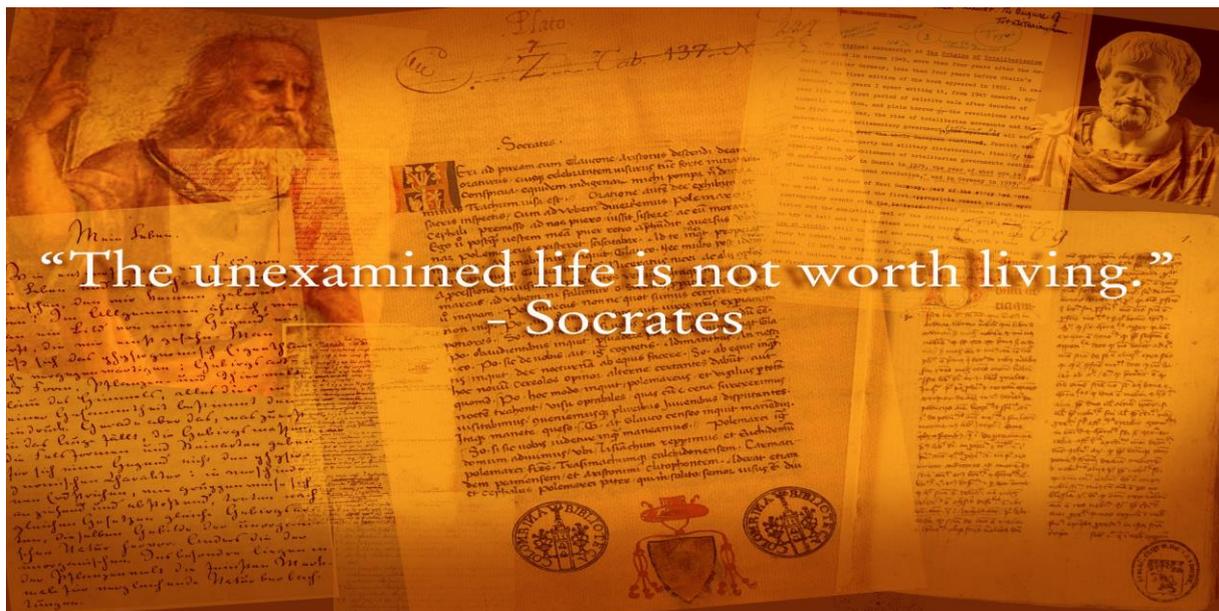


WHAT IS 'PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN' OR 'COMMUNITY OF ENQUIRY'?

Philosophy is an ancient Greek word that means 'love of wisdom'.

For the Greeks, philosophy was a process of asking questions & solving problems which produce value & satisfaction. Philosophy is the study of 'why'. But **P4C** is not about teaching children what Plato said about 'x' or Kant said about 'y'.

It isn't about learning philosophy but about teaching a special kind of co-operative discussion.



The inclusion of philosophy in the curriculum directly impacts on the development of pupils' moral and social development as well as enhancing their capacity to become independent learners. It also contributes to the development of pupil's positive attitudes to themselves and others

P4C is an ethos driven strategy that uses the process of philosophical enquiry for deepening thinking ability in children. It helps focus attention on concepts & questions central to human understanding (often at the root of prejudiced and racist views). **P4C** invites children to move beyond routine thinking & to interrogate their values & beliefs. Philosophical enquiry encourages self-correction in thinking - it is okay to change your mind. It is based on the following essential points:

1. The children ask the questions. Those questions are taken seriously & set the agenda for genuine discussion in a community of enquiry.
2. The teacher's role is to facilitate the thinking of the individual & the group.

3. The aim is a discussion that clarifies & explores complex issues that matter to children -
- It is not to have a polarizing debate
 - It is not to engage in quick judgments
 - It is not for teachers to air their views or knowledge
 - It is not mere opinion-swapping
4. Children are encouraged to be responsible for what they say & to give reasons, examples, counter-examples, & consideration to what someone might say in response. It is about thinking carefully in a self-correcting way. It demonstrates the difference between a disagreement & a personal attack. **P4C** teaches children to respect the ideas & opinions of others & to listen & build on those ideas, to be collaborative & to stand up for what they believe in.



**This can be summarized in the p4c's of good thinking:
critical; creative; caring; collaborative.**

This method involves a radical change in teacher's attitude to, & assumptions about, teaching. It fundamentally changes typical classroom communication patterns in which teachers ask most of the questions to which they have already decided on the answers.

It means the teacher must be very alert & silently engaged with the discussion in order to make a few interventions which really do develop individual & group thought.

The process embodies in a practical strategy the following research, principles & ideas:

1. The research showing that children ask hundreds of questions at home but almost none at school; that it is schools & not homes that set up restricted communication patterns; that it is teachers who silence children - mainly by bombarding them with questions.

2. The research showing that children do engage with the great questions that also puzzle adults.

It is worth remarking on the breadth of children's interest, & the complexity of issues which they raised. It is sometimes supposed that children of this age have special, childish interests, to do with mothers, babies, dolls, teddies, & animals, & such a view is reinforced by most of the picture books published for children of this age. The conversations, in our study suggest that, on the contrary, all human experience was grist to their intellectual mill.'

3. The idea that we develop the ability to think through talking & really listening with others, trying out ideas & self-correcting.

4. That teachers should model open, genuine discussion & a search for clarity & understanding.

5. That no one has a final correct solution to contestable concepts e.g.

What is happiness?

Do we know what people are like from how they look?

What is true? Who am I?

6. That children need to articulate their own experience in order to understand others; but they can use the experience of others, both real & fictional, to increase their own self-understanding.

I think, therefore I am.
What is reality?
Is truth relative?
What is the meaning of life?



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PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN