

the richness of questions in philosophy for children

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abstract

This paper argues that the various approaches within philosophy for children should purposefully integrate the exploration of questioning by children, instead of only presenting children with prepared questions as starting points for an inquiry session. This is particularly relevant since philosophy for children is one of the few educational settings that offer a space for children to question, as well as to explore the variation of their questions and the impact their questions have in their lives. We state that this purposeful integration of questions made by the children does justice to the inheritance of different philosophical traditions. It also reinforces questions as a privileged way for human beings to relate to the world. Thus, more than simply a methodological step in the design of a community of inquiry session, we claim that questions are a fundamental educational resource. Questions are also a central part of thinking and inquiry in a philosophical session with children. Therefore, the paper proposes a new way to leverage these tools, arguing that defining philosophy as an obsession to overcome opacity and aim for transparency (Caeiro, 2015) can help participants of the community of inquiry to identify questions that may empower dialogue in a philosophical way.

keywords: community of inquiry; questions; opacity; transparency.

a riqueza das questões filosóficas para crianças

resumo

Este artigo defende que as variadas abordagens dentro da filosofia para crianças ganhariam em integrar, de forma intencional, a exploração do questionamento, em vez de apenas apresentar às crianças perguntas já preparadas como pontos de partida da investigação. Esta ideia torna-se particularmente relevante uma vez que a filosofia para crianças é um dos poucos ambientes educativos que oferecem às crianças um espaço para que elas possam questionar e explorar as variações das suas perguntas, assim como o impacto que essas perguntas podem ter nas suas vidas. Desta forma, defendemos que a integração intencional, numa sessão de filosofia para crianças, de perguntas feitas pelas próprias crianças faz justiça à herança das diferentes tradições filosóficas e reforça que as perguntas são formas privilegiadas de os seres humanos se relacionarem com o mundo. Mais do que um simples passo metodológico no encadeamento de uma sessão de filosofia para crianças, as perguntas representam um recurso educativo fundamental. As perguntas são também uma parte central do pensamento e da investigação que se produzem numa sessão de filosofia com crianças. O artigo propõe, então, uma forma inovadora de lidar com esta ferramenta que são as perguntas, defendendo que a definição da filosofia como uma obsessão para ultrapassar a opacidade e uma obsessão pela transparência (Caeiro, 2015) pode ajudar os participantes numa comunidade de

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investigação a identificarem perguntas que poderão potenciar o diálogo de uma forma filosófica.

palavras-chave: comunidade de investigação; perguntas; opacidade; transparência.

la riqueza de las preguntas en filosofía para niños

resumen

Este artículo defiende que los variados enfoques dentro de la filosofía para niños ganarían si integrasen de forma intencional la exploración del cuestionamiento, en vez de sólo presentar a los niños preguntas ya preparadas como puntos de partida para la investigación. Esta idea se vuelve particularmente relevante porque *filosofía para niños* es uno de los pocos ambientes educativos que ofrece a los niños un espacio para que puedan cuestionar y explorar las variaciones de sus preguntas y el impacto que estas preguntas pueden tener en sus vidas. De esta forma, defendemos que la integración intencional, en una sesión de *filosofía para niños*, de preguntas hechas por los propios niños, hace justicia a la herencia de las diferentes tradiciones filosóficas y refuerza que las preguntas son formas privilegiadas de que los seres humanos se relacionen con el mundo. Más que un simple paso metodológico en el encadenamiento de una sesión de *filosofía para niños*, las preguntas representan un recurso educativo fundamental. Las preguntas son también una parte central del pensamiento y de la investigación que se producen en una sesión de filosofía con niños. El artículo propone, entonces, una forma innovadora de lidiar con esta herramienta que son las preguntas, defendiendo que la definición de la filosofía como una obsesión para superar la opacidad y una obsesión por la transparencia (Caeiro, 2015) puede ayudar a los participantes en una comunidad de investigación a identificar preguntas que podrían potenciar el diálogo de una forma filosófica.

palabras clave: comunidad de investigación; preguntas; opacidad; transparencia.

