



Questions

Philosophy For Young People

No. 2, Spring 2002

Human Rights

Q This second issue of *Questions: Philosophy for Young People* explores questions about human rights. *What is a right? Which rights are most important? What responsibilities do rights entail?* Teachers and philosophers discussed with students in elementary, middle, and high schools the nature of rights and whether rights exist that belong to all human beings. Many of us used the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a resource to elicit from students the rights they believed to be most important. This issue includes transcripts of K-12 philosophical discussions about human rights, declarations of human rights written by students, drawings, essays, and articles offering advice and ideas for activities for teachers and parents interested in facilitating philosophical discussions with young people.

Many of the young people who participated in this issue engaged in very spirited discussions about rights. They were deeply interested in understanding what rights are and why people everywhere do not have all of the rights to which the children concluded we are all entitled. It is exciting to watch young people involved in passionate dialogues about these questions. We hope that some of the flavor of these classes reaches you as you read this issue.

We are pleased to be distributing a second issue of *Questions*. We have been gratified by the enthusiastic response to the first issue and look forward to the continued publication of this unique journal. We welcome your submissions, and you can find submission information on page 10. After this issue, *Questions* will be available by subscription only, and information about how to subscribe is on page 12.

Have a wonderful summer!

Jana Mohr Lone, Editor-in-Chief

Voice, Rights, and Reason: High School Students on Philosophy and Children's Rights

Hugh Taft-Morales

Hugh Taft-Morales has taught philosophy, history and values at the Edmund Burke School in Washington, D. C. for the past fifteen years.

Q For the past four years we have organized a high school conference on philosophy as part of Howard University's Alain Locke Conference. The 2000 high school program focused on children's rights, and the program on Friday, September 15 was attended by over eighty students from local public and private high schools. Schools included Benjamin Banneker High School, St. Albans, Cesar Chavez Charter School and Edmund Burke School in the District of Columbia, and Walter Johnson High School and Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School from Maryland.

All students read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from the United Nations Charter, as well as a parallel declaration from the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in November, 1989. Students were asked to consider the following questions: What is a right? What is the origin of "rights"? Do such documents create rights, or merely acknowledge their existence?

What follows is a selection from one of the small group discussions about the nature of rights, with some omissions due to noise on the tape and minor edits. All of the names of the young people have been changed for the purposes of this article.

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"The right to a home."

Joseph Carey, 2nd Grade, Methow Valley Elementary, Winthrop, WA

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Questions is published annually by the Philosophy Documentation Center with the generous support of the American Philosophical Association and the Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children. If you would like to receive more information on how to obtain copies of *Questions*, please contact the Philosophy Documentation Center, P.O. Box 7147, Charlottesville, VA 22906-7147; phone: 800-444-2419 (U.S. & Canada) or 434-220-3300; fax: 433-220-3301; e-mail: order@pdcnet.org; web: www.pdcnet.org/questions.html.

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Voice, Rights, and Reason

(continued from page 1)

A Conversation...

LEE: It strikes me that what we're getting towards is the relativity of rights. You have a right relative to the circumstances you're in. There is no objective, absolute right. You're talking about whether you can yell "fire" in a movie theater, whether you have that right If someone grants you a right, and it's legal, then it seems like it should be an absolute right, but that never seems to be the case. There's no objectivity in this document or in any legal granting document If someone says you have a right to do this, then there really is no reason you shouldn't be allowed to do it whenever you want to.

PAT: Then there's kind of a problem with our Constitution, because the rights there . . . are all open to interpretation, they are all qualified. As society has changed so has the interpretation of the laws over the years. None of the rights, like the right to bear arms, that's not really an absolute right because of other restrictions or laws that have been made None of them are absolute.

JAMIE: Do you think the reason that none of them are absolute is that they wrote them so open-endedly that you can interpret them however you want to?

PAT: I think they can be made clearer. Someone may have said them in a statement, like "they have the right to do this" and might have thought that that meant absolute. But the person who actually wrote it might have thought it was very, very clear. And when other people took it they may have changed the interpretation . . .

TAYLOR: So is a right something that we as a society came together, and the government, in a document, on a piece of paper, says it's right or wrong. You just started talking about the Bill of Rights What is a right? Is it just a piece of paper?

LEE: If you look at it governmentally, or societally, a right is basically something which is a condition that you desire and that everyone else around you desires, or most other people around you desire. And you are willing to have restrictions placed on yourself to protect whatever this condition is. Say, uh, the right to free speech, or the right to not be killed. I'm willing to give up the right to kill other people in order to protect my right to not be killed. And it becomes a right because we all agree that it's worth giving up rights to be democratic or whatever. The authority comes from the social contract.

JAMIE: Does everyone have to agree?

TAYLOR: Does that make it a right?

JAMIE: Is it a right if only fifty-one of a hundred agree?

LEE: Nobody has to enter the social contract.

DAKOTA: Well, you're kind of born into the social contract. It's sort of a decision to break it than to enter it.

LEE: There's no place where at least technically that murder isn't a crime. . . . You're born into a society and you're bound by that society's rules. If you choose to break those rules then you give up the rights and protections that that society gave you.

TAYLOR: But sometimes in a society If you went back to when there was slavery they'd say that they have the right to own slaves.

LEE: But that's their social contract. You're born into a social contract.

TAYLOR: But that doesn't make it right though.

LEE: It's not necessarily right but the point is you're born into a social contract whether you like it or not. You can choose to follow that social contract and get whatever benefits or not get the restriction that implies. Or you can choose to break that, at which point the other people in that social contract can do whatever they want to because you don't have any social contract.



Humiliated Elephants

Talya Birkhahn and Dubi Bergstein

Talya Birkhahn is the director of the Philosophy for Children and Self-Remaking Project in Israel, and is the pedagogical coordinator of professional development in schools with the Israeli Ministry of Education. Dubi Bergstein is an elementary school teacher and a member of the development team of the Philosophy for Children and Self-Remaking Project in Israel.



