

Dog or Human?

Reflections from 3rd Grade

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what if animals ruled the world?

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This past week at a 3rd grade classroom at an elementary school in South Seattle, we read *I Am the Dog* by Daniel Pinkwater, which is a story about a boy and his dog exchanging places and personalities for a day. Our discussion began with “Whose idea was it to switch the boy and the dog?” Students quickly moved on to comparing the life of a dog with that of a human, and our discussion ended with them considering whether, based on our discussion, they each preferred to be a human or a dog. While we talked about this in class, trying to empathize with both sides, it became apparent that the concept of freedom was important for the students. A majority of the class believed that humans have more freedom, for a variety of reasons, some of which are illustrated below. A few, however, thought that being a dog would afford them more freedom. Due to shortage of time we were not able to spend more time developing this thought, but the students had a chance to express their personal perspectives. Here are some examples of their reflections. The first six offer reasons as to why students believed being a human is better and the last three offer reasons to why being a dog is better.

Reasons why being a human being is better than being a dog:

“I think it would not be better to be a dog because you cannot go to water parks and do a lot of things that humans can do but a dog cannot do.” —Adam

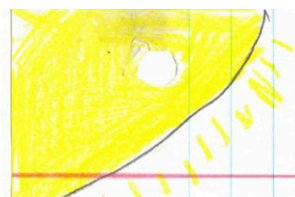
“I think it will not be better to be a dog because you don’t get that much friends and you got to get trained and you don’t get to do that much stuff.” —Diamond

“I do not think I want to be a dog because you do not get to do fun things. Why? Because you cannot go to restaurants and go shopping. You do not get to go to birthday parties.” —Kyala

“I think I like being a human, not a dog because dogs can’t see good. Dogs can’t go places. Dogs can die because nobody takes them.” —Mustafa

“I think it would not be better to be a dog because we will have no freedom.” —Ali

“I think it would not be better to be a dog because you will poop everywhere and not have good food or freedom.” —Mohamed



Reasons why being a dog being is better than being a human:

"I think it would be better to be a dog because you wouldn't do homework and have freedom." —Rahma

"I think it will be better to be a dog because you don't have homework and you can play around all day and when it is night time you can go to sleep." —Keira

"It is better to be a dog because you can go bathroom anywhere you want." —Dylan

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Reflecting on Animal Consciousness: Are Children Natural Philosophers?

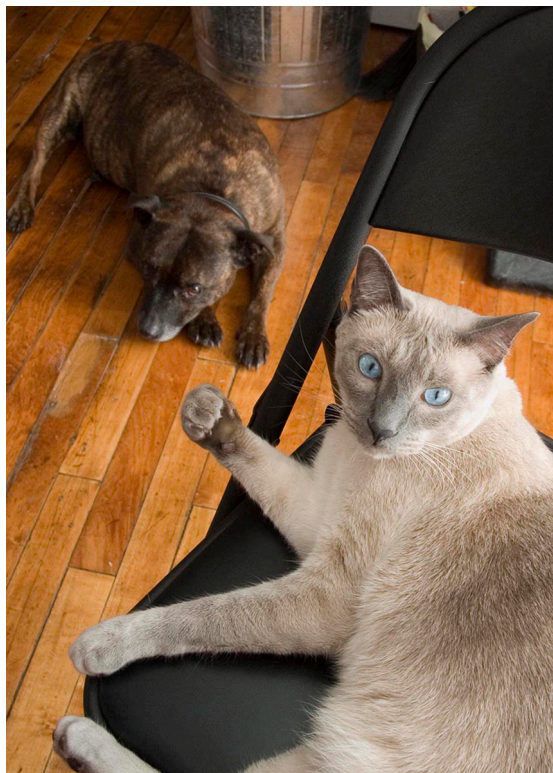
Laure Assayag

At the start of February, 2016, I had the opportunity to do a research project in Germany about philosophizing with children in primary school, funded by the French-German Office. I was introduced to the Hamburg approach by Anna Hausberg, philosophy teacher at the Grunschule Formanstrasse, a primary school located in Hamburg. She welcomed me with a children book, whilst I was expecting some kind of manual. She did not have a Philosophy background, but rather had a PhD on Teaching Biology.

"PhiNa," she explained, was a project that began in August 2007 to philosophize about natural science themes for talented children. By talented, she meant that every child had a hidden talent that waited to blossom and to be discovered. By philosophizing with children, she wanted to say that philosophy was not restricted to mere philosophy lessons with children; it can be an integral part of Biology, Mathematics, and Sciences courses in general.

Class Plan

Hausberg showed me a pack of cards, with plain pictures and a catchphrase at the bottom. She told me that the lesson was for primary school, and also for children of eleven to twelve years old; it consisted in picking one card and combining it with the card previously drawn. For example, one card picturing green apples accompanied by the



WHAT IS THE CAT THINKING?
WHAT IS THE DOG THINKING?

catchphrase "How do the apple seeds know that they should be an apple tree?" could be coupled with one carrying the question "Are ants planning their days?"

She then remarked that pupils in primary schools tended to associate pictures of the same color whilst older pupils (around twelve years old) made connections linked to the catchphrase at the bottom (ants + apple = nature).

When putting their cards on the table, and thus creating a giant domino, children were asked to give reasons for their choice, and discuss through a "community of inquiry" with other children about their conflicting views. Thus, this approach implemented creativity and logical reasoning.

The second part of the course was to ask pupils to create a card of their own that could be part of a larger game, tackling a fundamental question that mattered to them. The objective was to create

a new questioning out of a previous study.

I was shown cards made by second grade children (around eight years old) during their first philosophical class. Some of them used analogies, showing that they understood the goal of the exercise (for example, "Are stones alive?" in echo to "Does air live?") and that they were encouraged to ask themselves questions they never considered before. Others drew completely new subjects, high-

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