



Philosophical Exercises for Teachers

This handout introduces short exercises that teachers can use to support the development of philosophical enquiry in the classroom. These exercises are designed to help children and young people engage philosophically with: Questions (p.1), Concepts (p.5), Arguments (p.11) and their own Reflections (p.16).

Question Exercises

Question Pick 'n' Mix

If you expect children to generate their own questions as part of your approach, they will have a valuable opportunity to articulate their own philosophical interests. However, to begin with, children tend to have a fairly narrow sense of the range of possible philosophical questions they might ask. Often, they model their questions on questions that have proved successful in the past. They might stick with ethical questions like 'Is cheating ever okay?' or they might latch on Socratic questions such as 'What is love?'. Over time, this can make the composition of questions in philosophy too repetitive or formulaic. This exercise models a wide range of questions we might ask in philosophy, opening up new lines of enquiry for children.

Collate a generic set of philosophical questions, we provide a pack for KS1 and KS2 that you can use. They include a broad range of questions from different branches of philosophy including:

- Can anyone know what it's like to be you?
- Is it possible to think of nothing?
- Does every event have a cause?
- Is it always wrong to kill?
- What is art for?

Alternatively, replace or supplement these questions with photocopies of diverse questions asked by your own class in previous sessions.

- Lay out these questions on the floor with more choices than there are children
- Give the group time to look at them
- Ask every child to pick a question they find interesting
- Next they pick a partner and tell them about their choice
- After a few minutes mix, they find a new partner and find out why they found their question interesting.
- Repeat as many times as this is useful.
- Conclude with a discussion of what makes a question interesting.

- Older children might consider what makes some questions more philosophical than others.
- To help facilitate this, ask: *What do your questions have in common?*
- Participants may find commonalities in the kinds of answers the questions might elicit and the methods required to arrive at those answers e.g. *'They involve working out what concepts mean'*; *'They are questions that lead to further questions'*; *'They are controversial'*; *'They cannot be answered by experience, experimentation or research alone'* etc.

Hot Seating

This is useful as a way of developing questioning — particularly among younger children — and revealing which questions are more suitable for philosophical enquiry. Hot Seating works best when a group are engaged with a narrative stimulus such as a story or film clip. Often children's first questions aim at clarifying aspects of the story that are unresolved such as what characters might have felt, meant, wished or intended. While these speculative questions can help unlock what matters to a group, they are rarely suitable for productive discussion in their unrefined state as they are often concerned with facts about the story that we cannot know, rather than the meaning of ideas within the story, which are open to enquiry. Identifying and dealing with these kinds of questions first, can help uncover more fruitful philosophical questions beneath. These deeper questions, should still connect with the children's initial interests but, if you can find them, they are likely to produce a more philosophical discussion.

- The teacher gets into role as a central character from a stimulus text that the children have recently engaged with e.g. Goldilocks from Goldilocks and the Three Bears.
- S/he explains that the class are allowed to ask any questions they may have after reading the story together.
- The teacher should be sensitive to the different kinds of questions that come up. Factual questions about the character should be answered with reference to the text (*E.g. Whose chair did you sit in first?*). Speculative questions can be answered imaginatively, perhaps taking direction from the children's ideas. story (*E.g. Did your parents wonder where you were?*)
- If the children do ask any philosophical questions during the Hot Seating (*E.g. Were you naughty?*) this presents a great opportunity to highlight these as 'Questions for everyone to think about'. Goldilocks is the expert on the previous questions but this question is debatable.
- In a group of younger children, it is more likely that none of the questions will be philosophical. However, the teacher-in-role can enter into dialogue with the class raising more philosophical questions that stem from the less philosophical questions they have asked. For example, if a child asks: *'Did you feel sorry for breaking Baby Bear's chair?'* you may ask *'Should we feel sorry for the things we do by accident?'*
- Extend the activity by inviting some of the children to take the chair and assume the role of the character.

Question Sorting

Often the process of question-forming can show up a great deal of confusion about the kinds of questions that enable a satisfying philosophical enquiry. You may find that your class come up with a range of questions – some of which look less promising than others.

In this situation there are a few ways to proceed that aren't very helpful. You might decide to persevere with a vote in the hope that a decent question will prevail. Instead you may attempt to influence the selection by intervening to select your choice without explanation or even by deceiving the class about the outcome of their vote! All of these options pass up a useful learning opportunity. The discussion about what makes some questions more suitable for philosophy is itself a philosophical issue. As a result, answers are provisional.

Take this chance to help your students deepen their understanding of what makes a good enquiry question so that they are more likely produce viable questions in the future. This exercise can sometimes

take over the whole session, but when it does don't worry: you're still doing something philosophically worthwhile.

- Introduce one criterion at a time and briefly discuss its meaning with examples
- Next ask children working in groups, to consider whether their questions meet the criteria.
- Ask for reasoned examples for questions accepted and rejected on this basis
- Next introduce a further criterion repeating the process.
- By the end of the exercise you may have only a few questions or none at all that meet all four criteria.
- Ask the class to go back into groups and devise a question that meets all four criteria
- As a whole group assess these new questions using the same process.

