

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY THROUGH THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PEDAGOGICAL METHOD¹

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Abstract: *The problem solving may reveal as one of the most important pedagogical methods as it addresses the central question of pedagogy: by what means may we affect the representations of a human person in such a way that he or she could gain knowledge about the object of their learning that would be unknown to them until then? The procedure which is currently used when new knowledge is involved, making analogies with other objects which would have already been known, is limited and even obsolete in the case where the learnable object is so new that there is a consistent gap towards every familiar knowledge. At this point, the relation towards what is undetermined gets into discussion and the entire answer may depend on the abilities of the professor for appealing to the unconscious and for transmitting the access to that which is linked to semantics and contains other differentiated relation to reality, rather than appealing to the illusion of the communication of pure and mechanical information as in cybernetics.*

Keywords: *problem-solving, pedagogical methods, philosophy, history, knowledge, the problematic transfer.*

Introduction

Aiming at the modernization of the educational system and at its remolding into a teacher's collaboration activity with the students, one of the strongest accents is emphasized upon the autonomous, critical and creative thinking of the latter. The problem-solving didactical method, even after a short examination, points out the advantage of serving both tasks of the pedagogical modernity.

The method's investigation has been extended towards two of the socio-humanistic disciplines which are, through their very essential nature, available to offer a fertile ground for the knowledge's confrontation with situations of radical epistemic alterity.

Philosophy, as the science of the fundamental knowledge², is problematic by its very definition. Because it starts by the amazement as an originating condition

¹ A few sections of the present study have already been published in the article *The Problem-Solving Pedagogical Method in the Study of History*, in „The Journal of Didactics”, vol. I, nr. 1, December 2009, pp. 13-24.

of general interrogation, philosophy lies right in the point where knowledge's novelty may aim against if not even encounter its object within the light of an originating variation.

As a school discipline, history is currently associated with the event's condition, with the narration of humanity's outstanding works. Hence, it would follow that learning history would suppose only mechanical memorization activities in order to reproduce information with a very sundry character. At the foundation of this erroneous view concerning the discipline there have been underlying several factors. The high volume of information and the exclusive focus upon the great events and personalities' data, without a systematic analysis of the premises that have made possible their existence, without a general, unifying perspective on the past centuries, is, perhaps, the most important factor of all. It may be then added the refuse or, better said, the reluctance expressed by some teachers towards the heuristic methods, grounded within self discovery and problem-solving methods, the implement of which demand a supplementary effort from their part, a prior preparation and, obviously, a good mastering of the taught discipline.

Why problem-solving and not other methods with similar virtues? Because the problem-solving process obviously exhibits a few common elements with the historical labor. We have, on one hand, a problematic situation, an archaeological object, a document or a chronicle fragment etc. and we detain general information with respect to that age and we try to "discover" the causes that have lead to its making, to the epoch's value system, to the manner by which people of that time thought and acted. In both cases we proceed from an obstacle, from a given difficulty and we arrive at elaborating new knowledge, unknown matters until that moment.

If we make reference to the presentation's structure, we may say that it's organized on multiple sections. The considerations made on the problem's concept definition and, then, on problem-solving as a didactical method shall be supplemented by several reflections on its implementation, through concrete examples that have been selected from the educational curriculum. We are hereby interested not only in technical details such as descriptions regarding its implementation steps, but mainly in the reasons which are making possible the effectiveness of this relation, of this bridge between the students' already held knowledge, and the new discovered ones.

The concept of *problem* and the emergence of knowledge

In his well known work *On Pedagogy* (1803), Immanuel Kant pointed out that the human being is the only one that needs to be educated in order to become

² We take science in its general meaning, as a domain of rational investigations and not in its most currently used meaning, namely that of positive knowledge constructed on the two pillars of mathematical modeling and experimental verification.

human: “the human being may become human through education only. He is nothing else but what education makes out of him” [KANT S. 17]. The maxim reveals its signification merely at the moment where we direct our attention towards the essence of pedagogy itself.