*"The right to go to a doctor if I get sick."
Jacqueline O'Keefe, 1st Grade
Methow Valley Elementary, Winthrop, WA*

TAYLOR: Instead of just saying "Whether you like it or not . . ."
LEE: You could try to change it. You could try to move somewhere else. To another country or another state or whatever.
TAYLOR: Or why don't you stay where you are and try to help . . .
LEE: Well you could do that but you could end up being killed or imprisoned . . .
JAMIE: Do you see any ethical issue by saying, "A baby is born into a social contract"? Shouldn't they have some sort of say in whether they want to be in the social contract?
LEE: If rights are established by social contract, before you are in a social contract you have no rights at all.
TAYLOR: But you're saying that rights are established by social contract.
LEE: But the whole point of rights is that they come from a social contract.
TAYLOR: But do they come from a social contract?
LEE: Rights only exist if people respect them, and people only respect them if they are a part of some social contract.

The poem, "Humiliated Elephants" by Oded Boorla, was read in class in the Guatemala elementary school in Jerusalem as a starting point for a philosophical discussion. The framework we use is as follows:

First, the children, who are sitting in a circle, go around, one after the other, reading the text aloud. Each child reads a short part, a line or a paragraph, until all the text is read and every child has read.

Next, each child or each pair of children thinks up a question that is triggered by the text. We ask the children to think of questions for which answers can not be found in the text, which could be a starting point for a discussion that most of the children would find interesting and raises issues about which children can have and express different opinions and perspectives.

All the questions are "collected" and written on the blackboard with the name(s) of the child/ren who thought of the questions.

The questions are analyzed and similar or close questions are grouped together and even combined.

A democratic voting takes place, in which one question is chosen by the community as the starting point for the discussion.

Finally we start a discussion around the chosen question. This involves activities that will inspire thinking (critically and creatively), and self-remaking experiences that will support and inspire empowerment and personal growth. The combination of critical and creative thinking with self-remaking is done by harnessing philosophical understanding and inquiry about issues, concept, ideas, and notions to the process of empowerment and personal growth which we call self-remaking.

We chose to bring the following parts of the discussion and activities that took place in each of the classes in order to emphasize certain elements of philosophical discussion and of self-remaking.

HUMILIATED ELEPHANTS

By Oded Boorla

Circus elephants are always sad
They do tricks, they lie down, they sit up.
Their trunks they wave, they blow, they blast
But deep inside—they sure are sad.

In the zoo too, the elephants are sad.
They come and go, go back and forth,
They stretch their trunks and ask for peanuts—
But deep inside—they sure are sad.

Only jungle elephants, plain elephants, forest elephants
Are free elephants, mighty and proud.
They stride in safety, they have no fear—
Though captive elephants—are sad elephants.

(continued on page 4)



*"The right to live."
Jessica Dominguez, 2nd Grade,
Methow Valley Elementary, Winthrop, WA*



Second Grade

Students' Philosophical Questions (after reading the poem together)

- 1) AVICHAY, LIOR, IDAN, ARIEL, SAPIR, SAGI, YANIV, DANIEL: Why are the elephants sad?
- 2) BAR, SIVAN: What does humiliating mean?
- 3) INBAR, AYELET: Why do the elephants work so hard?
- 4) GAL, SARI: Why do the elephants do tricks, lie down and sit up?
- 5) YARDEN, ESTI: Why do the elephants go back and forth?
- 6) MAOR, MATAN: Why do the elephants stretch their trunks and ask for peanuts?

From the Philosophical Discussion

DUBI: Let's try and understand the connections between "sad" and "humiliating." First, try to give examples of things that you think are sad.

LIOR: Once, my mother promised me that she would buy me eight packages of cards, and she didn't.

DUBI: O.k, when someone breaks a promise, it makes you feel sad.

BAR: When someone hits you that is sad.

GAL: When you cry it's sad.

TALI: There is a doll that when you press a button she cries - is she sad?

SAPIR: When you press the button, you think, she is sad?

DUBI: O.k, there are, of course, many other things that make us sad, but I would ask you now to try and explain what humiliating means to you.

BAR: When a friend stands taller than you, and makes you feel that he's better than you because he is taller.

LIOR: To say to someone "you can't read well."

SAGI: To insult someone.

MATAN: When you make fun of someone for not being able to read.

CHAY: When a tall kid says to a short kid, "I'm taller than you."

DUBI: Does someone who humiliates someone else have to be taller or higher than the person he or she is humiliating?

ALL OF THE CHILDREN TOGETHER: Yes!!

DUBI: Why does being taller or higher than someone make her or him feel humiliated?

YANIV: It's not humiliating if **you** are taller; because you are supposed to be taller than us.

DUBI: Can you think of a situation in which you were big but felt small?

SAPIR: When I am a big girl and someone tells me I'm acting like a baby.

BAR: When someone calls me tiny.

The second grade discussion culminated in a self-remaking exercise, in which the students related the philosophical discussion to personal concerns in their lives. The sixth grade students also read the poem and came up with various questions with which to start their discussion. An excerpt from that discussion follows.

Sixth Grade

From the Philosophical Discussion

DUBI: Let's try and help one another to find examples of situations we can't be freed of.

ASAF: When someone curses me or hits me.

DUBI: Can anybody help Asaf? What makes us feel locked in this situation?

IDAN: It is a situation that you feel humiliated for being cursed and you think that you are the most unpopular child. The other children make fun of you.

RONIT: When I am asked to tattle.

LINOR: A humiliated person is someone that is being bullied by other people.

RAVID: It's like a child from first grade in our school whose parents abused him. And made him do things he didn't want to do.

DUBI: So, if someone, a parent for example, makes you do something you don't want to do – that's an example of humiliation?

RAVID: Only if they're not doing it for my own good. For example, when my parents make me brush my teeth and face, they want me to feel good. They're doing it for my own good.

SHIKI: When my parents make me do my homework, it's for my own good.

DUBI: You gave examples of humiliation between grown-ups and children. I would like to go back, and ask for examples of situations in which you feel towards each other feelings of oppression and humiliation.

SAPIR: A child in our class who is sad because all the other children isolate him, or a child that the other children are gossip about him, and make him feel bad so that he feels that he is not accepted in our "society."

SHIR: There are children that make other children do things they don't want to and if they don't do it, the children threaten them.

RONIT: When a girl makes me go somewhere I don't want to go to. I don't want to go there with her. But I don't want to embarrass her, so I go.

