topics so far were usually not confronted with arguments from the didactics of philosophy. Therefore, we try to frame the seminar as a space, where they can apply a theoretical perspective on their own experiences.

If the seminar takes place in a non-digital way, these perspectives create lively discussions, in which individual experiences are compared with and enriched by suggestions from experts (e.g. literature). Most students have practical experience from their educational background (classes in ethics or philosophy at school) or school internships. Moreover, they can apply certain principles that are central to didactics of philosophy (focus on philosophical problems, developing competences, formation of judgements) to other seminars or lectures. Two inspiring factors intertwine, so that the practical relevance becomes tangible: On one hand, students can contrast arguments with their experiences. On the other hand, implications, benefits, and restrictions of theory manifest when students have to develop their own teaching concepts.

To achieve this intertwining of didactical theory and practice in an online-only seminar we propose a concept that focuses on digital collaboration. Based on the assumption that doing philosophy happens best by dialogue, which fosters autonomous thinking and lively discussions, we based the design of the seminar on several dialogical forms. Dialogues motivate participation and the general dialogical setup of the seminar provides the chance for the students to regulate their own learning process.

2. E-Learning-Concept: A Learning Management System with Workshops

The seminar's basis is an online-only learning concept with two central elements that we implemented for the sake of teaching online after our university was closed due to pandemic restrictions. The first element is an extensively prepared classroom in Moodle (our university's learning management system) which contains all information, learning materials, exercises, assessments, and several options for feedback. The online classroom serves as the centerpiece of the whole course by structuring communication, providing topics, literature, and assessments, documenting learning processes and feedback. It works as a guideline, reader, calendar, a place for interaction, portfolio for exams, and corresponding ratings. To boost orientation and motivation we implemented an attractive design concept using modern photography. Another asset for students workings remotely is that Moodle is fit for working on mobile devices as well.

One major benefit is that the digital classroom allows for asynchronous learning: Students can work on the material provided and on the individual tasks in timeframes they set for themselves. Instead of replicating the number of weeks of the seminar, we present the content of the course in five thematically consecutive modules. The first module introduces the students to the setup of the classroom and the last one is an optional module with an additional topic. The introductory module and the three central modules correspond with live online meetings (that take place a couple of weeks apart from each other; live meetings will be discussed in detail in the following sections), of which the first has the main purpose to connect the group. For the last module, optional material is provided, and an assignment is offered so that missing points can be acquired to complete the

course.

The asynchronous setup allows internal differentiation as it gives students the flexibility to work on literature and assignments at their own pace allowing flexible time management. Not only the timeframe is individually plannable, but also the level of difficulty can be chosen by the students. (More on this in the following parts).

The periods of self-organized (yet supervised) engagement with the seminar content are accompanied by collaborative (i.e.: highly dialogical) working sessions in the live meetings – the second central element. Here we transform topics from the theory concerned with didactics of philosophy to tasks that deal with practical challenges about the process of teaching philosophy in the classroom. This underlines the workshop character of the live meetings, which last five hours each, and where work results are presented and evaluated, questions discussed, and transfers made.

From a teacher's point of view, live meetings fulfil the purpose to synchronize the learning processes of the students. This idea is based on Rolf Sistermann's model for planning philosophy classes, where wider and more narrow phases alternate (Sistermann 2016: 209). In the wider phases, the students work rather individually, while in the narrow phases the instructors focus on central learning outcomes and put their central messages forward. An example of this would be leading the students to formulate a philosophical problem accurately. This means that the philosophical problem is formulated clearly, leads to an argumentation concerning general coherences and not individual opinions. A philosophical problem is always normative and reflexive and does not exist because of empiric deficits (Richter 2016: 63–69). Focusing on these criteria narrows the phase and gives the students the optionality to widen it in the following by arguing about the problem. The individual preparation of the topics of the seminars as philosophical problems in the form of assignments (due before the meetings) helps the students to go right into discussions – which is very helpful, as the main goal of the meetings is dialogical exchange.