Human thought is grounded upon the unifying of the internal and external diversity of facts. This unifying makes up the privilege of our aprioric knowledge structure. That is the one which makes possible what we generally understand by “experience”. Experience, at its own turn, has the advantage of offering us a horizon of familiarity, a determination where nothing comes to menace our comfort of knowledge, where novelty is every time decomposed in terms already possessed by the totality of our knowledge about the surrounding reality, ending, then, in analogical evidences. There are, nonetheless, sequences where that which is revealed before our own eyes may place itself beyond every usual analogy, beyond every already known, familiar issues and, as a consequence, we see ourselves compelled to make a supplementary endeavor contemplating the gain of access to that which until then was fancying to us as an immediate knowledge. This discovery of the new constitutes an adventure, and the undertaking together with the fashion by which we face it may be related, finally, to our capacity of finding ourselves beyond our own already given frontiers.

Problem, solving problems come to us in their old Greek etymon — *problèma* means “that which is laid down before us”, and the verb *to probàllo*, from which this word begun, meant “to throw something before someone”:

That which you throw before yourself or that which is thrown before you — that which life or others throw before yourself —, this suite of obstacles which you put or are put before yourself, the suite of things that one encounters without cease, that you confront or that which provoke thee — all of these are **problems**. Our lives are nothing, in the end, but this collection of problems, of obstacles that ourselves or others throw before us in order to go past them [LIICEANU, p. 207].

As it is known, Plato asserted the idea according to which there is no strict sensible knowledge since, without having anything in common between myself and the object that I will know, something intelligible that should mediate between I and the object in order to open to me the path for a mutual concord, I may not have any criterion towards that which is before myself. In this order of thought, any attempt to make a forward step towards the object would mean, in fact, a step forward towards something that does not present anything intelligible or tangible. The possibility of concrete knowledge becomes, therefore, conditioned by the existence of an ideal act of knowledge, laid beyond the limits of experimental knowledge. An act which contains within itself its entire diversity that we, as knowing beings, have to span. As such, in order to arrive to the object’s concrete knowledge, which is strange to us, and

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nevertheless existent within our very world, we only have to remind us to place ourselves in an anamnestic disposition³.

The entire... **problem** is discussed at the level where we perceive the novelty of the object, at the fashion by which it is concretely given to us not only the difference in knowledge, but also its overtaking through the anamnestic effort to which might we be capable of being the subjects.

Since we discuss the pedagogical problem solving method, and namely in the discipline of history, we will appeal to a concrete case in order to exemplify: "If the United States of America did practice slavery until the second half of the 19th century, in what measure could we still talk about the existence in the mentioned period of the country of a democratic political regime, of a modern law state where the human rights and liberties are sacred and inviolable?"

The obstacle and the difficulty that we meet in this case have as their ground our ideas about the ideal of democracy and that of the state governed by the rule of law, our idea concerning the modernity and the juridical and political rights of the individual. We find all these brutally, flagrantly and horrendously contradicted by the practice of slavery, of servitude of the African populace. Logically, the two camps of signifiers - democracy or the state governed by the rule of law and slavery - contradict each other. Nonetheless, in the historical reality they coexisted. Naturally, without the possibility of discussing the relevance of one of the aspects in favor of the other - we can't, consequently, say that the state governed by the rule of law was in that measure developed for the inhabitants of USA that the existence of slavery would have been a negligible accident by comparison, for half of the Southern states lived at its expense, and more, after the abolition, persons with an African origin continued to be discriminated until the second half of the 20th century. We should rather make reference to the American libertarian anarchism⁴. This is one of the elements which could have "justified" slavery in a culture that pretended to be opposed to it by its very essence. It's necessary, then, also to point out the relevance of the economic aspect for the population of the over the Atlantic Republic.