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Asking questions has always been a fundamental part of philosophy because questioning is a crucial part of thinking and of inquiry. Describing this centrality of questioning to philosophy, Bertrand Russell writes in *The Problems of Philosophy*:

Philosophy, if it cannot answer so many questions as we could wish, has at least the power of asking questions which increase the interest of the world, and show the strangeness and wonder lying just below the surface even in the commonest things of daily life. (Russell, 2012, p. 6)

Consequently it is no surprise that Philosophy for Children (P4C)³ is recognized as an approach to education that places questions at the heart of the classroom. Thus, one of P4C founders, Gareth Matthews, commented: “[a] parent or teacher who doesn't hear the questions, or doesn't understand that they are more than, and different from, a mere request for information, misses a chance to do philosophy.” (Matthews, 1992, p. 73). The P4C literature has provided practitioners a wealth of convenient tools for triggering and maintaining dialogue in a community of inquiry because P4C “takes questions seriously and offers multiple points of entry for deconstructing the nature of the question.” (Turgeon, 2015, p. 284)

This paper proposes that since P4C is one of the few educational settings that offer a space for children to question and explore the variety and impact of their questions (as well as of other people's questions), P4C's various approaches to questioning should purposefully integrate exploration of the activity of questioning. Doing so will do justice to the inheritance of the philosophical tradition and reinforce the way in which questions are a privileged place for human beings to relate to the world. We will show that questions are educational resources that go far beyond a mere methodological step of asking questions

³ With the expression Philosophy for Children (and the acronym P4C) we refer to various models for philosophical inquiry with children using the community of inquiry approach introduced by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp.

within a P4C session; rather, in reality they are a central part of thinking and inquiry.

The paper begins by reviewing how P4C experts have discussed the role of questioning and the tools designed to help practitioners master questions in philosophy sessions. Then it proposes an innovative way of leveraging these tools. By introducing the notion of opaqueness and thickness, we argue that defining philosophy as an obsession to overcome opacity and an aim for transparency (Caeiro, 2015) can help guide facilitators and participants to identify questions that may be philosophically effective and to gauge the impact these questions have on dialogue.

After briefly reviewing how various approaches to philosophical work with children handle questions, the paper points out that an approach based solely on ready-made questions is rendered more effective philosophically if complemented by moments that enable children to raise, discuss and evaluate their own questions. Depriving children of the tentative and experimental activity of asking their own questions (in their own words) during a philosophy session is both an educational and a philosophical loss, for it neglects an opportunity to actively engage with the school's educational process, and fails to adequately honor one of philosophy's fundamental contributions to thinking. Finally, the paper demonstrates how the art of questioning requires a community, stressing that the crucial role of questions in both philosophy and P4C highlights the way in which excellence of thinking demands a community of thinkers (Peirce, 1868).

questions and questioning in p4c

One of the most important features of Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp's P4C program, based on the community of inquiry setting (Sharp, 1987), is the presence of questions. When, in a 1999 interview, Lipman was asked which were the basic tools that philosophy could provide to children, his answer was very straightforward: "The most important tool is to get the children to question." (Kohan & Wuensch, 1999, p. 169)

Ann Sharp also made this observation in an article about the process of curriculum development and the role of philosophical novels. She described how her involvement in the writing of manuals revealed that a large part of doing good philosophy was having the ability to ask the right question at the right time in the right circumstances (Sharp, 2017). This is why after spending a long time writing manuals and developing pedagogical resources to support teachers, Sharp felt the need to reinforce that philosophical activities are much more about cultivating a certain ability (to question), rather than to just implement and execute previously designed procedures or exercises. Exploring questions, experiencing how they feel when posed at different times, and examining them within a community of inquiry cultivates a philosophical sensibility that cannot simply be substituted by theoretical descriptions of the right question (at the right time and in the right circumstances).