DUBI: We were talking about situations of humiliation that we can't be freed of. I would try identifying the distinction between situations of humiliation from which we **can't** be freed and situations of humiliation that we **don't know yet how** to be freed of.

An Exercise of "Self-Remaking"

TALIA: I would like to do with you a little exercise. I would like each of you to sit quietly and try to choose a situation in which you feel like the elephants felt: humiliated, oppressed. . . . Think of any situation. . . now I would like you all to think of a little possibility that will help you get freed. It is like a huge ocean of humiliation and oppression that you are trying to empty – drop by drop, until you start feeling more comfortable in that imaginary ocean. It can be something that you do for yourself or something that someone else does for you.

SHIR: If some of the kids ignore you, you can try and become friendly with other kids.

OR: If there is a child that is not accepted in our "society," I can try and make the "ocean" smaller by helping him.

DUBI: In light of all we said today about humiliated elephants, what makes us feel humiliated, why we humiliate others and what can help us not feel humiliated and avoid humiliating others, I would like you to try and help the elephants from the poem overcome or avoid their feelings of humiliation by composing a new verse to the poem that will now be called: "Unhumiliated Elephants."

Examples of Some of the New Verses Kids Composed

SHIKY: Captured elephants are sad elephants.
Why are they sad?
Free the sad elephants
So they can stride with dignity
And not suffer any more.
The elephants are not sad anymore,
They are happy and content.

RAVID: The elephants have become used to all the tricks they have to do.
To walk, to stride and break cups too.
I hope the captive elephants will once be free
and become plain elephants.

NATALY: But captive elephants are
Big and strong, and everybody loves
Looking at them and enjoying their tricks.

HELENA: But they are happy after all
For they make others happy.
They prepare amazing shows
And that way—meet new faces
And above all—they have each other.



A Bill of Human Rights: by Methow Valley Elementary School First and Second Grade Students

Facilitator: Jana Mohr Lone

Jana Mohr Lone is the director of the Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children, a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing philosophy into the lives of young people, and an affiliate assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Washington.



During the school year 2001–2002, I facilitated weekly philosophy sessions with three first/second grade multi-age classes. During this time, we spent two weeks talking about human rights. In the first session we began by illustrating various rights (the right to live, the right to practice one's religion, etc.) and discussing their relative importance in small groups. In our second session I read to the students *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: An Adaptation for Children*, by Ruth Rocha and Otavio Roth, and together they created a list of the rights they believed every human being should have.

The students agreed that the first right on the list, the right to be treated equally, was the most important right to them. They disagreed about some of the other rights on the list, and we had spirited discussions about both the right to listen and not to talk (number 12) and the right to read (number 26). Some of the children felt strongly that these were not rights, but things you had to do, while others saw them as things they wanted and had the right to do. As part of this process, we spent some time trying to draw a distinction between rights and responsibilities.

Methow Valley Elementary School: First and Second Grade's Bill of Human Rights

1. The right to be treated equally.
2. The right to have clothes to wear.
3. The right to go to school.
4. The right to practice your religion.
5. The right to think for yourself.
6. The right to go to a doctor if you get sick.
7. The right to live.
8. The right to a home.
9. The right to enough food to eat.
10. The right to respect the flag.
11. The right to love each other.
12. The right to listen and not to talk.
13. The right to study what you want.
14. The right to have a family.
15. The right to have others listen to you.
16. The right to do the things you want to do.
17. The right not to be pushed around.
18. The right to enough money to take care of yourself.
19. The right to sit down.
20. The right to have a bed.
21. The right to be yourself.
22. The right to plan.
23. The right to rest.
24. The right to be free.
25. The right to have children.
26. The right to read.
27. The right to be safe from harm.
28. The right to have a pet.

Created by the students in Kay Lee's 1st/2nd grade class: Joseph Carey, Rozzie Christopherson, Brandon Cox, Cody Cupp, Chad Desjardins, Jessica Dominguez, Samantha Eiffert, Hunter Harrop, Joey Hausman, Mikey Michael, Saleya Miller, Riley Moe, Jacqueline O'Keefe, Buck Prib, Rhianon Toal, Briana White, Cricket Whittaker, Aaron Wiley, and Tommy Zbyszewski.

Declaration of Human Rights: by Whitman Middle School Sixth Grade Students

Facilitator: David A. Shapiro

David A. Shapiro is a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy at the University of Washington, whose work explores questions in ethics and moral education. He is the education director of the Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children.



In two sixth grade classes at Whitman Middle School in Seattle, Washington, we spent three class sessions philosophizing about rights. In the first session, we wondered about what rights are and who (or what) has them. This led us into a discussion of animal rights and—through a few thought experiments and the use of part of Mat Lipman's philosophical novel, *Lisa*—an exploration of the question, "Is it possible to respect the rights of animals and still eat them?"

In the second session, we wondered what rights look like and which rights are most fundamental. (To do that we used the "What Do Rights Look Like?" exercise described in the last issue of *Questions*.)

In the third session, we explored the idea of Universal Human Rights. Students read and discussed the Dr. Seuss classic, *Yertle the Turtle*, as a way to begin wondering about what rights all beings everywhere ought to have. We then read the first 10 or so articles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With those in mind, students worked in groups of three or four to develop their own lists of universal human rights.

Following is a combined list from both classes (about 56 students total) of the rights students identified as belonging in a declaration of human rights.

Whitman Middle School: Sixth Grade's Declaration of Human Rights



- The right to free speech.
- The right to have fun.
- The right not to do your homework.
- The right to read a book, even if it's banned, anytime you want.
- The right to a fair argument, with no excuses like "because I'm so-and-so."
- The right to bring pets to school.
- The right to shave our heads.
- The right to practice any kind of religion.
- The right to your own opinion.
- The right to sing and listen to music when you want to.
- The right to wear any appropriate clothes you want.
- The right to protest.
- The right to have friends of your choice.
- The right to be challenged in school.
- The right to demand that state lawmakers take their standardized tests before we do.
- The right to pass notes in class.
- The right to be heard without interruption.
- The right to be whoever you want when you grow up.
- The right to not know what you're doing.
- The right to believe in anything you want.
- The right to own property.
- The right to eat whatever you want.
- The right to an education even if you can't pay for it.
- The right to practice any kind of religion.
- The right to take your shoes off in class.