Just as little could we annihilate the reality of the political democracy and of the juridical American justice by saying that it was nothing but a form without content as long as this type of administration was essential for the society's life in its entirety and without it, it would have been impossible to abolish slavery. The logical contradiction, the tension and even the cleavage from within the North-American society is capable of revealing itself, consequently, as a problem to which we cannot find any answer on the grounds of what we already know concerning the already studied and implied concepts of this issue.

³ Platon *Phaidon* pp. 71-73, *Menon*, pp. 361-370.

⁴ We remind the assertions made by Charles Dickens about the Union's people. The Americans, he said, are „so much in love with liberty, that they allow themselves having a little too many liberties towards it". Dickens, p. 351.

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A solution that we encounter regularly when our reason finds itself thrown on the grounds of an unknown horizon is that of looking for antecedents, similar cases, in order to solve also the difficulty which just sprang through analogy, through imitation, could we say. Nevertheless, if problems would be solved this way, we could say that they would never be solved at all. More precise, if the problem solving method would be the approach by which we would reduce that which we don't know, the unknown, to that which we know, we wouldn't do anything else, but to repeat the already known aspects and, consequently, we would never learn something absolutely new.

Coming back to the question of the anamnesis, we may observe that things changed dramatically. The consideration after which to learn supposes only to apply or to awake already known matters, purely and simply, to that which is new, has no value at all.

However, something must be known, because, as we've seen, the Eleate paradox regarding the knowledge of the object and the realization of learning is applied on the opposite sense of that which has already been discovered. Hence, if something is known, what way is it known as to admit the new? And, if the new is already learned, in what way might it be a qualitative difference towards what is already known so as its learning should not be a simple repetition?

This difficulty is increased by the objections which have been raised by Empiricists against Idealists systems, especially against the Platonic one, concerning the theory of "innate ideas". There are two arguments at this level.

The first belongs to John Locke who has turned the challenge against the sensible knowledge towards itself. Thus, as it is known, Plato had described in *Menon*, through the Socratic dialogues, the impossibility to obtain the knowledge of something that we do not know yet: if we are to understand an object that we haven't ever encountered before, be it an object or an idea, it's impossible to attain its knowledge through itself since we don't possess anything before it within ourselves which we might relate it to, in order to manage to make it intelligible. Because the criterion of intelligibility is required, for an object to become intelligible. But this too is lacking from within the subject who is nothing more than a *tabula rasa*, wherein nothing intelligible has yet been given. Hence, the only solution for the explanation of the beginning of knowledge is that of the postulate of the preexistence within the soul of some basic notions that the soul possesses since eternity and that is, simultaneously, the proof of its immortality. Here, Locke will say that nobody knows since birth the basic ideas which one is supposed to own, but we attain their learning after our birth. Contrary, nobody should ever be taught anything, since we would all be already educated. Therefore, it results thereof that the Platonic theory encounters the rise of its own remonstrations: since we all arrive to learn all these, they would have never been able to already exist within our souls. But, also not by themselves could we understand them, for, observing the very demands of the Platonic theory, we would never possess precisely the

intelligibility criterion through which we would have to understand intelligibility itself: thus the innate ideas theory is undermined by its own arguments. The conclusion that would follow for Locke would be that, actually, we don't possess anything predetermined from birth within ourselves and, then, the entire knowledge and learning would reach us from outside, from the senses' experience⁵.

David Hume, at his turn, raises against the innate ideas theory the remonstrance by the imaginary example of the encounter of the empirical limit: if human beings would ever encounter an object that would be absolutely different from everything that they would have ever been accustomed to know, no matter how learned would they be, they would fall in the very deadlock that the innate ideas theory is invoking against the sensible or experimental knowledge — they would be completely overwhelmed by the radical novelty of the object and, as many analogy attempts would they ever venture to make, the object would never possibly be related to any of their prior lore or experiences. Thus, the void that Plato feared would reappear in the very act of experiencing⁶.