This process of question sorting requires some criteria. Over time your children will be able to use their experience to devise their own criteria, but to begin with you may want to provide them. We suggest that philosophically promising questions are:

- Conceptual – concerned with rich ideas and their meanings
- Contestable – about issues that are the subject of reasonable disagreement, that not settled
- Common – ideas we use frequently, familiar concepts
- Connected – about matters that are relevant to our lives and learning
- Central – at the heart of how we understand ourselves and the world around us
- Considerable – important or interesting enough to spend time on

Acknowledgments: Here we have adapted a list describing philosophical concepts given by Splitter, L. and Sharp, A. M. (1995) *Teaching for Better Thinking; The Classroom Community of Enquiry*

Question Capsule Wardrobe

This exercise helps children appreciate that besides the substantive questions they ask during an enquiry (e.g. *Are we free? Was that fair?*). Philosophical enquiry also requires a good repertoire of procedural questions too e.g. *Why do you think that? Does that idea follow?* They may be used to the teacher asking these kinds of questions, but they can ask them of each other too.

This activity strips down the many procedural questions we commonly ask, to a few bare essentials.

- Why do you think that?
- What do you mean?
- Can you give an example?
- Are those things the same or different?
- How does that help answer our question?
- What might someone who disagreed say?

Split the class into groups of 4 or 5. In each group, one child should be nominated as the facilitator. The rules of the game are that the facilitator of each small group, can ask only questions from this list as they facilitate a short discussion around a chosen question. The other children should explore the question together, much like an ordinary dialogue. At the end of the exercise ask the groups whether their facilitator played by the rules. Then ask the facilitator whether there were other questions they wished they could have asked. You may want to repeat the exercise at a later date, adding some of these suggestions.

Acknowledgements: Both Peter Worley and Jason Buckley's pare down questions in this way. This list is inspired by their use of 'content-less questions' in their teaching of facilitation.

Question Carousel

Sometimes questions prove popular initially, but once the group begins to explore them they fail to deliver, perhaps because the question is too complex or the answer is too uncontroversial. This is a strategy for briefly road-testing multiple questions before deciding on a question that has the potential to be explored in more depth.

Simple version:

This version of the exercise allows your class to consider 3 – 6 questions.

- Select several questions composed by members of the class (or if necessary, prepared by you in advance).
- Write the questions on white boards and distribute them around a circle.
- Split the class into as many groups as there are questions and allocate each of them a question that they should stand beside.
- Give each group 2 minutes to discuss their question before moving to the next in a clockwise direction.
- Ask them to pay attention to how much they felt they had to say about each question and how much agreement or disagreement there was within their group.
- After one rotation, invite the group to comment on the question they thought had the most mileage for further discussion.

Complex version

This is a more complicated version of the exercise useful for dealing with a larger number of questions. Because the instructions are complicated, it works best with older children. You may even want to set up an inner and outer circle of chairs to help the class visualise where they should move to during the rotation.

- Use questions devised in pairs. So, if you have thirty in your class you will have fifteen questions.
- Invite one person from each pair to form an inner circle facing outwards. During the activity they stay still.
- Their partner should face them forming an outer circle. They will move during the activity.
- Give each group 45 seconds to discuss their question before moving to the next in a clockwise direction.
- Ask them to pay attention to how much they felt they had to say about each question and how much agreement or disagreement there was within their group.
- After one rotation, invite a few contributors from the inner circle to comment on the viability of their question. They are experts having discussed the same question with 15 people.
- Then invite a few contributors from the outer question to comment on the question they found most worthy of further discussion. They are generalists having discussed all 15 questions.
- Use this discussion to decide which question to pursue as a class.

Concept Exercises

Concept Comb (See it, Say It)

This is a technique for teasing out the conceptual potential of stimuli in an open-ended way. It sensitises children to the fact that there is a conceptual dimension to everything that they engage with and helps highlight the significance of concepts in philosophical enquiry generally. It works particularly well with visual stimulus material.

- Participants should spend an extended period of 5 – 10 minutes looking at an artwork, artefact, series of stills from a video or illustrations from a book and identifying concepts that connect to what they see. Any idea that arises from looking at the stimulus is acceptable at this stage – e.g. *'Blame'*, *'Celebrity'*, *'Education'* – so long as the participants are able to say more to explain that connection in the subsequent discussion.
- The group may do this in silence, writing down their concepts privately or on post-its for others to see. Alternatively, they may make a list with a partner, or call out their ideas to the whole group while a facilitator scribes.
- After the initial period of generating ideas, collate the concepts the group comes up with inviting them to thematise and prioritise those concepts that are the most resonant and interesting. These kind of questions might be useful:
 - Are there any common themes among the concepts we've listed?
 - Does the artwork challenge our understanding of any of the concepts we've listed here?
 - If we could only explore one of the concepts, which would be the most relevant for our group?

Exemplify (Which? Why?)

Exploring and analysing concepts requires examples. Often these examples come from a stimulus that your class may consider together. (E.g. Having read Roald Dahl's *The BFG* you may ask, 'Was the BFG a good *friend*?') Your students can also supply the examples too and when they do, you get a good sense of their comprehension of the concept being explored. Their responses can also suggest ways in which you might challenge their understanding of the concept in subsequent activities.

- This is an activity that often begins with a generic set of resources as this can produce interesting associative thinking since contextual information is less important. We use the boxes of postcards you can buy from book shops (e.g. 100 Ladybird Book Covers) but any varied set of curious images or objects would do. Alternatively, you could choose images specifically connected to your enquiry e.g. illustrations from the *BFG*.
- Lay out the cards on the floor and give the group time to look at them.
- Then invite them to find a good example of the concept you'd like them to explore e.g. *'Friendship'*.
- When they've chosen a card that best exemplifies their understanding of *'Friendship'* ask them to share their postcard and their explanation with a partner.
- Older groups should be encouraged to ask each other questions about their choices.
- Invite some children to feedback giving full, well-reasoned answers about how their card exemplifies the concept you are exploring.
- Draw attention to features of their answers that might help the group to piece together an account of what the concept means e.g. 'You said *loyalty* was important, but also mentioned having *fun*'
- Older groups can then reflect on key assumptions the group has made about what friendships means. They may even be able to identify some areas of agreement and disagreement since not all children's answers will reveal the same understanding of the concept.