Teaching Plato's Cave

Stephen Barnes

Stephen Barnes is a Ph.D. student in philosophy at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, where he is currently working on his dissertation.



In the summer of 1999, I had the opportunity to teach junior high and high school students an introductory philosophy course during the "Challenge to Excellence" enrichment program at Southern Illinois University. While our class ranged over a variety of topics, including the role of education in their lives, skepticism and belief, contemporary moral and political issues, and the nature of selfhood, one of the more provocative and enthusiastic discussions centered on Plato's Cave.

Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" is, as Plato puts it, "a parable to illustrate the degrees in which our nature may be enlightened or unenlightened." It's also an allegory for what Plato sees as the role that philosophy and philosophers play in helping the rest of us to become more enlightened.

The allegory describes the condition of people who have been living in an underground cavern all their lives. They are chained by the legs and by the neck so that they can only look straight ahead—at the back wall of the cave. Behind them, towards the mouth of the cave, is a fire burning and in front of the fire is a kind of puppet stage. People carry along on this stage various objects, including figures of men and animals, which project shadows on the cave wall for the prisoners to see.

As Plato points out, since the prisoners have never seen anything else in their lives, they take these shadows to be reality. Plato's point is that, as far as real knowledge is concerned, most people in the world are really no different than the prisoners in the cave. We are similarly unenlightened, and take our own perceptions to be real when, in fact, they are no better than the shadows on the wall of Plato's cave.

As the parable proceeds, one of the prisoners is released from his chains and brought up out of the cave into the light. At first, he is blinded by what he sees and can't accept the reality of three-dimensional objects in the world. Finally, though, as his eyes and mind become accustomed to things in the world outside the cave, he comes to see reality for what it really is. He feels sorry for his fellow prisoners in the cave who still live in a world of illusion.

But when he returns to the cave, he is unable to communicate with them. Having become accustomed to the light, he can no longer navigate the world of darkness. His fellow prisoners laugh at him and say his sight is ruined by his ascent. "If they could lay hands on the man who was trying to set them free and lead them up," says Plato (in an allusion to the fate of Socrates), "they would kill him."

The high school students and I began our conversation by talking about what they already knew about the history of ancient Greece, especially Athens. Many of the students talked about the wars between Athens and Sparta, and a few had heard of Socrates, including his career and death. This discussion provided a sort of background story against which to set Plato's concerns.

I used an overhead projector and a few cutout construction paper figures (a house, a tree, and an airplane) to illustrate the situation in the Cave. We turned out the lights, pointed the projector and all of their chairs in one direction, and I focused the images of the cutouts onto the wall. We agreed that one could use such images to tell stories (we even tried a few brief ones), and that if such images were all that one had ever seen, then those images would be assumed to be the most real (or only real) elements of the world.

The use of the cutouts and projector had the advantage of placing the students in a situation similar to the denizens of the Cave. Once we stepped outside the story, however, we were also able to talk about the relationship between the images on the wall and the construction paper cutouts in my hands. This led to a conversation about permanence and stability—that we tend to prioritize those things that are more durable and reliable. Furthermore, we were able to talk about how I could construct those things that they took to be most real (the images on the wall, and the story I told with them) so as to make them believe whatever I chose.

These further conversations moved our focus from the situation they had just been asked to approximate to concerns they had in their lives outside the classroom. Our discussions allowed them to consider how what they think and believe can be shaped by the actions of others, especially authority figures (which the high school students were especially eager to discuss). When I asked who had power over them to shape their ideas and beliefs, the answers ranged from "teachers" and "parents" to "people on television" and "politicians." One student offered her pastor as an example. The conversation about the role others play in shaping our beliefs was sophisticated enough that we were able to talk about why this is both helpful and potentially harmful. We discussed traditions binding groups of people together, and also considered propaganda and various forms of demagoguery. And we talked about asking questions, thinking critically, and considering points of view that are alternatives to those we are typically given.

Another student asked a few more questions about why Plato was so concerned with such matters. We talked about how Plato was skeptical of the sort of mob justice he believed Socrates to have received. I explained that Plato wanted to get behind what appeared to be going on to what was really real, to the truth of things. The student asked if this meant more reliance upon reason and careful study and consideration than upon emotional reactions and personal biases. (He was already performing as Socrates quite well.) I dutifully answered, "yes," to which the student replied, "then Plato is guilty too—he's just doing this because he's mad they killed his friend." Clearly, he already understood the intricacies and difficulties of working with Plato.



*"Plato's Cave"
Grade 6 Student, Whitman Middle School, Seattle*



"Plato's Cave" Grade 6 Student, Whitman Middle School, Seattle

Essay on Superiority

Geoff Berkheimer

Geoff Berkheimer is a fourteen-year-old student in Libertyville, Illinois, who enjoys writing and hanging out with his buddies. He wrote this essay as part of the course "Introduction to Philosophy," taught by David White, Ph.D. at Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development.



A man comes to me with a question one day. He wishes to know if he can achieve superiority. A question riddled with questions, yes? I suppose an excellent person is one who is learned and has achieved everything that they have set out to do. But that has its problems. If a man's only goal in life is to live at home and feed off of his parents for all his life and he does so, then he would not be excellent, for he has done nothing. So a superior person must do something, and do it well, be it running a country or running a construction vehicle.

But an excellent person may not be a superior person for just that reason, as that only covers the work of a person. A superior person, also, must have little, if any, interest in filling his appetite. Profit must be treated as an appetite and, therefore, a superior man would buy only what he needed, and the contrary would buy whatever suited his fancy. A superior person would do his duties without being asked, and his counterpart would do his duties only upon being urged to do so or he would not do the job at all.

People, as a whole, generally associate with whoever they want to. This is what appears most logical to do and this is what a superior person must do, but those whom he chooses to associate with must have high morals and dignity. Therefore, he would not be weighed down by their wrong doings or corruptness.

Finally, it must be said that superiority cannot be learned, as the truly superior person would think of themselves as the common man because they are aware of their faults, even if their faults are few, and therefore would never believe it possible to be superior. It must also be said that perfection is not required for superiority, as perfection, as it is thought of today, is not possible.