The pedagogical paradigm of the problem solving offers us an acute materialization of these hard solving difficulties.

Problem solving: definition, characteristics, problem-solving steps

In any problem, asserted **WINCENTY OKOŃ**, there must be something given, known, and something missing, meaning something hidden, „*the idea of solving dwelling... in the find of the unknown element*”. Starting from the above mentioned assertions, the researcher defined the problem as being „*a structure of insufficient data*”, and the problematized learning as an operation having at its ground „*the research for these data and the demonstration that they are true*”. Struggling to clarify the given problem, **OKOŃ** continues,

the subject comprises by his thought the entire problem's structure..., reflects upon the mutual ratio between the known elements of this structure, discovers, then, the missing elements as well as the unknown ties of the given elements. By this method, the subject completes the structure [OKOŃ, p. 50].

But the essence of problem solving consists in that, by its use in the classroom, the professor does not transmit well established cognizances, instead he/she puts the pupils in the position of search, research and discovery. Problem solving supposes, consequently, a dedicated labor grounded in the update of older cognizances and the gain of new ones, fact which justifies its particular formative qualities. The trial implies organizing and categorizing activities for the

⁵ See Locke pp. 27-67.

⁶ See Hume, p. 10.

already mastered ideas, information and concepts, their analysis being made from another perspective, that of the new constructed situation.

The central element of the method, the initial point is represented by the identification of the problematic situation. As we have seen above, a question or an assignment becomes a problem only when it proposes something radically unknown, something that lacks a comparison, an obstacle which, in the present case produces in the mind of those interested a tension, an uncertainty, an astonishment, it stimulates their interest and brings them about to implicate themselves until the response is found - that "bridge" which ties that which they already know to that which is totally unknown to them.

Consequently, in learning through problem solving a central initial role devolves to the professor. It is to him/her that falls not only the assignment of correctly formulating such difficulties or of establishing a plan of action, but also the obligation of verifying in what measure the pupils dispose of the theoretical necessary premises to their solving. In history, for example, the professor has the duty of assuring himself that the pupils know those facts, events and processes absolutely necessary for clarifying the given situation. The chances of tracing true problematic situations arise in direct proportion with the teacher's experience, with the degree of his master of the discipline and to the development level of his psycho-pedagogical competences.

In the problem solving activity multiple stages⁷ have been identified. One of the first classifications has been offered to us by **GRAHAM WALLAS** in his work *The Art of Taught*. According to him, the creative process in solving difficulties presupposes four essential moments:

1. preparation — information is gathered, observations are made, the problem is delineated, a hypothesis or a general project are sketched;
2. incubation — the time span of labors and of sterile endeavors;
3. illumination — the happy moment of the rising of the solution;
4. verification — the materialization of the idea and its implementation [ALDOUS, p. 177].

At his turn, John Dewey [*How We Think*], American philosopher and psychologist, convinced that people are thinking only when they are compelled to it, during the confrontation to a problem respectively, speaks about five distinct steps:

1. a felt difficulty;
2. its location and definition;
3. suggestion of possible solution;
4. development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion;
5. further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection; that is, the conclusion of belief or disbelief [p. 115].

⁷ See Gagné, p. 189, Cerghit, pp. 108-109.

