

Thank you!

What is Philosophy?

What is philosophy to you?

“At its core, philosophy is the practice of asking questions that are fundamental to the human condition.”

We all ask philosophical questions, whether as children or adults, and are engaging in philosophical thinking. These questions do not have certain or definite answers—philosophy is defined by uncertainty.

Two terms central to the practice of philosophy: *questioning* and *dialogue*.

The Discipline of Philosophy versus the Practice of Philosophy

Philosophy is largely absent in schools - often a philosophical dialogue is a classroom dialogue, yet philosophical questioning and dialogue is not prioritized, or even introduced, for most until university.

Although there is a rigid association between the practice of philosophy with the discipline of philosophy, this exclusion is harmful to both those practicing and to the discipline itself.

Philosophy for...children?

What Does Pre-college Philosophy Mean for the Discipline?

- 1) The declining public support of the discipline of philosophy puts the exclusionary or esoteric practice into question.
- 2) *Expanding who we consider to be a “philosopher” and what is legitimate philosophical practice beyond the university is beneficial for the discipline.*
- 3) *Pre-college philosophy can supplement, benefit, pre-college education from its emphasis on questioning and independent thinking, on uncertainty rather than certainty.*

Expanding Access to the Practice of Philosophy

Both in theory and practice, philosophy has generally been reserved for adults. Children are generally seen as lacking developed reason and self-control, and childhood is posed as a deficient stage of being.

Expanding the spectrum of legitimate philosophical practice beyond the university, we can focus on the ability of children to practice philosophy.

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 - a) Are young students capable of practicing philosophy?
- 3) *Pre-college philosophy can supplement, benefit, pre-college education from its emphasis on questioning and independent thinking, on uncertainty rather than certainty.*
 - a) If children are capable of practicing philosophy, what form(s) does this practice take in primary and secondary education?

*Are young students capable of
practicing philosophy?*

Our Experiences With Our
Students (Your Children)

Again, thank you already!

Are young students capable of practicing philosophy?

They already are!

Philosophy begins with questions, and children intimately know philosophical questions.

Even if children are “deficient,” this means they have a natural Cartesian stance in attempting to make sense of themselves and the world.

Children are already prepared to have philosophical discussions

Adults passively accept parts of their experience, and children often model their parents in this way—children often wonder why things are the way they are. When we preserve their natural sense of wonder, we learn from our children.

“Children’s lack of knowledge about culture’s conventions forces them to take a ‘Cartesian stance’ and to start from scratch when thinking about philosophical questions. As a result, their answers to philosophical questions are bound to be more original than those of adults”

Many people often think that children lack necessary knowledge and experience to engage in philosophy—there is no such thing! No matter the knowledge or experience they begin with, philosophical discussions give children a deeper understanding of themselves, and the world around them.

If children are capable of practicing philosophy, what form(s) does this practice take in primary and secondary education?

Articulating their beliefs

“Learning philosophy at a younger age prepares students to concisely articulate their beliefs and have discussions with people they disagree with.” - Topping and Trickey (2014) - Kenyon “A case for integrating philosophy into early education”

Learn how to say why think think the things they do

There is a critical period for having philosophical discussions. What matters is to pick up the general spirit of philosophy at a young age.

“If one does not do this as a child, it is much harder to do it later” (“Letters to the Editor”, The Guardian, 18 June 1996, p. 14)

Metacognition and Critical Thinking

“Philosophy is not a body of knowledge so much as a method for articulating and exploring questions” (Kenyon et al)

Discussing philosophy in a small group setting requires students to be able to see why believe what they do, a process called metacognition. Developing metacognition helps children in all academic areas.

“Individuals will need to stay ahead of the curve and keep up with the times. This requires critical thinking, the ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity, and a readiness to enter into constructive dialogue with people of differing perspectives”

How to teach philosophy to
children?

Philosophical Sensitivity

The process of heightening our awareness that the way things appear to us does not necessarily reflect the way things really are. *PS Mohr Lone

Improves our ability to notice the philosophical facets of questions, beliefs, and situations, which we might otherwise miss.

Harnessing this sensitivity allows parents and educators to utilize children's natural wonder in order to perceive the hidden layers of meaning and mystery in the everyday experience.

Philosophical sensitivity is a tool for both you *and* your child.

The Implementation

How to cultivate Philosophical Sensitivity in yourself and your child

The Ground Rules

1) *We Listen*

Movement: Move your hand to your ear

Games to promote listening: remaining quiet and listening to surroundings, telephone

Importance: The act of listening not only improves our awareness of the world around us (prompting curiosity and questioning), but listening is also an important skill in philosophical dialogue. We must hear the thoughts and ideas of others in order to make progress in our philosophical understanding.

The Ground Rules

2) *We Think*

Movement: Move your pointer finger to your temple

Games to promote thinking: Question of the day

Importance: Thinking promotes self-reflective thinking about thinking (metacognition). It also encourages students to practice reasoning when sharing their thoughts.

The Ground Rules

2) *We Respond*

Movement: Pointing to our mouths

Scaffolding: ____, do you agree or disagree with ____ ? Why?

Games to promote thinking: The river game - all those who agree go to one side of the river, all those who disagree go to the other side.

Importance: Learning how to articulate disagreement and support it cultivates rich philosophical discussion and encourages questioning about the world.

Big and Little Questions

Answering your child's questions

Ask your child what they find puzzling, interesting, or important.

Ask clear questions about the meaning of the more abstract concepts your child uses.

What do you mean by fairness?

Elicit the reasons your child has for something they say. Investigate the implications of a particular view.

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Suggest assumptions that might underlie statements your child makes.

Help your child to recognize relevant distinctions between two or more views.

Point out logical fallacies.

Offer alternative ways to approach subjects.

Indicate when two statements appear to contradict one another .

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Prompting your child's
philosophical sensitivity

Our Tools - no need for a trip to the store, maybe the library!

Toys

Crafts

Books

A Combination!

The Specifics

Refer to your handouts!

Practice!