I turned to the man, and said "No, you cannot be superior. No one can be superior, not a single person on the earth. People will be excellent and superior in some things but everyone has a fault or thirty, and other people may be superior at one thing and horrible at another. It is therefore, very simple that there cannot be such a thing as superiority. So no, you can't be superior. Nor can anyone. It is simply not possible, but the human race has the right to try and obtain it all the same. Good luck!"

Resources and Ideas for Discussions about Human Rights

Some Discussion Questions/Topics for Essays, Stories, Poems or Drawings



What is a right? Are human rights universal?

Which rights are most important?

What responsibilities do rights entail?

If you were to create a Bill of Human Rights, what rights would you include?

Suggestions for Reading Materials

Four good websites for resources and activities about human rights for K-12 students are:

http://press.coe.int/press2/press.asp?B=30,0,0,0,0&M=http://press.coe.int/Files/RelPub/FactSheetsDH/e_intro.htm

<http://tlc.ai.org/rights.htm>

<http://www.hrusa.org/educate/default.htm>

<http://erc.hrea.org/Library/>

Some of the following readings will be more appropriate for older students and some for younger students, depending on their levels of sophistication and reading abilities.

Elementary School:

Yertl the Turtle by Dr. Seuss

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: An Adaptation for Children by Ruth Rocha and Otavio Roth (United Nations Publications)

Videotape: Amnesty International Animated Version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Middle School and High School:

Chapter 5 from *Savage Inequalities*, by Jonathan Kozol

Long Walk to Freedom, by Nelson Mandela

"Afternoon in Linen," in *The Lottery*, by Shirley Jackson

"The Use of Force," in *The Farmer's Daughter*, by William Carlos Williams



Philosophy in the Schools Project

by David A. Shapiro

David A. Shapiro is a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy at the University of Washington, whose work explores questions in ethics and moral education. He is the education director of the Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children.



When I first heard about Philosophy for Children, I understood it as a way of teaching classroom teachers to lead philosophy lessons with their own students.

The excellent materials produced by the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC), including their comprehensive teachers' manuals, provided systematic lesson plans for teachers to conduct philosophical inquiry as part of their ongoing in-class instruction. Even instructors with little or no background in philosophy could, by working through the IAPC materials, develop rich philosophical lessons in their own classrooms. To me, the promise of helping to turn teachers into philosophers was an exciting aspect of introducing philosophy into children's lives.

When I began regularly leading philosophy sessions in K–12 classes, I came to understand a difficulty associated with the above approach. Classroom teachers, at least the ones I had the opportunity to work with in public schools in and around Seattle, already had more than enough on their plates. Given the numerous initiatives associated with developing student competence, not to mention the many hours spent preparing for standardized tests of one sort or another, none of the in-service teachers I met believed that they had time for adding much of anything additional to their teaching load. These teachers were all quite interested in the questions we were exploring with their students, but none of them really wanted to lead the philosophy sessions themselves.

Over time, an alternate model of introducing philosophy into K–12 schools began to emerge. Rather than training primary and secondary school teachers to be philosophers, we educate philosophers to be (at least in a limited sense) primary and secondary school teachers. This is the idea behind the "Philosophy in the Schools" program that the Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children, in conjunction with the University of Washington Philosophy Department, has been developing for the past five years.

For the last two years, I have taught a fall quarter course at the university in methods of doing philosophy with children. Here is how it is described in the course catalogue: "This course is a workshop in doing philosophy with children. Students will be introduced to the methods and practices of doing philosophy with young people, eventually enabling them to facilitate philosophical inquiry sessions in local elementary, middle, and secondary schools. Philosophy for Children is an instructional theory and methodology for bringing philosophy into the lives of pre-college students. It emphasizes 'doing philosophy' over 'studying philosophy;' instead of reading Plato, for instance, young people explore the same sorts of questions that intrigued Plato through the creative use of literature, classroom games, and collaborative exercises. Philosophy for Children stresses the development of a "community of inquiry" in which budding philosophers are encouraged to ask their own relevant questions, to develop their views and articulate reasons for them, and to listen and learn from one another."

Class size is capped at 20. About a third of the students have tended to be philosophy majors (or minors); about a third have been students who are interested in becoming classroom teachers; and about a third have just been random enrollees. The class meets twice a week for three hours. During that time, students are introduced to numerous readings and activities that can be used to stimulate a wide range of philosophical discussions—across the range of philosophical topics—in pre-college classes. Essentially, I lead a few dozen philosophy for children lessons. Students in the class participate as would students in the schools. By the modeling of these lessons, and through discussions and critiques afterwards, students get a good preparation for how to lead a community of inquiry into philosophical questions. For their final projects, all the students must develop and deliver a philosophy for children lesson of their own. The last four or so meetings of the course are taken up with this to give all the students a real taste of what it's like to be in front of a class facilitating a philosophical discussion.

Students who complete the fall quarter methods class are then invited to take part in a winter quarter practicum in which they are placed in local area elementary and middle schools to lead philosophy sessions on a regular basis. This aspect of the program has been a bit trickier to establish than the methods course. Students who

aren't at all reluctant to lead a class of their peers are far more hesitant to do so out in the real-world of public schools. Nevertheless, in two years of running the practicum, eight different students have been successfully placed in local schools to conduct philosophy lessons with students as young as kindergarten and as old as 8th grade.

We have established a working relationship with the Pipeline Project, a university-sponsored program that places undergraduates in tutoring positions throughout the Seattle School District. Students in the Practicum course sign up with the Pipeline Project as a way to get a foot in the door of the schools in which they hope to do philosophy. By tutoring kids on a regular basis (usually twice a week), they develop a familiarity and sense of trust with them. This makes the transition to leading philosophy sessions much smoother for everyone involved.

At the Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children, we see the "Philosophy in the Schools" project as similar to the many successful Writers or Artists in the Schools programs that have been established in schools all around the country. The well-known benefits of those programs include that students have the opportunity to learn from a "real live" writer or artist and that they are typically introduced to a perspective that may be somewhat different than that of other teachers. Our "Philosophy in the Schools" project similarly gives students a chance work with "real live" philosophers, even though those "philosophers" may simply be undergraduate majors in philosophy. (This actually has the benefit of highlighting the important point that one doesn't become a philosopher in virtue of completing some degree; we're all philosophers, after all.)