In teaching history it's recommended to avoid the direct passage from the definition to its solving and the introduction of the so-called *preceding stage* (**KRYSTYNA KULIGOWSKA**). This supposes the fact that the teacher verifies if the pupils detain information about the events and the historical processes taken into question, and, nevertheless, the degree in which they understood the signification of what has been told⁸. The solution is justified by the discipline's character, by the fact that solving historical difficulties does not have as its ground the experience on a day to day basis, but the explanations priory received from either the professor, either the manuals, encyclopedias and other types of bibliographical references. We may take the example of the following problematic situation: "*How do you explain the burst of the revolution wave which enfolded Europe in 1848?*" For its solving, it's necessary that the professor verifies if the pupils know not only the internal situation of the states engaged in the revolutionary events — France, The German Confederation, The Habsburg Empire, The Romanian Countries —, but also the ideologies and the political streams that were proper to that century. It's the same with the following example: "*How do you explain Adolf Hitler's theories concerning the Arian race's superiority, taking into account that his physical traits did not correspond to them?*" Neither exists in the present case some correspondent of reality that would deliver them ideas and which finally would drive them to the solution of the problem. Still, it's important to hold that the updating of information regarding the raised issues do not offer them any answer, but only eases them the way towards the down dropping of the raised obstacles, towards the transformation of the unknown to that which is known.

Philosophical problems

A genuine problem in the philosophy discipline is that which is regarding knowledge itself. The philosophy teacher may propose students to point out for cases where our knowledge appears sure and for other cases where knowledge fails. And here we may start over with one of the philosophy of knowledge's old disputes - that between objectivists and subjectivists. On one hand, it may be required from pupils to expose the objectivist doctrine in both of its variants: that of the real, but ideal object; and that of the real, but empirical object. On the other hand, the subjectivist doctrine may also be exposed in its two variants: the first, where the subject is in the center of knowledge so that any object is secondary or even generated by the subject; and the second, where the subject does not have any truth criterion, may it be even subjective, and where the basic assertion stands for "Everything's relative".

Once these positions have been emphasized, the analysis of every direction will follow. The idealist doctrine's basic assertions may be analyzed and one may raise the problems regarding the fashion through which the existence of pure

⁸ Okoń, pp. 31-32, 133-134.

forms of knowledge may be spoken about. On the utmost limit, it may be exposed to the pupils the Empiricists' or Nominalists' remonstrations against Idealism and one may require them their discussion — the infinite halving of the ideal Forms which ends into their irrelevance, their steadiness opposed to the concrete objects' radical variability and instability or the question if there really are Forms for absolutely every kind of thing. The Empiricist doctrine's assertions shall be analyzed regarding knowledge, the dependence and the subject's irrelevance in relation to the object. Thereupon arguments may be provided against the Empiricist doctrine: the knowledge's impossibility in the lack of the subject's objective and internal set of principles of knowledge, the objective knowledge's dependence on this set, the circular argument of the Empiricist's doctrine, the impossibility of a subject's constitution as a strict object's effect etc. Further, basic thesis of the subjectivist-idealist doctrine may be presented: the object's irrelevance towards the subject, the virtual inexistence of any objective coherence or consistency in the subject's absence, the subjective causation of reality etc. Thereupon, remonstrations may be presented: the impossibility of the existence of any difference for the subject in the absence of the object, the impossibility to generate reality through simple subjective self-affecting acts, the irreducible opposition that the object manifests as opposed to the subject's existence etc. Finally, on the subjectivist-relativist doctrine, after one has presented its basic assertions (the issues encountered in the foundations of knowledge - the laws of identity and of non-contradiction suppose their opposition through their very definition - are leading to the radical randomness which proclaims that there is no objective truth, but everything is dependent upon the subject's will), the following remonstrations may be produced: the universality, the identity and the non-contradiction maintain themselves valid in relation to every sentence, even in relation to the relative ones, as meta-discursive instances and reality may not be boundlessly molded by the subject.

When all these stands would have had been fully exhibited and comprehended in all their depth and consequences, it will be required for all the students to formulate their own stand concerning knowledge, for which they should provide a different solution in relation to all other four bearings. At this very moment, pupils will be able to express their creative and transferential capacities, so as for them to arrive to the point where they might seize the horizon of convergence of all these bearings and to be able to be undertaken into a problematic transfer. Only in this manner it will be provided to them the chance to foresee the problem's fundamental solution and to speculatively bring forward all the themes in relation to the truth's issue, of the intellect's adequacy towards the object and to the subjectivity's precedence.