Exemplify (Where? There!)

This activity is similar to Exemplify (Which Why?), but allows the group to consider anything they find in their environment as an example of the concept under scrutiny. It is much like a treasure hunt but they are in search for examples of ideas.

- Take a central theme such as *'Sadness'* and invite your students to work in pairs to explore a space such as the classroom, playground or museum looking for interesting examples of that concept.
- Younger children should seek one good example and work together to say why.
- Older children should be directed to find two examples, one that they believe is non-controversial obvious or archetypal and another that they think is a borderline, ambiguous or controversial case.
- This is an activity that works well with digital cameras. If your class has access to cameras, phones or tablets, ask them to photograph their finds. If you then upload them to your computer, the class can consider them in more details in a subsequent session. If you prefer a more low tech variant, encourage your class to sketch what they find and bring back their pictures.

Exemplify (Show and Tell)

Once your participants have plenty of examples, organise a tour of the classroom, playground or museum during which each pair 'presents' their selections and talks with authority about what the example reveals about the chosen theme. Invite the group to take note of what each presentation tells us about the concept under scrutiny. You may even ask some students to work as observers to collect an emerging account of what we mean by **'Sadness'** and to note any new ideas revealed by the examples.

Compare/Contrast

This simple strategy encourages children to look meticulously at examples. It follows on naturally from 'Exemplify (Which? Why?)'. Arguments often succeed or fail based on the strength of particular examples. The ability to closely examine their features is a crucial way in which we assess whether we can draw particular conclusions presented to us.

- Quite simply, ask the group first to find as many similarities between the two postcards, images, stories, objects or examples as they can in two minutes. For example, if they are investigating the concept *'Art'* and have identified as examples, Picasso's *'Weeping Woman'* and Warhol's *'Marilyn Monroe'*, we might say: 'They are both paintings, they are both depictions of women and they are both by men'.
- Treat it like a game with the goal to exceed a target e.g. 10 similarities in two minutes.
- Be generous about what counts as a similarity and invite lots and lots of suggestions, this will encourage them to make observant, fine-grained distinctions.
- Next ask them to find as many differences as possible. For example, we might say: 'One is made by a mechanised process while the other not; one is of a recognisable public figure while the other is not; and one is a unique copy while the other is not.'
- Again, treat it like a game with the goal to exceed the number of similarities they found
- Afterwards invite the group to analyse their responses by asking questions like: *'What do we discover about the concept 'Art' from these similarities and differences?'*

Poles Apart

Sometimes exploring concepts through opposing pairs can be revealing e.g. (*'Pleasure/Pain'*; *'Knowledge/Ignorance'* *'Hope/Fear'*). Although there may not be an obvious candidate for the opposite of many concepts, attempting to find one can help us better understand the concept we are focusing on.

- This activity can be facilitated verbally as a brief exercise in brainstorming possible opposites. To facilitate it this way, in a discussion about truth the facilitator may simply ask the group: *'What is the opposite of Truth?'*
- Working in pairs the students should agree on an answer, E.g. *'Lies'* or *'Falsehood'* – both subtly different concepts with different implications for the discussion
- When feeding back the facilitator should avoid accepting any suggestion as obvious and instead ask for alternatives. Intriguingly, some pairs may also say something unexpected like *'Fiction'* *'Deception'* or *'Ignorance'*.
- The facilitator should then lead a discussion about which suggestion seems the furthest away from *'Truth'*.
- This metaphor of spatial distance can set the activity up as something physical. Children can either write down their suggestions and map them on the floor in the centre of the circle. Moving *Ignorance* further away from *Truth* than *Lies* if someone provides a compelling argument. Or children can embody their suggestions, with the pair who propose an opposite concept moving themselves further away from the facilitator.

Alien and Expert

This exercise imagines the role of philosopher as an Alien, someone who finds curious those things that others take for granted. An Expert in this context is just a human. Their expertise comes from everyday experience of using the concepts that will be discussed. This works best when the children really imagine themselves in role. Aliens ask more creative questions and Experts answer more sensitively and with less exasperation! Run the exercise like this:

- Students find a partner
- One child is the Alien and the other the Expert
- Pick an 'everyday' concept from a pack of cards e.g. marriage, farming, play, holiday
- The Alien must ask as many questions as possible to understand the concept, the Expert must answer as well s/he can. To play their role well, the Alien should not treat even the most familiar of ideas as strange. In their answers, the Expert should not assume the Alien understands the same common set of ideas that people do.

- E.g. (Exploring the concept *'School'*)

- Alien: *What is school?*

- Expert: *It's where children go to learn*

- Alien: *What are children?*

- Expert: *Small humans?*

- Alien: *Why do small humans have to learn?*

- Expert: *Because they haven't grown up yet*

- Alien: *So have grown up humans learnt everything?*

- Expert: *No?*

- Alien: *So why don't they go to school?*

- Feedback by replaying conversations between a few of the pairs and asking the rest of the group to notice the kinds of questions that help the Alien make progress towards understanding the concept.
- Get them to swap roles and refine their questioning with a new concept.

List-o-logue

This is a short dialogue driven by a goal: to produce a list of items. So, for example in an enquiry about 'Belief' the Facilitator might ask; '*Can we think of 10 examples of occasions when we are justified in believing something?*'. She then encourages a discussion in which she writes up each new example until the goal is achieved. Alternatively, she may spit the class into groups and encourage them to race to achieve their own set of ten examples independently.

