

*40 lessons to get children thinking: Philosophical thought adventures across the curriculum* by Peter Worley (2015). Bloomsbury, London. ISBN 978-1-4729-1608-2

Peter Worley's latest book provides a wealth of interesting and engaging lessons based around the pedagogy of philosophical discussions in the classroom. The book's subtitle references the curriculum, and indeed the book contains 'thought adventures' to deepen and enliven learning in many of the subjects taught in schools. While the curriculum in question is pretty clearly the National Curriculum in England, none of the lessons are so closely tied to the details of that curriculum that they could not be used in other countries.

With Emma, his wife, Worley runs The Philosophy Foundation, based in London. TPF (<https://www.philosophy-foundation.org/>) is a charity that supports philosophers—including the Worleys—to run philosophical discussions for schools and other groups. They train teachers and philosophers in their version of philosophy in schools, which they call Philosophical Enquiry (PhiE). Moreover, the foundation is developing a growing range of materials, including books (such as the one under review) and online resources.

The book is aimed squarely at teachers, so how are they likely to view it? For the purposes of this review, I will consider two types of teacher: ones who are new to the whole idea of philosophy in schools (newbies), and ones who already have experience and/or training in it (oldies).

One of the real strengths of the book is the wide-ranging and (largely) excellent advice to be found in the eight introductory pages, and the six appendices (14 pages) at the end. When coupled with the facilitation tools scattered throughout the text, and the references to other TPF materials—both books and online—it is hard to imagine newbies complaining that they are being left in the dark. There may be a danger of too much information at once, but this is certainly preferable to the alternative. Oldies will also find some interesting new ways to think about their practice, though much of the advice will be well-known wine in new bottles (more on this later).

Each of the forty thought adventures (TAs) is set out in similar fashion. A title is given, expanded by identifying which concept the TA is thinking about. Equipment and preparation, key controversies, concepts, vocabulary, facilitation tools and subject links are listed, as well as possible misconceptions that might arise. Then it is into the meat of the lesson.

The instructions on how to set up each lesson—including a script stating exactly what to say—are highly directive. While newbies might find this useful, I would imagine oldies seeing it as a bit condescending. This is not a problem, of course: oldies can simply adapt them to suit themselves and their class. However, such a highly prescriptive approach will not work when it comes to the heart of such lessons: the philosophical discussion. Worley knows this, of course: on p. xiii, after giving a broad outline of how to run an enquiry, he says ‘this is *not* a PhiE; this is the procedural structure in which you hope a PhiE will occur’. At this stage, he also points out that the TAs can be adapted to what he calls ‘the well-known Community of Inquiry’ procedure—that is, the Lipman-Sharp CoI.

It is worth taking a moment to consider this contrast. Many readers of JPS will be familiar with the work of Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp. From that work, a thousand flowers have bloomed. Few now use lengthy, purpose-written novels accompanied by thick manuals of support material. Yet we still have demarcation disputes about the ‘best’ way to conduct philosophical inquiry with school students. Without entering into this minefield, let’s consider the differences between PhiE and CoI. It seems to me that the key difference lies in who asks the questions. Worley (p. xi) identifies six types of questions, though I will concentrate on three: task questions, nested questions and emergent questions.

The task question is the ‘main question around which a PhiE will revolve’: that is, it is the question that supplies the agenda for the discussion. Each of Worley’s TAs identifies one or more task questions for the teacher to ask, and to return to regularly. In the CoI, generally it is the students who supply these questions, and a variety of methods are used to select the one to start with. It seems to me that this is the key difference between PhiE and CoI, and it reflects different ideas about how the discussion ought to be focused. While CoI practitioners believe good work can be done through any philosophical inquiry that arises from the trigger material, Worley wants specific ideas addressed. In practice, though, the differences are usually not too great, as students are liable to pick out the ideas seeded in the trigger material.

Nested and emergent questions are more familiar to CoI practitioners, though not under those names. Nested questions are ‘further, implicit questions that lie behind the ... task question’. In CoI terms, these are the questions that make up discussion plans. Emergent questions are questions the students ask during the discussion, which an alert facilitator will use to shape and advance the inquiry.

Nested questions/discussion plans are of immense help to the teacher, especially the newbie. In contrast to the very detailed scripts for the set up and linking phases of the

lessons, Worley's nested questions that are meant to structure the discussions vary quite a bit in quality and quantity. Lipman and Sharp thought carefully about sequencing such questions to lead the discussion from the concrete particulars of their story to the more abstract underlying philosophical concepts. Some of Worley's lists of nested questions do this ('So who is right?' p. 73), but some don't—they seem more like a grab bag of ideas, and can start with the most abstract question ('What is it for something to exist?' p. 63). And some of the nested questions would need a good many second level nested questions to unpack ('What is an explanation?' p. 133).

Of course, the other essential for good facilitation of discussion is knowing what sorts of moves to make and when to make them. In this respect, the book is very rich. I counted over 40 key facilitation tools, in addition to the advice in the introduction and appendices. These moves often have special names such as 'iffing' (asking conditional questions), 'anchoring' (re-asking the question) or 'antithetical response detector' (asking for alternative views), though some are ordinary descriptions such as 'introducing appropriate new ideas'. Despite their new names, these moves will be familiar to oldies. Newbies will learn a lot about possible ways to facilitate, though the difficult part is not only knowing what sorts of moves you can use to advance the discussion or deepen the inquiry, but being able to do it at just the right time in the right way. Written material cannot teach this well: face-to-face training, modelling and practice are all much better.

I would like to highlight Appendix 3: an interesting list of 26 intellectual virtues philosophical inquiry may develop. I was struck by number 15: to be Judicious (the only virtue that was capitalised in the book). What's more, four further virtues are qualified by the adverb 'judiciously'. This emphasis on strengthening student judgement echoes that of Lipman, and flies in the face of the common exhortation in education 'don't make judgements'. This phrase apparently means 'don't be judgemental', which we can unpack further to mean 'don't make unsound judgements of others based on insufficient evidence, or on bias' or, more simply, 'don't make bad or hasty judgements'. Worley and Lipman are quite right in their common insistence that educating children to make good judgements is central.

In summary, this book is a very welcome addition to the burgeoning literature that assists teachers to make the philosophical turn in their classrooms. Newbies will gain plenty of ideas to try as presented, while they learn how to become better facilitators of philosophical inquiry. Oldies will find much that they can, by drawing on their pedagogical judgement, adapt for their own purposes.

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