Questioning does not necessarily lead directly to an answer, however, because questions open up new means for a community of inquiry to defy assumptions and discover errors, enabling new perspectives to reshape previous assumptions about the world. Lipman stresses the importance of the ability to pose a question when he writes, “[t]o question is to institutionalize and legitimize doubt and to invite critical evaluation.” (Lipman, 2003, p. 99)

In the practice of P4C inspired by Lipman and Sharp, two moments for questions appear during an inquiry: first, the community sets the agenda after reading an episode of a philosophical novel (or short story) specially designed to be used in a philosophical session; and second, the facilitator starts managing follow-up questions during dialogue. These are also called Socratic questions (Fisher, 1995) and serve as a model for the community to incorporate the habit of exploring and fostering thinking thorough inquiry. In Lipman’s approach, the very first questions are entirely the responsibility of the participants, for it is crucial that the agenda be settled by the questions raised in community. This provides the group with a cognitive map of its own philosophical interests and needs (Lipman, 1997, p. 18). The text thus encourages the appearance of questions and works as a springboard that prompts the community to formulate their own

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questions about what they hear (or read) as well as questions that are suggested by what they heard (or read).

According to Lipman, every question has an individual questioner, and the facilitator should make this clear by writing the name of the participants who formulated the question after it is written (on the board or a flipchart). The question is not an abstract search for knowledge because it belongs to a specific person and thus bears the hallmark of their unique context.

After collecting this set of questions, the community of inquiry is invited to reflect on them. The community identifies possible hierarchies and the different foci of the questions, so as to give participants the most possible information to be able to decide which specific questions to select for inquiry.

However, in Lipman's model for conducting P4C, the moment of selecting a specific question for the session (or sessions to follow) can be quite difficult to manage, in terms of both respecting the community of inquiry's interests as a whole, as well as promoting philosophical thinking. Voting often can be used to reach the final decision. The facilitator may find herself struggling with the need to allow the community to express their questions freely and, at the same time, her desire to proceed to a moment in the session when she feels that the conversation is heading toward something approaching a philosophical question. Still, giving the community time to refine their ability to raise questions, and even to think (meta-cognitively) about different types of questions, is a fundamental way to foster growth of philosophical insight and depth in questioning.

Ultimately, what counts as a philosophical question is a philosophical topic in itself (Floridi, 2013), and in a P4C session this is intimately connected to the continuity of philosophical practice. Ideally, the community should be given the time to inquire about what counts as a philosophical question. Therefore it is a philosophical hallmark how the selection of a question for dialogue is one of the hard tasks of a session, both for the facilitator and for the community since it is grounded in criteria and meta-criteria which cannot be easily and quickly shared.

In the community of inquiry, questions are not static or sacred entities that the hearers must accept passively, for after the agenda is set, every individual

question belongs to the group, and consequently the group may at any time reconstruct questions by sharpening them. This means that refining a question is also a part of communal philosophical work because reconstructing the question plays a fundamental role in the metacognitive practice nurtured by the community of philosophical inquiry. This promotes the group's self-regulation in determining what constitutes a fruitful area for inquiry, as well as cultivating the philosophical skill of refining thinking in community.

Once the dialogue's focus has been established, a second moment for questions begins, as the facilitator is encouraged to raise additional questions designed to deepen its thinking processes, thus enabling the community to "follow the argument where it leads in the dialogue" (Lipman, 1997, p. 7). Many of these are procedural questions and can be posed concerning the content under discussion, while maintaining the facilitator's role of bridging arguments and triggering conceptual transformation (Kennedy, 2004, p. 757). This use of questions and questioning may also be difficult because "the notion of following an argument where it leads has been a perplexing one ever since Socrates announced it as the guiding maxim of his own philosophical practice." (Lipman, 1997, p.7)

In general, the facilitator will ask participants to provide examples, present evidence supporting their opinions, and establish consequences that follow from their positions in order to facilitate the dialogue and to develop the argument. The difficulty for the facilitator here is to know how and when to ask for certain procedures without dominating the dialogue, simultaneously offering opportunities for deepening inquiry that can be adopted by all members of the community of inquiry.

There are some pitfalls that the facilitator must guard against, such as a "canned" approach to questions (Gardner, 1998, p. 104), which might lead to instrumentalization, as well as the bureaucratization of questioning (Freire & Faundez, 1985, p. 27), a patronizing attitude in which children are allowed to briefly ask questions before moving on to what more "substantial" content (by getting to the answers previously established by adults). To prepare for this

moment of questioning, the facilitator can get acquainted with the discussion plans and exercises in the manuals that accompany each of Lipman's philosophical novels. However, this is by no means infallible. Certainly the reader can recall an occasion when a very promising follow-up question ended up closing off the dialogue much more than opening it up.