The next step is to critically engage with this list which might involve prioritising, categorising, ranking or otherwise sorting the examples on the list before focusing on several in more depth.

The goal orientation here encourages divergent thinking and the generation of plenty of content. This can help you identify an example that is most apt, rather than simply exploring the first example that happens to emerge from the discussion.

Sort it Out

This quick classifying activity is designed to explore a concept using intuition and then analyse the results afterwards.

- With a concept in mind, e.g. 'Forgivable' devise a set of examples for your students to sort in smaller groups. E.g.
 - *A friend lies to you*
 - *Your mum forgets your birthday*
 - *A stranger steals your bike*
 - *Your teacher punishes you for something you didn't do*
 - *A classmate copies your test answers*
 - *Your dog chews your shoe*
- Give the groups a short amount of time to sort the examples into two piles. Forgivable and Unforgivable. Make it clear that in this exercise, there is no middle pile for examples about which they are undecided. They should make their decision's relatively quickly.
- When the time is up, explore a few examples as a whole class comparing results between the groups and listening to extended explanations from individual children.
- Allow the sub groups to move their examples to the other pile if they hear something that convinces them to do so.
- If new related concepts emerge e.g. 'Sympathy' 'Regret' or 'Accident' note these down. Allow the group to make new piles if it helps them classify their examples in a more nuanced way.

Concept Cake

Explore the meaning of ideas by looking for their key ingredients. Split the class into groups and ask them to write a recipe for 'Love'.

- Start by asking them what they think are the essential ingredients of love.
- Encourage more nuanced responses by extending the metaphor with further questions: Are there any other non-essential ingredients of love? Do we need more of one ingredient and less of another? What ingredients do we add first and what ingredients do we add last? Are there any secret ingredients?

- Once you have several recipes, compare them. Groups may want to write down their recipes on a cookbook template. Others may even want to act out the baking of their cake as though they were on a cookery programme. You might add a wooden spoon, mixing bowl and chef's hat too.
- Key to the feedback is digging into the detail: Why is it that some groups have included fun and others not mentioned loyalty?
- If you have time, the class might try and come up with a class recipe. Make it more challenging by limiting the number of ingredients they can include.

Acknowledgements: This is our interpretation of Jason Buckley's lovely idea.

Concept Continuum (or Concept-O-Meter)

Few concepts are quite so black and white as the exercises above may suggest. Exploring concepts using continuum lines allows your students to appreciate this and to distinguish examples by degree rather than treating them as absolutes. This activity also helps participants make their response to a set of choices visible for the whole group to see

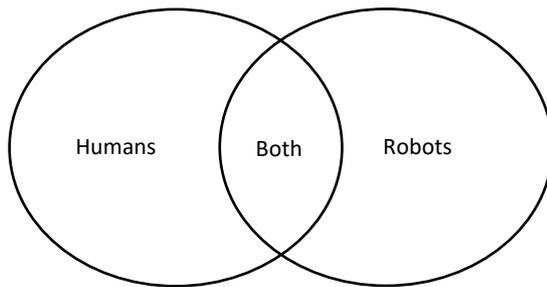
- Begin the activity by naming your Concept-O-Meter for example: 'The Brave-O-Meter', 'The Cute-O-Meter', 'The Evil-O-Meter' etc.
- Demarcate a long line on the floor with tape or string with one end signifying the most brave and the opposite end, the least brave.
- Prepare a series of examples of bravery. Some should be fairly straightforward, but most should be interesting borderline cases.
- Taking printed copies of these examples, ask the group to consider them in small groups and decide where they belong. For example:
 - *Risking your life to save a fellow soldier*
 - *Going into battle even though you are scared*
 - *Going into battle without being scared at all*
 - *Refusing to go to war even though people will think you are a coward*
 - *Going to war, but deserting once you get there*
 - *Injuring yourself, so you can't fight*
- After some discussion, invite each group to lay their example along the continuum line one at a time, giving their reasons.
- Notice the examples that cluster around the top of the Brave-O-Meter and invite arguments from the group about why some examples ought to be re-positioned after considering the others.
- Encourage the group to propose moving some of the examples, giving arguments.
- As the discussion develops, let the group suggest their own examples
- Older groups can then reflect on key assumptions the group has made about what bravery means. They may even be able to identify some areas of agreement and disagreement since not all children's answers will reveal the same understanding of the concept.

Acknowledgments: Thanks Jason Buckley for his Evil-O-Meter. We have also used continuum lines independently in our own classes but are grateful to Jason for his excellent demonstrations of their use in his.

Concept Collision

This is another exercise that explores the interesting borderline cases that may or may not belong to a particular concept. The best time to use this is when a stimulus or a discussion throws up two concepts that appear to overlap for example 'Human' and 'Robot'.

- Older children should work in pairs or small groups to identify properties (features, qualities, capacities) of humans, properties of robots and properties of both.
- Younger children should work with a teacher to classify properties that you have prepared in advance and made into flash cards e.g. *Can Move, Can Speak, Can Think*
- In both case: they should list their answers on a Venn diagram like this:

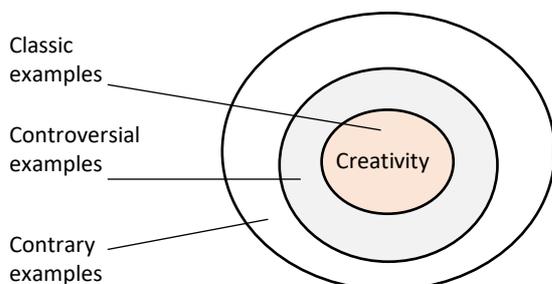


Acknowledgments: Thanks to Roger Sutcliffe of DialogueWorks and SAPERE for his work on the use of Venn diagrams in P4C.