Because of the generous planning with five hours per live session, it is possible to also implement demanding forms of group work, which build on the individual preparations concerning didactical theory and transfer them into exercises relevant for teaching philosophy at school. In these group works, intermediate results can be elaborated, reflected upon, and deepened. The fact that work results are not only recited but rather presented via shared screens and with diverse media formats involved (etherpads, presentations, diagrams, and others), leads to profound feedback and sharpens the terminological work. This gives the working sessions a strong sense of purpose. The learning materials, live meetings, and assignments as well as the feedback are coordinated and related to each other in a variety of ways. The following graphic schematically presents the basic elements of the seminar in relation to each other.
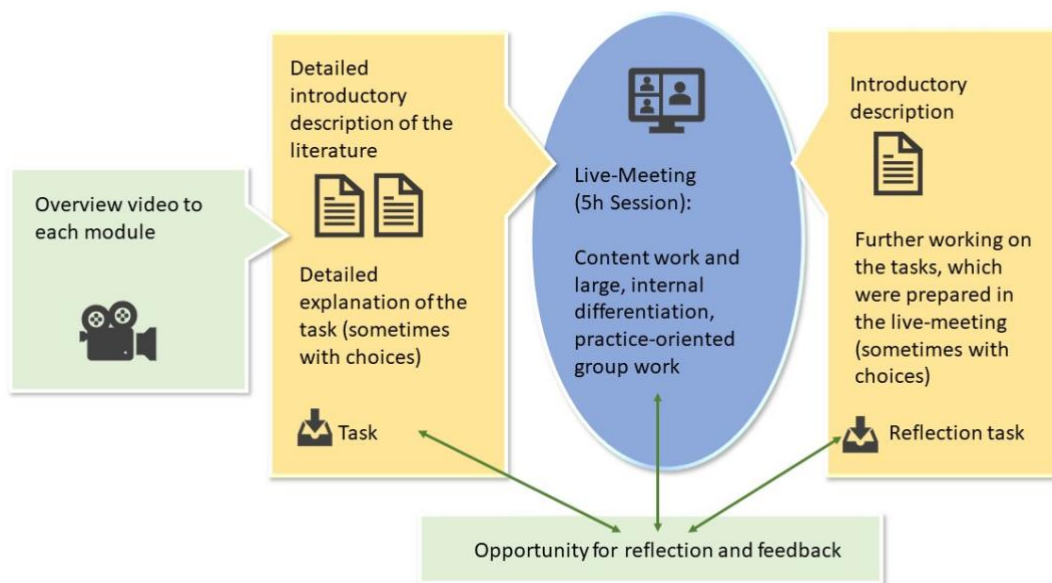
Image 1. Dialogical Learning Concept Combining a Learning Management System with Workshops in the Live-Meetings

3. Dialogical Modules introducing didactics of philosophy

This dialogical learning concept is the core of the introductory course to teaching – or, as we think fits better, doing – philosophy with students. The pedagogical double-decker is implicitly guiding the whole setup of the seminar: In accordance with didactics of philosophy, we think that dialogue is a crucial concept for doing philosophy and we therefore implement many occasions for practical forms of dialogue. To show this implementation of didactical concepts into the arrangement of the course, we briefly summarize the contents of the five modules:

With the first live-meeting we intend to facilitate the students to get to know each other in general with a special focus on their interest in teaching ethics and philosophy. To achieve lively and substantiated opinions we ask the students to complete an expectations survey consisting of questions about what they think makes good Philosophy/Ethics classes in school. They are asked to answer the question out of the perspective of parents, students, and from their own point of view. Following their own perspective, they are asked what they expect from the seminar and what they would like to discuss. Since we can evaluate the answers before the meeting, we can cluster topics and thereby moderate the discussion by contrasting the three perspectives of expectation. From the answers, we can deduce how we can modify and complement our syllabus to address the student's interests. We use the meeting to discuss why some requirements do not fit into the course concept and how we can implement other wishes. This discussion on the seminar's outset aims to create a sense of involvement for the topics and legitimizes a common starting point by contrasting Philosophy/Ethics lessons as a dialogue about philosophical questions with an understanding of the lessons as a merely entertaining alternative for religious education, moral upbringing or similar conceptions. As we try to implement a dialogical setup, we make clear that active participation in the form of philosophizing is the key requirement in the course. Moreover, we discuss revisions