Here's an example of a session conducted by one of our philosophers in the schools. Sydney Santos, an undergraduate Philosophy major, led a group of kindergarten kids through a fascinating exploration of fairness. He created a story with them that they had to "build" by filling in blanks he left in the narrative. Sydney would pause, wait for a student to fill in the blank, and the story would proceed. So, the story ended up being about a *young prince* who had a *magic ball* that could make *chocolate chip cookies* fall *from the sky*. (The above italicized details were filled in by students). Each student who contributed to the story was given a yellow piece of paper about the size of a playing card. Some students in the class of about 20 contributed more than once and so ended up with several cards; others didn't contribute at all, and so ended up with none. At the conclusion of the story, Sydney announced that the yellow cards would be redeemable for candy. (The teacher had agreed beforehand that this was okay; they were just small mints.)

The lesson in fairness the kindergartners then explored was whether it was fair that people with more than one card could get more than one candy. Should, they wondered, kids who didn't contribute be left out, especially when they didn't know beforehand that the coupons would be redeemable? Following a very lively discussion about this, the class decided that the fair thing to do would be to have all the kids get a piece of candy, even those who didn't have a yellow card. They agreed that in order for the distribution of candy based on yellow cards to be fair, that everyone should have known in the first place. Additionally, they shared the view that handing out candy based on someone's participation in the story wasn't fair to begin with; there might be any number of reasons why someone didn't contribute—he or she might be shy, someone else might have said what he or she was going to say—but that shouldn't determine whether a child would get a treat.

Sydney facilitated this discussion well, asking the sort of probing and clarifying questions philosophers love to ask. Certainly the kindergarten teacher could have done something like this herself (she is exploring questions about fairness every day in her class). She was quite pleased though, that, in this case—for these 50 minutes or so—she didn't have to do so; for this time, she could have a "philosopher in the school" lead the discussion instead.

I have been similarly impressed with the work of other philosophers in the schools our project has trained. One of them, for instance, used Lego blocks with 3rd graders to illustrate the famous "Ship of Theseus" puzzle in metaphysics. She arrived with a Lego house and proceeded to replace all the blocks in it, one-by-one, with new ones. This led to a spirited debate about where the original house now was. Was it the one made all of new blocks? Or was it the pile of original blocks set to the side?

One of the most rewarding things for me, as coordinator of the "Philosophy in the Schools" program, is to see how many of the philosophers express an interest to keep working in the schools after their one-quarter commitment is completed. Most do, even though they won't get any additional university credit for doing so. It is our hope, at the Northwest Center, that this trend will continue and that, in years to come, we will have philosophers in many—if not most—of the public schools in and around Seattle.



Maya's Philosophy

Hugh Taft-Morales

Hugh Taft-Morales has taught philosophy, history and values at the Edmund Burke School in Washington, D.C. for the past fifteen years.



I am a dad, and I am a high school philosophy teacher. While I have tried to keep these roles separate, I cannot always help myself. Obviously, my children have picked up bits and pieces of philosophy from dinner table conversation.

DAD: Can we talk about philosophy a little?

MAYA: Philosophy? Philosophy is hard. It's like extra homework.

DAD: I will just ask you some questions and you tell me what you think. I want to ask you about "rights". Does that sound alright?

MAYA: Rights? What are those?

DAD: Good questions. Can we try it?

MAYA: Ok.

DAD: What do you think of when someone talks about "human rights"?

MAYA: Rights are what someone is allowed to do by the government and the laws, and the rules, and the parents. They all have the power.

DAD: Do you think there would be "human rights" if there were no governments?

MAYA: Yes. A right is just when you have something that can't be taken away.

DAD: Like what? Example of a right?

MAYA: To be able to wear what you want.

DAD: Someone on a desert island, without any rules, would they have many rights? They don't have a government, but they can do almost what ever they want. If there are no authorities.

MAYA: Rights are everything that no one says you can't do.

DAD: It sounds like rights are nothing!

MAYA: You mean like solid. No—but it's not that they don't exist. It's kind of like how sound exists. It's not a solid, but it is there.

DAD: But sound is actually the movement of tiny molecules and particles. Are rights like that?

MAYA: No (bemused).

DAD: Is there anything solid or physical about a "right"?

MAYA: Yes. . . ., no. . . . I have changed my mind. Rights can be like a solid, but not like a solid. It's an idea. You can't take it and put it in a jar, but it's there. Rights are like ink on paper. The President or Congress writes them down on paper.

DAD: Are there other rights?

MAYA: Yes. Other rights are being able to say what you want, to be scared of what you want to scared of, to go where you want, to love who you want, to paint what you want, to believe what you want.

DAD: Where do rights come from?

MAYA: Mainly from adults, and the government. The people who make rules.

DAD: Some people think that God gives people rights. What do you feel about that? MLK and Thomas Jefferson thought that.

MAYA: They believe in God. And they think that God is very important. That he is not just a man up in the sky. I don't believe in God. I don't say rights come from God. I don't say they do.

DAD: How do we know we have human rights—the type you believe in, given to us by the governments?

MAYA: They make some laws and not others. They don't say that you have to wear a particular style of clothes, so you have a right to wear any style.

DAD: So a "right" could be just something the government doesn't say you can't have?

MAYA: Not necessarily. A toy isn't a right, and the government doesn't say you can't have toys.

DAD: Do you think that people have the right to live?

MAYA: Depending on what they do. If they kill people, then they don't have the right to live...or at least they can't live how they used to. You can put people in jail, or sometimes they kill people. It is better for one person to be killed than for a million.

DAD: We've been talking about some rights, like the right to live. Are there rights to have good doctors and affordable medicine for people, or the right to an education?

MAYA: It depends on how much money you have. If you are poor you can't have doctors and schools. If you are rich you can.

DAD: Is being able to do something the same as having a right?

MAYA: A right is what you are able to do.

DAD: Does a poor person have rights?

MAYA: Yes, but a poor person doesn't have enough money to really have many rights. That is one way that rights, and what you are able to do, are different.

