

Class 1: Metaphysics Lesson Plan

Materials:

- Baby pictures of Annika and Daisy
- Duplo Legos
- Paper and markers for philosophy “contract”
- Leaves

Goals:

- Introduce students to the discipline of philosophy and set norms for how our discussions will proceed in future classes
- Discuss concepts of persistence and continuity as they relate to personal identity
- Discuss concepts of persistence and continuity as they relate to objects through the example of Theseus’ ship

Timeframe (minutes):

0 - 10: Introductions and What is Philosophy?

10 - 15: Make philosophy contract

15 - 30: Baby photo activity

30 - 45: Lego activity

If extra time: Leaf activity

Activities:

A. Introductions - Daisy and Annika

- a. Names pronouns, one thing you like to do, favorite animal

B. What is philosophy?

- a. Have you ever heard of philosophy? What do you think philosophy is?
- b. Basically, we’re going to be asking big questions about the world that have lots of right answers.

- i. The goal is just to get you to think more about how the world works and why you think certain things

1. Are there any questions you have about how the world works?
2. Ex: why are some actions polite, why do i have to raise my hand,
3. Scientific questions, others.. Used to be answered by philosophy, but now their own fields

- ii. Talk a little about how certain questions that have definitive answers

1. Are there any questions where you think there can be two (+) correct answers?

- a. Favorites (ex of sharing)
      - b. What makes something art?
    - iii. We approach these with both “sharing” and “discussing”-- sharing helps us gather information, discussing helps us get an answer.
  - c. Example for sharing vs discussing questions:
    - i. Sharing: What’s your favorite animal?
      - 1. We could go through a short dialogue explaining our favorite animals and showing why it doesn’t really make sense for us to disagree with each other
    - ii. Discussing: What makes someone my friend?
      - 1. Similar thing with short dialogue
    - iii. Good to disagree!
      - 1. In fact, necessary when discussing
      - 2. How to disagree? Respectful, listening, not attacking person
      - 3. Model disagreement
      - 4. Ask: how does it feel to disagree? When disagreed with?
  - d. Make our “philosophy contract” and sign it
    - i. Put things on it that we want to do to make sure we respect each other
    - ii. Few ideas like: raise hand to speak, respectfully disagree, listen when other people are talking
    - iii. Have everyone sign their name on the contract
- C. Persistence and continuity with identity:
- a. Annika and Daisy bring out baby pictures and talk a little bit about who we were when we were that age
    - i. Movement moment: Go to the left side of the tarp if you think Daisy and Annika are the same people (on the inside) as they were when they were the age in the pictures. Go to the right side of the tarp if you think they are different people.
    - ii. Go around and have students share why they think that. Encourage them to defend their answers with reasons
      - 1. If students seem uncomfortable disagreeing, Daisy and Annika can model respectful disagreement about the answer to the question
  - b. Bring everyone back to their original spots on the tarps. Ask students to go around in a circle and talk about one thing they remember from when they were 4. Based on what they say, talk through some or all of the following discussion questions:
    - i. Are you the same you as you were when you were younger? Why or why not?
    - ii. What, if anything, would cause that to change?
    - iii. What makes you (now) you?

- iv. What if your friend/sibling did all the same things as you? Would they become you?
- D. Persistence and continuity with objects: **Lego Activity**
  - a. Bring out legos that make some shape (block, building, ship, etc.)
  - b. Take apart shape and put it back together again:
    - i. Is this the same thing that it was originally? Why?
  - c. Take apart shape and put it back together with one piece replaced
    - i. Is this the same thing that it was originally? Why?
  - d. Start replacing piece by piece. Continue asking if it is still the same thing it was originally. See if there is a point at which they think the object is no longer the same object
  - e. Have the other person take the discarded pieces of legos and rebuild the original shape with them. Don't show this to the children until they have made a decision about whether the original object is still the same object.
  - f. Differences between people and objects
    - i. Ask– what if anything is similar between you and the lego object?
    - ii. What is different?
    - iii. More non-physical properties when it comes to people compared to objects
- E. Essential properties of objects: the perfect leaf (platonic ideal)
  - a. Movement moment: We are going to scatter leaves that we bring with us around the area we are sitting. Everyone has one minute to get up and find us the best leaf you can find. You want the leaf to be so perfectly leaf-like that if an alien came down in a spaceship and asked you what a leaf is, you could hand it to them and they would know what a leaf is. Bring your leaf back to the tarp.
  - b. Everyone comes back to circle and we have discussion:
    - i. What is similar/different about everyone's leaves?
    - ii. Daisy and Annika get an object that is clearly not a leaf (pinecone, blade of grass, etc.). Is this a leaf? What makes it not a leaf?
    - iii. What does something have to have for us to call it a leaf?

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR INTERACTION

- WGBH: engaging children in meaningful conversation ([x](#))
- Model, prompt response
- If something doesn't work, move on