of the syllabus and explain the general idea of the seminar and its rating system. Most importantly, the aim of this initial meeting is to open a space for reasoning and argumentation because this (so we think) sets the bar for the next sessions.

There are two main questions in the second meeting, i.e., the first of three workshops that take five hours each: What are the didactics of philosophy about and why should philosophy be practiced in school? A discussion of this is built on individual experiences, education policy guidelines, and arguments from didactics of philosophy. But as the focus is on doing philosophy in a group, we focus more on arguments than on mere guidelines (which of course contain arguments as well). In preparation for the seminar, all students have to read an overview of didactical theory by Jonas Pfister and list the key ideas for four different approaches to the didactics of philosophy (Pfister 2014: 177–200). Additionally, we ask our students to pick at least one out of four of the approaches to prepare a profound evaluation of it for the live-meeting with the help of an anthology (Peters/Peters 2019) and some guiding questions. A major part of the live-meeting is dedicated to a multi-step discussion (think-pair-share) of the advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches and whether they are suitable for teaching philosophy to students. The jointly developed results are documented in etherpads in Moodle.

To offer a joint base for further discussion we moreover offer a comprehensive introduction to the benefits of teaching philosophy at school that presents two main arguments: Philosophy as basic cultural technique and as a principle of education (Martens 2010). We ask the students to prepare the text and retrace and discuss the line of argumentation in the live meeting. After the meeting, the students subsequently finish two more assignments: The first is to give a comparison of at least two of the four approaches to didactics of philosophy, the second consists of a reflection of the question of what the purpose of doing philosophy in school might be by reconstructing Martens line of argument. We emphasize that active preparation of and participation in the discussions about the underlying philosophical problems in the live-meeting reduce the effort to complete these tasks.

Problem-oriented teaching is one of the basic principles in the didactics of philosophy (Tiedemann 2013) and the focus of the third module. Like in the last module we start with different theoretical considerations about what makes a philosophical problem. Here we provide passages from Bertrand Russell, Moritz Schlick, and Jay Rosenberg, of which the students again pick one to prepare for the live-meeting (Russell 2017; Schlick 2016; Rosenberg 2009). There we ask them to fill in "placemats" together in groups of six and thereby relate the different aspects presented by the authors to each other. Placemats serve as an interesting method as they allow for individual considerations on the one hand and ask for a collective position on the other. The placemats require dialogical exchange out of different perspectives about the guiding question and facilitate a judgement of the arguments.

Building on the deepened understanding of the several conditions that define philosophical problems, the second part of the workshop is about an approach from the didactics of philosophy that proposes solutions on how to implement philosophical problems in teaching philosophy in general (Thein 2017) and concerning the moral boundaries of art (Thein 2019) as an example for this. While the students prepare these texts in advance with an assignment, they serve as mere background knowledge in the workshop. Here they work in groups to develop concepts for a lesson

series dealing with a problem where aesthetics and ethics meet: "Is art allowed to do that?" With the material provided we encourage the students to develop their own lines of reasoning by picking relevant objects of art, formulating inherent philosophical problems, and designing tasks for the classroom. The group's results are presented online and as everyone is engaged with the same set of questions and supposed to be active in the group's discussion, a wide range of praising as well as critical contributions and ideas for improvement of the lesson series can be expressed. Here two content levels, that are part of different dialogues, intertwine. First, the philosophical problems themselves, which are the topic of the planned lessons. Second, the didactical questions of how to plan lessons which are problem-oriented. With this combination, the students get involved in an intense dialogue with theoretical approaches from didactics of philosophy.