DAD: Do rights do you any good if you don't have the money or power to use them?

MAYA: For some things you don't need power. Like the right to be scared of what you want to be scared of, or the right to love who you want. You just need your imagination and be able to think. That's all part of the mind.

DAD: What happens, what do you think about it, and how do you feel about it when you see people having their rights taken away?

MAYA: It depends. If rights are just taken away from someone for no reason I feel bad for them. But if they did something bad, like killing someone, then that's too bad. They have to take responsibility. That's life.

DAD: Are there such things as animal rights?

MAYA: Yes, I guess. But they have less rights. But they have less laws and rules and stuff that take away rights.

DAD: Do rocks have rights?

MAYA: I'm not sure.



*"The right to go to school."
Saleya Miller, 2nd Grade, Methow Valley Elementary, Winthrop, WA*



PERSPECTIVES:

The Center for the Advancement of Philosophy in Schools

Sara Goering

Sara Goering is assistant professor of philosophy at California State University, Long Beach and managing director of the Center for the Advancement of Philosophy in Schools.



The Center for the Advancement of Philosophy in the Schools (CAPS), at California State University, Long Beach, was created in fall 2000 to bring philosophy into the lives of K–12 students via their regular classrooms as a way to promote critical and creative thinking skills and to enhance students' abilities to meet current academic standards. The program involves training teachers and philosophy students in the art of philosophical discussion leading, and then creating teaching partnerships to lead weekly philosophical discussions in selected classrooms. CAPS ran its pilot program in seven classrooms in the Long Beach area during fall 2000 and currently has nine classrooms running regular philosophy sessions, from 5th–12th grade. In addition, CAPS has helped to create a philosophy elective course at Wilson Classical High School in Long Beach, and is working with teachers to create a special academy within Millikan High School, with philosophy as one of its core subjects. CAPS is funded by university and private grants (e.g., from Mattel Corporation and Ralph's Food 4 Less Foundation), and its programs have the support of the Long Beach Unified School District. The CAPS advisory board includes CSULB faculty members from philosophy and the college of education, a practicing teacher, the Superintendent of Long Beach schools, and CSULB administrators.

In our academic year program, young students read texts that are rich in philosophical issues (in many cases, we concentrate on texts they already use in their regular language arts or history classes), produce philosophical questions that arise from the readings, and participate in class discussions that address those questions. The teaching partnerships (one teacher, one philosophy student) help to structure the discussion, comment on important distinctions and counterexamples as they are made, make connections—where appropriate—to historical philosophical works, and provide closing statements that summarize the progress made in the discussion. The teachers may also employ thought experiments, games, role-play exercises, etc. to help students consider some of the philosophical issues, and they encourage the students to write and draw as a way to express their philosophical ideas.

Although we do not have a set curriculum (partly by design, so that we can collect materials that tie philosophy into the particular subjects that are already addressed in each classroom, and partly because we are still a developing program), we have a wide variety of materials that we commonly use. These include, for instance, stories from Philip Cam's *Thinking Stories* series (especially "On the Veranda" and "Double Trouble"), Toni Morrison's *The Big Box*, selected chapters from Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince* (esp. chapters 10 and 15), Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s "Harrison Bergeron," excerpts from Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and selected stories from Gareth Matthews' book *Dialogues with Children*. In addition, we introduce thought experiments and philosophical excerpts from more traditional philosophical sources, including, for instance, the Allegory of the Cave and the Ring of Gyges story from Plato's *Republic*, Dan Dennett's "Where Am I," selections from Thomas Nagel's book *What Does It All Mean?*, Meredith Michaels' "Persons, Brains, and Bodies," and Descartes' *Meditations*. Interactive games and provocative thought experiments to introduce philosophical concepts and to spark philosophical dialogue can be found in the journal *Teaching Philosophy*, in David White's book *Philosophy for Kids: 40 Fun Questions that Help You Wonder . . . About Everything!*, in Martin Cohen's *101 Philosophy Problems*, and in Robert Martin's *There Are Two Errors in the Title of This Book*. We draw from all of these resources to design materials that will help students to uncover the philosophical issues related to their regular classroom subjects.

In addition to the academic year program, CAPS organized a special eight-week summer philosophy program in 2001. In collaboration with the Long Beach Youth Opportunity Center (and the California Workforce Initiative Act programs), CAPS offered an on-campus educational enrichment experience for 54 teens identified by the Youth Center as "at-risk" based on their school status, special conditions (e.g., teen pregnancy), or family income categories. These students attended philosophy classes three days/week for two hours/day, covering topics from ethics to justice to personal identity to free will and determinism. Although students used *Twenty Questions in Philosophy* (eds. Bowie, Michaels, and Solomon) as a text, we also included many games, thought experiments, and stories from the list above. The teachers were philosophy graduate students who had participated in previous CAPS workshops.

Our program builds on the successes of similar programs for philosophy for children in Montclair, New Jersey (the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children), Seattle, Washington (the Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children), Boulder, Colorado (the Philosophy Outreach Program of Colorado), and Oakland, California (the Developmental Studies Program). These programs have shown that the study of philosophy in the K–12 curriculum (including the entire span of grades) has improved student retention rates, increased student scores on critical thinking and reasoning tests, and created a classroom atmosphere that encourages critical, creative, philosophical thinking and discussion.

If you are interested in finding out more about CAPS, please contact Dr. Sara Goering, Managing Director, CAPS, Department of Philosophy, CSULB (562-985-4258; sgoering@csulb.edu), or visit: <http://www.csulb.edu/centers/caps/>.

Call for Submissions

Please send us your submissions for the next issue of *Questions: Philosophy for Young People*. The editorial board is planning future issues devoted to the following questions:

- What is art? What makes something art?
- What is the relationship between my mind and my body?
- What is time?
- Who am I? What is the self?

We welcome submissions on these questions and other topics in philosophy. The next issue will be devoted to publishing the voices of young people engaged in thinking and discussion about a wide range of philosophical questions. We will publish transcripts of classroom philosophy discussions, articles about doing philosophy with young people, student stories, essays, poems, and drawings, and photographs of students in philosophy sessions.