Concept Target

A concept target is a visual map you can use to classify examples of a particular concept e.g. *Creativity*. Children may use it to identify and classify examples given to them or they may generate and classify examples of their own. This is another way to uncover those borderline or ambiguous cases that stretch our understanding of a concept

- Older children should work in pairs or small groups to identify classic examples of *creativity*, e.g. good examples of the concept, contrary examples of *creativity* (e.g. instances that are obviously not examples of the concept, or bad examples) and controversial examples that fall some way between the two.
- Younger children should work with a teacher to classify examples that you have prepared in advance e.g. *Coming up with a brand-new invention, copying someone's test answers, making art inspired by an artist*
- In both case: they should list their answers on a diagram like this with the target concept in the middle and the examples around it.



Acknowledgments: Thanks to Roger Sutcliffe of DialogueWorks and SAPERE for his work on the use of Venn diagrams in P4C.

Metaphor Mix Up

This exercise explores concepts using metaphor. It works best when you prepare the resources in advance. Taking a concept from a previous enquiry, or one you wish the class to explore next, devise a set of possible metaphors for understanding that concept. So if your chosen concept was 'Mind' you might create cards that claim the mind is a: Computer, Bird, Mirror, Room, Engine, Ghost, Boss, Tool, Snowflake, World etc.

Working in small groups distribute the set of cards and get the children to identify the metaphor that best captures what they understand by '*Mind*' before feeding back some of their suggestions. Once they get the hang of it, they may be able to organise the metaphors in more elaborate ways, such as into piles of 'helpful' and 'unhelpful' metaphors as in 'Sort it out' or along a continuum line of 'truthful' to 'untruthful' metaphors.

Argument Exercises

Head to Head

This strategy can be used both to introduce and to reinvigorate debate. This works well as a stand-alone exercise with pre-prepared statements but it can also be used to explore a statement spoken by a participant during the discussion. It's crucial that for the exercise at least, there is no middle ground and teams must argue wholeheartedly for one side or the other. For younger groups it may also be necessary to stress that you must try your best to argue for that side, even if it's not what you really think.

- Working in pairs of person A and person B, allocate sides of a debate and encourage the pairs to put forward their strongest arguments for that position. For example the A team argues in favour of the motion '*You need money to be happy*' the B team argue against the motion.
- Encourage the opposing pairs, or the opposing groups, to stand opposite one another.
- Give the debate a set amount of time, a minute or two will do. When then time us up, you have a few options.
- You may decide first to introduce one of the variations described below such as 'Reverse it' 'Multiply it' or 'Cross the Line'
- Alternatively, you may want to introduce a series of related statements and explore them using the same strategy e.g. '*You need friendship to be happy*' or '*You need good health to be happy*'
- You may want the speakers to feedback on some of the arguments they've given so far. Older children might be able to use this feedback to summarise key arguments on either side.

While debating and philosophical enquiry share in common some features namely defending a position with a series of convincing arguments, they differ in two important respects: firstly in a debate one may argue for a position they don't hold and secondly in a debate one must hold their ground and changing one's mind is not allowed. In philosophical enquiry changing your mind in response to a convincing argument is much encouraged and while arguing for sport rather than sincerely is okay from time to time, it's not really in the spirit of a community of enquiry. However sometimes a debate is needed to encourage a group to treat a topic more critically and creatively. Use this strategy occasionally and give participants a chance to articulate their true position afterwards using an activity like 'Cross the Line' below.

Acknowledgments: Thanks Jason Buckley for his take on this debating format.

Reverse it

In this extension of Head to Head, invite Person A and Person B (or Team A and Team B) to literally swap positions as they figuratively swap positions. E.g. swap arguments and swap places.

Acknowledgments: Thanks Jason Buckley for his take on this debating format and his thoughts on the significance of thinking on the move.

Multiply it

In this extension of Head to Head, invite several people on the A side of the debate to group together facing several people on the B side of the debate. Taking slightly longer this time invite them to offer their best arguments with the rest of the class as an audience. This time every contribution should respond to a point already made by the previous group.

Acknowledgments: Thanks Jason Buckley for his thoughts on the importance of bringing 'playground confidence' into the classroom by building children up to speaking in larger groups of peers.

Cross the Line

This is a great activity to use after a debate as it allows students to express their considered judgements on an issue.

- Demarcate a long line on the floor with tape or string and allocate each side of the argument to respective sides of the dividing line. For example: One side in favour of the motion '*You need money to be happy*' the other side against.
- Invite the group to stand either side of the line according to their view.
- Then gather some of arguments individuals have for their judgement.
- Tell the group that they should move if they hear anything that makes them change their mind.
- If any participants do move, interview them about what it was they found persuasive.

Acknowledgments: Although this version is our own, this kind of activity is widely used by SAPERE trainers.

Vote with your feet

This activity helps participants make their response to a set of choices visible for the whole group to see. The great thing about physical activities like these is that you don't need to wait for participants to volunteer to speak by putting their hand up, since by standing in a particular place, they have already signalled that they have done some thinking and must have something to say in justification of their choice. This can help you avoid contributions from the same people over and over again.

- Ask the group to make a decision for example: '*Which of these inventions has done the most harm?*'
- Then lay out their options around the room. E.g. the internet, guns, TV, refined sugar. You may set out the actual inventions, images of them or words to represent them.
- The whole class (or a chosen group if you need a little more order) should go and stand by their choice.
- Begin the discussion by asking for reasons in favour of each option from students standing there.