Thus, posing and selecting questions at the beginning of a session, as well as questioning to guide and deepen dialogue, are easy to talk about but hard to carry out with precision in the context of a session. It seems to require experiential insight. Materials have been designed (for both the first, and second moments of questioning) to help facilitators acquire and critically examine the use of questions and questioning in philosophy sessions. These materials aim to overcome the difficulty, already identified by Lipman, that "[p]rospective teachers of philosophy at the elementary school level repeatedly want to know what it is that makes a discussion philosophical," (Lipman, 1996, p. 64), and many P4C experts' efforts have been focused on establishing criteria for distinguishing questions that are philosophical from those that are not (Cam, 2006, p.63).

Indeed, the need to identify the cornerstone of a philosophical session is a focus shared by most P4C experts and practitioners, especially regarding newcomers. And even if the questions are not the sufficient condition to warrant describing a session as philosophical, one can at least say that there is something about a certain way of questioning that seems to prompt an inquiry that is philosophically fruitful for the community. This is one of the reasons why P4C requires a continuous practice of refinement, both by watching others facilitate philosophy sessions and by doing them and critically reflecting on the process.

Nevertheless, in *Teaching for Better Thinking: The Classroom Community of Inquiry* (1995), Splitter and Sharp describe how one should take the distinction between open and closed questions as a good guiding principle for establishing which questions can more fruitfully enhance philosophical dialogue. It is a common assumption in philosophical circles that empirical and logico-mathematical questions are closed, while philosophical ones are open because

“philosophical questions are not answerable empirically or mathematically with observations or calculations” (Floridi, 2013, p.200).

For Splitter and Sharp, however, the distinction also entails another criterion of a more nuanced nature. They write,

Our preferred criterion for distinguishing between open and closed questions has a different focus. Irrespective of the subject under consideration, or the ages of those involved, what really produces closure is neither the question, nor the answer, nor again the epistemic state of those involved, but the environment in which questions and answers are considered. If the environment encourages the formation of questions as an important activity in its own right, and if it encourages those involved to bring to bear a range of strategies and dispositions for treating both questions and putative answers as grist for further inquiry, then and only then, should we say that the questioning is open. (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p.55)

Thus, Splitter and Sharp’s proposal is not to use the open versus closed distinction as an absolute rule, but rather that it should be seen as a tool to guide experience, emphasizing that the practice requires a specific sort of questioning-friendly environment.

This idea was also stated by Lipman: when asked how to teach children to question, he answered “Well we don’t insist to them dogmatically and say, ‘Look, you’d better question or...’ [...] but we create an environment in which the questioning is carried on by all the members as a part of the distributive thinking that’s going on...” (Kohan & Wuensch, 1999, p. 169). Indeed, in philosophical inquiry there are certain ingredients that produce closure, while others encourage the opposite and, according to the quoted authors, P4C should nurture, much more than a set of open *questions*, open *questioning*.

Nevertheless, as all facilitators have at one time experienced, the above classifications are insufficient to ensure that the first moment of a session will provide good questions for philosophical discussion. According to Phillip Cam,

The problem is that all too commonly students ask questions that are not very deep and do not readily lead to the kind of discussion that is desired. If only we could teach them to ask better questions – really meaty inquiry questions – we would be off to a far better start. (Cam, 2006, 32)

To overcome this problem, Phillip Cam developed a supplementary tool – The Question Quadrant – to help facilitators classify students’ questions (Cam,

2006, p. 32-36). The Question Quadrant is a highly practical approach, echoing the oppositional quadrant in Aristotelian logical tradition. This P4C quadrant is a resource included in an introductory toolkit level designed by the author to organize discussion in keeping with the need to encourage questions that lead to effective inquiry.

The scheme is divided into four types of questions: reading comprehension and factual knowledge questions (labeled as closed questions) and literary speculation and inquiry questions (labeled as open questions). The goal is to enable facilitators to better master the selection of a particular question for stimulus because it connects questions with specific capacities fostered in the school setting and distinguishes philosophy from comprehension or verification of general knowledge, as well as from exercises of imaginative speculation. Over the years, the Question Quadrant has undergone several adaptations and was rapidly incorporated into P4C training materials around the world as a tool for teachers to easily improve their facilitating when conducting philosophy sessions in their classrooms.