If you have questions or would like further information about participating in *Questions*, please contact the editor-in-chief at jmohrlone@hotmail.com.

Submissions for the next issue (except drawings and photographs) must be sent electronically, **by December 31, 2002**, to: jmohrlone@hotmail.com

Drawings and photographs can be sent to:

Dr. Jana Mohr Lone
Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children
Department of Philosophy
University of Washington
345 Savery, Box 353350
Seattle, WA 98195-3350

We anticipate that the third issue will be ready for distribution in Spring 2003. Subscription information for *Questions* can be found on page 12.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

American Philosophical Association Grant Competitions

The APA Committee on Teaching is happy to announce two grant competitions:

1. Forty persons will receive \$50 each for submitting innovative course and syllabi material on philosophy and service learning to the APA Teaching Committee website. To submit your materials and qualify for a small grant, please go to the APA homepage at www.udel.edu/apa and click on the Teaching Online Resource Center's Community Service Learning Resources Section, now accepting postings under News and Announcements. The Teaching Committee reserves the right to refuse a posting.

2. Up to 16 persons will receive \$500–\$800 grants for community service learning course development. The criteria for these grant awards are the following:

- The proposed project involves students in a community service learning project that significantly integrates philosophical skills and content with service to the community. Thus, the course has a clear reflective component and shows interaction of course concepts and skills with the service being performed.
- The project demonstrates a clear need for financial assistance to develop the project.
- The project demonstrates the possibility of being shared and utilized by others.

For information and a proposal form, please contact Jacquelyn Kegley at jkegley@csulb.edu.

The North American Association for Community of Inquiry

presents the 5th bi-annual

NAACI Conference

June 13 through 15, 2002

Hosted By

The Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children



Upper Montclair, New Jersey (14 miles from Manhattan)

This Year's Conference Theme:

"Community of Inquiry in the Disciplines"

Questions Regarding the Conference Should be Directed to:

Jeanne Matkowski, Assistant Director
Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC)
Phone: (973) 655-4277; FAX: (973) 655-7834
E-mail: matkowski@mail.montclair.edu

Since its founding in 1994, NAACI has brought together scholars and teachers to enhance educational theory and practice through expanding the work of Matthew Lipman and others in Philosophy for Children to all those interested in the community of inquiry as an approach to teaching and learning.

The American Association of Philosophy Teachers

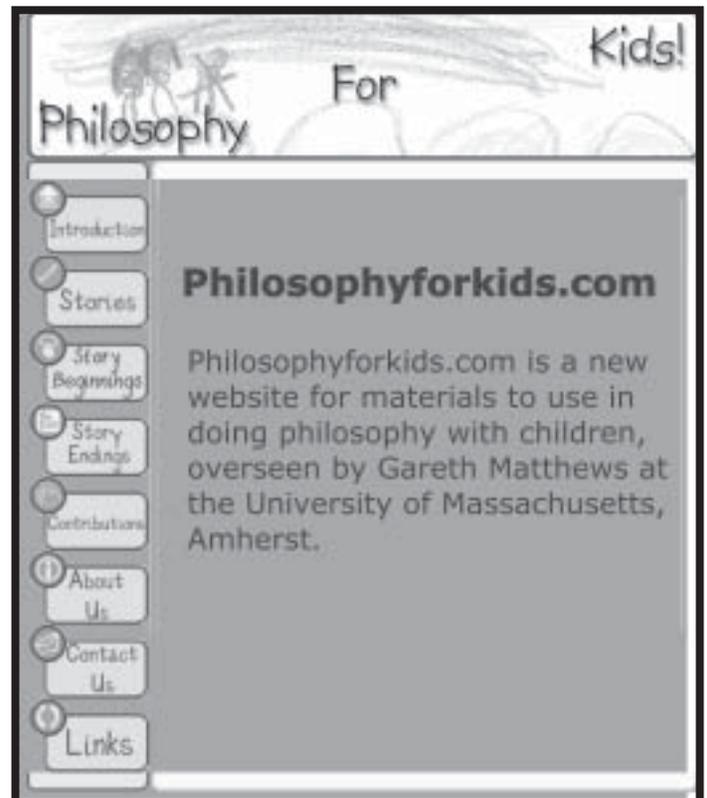
Conference July 31–August 4, 2002

Thomas More College, Crestview Hills, Kentucky

The American Association of Philosophy Teachers (AAPT) will hold its 14th Biennial Workshop-Conference beginning in the evening of July 31st and continuing until Sunday August 4th. The conference will be held at Thomas More College in Crestview Hills, Kentucky, which is in the Cincinnati metropolitan area. There will be approximately 70 interactive workshops as well as plenary addresses by Tziporah Kasachoff (Editor of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching*), Richard Schacht (author of *APA Guide to Graduate Studies*), Arnold Wilson (Founder and Executive Editor of *Teaching Philosophy*), and Myles Brand (President, Indiana University).

The AAPT is dedicated to improving the teaching of philosophy at all levels, from kindergarten to graduate school. Conference information and registration forms will be available at the AAPT website: <http://aapt-online.dhs.org/index.html>. Conference inquiries may be addressed to Nancy Hancock at hancock@nku.edu.

Inquiries about the American Association of Philosophy Teachers, including inquiries about membership, may be addressed to Betsy Decyk, AAPT Executive Director at bdecyk@csulb.edu or 562-985-4346.





Subscribe to *Questions*

Questions is a unique forum for the philosophical questions—and answers—of young people and their teachers. Published annually, each issue revolves around a philosophical theme, and contains transcripts of K–12 philosophical discussions, philosophical writings by students, drawings, essays, and articles offering advice and ideas for activities for teachers and parents interested in facilitating philosophical discussions with young people.

Funding for *Questions* is provided by the American Philosophical Association, the Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children, the Philosophy Documentation Center, and generous donations from individuals. Copies of issues 1 and 2 of *Questions* are available for downloading at: www.pdcnet.org/questions.html. Future annual issues of *Questions* will be available by subscription only. If you would like to subscribe to *Questions*, please send \$25 for issue 3, which will be published in May 2003. Thank you!

I would like to subscribe to *Questions*. Enclosed is my check, made out to *Philosophy Documentation Center*, in the amount of:

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