The fourth and last of the mandatory modules is about the question, how philosophical skills can be developed in the classroom. It is a shift from the discipline's objective content in the form of problems to the subjective ability to deal with those problems philosophically. On the meta-level, this can also contain philosophical problems, like what is meant by "competencies", which has to be discussed at first. Then once again we offer different positions in the discussion of why and how philosophical competencies should be taught (Tichy 2016; Dietrich 2007; Rösch 2012). For the live-meeting these three positions have to be prepared with an assignment while we offer additional controversial perspectives that are voluntary. In the first part of the live-meeting we discuss the approaches to competencies from the didactical literature, while in the second part the students design a lesson that focuses on developing philosophical skills. In the groupwork, they have to argue for certain principles in enhancing philosophical competencies and need to pick a small set that they want to focus on while considering which tasks are useful to fulfil this purpose. In order to guide the groups' discussions and to allow for some kind of comparability, we narrow the topic and demand that caricatures and deriving problems should play a role. This also invites a dialogue about the difference of planning a lesson on the boundaries of art from a problem-orientated or a competence-orientated point of view.

Because of the change of perspective, from receiving input from didactical literature to implementing it in their own concept, the students work with the arguments provided intensively and see how they work when applied to the practice of teaching philosophy. This leads to productive discussions when the groups present their concepts at the end of the workshop or when they individually reflect on the benefits and trade-offs of developing competencies in the assignment concluding the module.

An optional module is offered that deals with the principle of moral neutrality and how it guides teaching – especially in teaching ethics. With an additional assignment, students can acquire bonus points in case they did not collect enough in the four prior modules.

4. Aspects of an E-Learning Setup Supporting Philosophical Dialogues

In the following section, we highlight some aspects that we think functioned well in the course setup. We use the following e-learning tools and didactical concepts to support dialogical philosophizing which we break down and present one by one, but that are used to work together to achieve a philosophical dialogue:

(1) Consistent structure: All five modules have the same structure; the elements of each topic

are arranged according to their logical (and chronological) order. Students are linearly guided through a topic (from beginning to end) to give orientation. Due to the consistent and asynchronous structure, students can view the workload at any time and align their efforts during their self-study time accordingly. Every module begins with a video in which we give an overview, then we present and describe the learning materials together with the tasks that are due before the live sessions. A forum provides opportunities for exchange and discussion amongst students at any time while serving as a communication element for instructors (e.g., for reminder messages). In the middle of the modules, we have a section dedicated to the corresponding live meeting with a detailed plan that makes our goals and our planned methods transparent. Every module is concluded by a section with assignments that reflect central questions and learning outcomes.

(2) Introductory videos: As previously mentioned, each module starts with a video sequence presenting the central philosophical questions. Additionally, we explain the modules' structure and specify central elements such as learning material and tasks. The videos also introduce us as teaching staff on a personal level and thus contribute to an open and appreciative atmosphere in the live meetings. Another advantage of using videos is the opportunity to watch them multiple times - which is especially helpful for comments on theoretical issues. By reducing the occasions of "live contact" to four longer sessions, we provide an easy way to give theoretical and organizational inputs and create a friendly atmosphere. The videos initiate dialogical work as we outline introductory theoretical perspectives on the topics. They also work as an invitation to ask questions in the forum or the live meetings.

(3) High transparency: The videos and introductory comments on the teaching materials result in a high level of transparency. In written explanations accompanying all materials (literature and assignments) we highlight important aspects (from our point of view), such as how the acquisition of competencies should take place in the seminar, and how the assignments are embedded in the general learning goals of the academic training. This helps students to orient themselves in their own learning process and can lead to a (quite worthwhile) discussion about the interaction between teaching and examination: As prospective teachers, students can reflect on the content of the seminar as well as the didactical setup. This also transforms the idea of doing philosophy dialogically into practice.