While the famous Question Quadrant has been very useful in guiding facilitators and participants in the discussion of what constitutes a philosophical question, it remains insufficient to capture all that is at the heart of a philosophical question. Thus, in an attempt to refine the use of the Question Quadrant as a tool for practitioners, Peter Worley has discussed certain subtleties and nuances within types of open and closed questions that one can find in a philosophical inquiry (Worley, 2015). Worley elaborates the distinction between open and closed question by showing that there is a difference between questions that are conceptually and grammatically closed (Do you like honey?) and questions which are conceptually closed and grammatically open (What can you tell me about Paris?), and that these again differ from questions which are conceptually open and grammatically closed (Is the mind the same than the brain?) and questions which are conceptually open and grammatically open (What is the mind?). This effort to extend the possibilities beyond a rigid and narrow way of classifying questions in the binary open-closed scheme further testifies to the complex nature

of a philosophical question. “Philosophical Questions, like empirical and logic-mathematical ones, come in a whole variety of degrees of value, importance, relevance, seriousness, difficulty, and so forth.” (Floridi, 2013, p. 206)

Consequently, issues will arise, and teachers and facilitators will not always be sure of what constitutes a philosophical question because, as Lipman writes,

What makes a question philosophical rather than non-philosophical may lie more in the function than in the form. What makes a question philosophical rather than non-philosophical may lie not in the verbal form of the sentence but in the circumstances under which it is uttered, and it is only through the repeated exposure to the doing of philosophy that such circumstances come to be recognized. (Lipman, 1996, p. 64)

Thus, the distinctions and schemes to guide the use of questions in inquiry do not solve all the problems that arise in a session. Building on the above-quoted authors, we can stress that from the very beginning of P4C the recommendation is to look beyond a simplistic categorization of questions. More importantly, using tools such as the Question Quadrant in a strict and mechanical way can diminish the philosophical tone even when the community faces a compelling question, because “There is no methodology or formula that can be applied to teach someone how to ask philosophical questions, or that can be used to provoke someone to enter into a philosophical relationship with questions.” (Kohan, 2014, p. 107)

Therefore, to enable people to overcome a mechanistic way of interpret the proposed distinctions, it is important that the questioning be embedded in the notion of community of inquiry. That is, to ensure that distinctions do not block inquiry but instead work to promote thinking, it is important to have an approach to questions that is “of a more nuanced and contextual view of both openness and inquiry,” (Splitter, 2016, p. 19). This implies that questions and questioning should not be abstractly considered, but rather embedded and associated with certain dispositions and attitudes that motivate thinking in community. This will require searching for ways to create a philosophical dialogue in which people respond “to a question by attempting to ascertain the meaning of the question.” (Brandt, 1988, p. 36)

More than 20 years after writing *Teaching for Better Thinking* with Sharp, Splitter once again takes up the subject of questioning to stress this nuanced and contextual view of openness and inquiry (Splitter, 2016, p. 19). Splitter argues for a dispositional ground for inquiry based on the willingness of practitioners to go from unsettlement to settlement. This means that what prompts inquiry, according to Splitter, are questions associated with dispositions such as curiosity, puzzlement and wonder (Splitter, 2016, p. 22-23). We will argue, however, that these dispositional ingredients can more easily be understood by considering Barbara Weber and Arthur Wolf's overview of the issues at stake when one considers philosophical questions (2017).

In light of Gadamer's writings, Weber and Wolf show that it is important to also acquire a psychological, as well as an epistemological, dimension that is reflected in the way the experience of thinking upon a question "emphasizes the importance of anchoring the question in the concrete lifeworld context." (Weber & Wolf 2017, p.80). This means that linking the specific question "to the specifics of the situation is important in order for one to know what classifies as an answer" (Weber & Wolf, 2017, p.78), and to establish the meaning of a question and how it is to be lived and experienced in a community of inquiry. This is why it can never be fully captured by a method, even though methods can help build and scaffold the experience of thinking philosophically and turn it into an ongoing attitude. "And while it can't be taught - the authors argue -, it can be role-modeled" (Weber & Wolf, 2017, p.80).