Other problematic situations may be articulated just as well for the following themes: *"Is there truly any freedom in the free will doctrine if it supposes the choice between already given multiple alternatives?"* or *"If only Being is (Parmenides), and movement, multiplicity, change are nothing but delusions how is it possible to have any delusion within a Being without any diversity?"* or

“If human freedom supposes spontaneity, therefore being grounded into nothing, how is it possible that a finite being, such as man, separate itself from this nothing and to freely act?” Of course, because philosophy is in itself a discipline of frontiers, it has as a genuine object of study the problematic or the obstacle by definition. Thus, particularly, any kind of subject from within philosophy may be relevant for the problem-solving method.

Historical problems

Because of its character, of the fact that it takes upon the study of people and of society's evolution from the earliest of times to the present, because in human reality the materialization of the fact amasses the contradiction, the opposition, the conflict, and more precisely, as incarnated, history represents a favorable domain for the application of the method, an inexhaustible source for the creation of certain difficulties. The analytical glance upon this domain where we become conscious of all these systems of inexhaustible oppositions shall know to search and even to find, in the measure where it will make an appeal to the semantic structures of science and culture, the superior significations and the fundamental principles of historical life. Barely through giving out such fields of superior signification human history begins to unveil its meanings and to open for interpreting in depth the events that marked it. Thereby it's possible to surmount some of its deficiencies as, for example, the exaggerated focus on the factual knowledge in the detriment of the general orientations regarding the processes which take place during several historical periods⁹. The encumbrances, the trammels, the deterrents must be elaborated in such a manner that they would help pupils to master the notions and to offer them a general orientation in the historical processes and phenomena and, at last, a certain autonomy in the appreciation of the events that took place during all centuries.

The condition that they would be adapted to the age and individual particularities of the pupils naturally remains.

The surest path to illustrate the above said, is the appeal to a few examples. We shall turn back, at first, to that example regarding the United States and the practice of slavery. Essential in order for the pupils to have the possibility to find of at least one hint for an answer is for the professor to present them in time and adequately the state of affairs. Especially because this problem solving method's aim does not consist in the simple mention of some details concerning the political system of the Republic and eventually in the assertion of some opinions regarding discussed reality, but relates to the understanding of the North-American culture as a “melting-pot”, as a state which incarnates the historical dialectic's contradictions. In order to attain such a result, the pupils must follow several stages.

⁹ *Idem*, pp. 144-145.

We believe that the most important is the knowledge of the facts themselves. In this manner we will relieve the entire problematic matter from the addition which doesn't touch the nuclei of the aimed contradiction clearing the ground for the depth analysis. Moreover, through this prior knowledge it is obtained a first contact with the subject as it is and the property of terms is attained.

The emphasis of the existent differences between the young republic and the Old Continent's countries is imperative. The first, a state without history, deprived of traditions with a culture traversed by the shudder of absolute change and, consequently, of the absolute contradiction — a state where everyone manages to do whatever one wants (from the establishment of the most bizarre societies, clubs and organizations until... the practice of slavery). The latter, instead, countries with a distant past and grounded on a culture which has behind itself an entire burden of symbols. Just as necessary are the mentions of the Protestantism characteristics which, by its fundamental divorce, not so much from the Old World's tradition, but of every kind of tradition, of the idea of tradition as it is¹⁰, drives people into appreciating more the rupture, independence, the absolute value of the individual will and not necessarily the sacrosanct respect of the principle of the social equality — especially when the free will of the Protestant came against the lack of individual consciousness of the African descended from a culture which did not proclaim any universal revelation.

It's also not useless to remind the primacy of the economic factor in the new society's life and the American's pragmatism often driven to its extremes and which came from the same passion for individualism. Fact which possessed the ability to encourage the use of slaves in order to gain a cheap and swift profit.