(4) Consecutive tasks: Before live-meetings take place, the students prepare the modules' topic through tasks that focus on conceptual questions and have rather low requirements: Here, students are asked to summarize the main ideas of the literature, reconstruct arguments, or identify the connection between different theoretical positions. During the live meetings, students share and compare the results of their individual work and transfer these collaboratively into a teaching situation. Collectively working on an everyday life problem and transforming it into a concept for teaching philosophy (e.g., Christian Thein's suggestion for a problem-oriented unit on the question to what extent art may cross lines – "Darf Kunst das?" (Thein 2019)) increases the motivation to discuss (according to our experiences with groupwork) especially when creative solutions are welcome. Each module closes with a rather open task based on the learning products of the live meeting. This helps to evaluate what has been learned and concludes the topics of the module with the formulation of their own reflection in the form of an individual and independent argumentation or judgement. What we see as a benefit of this setup is that the tasks build on each other and

together frame each module: They prepare the collaborative live-meetings and conclude them with individual tasks but keep a focus on practical questions of how to teach doing philosophy that are debated by the students in group works together. Through this arrangement of tasks, students develop a portfolio of their exploration of the seminar´s topics across different dialogues (dialogical reading, dialogue, monologue).

(5) Effective internal differentiation: The digital learning management system allows to emphasize that individual learning paths are possible within the course. For example, this can mean that (a) only one out of three texts dealing with the question characterizing philosophical problems will be prepared in advance, (b) that groups prepare different solutions to the same task in the live sessions (concluding assignments can be built based on the solutions of the groupwork) or (c) the (voluntary) consultation of ambitious additional literature is possible. Especially the tasks that conclude a module are open to different approaches (e.g., recapitulating, structuring, reflecting, or discussing what has been learned), which the students can choose. Due to the different competence levels, we can address all students in the course at the same time. Digital learning environments make it easy to implement internal differentiation when creating a course – and students can find their individual learning way. What we want to highlight is that one benefit of online learning platforms lies in the possibility to arrange more material than necessary, where students can choose and discuss aspects that interest them the most. Introductory descriptions to the literature can also help the students to estimate the level of difficulty and plan their workload due to their own estimation of their level of competencies. In some cases (especially when students with very high or low levels of involvement attract attention) we can provide personal hints that one of the learning paths will fit better than another. In the live-meetings the different learning pathways converge and are condensed and combined once again to the philosophical problem.

(6) Iterative feedback: The dialogical conception of the seminar allows to give feedback at crucial points (to the students, amongst each other, and about the didactical setup of the seminar). The students can evaluate their performance with the help of a rating system, or, more specifically, through points, they get for their assignments. Additional extensive written feedback (especially for the assignment following the live sessions, where students are asked to recapitulate their understanding of the module's main topics) by the teachers helps pointing out individual strengths and potential for development. They are furthermore an invitation to deepen and clarify dialogically the discussed philosophical problems a second (third, fourth, …) time. Frequent difficulties in understanding or mistakes can also be addressed via the forum and discussed there by the whole group. After the completion of each assignment and the preparation of the individual feedback, we highlight some flaws as well as some best practices in a post in the forum. By doing this we want to show that we examine the student's solutions intensively and have developed an opinion on their results. The post itself can be seen as another invitation for a dialogue (for a more advanced approach on feedback loops cf. Roupa 2021). Another important component is peer feedback: The transfer tasks (performance level III) are worked out in groups and as the results are assessed reciprocally this process offers possibilities for constructive criticism and is a way to connect students to discuss their understanding of philosophical questions in the field of didactics. Finally, we ask the students for feedback on the didactical concept, chosen literature, topics, the learning atmosphere, and workload in general. Concluding the seminar, we have asked this from

the students and have received feedback which we deem as quite positive (more in the résumé section).