- Once the discussion has started tell the group that they should move if they hear anything that makes them change their mind.
- If any participants do move, interview them about what it was they found persuasive.

This can be an interesting activity to do at the beginning and end of an enquiry on the relevant concept (in this case *'Harm'*). Often the ensuing discussion can mean the group vote quite differently later on. If you take a photograph of where everyone is standing the first and second time you run this exercise, comparing them can be an interesting reflective activity.

Acknowledgments: Versions of this activity are known by various names and widely used by SAPERE trainers

Opinion Continuum

This is another activity that can be used to help make private thinking visible. Like some of the others, this works well as a stand-alone exercise with pre-prepared statements but it can also be used to explore a statement spoken by a participant during the discussion. The activity allows participants to explore a range of views along a spectrum making a visual map of the different perspectives in the room.

- Begin the exercise by laying out a scale on the ground comprising: 'Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Neither Agree nor Disagree', 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree.'
- Share a series of statements with the group that capture major arguments associated with a particular topic or offered so far by the group.
- Ask you class them to position themselves along the scale according to the extent to which they agree or disagree. For example: *'If you lost your memory, you'd still be the same person'* or *'If you spoke a different language, you'd still be the same person'*
- Once the discussion has started tell the group that they should move if they hear anything that makes them change their mind. If any participants do move, interview them about what it was they found persuasive.
- If there is an end of the continuum that is neglected (i.e. there is no one standing there try using 'Imaginary Disagreeer' described below, whereby someone stands at that end of the continuum and shares reasons why someone would hold that view.

This can be an interesting activity to do at the beginning and end of an enquiry using the same statement or a revised statement as with the example above. If you take a photograph of where everyone is standing the first and second time you run this exercise, comparing them can be an interesting reflective activity.

In a large class, or where more order is needed. Invite the group to discuss their response in pairs while still seated, and then invite a couple of students to stand along the scale and report back.

Acknowledgments: Versions of this activity are known by various names and widely used by SAPERE trainers

The Empty Chair

Within a Community of Enquiry the discussion can be limited by the restricted knowledge and experience of a particular group, especially where they have very similar knowledge and experiences to one another and where that knowledge and experience is particularly restricted. The Empty Chair is a good strategy for drawing a group's attention to the perspectives they may be ignoring. Use this strategy when you notice either widespread consensus on an issue or a failure to consider key issues that could deepen the debate.

Place an empty chair in the circle and ask the group to imagine a certain kind of thinker is sitting there. What might they add to this discussion?

- Someone who is female
- Someone who is older
- Someone who has been a victim of racism
- Someone who voted for Trump
- Someone who goes to another school
- Someone from another country
- Someone from another time
- Someone from another planet

Beware of stereotypes in this exercise. Sometimes a group with limited experiences will struggle to see an issue from another point of view and may resort to lazy kinds of thinking. If this becomes a problem try the simpler 'depersonalised' version of this activity 'Imaginary Disagreeer'

Imaginary Disagreeer

Using the convention of the empty chair described above or bypassing that entirely, ask: *What would someone who disagreed with you say?* Individuals can respond straight away without a break in the conversation, or for a richer discussion, invite them to consider the question in pairs and feedback.

Add an intellectually useful (and generally engaging) twist by asking individuals to stand up and sit in the Imaginary Disagreeer's chair to present their argument in role using the first person '*I think that...*' It is remarkable what a difference embodying the opposite view makes to the quality of the arguments given. If you extend the activity in this way, invite the rest of the group to grill the Disagreeer and see how they defend their position. (Much like 'Hot Seating')

Acknowledgments: Peter Worley uses this name, which I have borrowed. However, the practice of asking students to consider what someone who disagreed them would say is widely used and the extension of this in role is my own.

Defend this

This exercise encourages children to carefully consider views that they may not actually hold. You might decide to use statements that were made during the course of an enquiry, or you could devise your own. Statements work best when they are controversial. *E.g.*

- *Pain is good for you*
- *No one should get married*
- *We should set prisoners free*
- *Everyone should support their local football team*
- *Keeping pets is cruel*
- *There is no such thing as truth*

Make it clear that this is just an exercise and that the person defending the idea may not agree with the argument they give. If necessary discuss the value of doing this for critical thinking. Then distribute the statements to pairs of children and ask the pairs to imagine how they could defend this statement. After 5 or 10 minutes, ask volunteers to come to the front of the class and defend the statements to the rest of the class. The class can respond with their own arguments.

You may follow up this exercise with 'Opinion Continuum' allowing the person defending the idea to express what they really think.

In another variation, ask one child in the pair to come up with a statement and the other to try and defend it. After a few goes, swap roles.

Response Chain

Occasionally the discussions we facilitate can begin to resemble a radio phone-in rather than an interconnected dialogue. Often this is the product of individual contributors waiting their turn to speak and holding on to their ideas like callers in a queue, taking little notice or how the discussion is evolving around them. At times this can result in one isolated comment after another with very little argument. One strategy to address this is to encourage participants to link their contributions together like a chain.

For a period of time, strictly enforce the following rule: All new contributors must begin their contribution with the following: *"I agree/disagree with (name) when s/he said (statement) because (reason)"* During this period ensure that you do not intervene at all, or that your intervention is absolutely minimal. Lengthy discussions using this format can feel a little restrictive, but this is a very useful strategy to employ for periods of time within a discussion.

Note that this sentence starter encourages participants to be precise about what has been said earlier allowing them freedom to agree with some elements and not with others. It also helps the group focus on the exact words said and search for their intended meaning, rather than talking at cross purposes. Finally, the sentence distinguishes between the speaker themselves and what the speaker said. Where needed, this can help participants appreciate that disagreement is not a personal attack.