We shall take then the case of the lessons regarding the conquest of Dacia by the Romans or those about the First World War. Here too the professor may formulate several problematic situations. We offer only a few suggestions: "*If the Romans quitted Dacia during the years 270-275 A.D., how do you explain the fact that Romanians speak today a Latin originated language?*" or, another case, "*Taking into account that the Romanian royal family was the descendent of the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen dynasty, what were the causes which drove it to join Romania to the Antante and not to the Central Powers during the First World War?*". At the same time, during the recapitulative class of cognizances with interest to Transylvania's history in the modern era, the pupils may be invited to explain to what fact is due the great number of Romanians in this province during the 19th century, under the premises of a very long foreign occupation and of an intense denationalizing policy. Essential in all three examples is that the pupils be guided to bestow a special attention to the importance of those happened and not to the details tied to the said facts. Of

¹⁰ *Traditio* means "transmission", "transfer", "passage from one to the other". To transmit further the terms of a culture, its symbols, its practices and significations does not mean the inscription in the ossified fixity of some more or less contingent determinations and their adoption as a perpetual reference system. It is instead about identity within change, about novelty in that which is ancient, about that which is unknown within that which is known.

course, their difficulty degree is not an exceptionally elevated one and may be used even to the general school classes.

In high school, instead, a gradual increase of the difficulty level is compelling. *“How do you explain the chain collapse of the communist regimes in 1989?”*, *“During the 19th century the United States, a no more than a century old Republic, gained and even economically overran states with a distant historical past. How do you argue for this astonishing progress?”*, *“As the sentiment of belonging to a nation has developed to the Romanians only in the 19th century, what could have determined Michael the Brave to unify the three Romanian provinces in 1600?”* or *“As it is known, women have acquired the right to vote only in the first half of the 19th century. Thus, can we speak about a true social equality during the period from before its sanction?”* are only a few variants. Just as well they may be invited to answer the following provocation: *“If the North and West European zones were rather economically developed during the 19th century, what has determined so many millions of people to quit their country and to immigrate to America?”*. Through the present examples too, the teenager’s thought is channeled toward the examination of the cause-effect ratio or toward the deep understanding of differently principles and notions.

Thus, we may assert that the problem solving method responds in a first stage to the pupils’ need of orientation, not to the memorization of diverse events’ and phenomena’s details, but towards the capture of their essence and causation. The effect is being felt in the deeper assimilation of cognizances and, from there, to the seizure of the difficulty that has been aimed by the problem solving method.

The problematic transfer

The second phase or stage of the problem solving method, that is not only tied to the essence of the pedagogy and to its fundamental purposes, but is also the zone where the problem solving method reveals its ultimate nature, is the principle asserted in the beginning of this article related to anamnesis.

To remember appertains to passed, determined and known facts. Having before someone something unknown means the suppression of every determination of the empirical remembrance. It’s left for us to place another kind of remembrance, a remembrance of the unknown if the paradox is allowed to us. In this point pedagogy intersects the territory of two fundamental disciplines: philosophy and psychoanalysis.

At the precise point where philosophy uses the concept of transcendental, psychoanalysis articulated that one of unconscious¹¹. In fact, the subject’s division that psychoanalysis talks to us about already for as long as a century

¹¹ The unconscious is the sign of the presence in the human being of a fundamental difference. For the development of the concept of unconscious, see Jacques Lacan, also Melman, 2005.

signifies exactly the achievement of a difference within the undetermined void of a subject. Barely from this point forward, the identity, the seizure, the distinction become possible altogether with language and thought. Thus, a good achievement of a distinction or of an identification of a concept (actions which may be perceived in their profound complementarity) pertains each and every time of a good reduction or analysis of everything that we already know of all determinations to something undetermined. Barely the access to undetermined, hence, to the unknown may bring us something simultaneously new and intelligible in our knowledge. Anamnesis is a profound act of reduction and of unification of this reduction precisely through the fact that, as tradition has already told us, we are ourselves unknown¹². We may achieve the above mentioned reduction only because we are ourselves grounded through a radical reduction that transcends every computation, namely every reference to numerable or to analogy.