(7) Intensive workshops: The live meetings have a workshop character. In the syllabus for the five-hour meeting, which is communicated in advance, phases of groupwork alternate with inputs from the lecturers, presentations, plenary discussions, and breaks. The focus is on the students' active participation, while we act as moderators and contribute our expertise when necessary or asked for. The workshop concept increases the intensity and the multifaceted dialogical character of the discussion of philosophical problems and helps to include several perspectives on the seminar's topics. In general, we split the meetings into two segments. In the first, we discuss the general questions of the module and the answers or arguments from the literature provided. As instructors, we add a few lecture-like episodes to classify the arguments and elaborate on misunderstandings that occur to us when reading the assignments. As the students are well prepared for this part of the meeting by their preparatory assignments, vivid discussions are possible that go far beyond simple text- or argument-reconstructions and instead deal with comprehensive questions aiming at the core of the module's topic. The second segment is about a practical transformation of the rather theoretical perspectives from the first one. Several practical challenges are possible: our students are supposed to work out problem formulations suitable for teaching philosophy, setting up tasks to establish certain competencies, or find and discuss material for a certain topic, to name a few. Based on our experience, most of the forms of social interaction used in classrooms can be integrated in digital sessions – and some even in an optimized way: Multi-step groupwork, for example, is hardly possible in usual seminar sessions or at least need a lot more planning effort. Regarding students in precarious circumstances (e.g., due to the pandemic) the digital learning environments offer advantages because participation can be handled with a lot of flexibility. Regarding the requirements to pass the course we decided to categorize the group works as pure learning tasks that are not part of the seminars rating system. We did so to facilitate open and creative working without any pressure. But since the results of the groupwork can be used as prework for individual conclusions on the modules topics, this creates an additional layer of interest in achieving the best possible results in the joint work.

(8) Additional tools: Working with a learning platform in combination with video conferencing systems permits the use of collaborative tools that didactically enrich seminar sessions. Surveys (answergarden), collaborative text work (etherpad), visualizations (mindmeister, placemats) etc. are appealing ways to enrich seminar discussions and bring new possibilities into the seminars' multifaceted dialogues. Unfortunately, access is often limited by the need to register, or the costs involved, and in many cases, the protection of data privacy must be considered. Nevertheless, we experienced that some of these tools are useful in structuring discussions. We found etherpads very helpful, in which we had entered questions and headings before inviting our students to join in and enter their ideas (which is possible simultaneously for all students). This way of working helped them to structure their discussions and their findings likewise. And in difference to spoken words, the terminology has to be clearer, if it is necessary to write thoughts down. Another benefit of the online tools is that we can save the results of several groups easily and provide this material to all the students.

(9) Inviting atmosphere: Active participation in all three forms of dialogue is the key to

increasing knowledge and acquiring competencies – that was our starting point in arranging the course setup. Therefore, we found it important to create an atmosphere in which everyone participates in the joint seminar work, especially in the group sessions. As just mentioned in the paragraph above these are planned in detail with the help of guiding questions that are posted online in advance (in etherpads, mind maps, or other tools). Doing philosophy in dialogue can be an enlightening enterprise. We try to establish an atmosphere that is friendly and open to all contributions that serve the purpose to learn about how teaching philosophy can be achieved productively and where uncertainties or mistakes are welcome. Besides discussions about the literature on the philosophical topics, this of course includes criticism amongst the students as well as towards the instructors, if it is supported by arguments. To achieve this kind of discussion in the space of reason is the main goal that we focused on with our concept of a digital dialogue about the didactics of philosophy.