To sum up, P4C experts have helped shape the way a facilitator should approach questions and questioning during a P4C session in order to enable practitioners to overcome a rigid, mechanical way of looking at distinctions, such as closed and open, introducing subtleties and nuances and calling our attention to the need to understand the practice of questioning as something that is refined by the regular and continuous experience of philosophical thinking. Therefore, openness and "closed-ness" are no longer simple adjectives with which to sort the questions, but acquire a psychological as well as an epistemological dimension which contributes to cultivating *dispositional ingredients for inquiry* (Splitter, 2016),

to create the proper *mindset* surrounding dialogue (Worley, 2016) or to promote the *philosophical attitude* as an *hermeneutic experience* (Weber & Wolf, 2017), similar to a type of adventure *where we do things with questions, but we also let questions do things with us* (Kohan & Kennedy, 2017, p. 499).

The above description offers a coherent and unified interpretation of the place of questions and questioning in P4C's literature. However, it is important to add that "even within the movement collectively known as P4C we find active disagreement and debate over the proper role and nature of the question in philosophical inquiry" (Turgeon, 2015, 284), and consequently there continues to be interest in better understanding how to approach the questioning process. Therefore, there is still more work to be done to refine and articulate how the central place of questions in philosophical inquiry should be mirrored in the various settings of P4C.

In the following pages, we offer two suggestions that might contribute to fostering a philosophical environment and practice for inquiry accordingly.

two additional suggestions to foster philosophical questions and questioning

The first suggestion is that taking the nature of philosophical inquiry as a guide can help establish which questions might promote philosophical dialogues. This is because one of the ways to better guide and conduct questioning in philosophy sessions, and to grasp what "following the argument where it leads" means, is to adopt a philosophical attitude that must be lived and experienced (as opposed to instrumentally mastered). And though the nature of philosophy is also a topic of debate among philosophers (Mulligan, Simons, & Smith, 2006), and different philosophers have different conceptions of philosophy, we propose that the assumed nature of philosophy from the Ancient Greek could help facilitators better promote philosophical thinking by serving as a guide for facilitators and participants.

It is well known that "philosophy" is a word with a Greek origin, coming from *philos* (loving) and *sophos* (wisdom), and it is commonly described to mean the love of wisdom. However, this notion of "love of wisdom" may not provide a

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clear track for facilitators and participants to follow. We all love to know from the moment we decide to sit in an inquiry circle. But what does this really mean? Or where can that statement lead us in terms of deciding what counts as philosophical inquiry?

A different translation of the Greek components of the word “philosophy” can better accomplish this. In an interview about the word, Prof. Antonio Caeiro says:

The term philosophy is usually translated as “friendship towards knowledge,” but in Greek all compounds of “philo,” like philology, mean an obsessive compulsion. Therefore philo means a kind of behavioral reaction to a fixed idea. Sofia in Greek encompasses several adjectives and nouns that mean transparency. Therefore if the philosopher is the one who has a compulsive reaction to the lack of transparency and therefore a bad relation with opacity, philosophy is what happens under the pressure of this need for transparency. And it is under the pressure of opacity that we try to clarify: What does anyone want to say? How do we feel good or bad?⁴

Adopting this translation and definition of philosophy as an obsession for transparency is another possible way to guide facilitators to encourage attention to, as well as questioning about, issues that are opaque. This would provide an environment more conducive to inquiry and a less mechanistic use of questions as simple tools.

We argue here that by accepting this definition of philosophy as the obsession for transparency, we can better grasp the practice of philosophy than if we started from the commonly-accepted definition of philosophy as the love of wisdom. First, because it seems easier to identify what is opaque, than to know what is wise. Since the philosopher’s defining characteristic has always been feeling and being ignorant (and knowing that he knows little about everything), opaqueness offers a path to practice: whatever most demonstrates our ignorance about a certain issue or that prompts in the community cognitive repulsion. It is also a definition that offers degrees of ignorance, allowing practitioners to situate themselves in between opacity and transparency. It is not simply that after delving

⁴ Consult: <<http://www.tvi24.iol.pt/videos/palavra-de-escritor/palavra-de-escritor-convidado-antonio-de-castro-caeiro/556041330cf2ab4fe7cc781c>> Accessed on July 2th, 2017.

into a question everything becomes transparent, but more that some areas are clearer, while other still require new questions.