Acknowledgments: Catherine McCall discusses this approach (though not by this name) in her work on the Community of Philosophical Inquiry or COPI method. I have observed it modelled by Ed Weijers.

Silent Dialogue

With older groups who are confident writers, try conducting a silent dialogue whereby responses are written rather than spoken aloud. This activity can slow thinking down creating more reflective contributions. It also presents new challenges for self-regulation and cooperation that can help strengthen the *community* of enquiry.

- Allocate small groups of 3 or 4 children and give each group a roll of wallpaper between them and a marker pen for each individual child.
- Distribute copies of the question to each group, you may decide to distribute the same question to every group or different questions.
- Give the instruction that the groups must conduct an enquiry into their question without speaking at all.
- If necessary show them what a script looks like and encourage them to use the same format, e.g. their name, a colon and their contribution. Each child's comment should be on a new line.
- Give them 5 – 10 minutes the first time you run this activity and longer once they are used to it.
- Extend the activity by passing the rolls of wallpaper clockwise round the groups. Still in silence the group should read the new dialogue and add their contributions.
- Conduct the reflection for this activity verbally, asking the children to highlight contributions they found interesting or persuasive.

Red Pen

This exercise encourages children to respond critically to statements. It can be used to respond to notes made by a teacher on the whiteboard during an enquiry; or it may be used in response to a written dialogue given to the class as a stimulus. It can also be used during a 'Silent Dialogue' as described above.

Whole class version

- Begin an enquiry in which you take some verbatim notes of what the children say in black pen. Make sure you attribute quotes to the right children.
- Mid-way through the discussion, explain to the class that they may write on the board with the red pen if they disagree with a particular statement written there. *E.g. 'I know I'm not dreaming, because my eyes are open'*
- Allow volunteers to come forward and identify the comment they disagree with and then write their response in red alongside it. *E.g. 'But you could be dreaming that your eyes are open'*
- While they write, ask the rest of the class to consider other comment they disagree with.
- Collect 4 or 5 red comments before returning to normal dialogue, perhaps first giving those children whose statements have been a right to respond. This should deepen the level of argumentation in the remaining dialogue.

Small group or individual version

- As a preparatory or extension exercise, split the class into small groups and give them a written dialogue to look at. This may be taken from a transcript from a previous enquiry, a purpose written philosophy resources or from a text you are studying. (If the latter, it should contain some philosophical arguments).
- Give them each a red pen and ask them to critique as many of the views presented in the text as they can.
- Later, you may also want to give them a green pen to annotate sections of the text they agree with and perhaps even a blue pen for sections of the text about which they have questions.
- Conduct a verbal plenary with the whole group by focusing on a few passages from the text and asking groups for to share their annotations.

Acknowledgments: This idea is our interpretation of Andy West's idea, which he shared at SOPHIA 2015 in Antwerp.

Reflection Exercises

The 4Cs of Philosophical Method

When we reflect we are thinking about our thinking. During a reflection we move from thinking about particular philosophical content (e.g. concepts, questions and arguments) to thinking about the philosophical method we have been using (e.g. the structures, strategies and skills we've been practising). To do this well we need to develop a way of structuring our reflections so that we can pay attention to the relevant aspects of what is happening or has just happened. One very useful structure is the '4Cs': Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Caring Thinking and Collaborative Thinking.

- **Critical Thinking** – Reasoning and arguing; making judgements, pulling ideas apart then examining, revising and sometimes rejecting them.
- **Creative Thinking** – Generating new ideas, examples and arguments, putting old ideas together in new ways, wondering, imagining and hypothesising.
- **Caring Thinking** – Listening, respecting, showing sensitivity to the context of an enquiry and to one's co-enquirers; investing in the outcome and caring about the truth
- **Collaborative Thinking** – Acknowledging ideas and their influence, regarding other thinkers as sources of insight. Learning from each other and supporting one another's learning.

You can use the 4Cs as a framework for organising and understanding examples of words, actions and omissions that participants notice during their enquiry. Sometimes, it can be helpful to make one of these kinds of thinking the methodological focus of the session and then use the reflection to ask how

well the class did. Over time, systematic focus on the 4Cs can give your class a sense of how progress can be made within philosophy as a practice.

Acknowledgments: This framework has been developed by SAPERE

Reflection Bingo

This exercise can help children develop a more concrete view on what the 4Cs look like in practice. Alternatively, the same device can be used to structure observations around a set of criteria that you or you class devise independently.

For younger children ask: Did we?

Find some big ideas	Offer examples	Take turns	Join in
Give reasons	Link our thoughts	Listen well	Encourage each other
Critical	Creative	Caring	Collaborative

For older children ask: Did we?

Identify concepts	Offer examples	Take turns	Participate
Define meanings	Draw comparisons	Listen respectfully	Encourage each other
Draw distinctions	Imagine causes	Show interest	Respond to ideas shared
Judge reasons	Anticipate consequences	Speak honestly	Try to understand
Question assumptions	Consider alternatives	Remain focused	Communicate clearly
Critical	Creative	Caring	Collaborative

How to use it:

Before an enquiry:

Discuss what the children understand by Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Caring Thinking and Collaborative Thinking. Either devise your own bingo card together or share one you have devised discussing how it works.

During an enquiry:

Distribute copies of the bingo cards to several observers. Ask them to stamp as many features of philosophical thinking as they notice happening during the enquiry. After the discussion, invite the observers to compare their cards. Did they all notice the same kinds of thinking? Even when they did, do they have the same evidence to share in support of that? What thinking was missing in their view? What could have been done to improve things?