5. Conclusion

In this conclusive section, we want to discuss some aspects of our concept, where we see chances of improvement for future replications of the seminar. We want to do this with an emphasis on time, as we see the dimension of time as an inherent element of dialogical teaching. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, it was widely discussed that online teaching might lead to a loss of learning effects due to a reduced form of (nonverbal) communication. With last year's measures to counter the spread of the virus, the discussion became lively as everyone involved in the educational system had to find ways of dealing with the rapid closure of the classrooms. With the question in mind on how to counterbalance the possible problem of reduced communication that might come along with online-only teaching, we tried to structure the timeframe in a way that supports dialogical moments to unfold. The importance of giving time as a part of educational theory has been emphasized by Max Horkheimer who, with a critical stance on society, points out that education is not a linear process that can be forced upon individuals:

> Der Prozeß der Bildung ist in den der Verarbeitung umgeschlagen. Die Verarbeitung – und darin liegt das Wesen des Unterschieds – läßt dem Gegenstand keine Zeit, die Zeit wird reduziert. Zeit aber steht für Liebe; der Sache, der ich Zeit schenke, schenke ich Liebe; die Gewalt ist rasch. (Horkheimer 1985: 411)

> The process of education has turned into processing. Processing – and this is the essence of the difference – allows no time for the object, time is getting reduced. But time stands for love; to the object to which I give time, I give love; violence is rapid. (Translation A.B./S.D.)

Following Horkheimer, Peter Euler, and (by reflecting digitalization) Hartmut Rosa attest society an enormous acceleration due to the economization of all areas of life in the last years (Euler 2012, Rosa 2017). Euler diagnoses a negative impact on education as a result of this acceleration, as all learning efforts are subjected to the goal of efficiency: high outcome in as little time as possible. This contradicts a traditional idea of education in opposition to "getting ready for the working world" and the job market. Because we wanted to focus on education in its strong sense of

understanding – where we relate philosophy – we invested a rather large amount of time on reflective learning processes, especially in the multi-step groupwork sessions and the follow-up discussions, due to the fact that autonomous thinking in dialogues needs time.

To analyze the success of the seminar, we can question if we achieved the aims we set for the course. Which understanding of education do we follow and has the seminar been in line with the idea of doing philosophy as a dialogical process? And how did the circumstance that we taught online-only concur with our concept?

Doing philosophy successfully by reducing pace is not trivial because this does not mean having unplanned spare time between different phases where you hope that philosophical thinking happens by itself. In our case, it meant to choose basic topics relevant to an introduction to the didactics of philosophy (like the question of what philosophical competencies are) (and to get an exemplary access to philosophize in a sustained and enduring way, so that the topic can open to the learners. In the case of the seminar, we decided to only work with three obligatory topics in one semester, for which we offered different types of dialogues to provide various perspectives. We think that this approach of philosophizing dialogically fits the requirements of providing time for autonomous thinking and can be adopted by the prospective teachers by implementing it into their teaching styles. Our idea was to not merely provide methods and guidelines but to philosophize about central issues from the didactics of philosophy.

When planning the seminar, we had this general idea of how teaching and learning dialogically could look like. To transfer this idea into Moodle and live meetings was quite a challenge. The construction of the online learning platform needed considerable amounts of time. From our point of view, this effort is worthwhile when the course is repeatedly taught (for example, every or every other semester). Then the basic structure can be adopted and new elements can easily get included to optimize the setup or provide more supplementary material.

Limitations to our approach have come along with this setup. The whole concept is built on the idea that philosophical problems are entangled and open to many different perspectives – and that the three forms of dialogue jointly help to understand them. As we let students complete assignments while preparing and reflecting on the workshops, we had a quite massive workload in providing them written feedback. As we conducted the seminar in team-teaching, we managed to give feedback to our almost thirty students in time – but it still was a challenge. Peer-Feedback might be an option to rearrange the setup here, especially as the prospective teachers will themselves have to provide feedback in their future profession. Moodle allows for such peer-feedback options, but developing a properly working mechanism would still be a task. Part of it would be to prepare a guideline that provides the requirements for feedback in general and for each assignment in particular. At the same time, this would offer a new way of dialogue between the students. One remaining difficulty is how to include peer feedback in a courses rating system. Another option is to voice-record the feedback and then upload it. This takes away the time-consuming part of writing and might even allow for subtones. That might be beneficial, as from a communications theory perspective up to 90% of communication is non-verbal. This finding has of course a major impact on discussions and groupworks in seminars.