It is not always easy to see the nature of the question, nor to establish its philosophical nature, which is why Lipman's approach to the community of inquiry includes a moment to investigate the meaning of the questions set by the agenda. This would be the moment for the community of inquiry to evaluate what the question is searching for. Of course, Lipman's novels, and any other story written in the same manner, aim to promote a certain type of strangeness and opacity precisely to stimulate the raising of philosophical questions. However, the use of philosophical novels does not guarantee the appearance of philosophical questions, and, in addition, some practitioners of philosophical work with children use stories from children's literature, which were not written to have that effect (Murriss & Haynes 2002; Wartenberg 2009).

The criterion of opacity and the search for transparency may even help facilitators explore questions that, at a first glance, appear to not be philosophical and apply the philosophical gaze to them. Of course, sometimes this is easier to do than at other times. Examples of smooth sessions come from dialogues in which children ask questions that are similar, or even equal, to questions placed in the past by philosophers, echoing common questions from the philosophical tradition. For instance, the question, "What is it like to be an ant?" may immediately remind a facilitator with philosophical training of the question, "What is it like to be a bat?" from the famous essay by Thomas Nagel, just as the question, "How do we know what is the right thing to do?" echoes the entire Ethical philosophical tradition, or even, "How do I know that I am not dreaming?" hearkens to some of Descartes' work. However, at other times, a question may sound philosophical, even though it is not clear that its direction is philosophical. In this case, it is useful to ask for clarification about the nature of the question in order to uncover what type of opacity it is aimed at.

It is possible that children might identify different kinds of opacity, and therefore the facilitator has to be insightful to recognize it, or at least to act bearing it in mind. For example, the question "Why is there this?" may simply be asking

why a certain object was invented, or it can signal the awe at the fact that there is existence. This is similar to how the odd question about why all babies are born bald might indicate a recognition of the strangeness of some of nature's regularities.

And even though with practice, a facilitator can ultimately help the community of inquiry find an interpretation of a question that reveals an opaqueness worthy of philosophical investigation, if the question appear to be straightforwardly non-philosophical, the practice requires that in the process of doing sessions, the community of inquiry discover what counts as philosophical.

Adopting the definition of philosophy as an obsession with transparency and non-opacity can thus help to show the community of inquiry the type of questioning that will provide a richer and philosophically transformative experience, as opposed to thinking about questions that do not have the same effect. In addition, taking philosophy as this obsession for transparency can guide facilitators without the need to use philosophical novels because it will help teachers select which stories (or other pedagogical resources) are more likely to promote philosophical sessions. For example, if a story does not leave anything for opaqueness to reveal, if it tells more than it conceals, than it is probably a narrative with which children will not easily engage philosophically.

To summarize, once the definition of philosophy in Ancient Greek is translated as "obsession for transparency," it becomes clearer why questions have such a fundamental role in philosophy. Part of philosophical work is to identify the questions that should be asked to promote thinking and distinguish them from the questions that trap inquiry in dead ends. As Daniel Dennett explains:

We philosophers are better at asking questions than at answering them, and this may strike some people as a comical admission of futility – "He says his specialty is just asking questions, not answering them. What a puny job! And they pay him for this?" But anybody who has ever tackled a truly tough problem knows that one of the most difficult tasks is finding the right questions to ask and the right order to ask them in. You have to figure out not only what you don't know, but what you need to know and don't need to know, and so forth. The form our questions take opens up some avenues and closes off others, and we don't want to waste time and energy barking up the wrong trees. (Dennett 2006, 19)

In other words, philosophical research about questions establishes the type of transparency that should be fostered and aimed for. Our second suggestion is aimed at practitioners who promote the practice of philosophy in the classroom by offering philosophical questions at the beginning of sessions. This is sometimes viewed as a way to overcome the problem identified by Cam of having to deal with non-philosophical questions, since children are not familiar with the expected inquiry questions. That is, given that one cannot absolutely guarantee the appearance of philosophical questions in the session, some practitioners have designed materials that offer ready-made philosophical questions to begin a session with as a way to overcome this problematic issue (Worley 2011; Law 2003)