This idea is already present to **ARISTOTLE** and is present in **TOMAS OF AQUINAS'** scholastics, with the idea of potency of the passive intellect and in that of knowledge through the act of the agent intellect. Thus, potency means the being's and non-being's co-presence within a given term. The term does not exist yet, but it may exist. But the comprehension of the knowledge's potency such as an outlet of the latter towards that which is unknown to it in order to touch its exhaustion may be seen precisely as the anamnestic reach of the unknown. Certainly, the potency is not yet the actual reach, but the subject's availability for it. An availability which already refers itself to the identity's co-presence or superposition on its own difference: the coincidence between that which is known and that which is unknown. The solution for an unknown is related, therefore, to the coming into act of this superposition between identity and difference, where identity is as much passing into its own crisis of the reduction to its possibility conditions, as difference is brought within the range of knowledge as a fundamental encounter of the variation limit of a certain element. Once that this overlap takes place, subjective consciousness may gain ingress into the novelty's intelligibility that she has encountered precisely because conscience becomes one with this simultaneous variation and reduction. Namely, the overlap becomes something interior to it: the subject is able to (re)cognize the unknown because he has become identical with the latter¹³.

The pupil's analysis in the problem solving method must thusly uphold upon the actualization of the difference, upon the appropriation of this unknown against which his intellect collides.

The formal thinking cannot use such terms. Following formal logic, the perceived contradiction in the particular history of the United States of America is not possible to be solved. The administration of such a conflict within itself appears as merely a systematic aberration, as a historical deficiency pertained

¹² See *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. 11, pp. 1459-1461.

¹³ See T. of Aquinas, pp. 47-57.

only to human meanness and obtuseness or to any other circumstances deprived of any tie to the American culture premises. The two contradictory facts are so radically disjoint that the explanation of their coexistence and deep liaison may not be asserted by the terms of formal thought, but by the search of some contingent explanation of their ties and concurrent contemporaneity within a society as the North-American one.

The formal thought may not understand, therefore, that there exists a necessary, not contingent, link between slavery and the American culture of the 18th-19th century, that, in fact, the radical libertarian ideal implies through its own definition the dialectics of its own opposition, ending in slavery — the American case — or in terror — the French Revolution case.

Resuming the entire span of the problem solving method, we point out that the solution of the detailed case is that of making the pupils understand the inner, necessary, semantically tie between the concepts of absolute liberty or of that of absolute difference — the Protestantism's case, divorced from tradition, from continuity — and anarchy, or the reverse of that, totalitarianism or terror — the case of the American slaver derive or of the Jacobin's terrorist one.

In this point one shall arrive, however, only if the professor shall understand that a new knowledge's terms, by their very novelty, imply an analysis, thus a first renouncement of that which was already known until the encounter of the irreducible point of that novelty and by relation to which it is established a link or a continuity of a totally different order than that of an analogy — analogy that pertains to the essence of the imitative, reproductive thought, that puts the pupil in the posture of the dogmatic receptor who is not truly formed in the pedagogical sense, but only informed, in a rather mechanical sense. And, nevertheless, that the remembrance or the *anamnesis* does not pertain in its essence to any term already determined by knowledge excepting the place where it identifies that which novelty is not — when the pupil remembers the known facts of the American history, he does it only to eliminate from the contradiction's landscape that which is already known and may not offer him an answer to the perceived problem. Then it is understood that the remembrance in the sense of *anamnesis* is that of the unconscious itself by that, following the word of the psychoanalysis, the unconscious is structured as a language¹⁴, but a language with means which go beyond the bivalence of formal logic and admit the speculative dialectic of the opposed that we meet in the philosophical semantics. Barely arrived here we understand that certain ideas which materialized in the history of certain people could direct to the contrary of that which they proclaimed by their ground principles.

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