Communication mishaps and problems can be found mostly in forms of dialogue between two or more persons. The request to turn on cameras is a desperate attempt to solve this problem that

entails digital forms of dialogue between human beings. There is a huge amount of communication which only takes place in face-to-face situations, and according to Rosa, there is a loss of resonance in a digital environment. Problems on the social interaction level of dialogues also affect the efficiency of the philosophical debate because of misunderstandings and personal feelings. Irony, to mention a well-known example, is harder to detect in a digital conversation without any facial expressions and gestures. The other forms of dialogue can take place in digital surroundings (or home office) like in the classical way. Chairing discussions worked well in the seminar where we combined individual perspectives and general questions and gave time for negotiation processes in smaller groups. Setting timeframes, offering guiding questions, and helping out when discussions get stuck helped to encourage dialogical exchange of arguments. To have the workshops as the central element between individual preparations and conclusions fostered a concentrated working atmosphere which we equipped with several different tools that the students used to collaboratively work on the tasks. To improve the concept of the course in the future we would consider to include annotation tools such as nb (Zyto, Karger, Ackermann, Mahajan2012) in addition. These tools allow to show up how the individual dialogical reading takes place and offers an invitation to discuss the upcoming philosophical questions close to literature. It gives an opportunity to combine the different forms of dialogue and has proved itself in other seminars.

We were satisfied with the communication in the workshops but would have hoped for more initiative on the student's side concerning the use of forums. Those were mainly frequented only after we posed questions or gave extra information concerning the live meetings or feedback. The combination of asynchronous and synchronous elements in the seminar should actually motivate the use of forums for exchange.

More room for improvement we see in the rating system we used for the course (we gave up to ten points per task and another ten bonus points for the additional topic and required that at least half of the 60 regularly possible points were achieved). When giving points for the assignments there is a danger that the dialogue is shortened, and the speed increased when students shift their focus from philosophizing to achieving the necessary points. One drawback of several consecutive assignments is the need for well-working feedback loops to keep the process of doing philosophy going.

Furthermore, overall qualitative feedback about the course has been requested from the students. We asked them to name positive and negative aspects as well as ideas for improvement. Contrary to our expectations, even the demanding five-hour sessions on Saturdays were perceived as positive because of their dialogical productivity and collaborative working climate. Also, the need to prepare the assignments in order to be able to collaborate in the meetings has been welcomed. The only negative feedback was that six assignments are a lot, especially when in pandemic times other seminars have a similar workload, which we can understand. In addition, for some students, the concept of the seminar was overwhelming in the sense that they sometimes lost their way within the materials. We did try to counter that with regular messages and friendly reminders, introduction videos, and a – in our opinion – well-structured course setup. Still, we nonetheless see room for improvement in getting our basic didactical conception across right from the start, e.g.: that dialogue demands a high level of and that the pedagogical double-decker combines theoretical and practical perspectives. Furthermore, it remains a challenge that

arguments must be proven right in the course of autonomous examinations. When repeating the seminar in the future we think to emphasize these points even more right from the beginning in the course description and in the general introductory video.

Concluding this article, we want to recapitulate some of the key findings we encountered during the preparation and the execution of the course. Planning the condensed workshops was engaging as we tried to transfer theory to praxis and had to find assignments that fit this challenge. The group works sparked intense discussions and lead to interesting results for the whole group. But individual reflection had its fair share of the course's schedule as well. It was positive to see how the discussions from the live meetings influenced the individual assignments following up – that they deepened certain aspects or that they took a critical stance. Nonetheless, we think that dialogue in its various forms is a good principle when creating a teaching environment. And from our point of view, digital environments are suitable for dialogical forms of doing philosophy.

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