On the one hand, this supposed methodological refinement overcomes the difficulty of passing philosophical criteria on to the community of inquiry, and even the difficulty of training teachers how to select a question so as to safeguard a session's philosophical nature. But on the other hand, it removes from practice the lived experience of testing, evaluating and creating awareness of the philosophical tone of questions, as well as the process of discovering the meaning of questions from scratch. That is, when following this option, there is no given moment at which the community of inquiry can live cognitively and explore metacognitively the discovery of asking questions, and in the process of dialogue address the philosophical tone underlying the questions.

The shared experience of finding and discussing criteria for the philosophical nature of inquiry, when done within P4C practice where children pose their own questions, is fundamental, for it provides myriad scenarios that are philosophically promising for building the community. It shows how some questions invite thinking in an open way that is not philosophical, how other times questions invite thinking philosophically and how at still other times questions may appear to invite philosophical dialogue but still hide a certain obscurity that requires refinement of the question by the community.

That is, beginning a philosophical session with questions offered by the participants promotes an experience and experimentation with questioning that help participants understand how questions come with assumptions, how

modifying the question can turn a murky subject into a clearer inquiry, how sometimes questions are repeated in interesting ways over the course of a school year or even that a question might not be a means to an end (the answer) but an end in itself. Understanding a question is an important part of thinking, and in a P4C session the community soon discovers that philosophically the most interesting thing that one can do with a question goes beyond just answering it.

The exploration of questions also helps better understand what is meant by a certain type of philosophical opacity, which is not always immediately visible or identifiable in resources such as the Question Quadrant. For example, if a child asks the question “Why does this exist?” a lack of practice on understanding questions or a hasty procedure to label them can interpret it as simply asking why some specific thing comes into existence. A deeper investigation of the motivation of the question can reveal the metaphysical tone of wonder about the ontological nature of things in the world and astonishment at their existence.

Our suggestion is that providing moments to ask questions and deliberately investigating the nature of questioning can overcome this lack of experience that occurs in approaches that do not start sessions with questions to set the agenda for inquiry. One possibility is to ask at the end of a philosophical session for participants to share their own questions to be debated. This can be done simply by asking the community to share these questions out loud or by giving participants pieces of paper to write down questions and collect them to share them later.

Another possibility is to hold a session to collect questions in communities of inquiry that have had previous philosophy sessions. The facilitator may write on the board the beginning of a story that requires questions for completion. For example, she may write: “Daisy was on holiday. If someone had asked her what she was thinking about she wouldn’t have been able to say... She would have only remembered the question that occurred to her. What question do you think could have occurred to Daisy?”

Another possibility is to collect questions in the classroom at various other moments during the school day and then organize a session in which participants

can analyze and debate what they might do with their questions and why questions require different treatments⁵.

In conclusion, a proper understanding of philosophy and questioning implies recognizing that excellence of inquiry requires a community.

questions and the community of inquiry

A proper understanding of philosophy as an obsession for transparency is to recognize that thinking is a situated, embedded and embodied activity that underlies the practice of philosophical inquiry, and consequently depends on a broader posture that sees questioning as an activity that requires a community (Peirce, 1868). As Daniel Dennett describes:

Eventually, we must arrive at questions about ultimate values, and no factual investigation could answer them. Instead, we can do no better than to sit down and reason together, a political process of mutual persuasion and education that we can try to conduct in good faith. But in order to do that we have to know what we are choosing between, and we need to have a clear account of the reasons that can be offered for and against the different visions of the participants. Those who refuse to participate (because they already *know* the answers in their hearts) are, from the point of view of the rest of us, part of the problem. (Dennett, 2006, p. 14)

That is, even when there are people who do not want to participate in the community of inquiry, they must be taken into consideration by imagining which questions they could pose and how they would engage in the questioning. This is captured by how the notion of community of inquiry stands as a regulative ideal that is deepened and clarified by experiencing being part of communities of inquiry (Costa-Carvalho & Mendonça, 2017), in which participants learn that even those that are not part of a specific community of inquiry are included, and become an integrated part of it in the struggle to overcome issue's opaqueness.

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