After an enquiry:

Alternatively, after an enquiry distribute bingo cards to everyone ask them to stamp as many features of philosophical thinking as they recall happening during the enquiry. Working in pairs, invite the children to compare their cards Did they all notice the same kinds of thinking? Even when they did, do they have the same evidence to share in support of that? What thinking was missing in their view? What could have been done to improve things?

Very young children benefit from having no more than four thinking foci to look out for. You may even start with just one of the 4Cs to start with, e.g. [Creative Thinking] *'Today let's notice when someone gives an example'*

Acknowledgments: Although this version is our own, this device has been modelled by numerous SAPERE trainers and the 4Cs have been well articulated by Roger Sutcliffe.

Fishbowl Reflection

Reflection can be hard, in part because it often relies on us accurately remembering what has happened and we rarely do this well. This Fishbowl exercise allows some members of the class to closely observe a live dialogue among their peers and to be observed in this way too. The aim is to help both observers and participants to notice, with greater accuracy and perception, some of the specific ways they might improve their contributions in an enquiry.

To do this you need some observation objectives. The first time you run this activity you might find some of ours useful. In each case, the observer should give concrete examples.

- Does anyone give a good reason?
- Does anyone ask a good question?
- Does anyone give an example? Or a counter example?
- Does anyone talk about concepts?
- Are any definitions of concepts made?
- Does anyone make a distinction?
- Does anyone draw a comparison?
- What arguments are put forward?
- What theories are proposed?
- What do people agree about?
- What do people disagree about?
- What do people seem confused by?
- What do people seem to understand?
- Does anyone change their mind?
- Does anything stick with their first thoughts?
- Do some people speak more than others?
- Do some people listen more than others?
- When does the group seem most engaged?
- When does the group seem most disengaged?

Later your class may devise their own set of things to look. One way to help them do this is to facilitate an enquiry around the question: 'What is a good enquiry?' They might find it helpful to devise their observation criteria around the '4Cs' that philosophical enquiry aims to develop: Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Caring Thinking and Collaborative Thinking.

Set the exercise up like this:

- Split your class in half and form two circles; an inner circle whose members will participate in a philosophical dialogue and an outer circle who will observe their discussion and report back. You might find it helpful to run this activity with two facilitators, one to support each group.
- The children observing the dialogue will each be responsible for reporting on specific features of the enquiry.
- Observers should make notes or use a proforma you prepare in advance.
- After twenty minutes or so, the participants and observers should swap roles, picking up the dialogue where it has left off for a further twenty minutes.
- Once the discussion has drawn to a close, children should feedback their observations using concrete examples and quotes wherever they can. Older children may also be able to use their observations to form suggestions about what would improve the enquiry next time e.g. *'I noticed that some people spoke for a long time and more than once, while people who hadn't spoken at all didn't get a chance. So, I suggest that people who have had a chance, pass on their turn to someone who is still waiting.'*
- The group can then decide on how to respond to this feedback next time. For example, they may set a new target e.g. *'We will try to include everyone'* or agree on a new rule e.g. *'Everyone must speak at least once.'* Equally, they may disagree with some of the feedback and agree that it is

not necessary for everyone to speak so long as everyone listens.

- Make sure you refer to their commitments at the start of the next session.

In a variant of this activity, you may ask the class to look at what the teacher does – and fails to do – to encourage philosophical enquiry.

Secret Session Spies

The Fishbowl enquiry is quite artificial and can inhibit some children because they are so aware of being watched. An alternative way to set this up is to solicit the help of several ‘Secret Session Spies’. These are students who will participate in an activity alongside everyone else but have a secret mission to report back on something specific they noticed happening. You can tell the group that they have spies in their midst or you can spring it on them at the end!

Video Replay

Watching yourself on video is one of the richest ways to reflect on your philosophical practice. Try recording your class occasionally and watch the footage back using any of the frameworks described above.

With parental permission, Zoom lessons can be recorded and an automatic transcript generated. These make amazing resources for reflective work for students and teachers.

Acknowledgments: You can see examples of our work here:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLeUU4ZAsiFpwA3saqp0uqp_p-jxux_njR

Notice what you Notice

While the previous activities encourage children to reflect back on events that have already happen, this one encourages more reflection in the moment. It works well considering visual stimuli and conducted as a whole class or in smaller groups.

Standing in front of the artworks, for 6 minutes in total, take turns to call out or write down observations under the following headings:

- *“In the artwork, I notice...”* (3 minutes)
(Publicly accessible visual, auditory and tactile perceptions) *e.g. I notice brush strokes around the eyes, I notice the canvas is torn at the bottom, I notice there is no signature.*
- *“In myself, I notice...”* (3 minutes)
(Privately accessible emotional, intellectual, imaginative, interpretative, associative, critical and questioning responses) *e.g. I notice that I really don't like it, I notice myself assuming it symbolises power, I notice that reminds me of someone I know, I notice myself judging it as crude, I notice myself wondering if its fake.*

Written by Grace Lockrobin 2019, with revisions 2022. All rights reserved.

While we make this freely available, stuff like this takes a lot of unpaid time to compile, so please acknowledge me, and the other authors cited, as the source of these ideas. For expert P4C facilitation, training and resource-writing, get in touch at info@thinkingspace.org.uk

Thinking Space c.i.c.

Public Philosophy Projects

101 Beechwood Road, Sheffield S6 4LQ
info@thinkingspace.org.uk
www.thinkingspace.org.uk

twitter.com/Thinking_Space_
facebook.com/ThinkingSpacePhilosophy
instagram.com/Thinking_Space_

© 2019 (with revisions made 2022) Grace Lockrobin of Thinking Space
All Rights Reserved