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Professor Susan Russinoff

PHIL91: Philosophy for Children

Fall 2022

Metaphysics: Importance in Identity

Subject of Discussion: Metaphysics

Age Range: 5-6

Time Total: 1 hour

Materials: *The Important Book*, an apple, a pencil, a spoon, a pair of shoes, baby photos

Learning Objectives:

- Students will begin to understand, through discussion, what philosophy is and what it means to ask a philosophical question vs a non-philosophical question
- Students will be able to think about important/essential qualities of objects
- Students will be able to think about the essential qualities of a personal identity
- Students will be able to think critically, have meaningful disagreements with each other and the teachers, and ask questions of curiosity and confusion

Introduction (5-10 mins)

- Introduce ourselves (name, age, major at Tufts, most important thing about you) (David and Mindy)
- Have them introduce themselves (David)
 - Name
 - Age
 - Most important thing about you!
 - If you are meeting someone for the first time and you want them to know who YOU are, what one thing would you tell them about yourself?
- Outline Rules/ Expectations for the group (Mindy)
 - Explain that we know rules are usually given TO you to follow, but we want to ask YOU what rules we should follow while we are together
 - Question– What are some rules/expectations we should follow during our discussion?
 - Our ideas:
 - Respect
 - Share the air space
 - Disagreement is good!
 - Being confused or unsure is NOT a bad thing... there are no right or wrong answers in this discussion!
- What is philosophy?
 - Have you heard of the word before? What do you think it means?
 - What is a philosophical question?

- Questions with no certain answers
- Questions that can't be answered just by looking
- Questions that require thought to come up with an answer
- How to tell the difference?
 - Ex. What is your hair color?-- no!
 - Ex. What makes a pencil a pencil?-- yes!

Activity #1: *The Important Book* & Discussion (15-20 mins)

[Link to online version: <https://www.slideshare.net/ruthdemshick/the-important-book-ppt>]

Book-Reader: Mindy

Pre-Reading Question (David):

- What is the difference between “important” and just a description/ fact about the object?
Fact vs important or essential fact?
 - Ex. I have this pencil and it is yellow, is that “important” to the pencil or just a description?

— *read the book now :) —*

Discussion: (David holds book)

- Go through each object and ask if they agree with what makes that object that object and what else could be the most “important” quality of that object other than what the book suggests
- Do you agree that...
 - What makes a spoon a spoon is that you eat with it?
 - Do you eat with a stirring spoon? A spoon too big to put in your mouth?
 - What makes a daisy a daisy is that it is white?
 - What if it is a colored daisy?
 - What makes rain rain is that it is wet?
 - Does it have to fall from the sky?
 - What makes grass grass is that it is green?
 - What about in the winter or fall when it is dead and brown?
 - What makes snow snow is that it is white?
 - What about when it gets brown on the ground?
 - What makes an apple an apple is that it is round?
 - Are all apples round? [Show them my non-round apple]
 - What makes wind wind is that it blows?
 - Is all wind cold?
 - What makes the sky the sky it is always there?
 - What if it is blocked by clouds?

- What makes a shoe a shoe is that you put your foot in it?
 - What if you put a shoe on your hand? Are they gloves now?
- Can you describe any object with just ONE thing?
 - YOU... transition to next activity
 - *MOVEMENT BREAK: crocodiles and crabs OR shake the wiggles out –*

Activity #2: Personal Identity: What makes you, you?? (15-20 mins) (have baby/childhood photos of ourselves)

- Questions about identity (Mindy)
 - From book: Ask “What makes you, you?”
 - Is saying that “you are you” enough? What is “you”?
 - Possible answers to explore:
 - Appearance
 - Personality
 - Brain/mind
 - Family/friends
 - Home
- What if... [insert option below]... are you still you?! (David)
 - Your hair color changed/ you got a haircut
 - You got a tattoo
 - You lost your memories
 - You changed interests
 - You swapped thoughts/ minds with someone else
 - You mimicked or copied someone else exactly
 - You had a different family/ different people who love you
 - You age/ grow up
 - Show them our baby photos!

Concluding Activity (5 mins) (Mindy)

- Have students go around again to share the “most important thing” about themselves from the beginning
- Has it changed after our discussion?



