

Teaching philosophy in France

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France



- 1 Where philosophy is taught in France
- 2 Who teach philosophy in France
- 3 What sort of philosophy is mainly taught in France ?
- 4 Conclusion

Philosophy is taught in France mainly in two institutions

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- At the University (in philosophy Departments) and in other institutions of higher education, called in France “les grandes écoles” (the “Great schools”) i.e. the famous “Écoles normales supérieures” (Rue d’Ulm, ENS Lyon), École Polytechnique, Écoles de commerce (Business Schools) (e.g. HEC), etc. and therefore in all preparatory schools of higher education that prepare to the national competitions to obtain the right to study in such or such “Great school”. (Commentary and philosophical essay are exercises in almost all competitions for these “Great schools”, including the scientific ones.)

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In high schools

- In high schools, except those who are in a position as non-incumbents or some who teach in private schools, all philosophy teachers are state officials who succeeded either the “CAPES de philosophie” (Certificate of Proficiency in Secondary Education in philosophy) or the more prestigious “agrégation de philosophie”. The rules and the jury for these competitions are strictly national, the written tests are based on a blind refereeing system, and the members of jury ignore the results of these tests when the admissible candidates give their lessons tests.

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NB: It is not disputable that those from the Ecole Normale Supérieure enjoy a big advantage for getting positions in higher education (around 60% of ENS students get a position in higher education).

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 - ④ Analytic philosophy, mathematical logic and history of science are taught in higher education, but not very largely, remaining in minority and isolated.

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The teaching of philosophy in France is often the occasion for pedagogical and political debates. It is rightly considered as an important teaching, but I believe, maybe in a pessimistic way, that a lot of teachers at all levels feel that it is nowadays a task more and more difficult.

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