

About Children and Youth Philosophers

Children and Youth Philosophers is owned by Ariane Schjelderup and Øyvind Olsholt, both Masters in Philosophy from the University of Oslo, Norway. Since 1997 we have performed projects in schools, kindergartens and other institutions for children. We have written two books: *Filosofi i skolen* (Philosophy in School), which won the Tano-Aschehoug prize for 1999, and *Filosofi-Sokrates, Platon og Aristoteles* (Philosophy—Socrates, Plato and Aristotle).

You will find much more information about us and our philosophical projects on our home page www.buf.no Here you can also explore lots of articles about philosophy for children, book reviews, web forum, calendar, links page etc. (Note: Most web content is in Norwegian language only.)

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"The method helps us to listen to each other, and to see the other person's perspective. Everyday life with the children is much more interesting now. New discussion topics emerge spontaneously and naturally. There is much more humour and happiness. Children are not "just" children anymore. Now they have something to tell us. We think together on different aspects of life. And it is actually quite fun!"

Pedagogical leader in a Norwegian kindergarten after having participated in extensive training programme with the Children and Youth Philosophers.

Children- and Youth Philosophers



www.buf.no

Philosophical dialogue

Doing philosophy with children and youth is all about creating so-called "communities of enquiry" where children learn to think critically and creatively in order to further their development as human beings—intellectually, morally and socially—with an ability to endow their existence with meaningful content and purpose.

Philosophising is therefore completely different from presenting children to adapted highlights from the history of philosophy. Through careful dialogue with their peers the children develop their selfconsciousness and powers of judgement.

Also philosophical dialogue is a tool in the furthering of democracy and democratic attitudes among young people. In the dialogue they gradually learn how to take critical stances and to adopt self-corrective behaviour. These are vital steps towards constructive participation in society later in life.

Method

As facilitators of philosophical dialogue we never express our opinions. Rather we want the children to give birth to their insights and ideas. One way to do this is to move the deliberation from particular statements (e.g. "Adam is evil!") to questions of universal nature: "What is evil?", "What kind of actions are good, and which are evil?"

In a philosophical dialogue we problematise questions so that the essence of the matter may emerge as clearly as possible. Such deliberating leads to greater openness and stronger relations between the participants—and indeed an increased appetite for new knowledge.

To say that the philosophical dialogue focuses on universal questions does not imply that the dialogue is abstract or far-fetched. Questions always begin with something close at hand (teaching material, individual experiences etc.) and is constantly illuminated by the children's own examples and illustrations. And besides, philosophical questions are fascinating in themselves!

Philosophical dialogue presupposes confidence in the ability of the child to carry out independent reasoning and assessment. Therefore the adult should not automatically censor provocative or immoral utterances. We allow them because we know very well that the philosophical dialogue soon reveals whether or not the claims will be supported by good reasons.

Targets of philosophical dialogue

- ◆ listen carefully to what the others say
- ◆ clear and distinct formulations
- ◆ relevant and logical argumentation
- ◆ creative thinking without losing the context
- ◆ develop new ideas through critical attitude and awareness
- ◆ lucid explanation of concepts and relations between concepts
- ◆ discover similarities and differences between assumptions

Our products

- ◆ *Courses, Workshops and Seminars*
We arrange courses, workshops and seminars on philosophy for children. Main target groups: schools and kindergartens, museums, governmental, municipal and private institutions, parents, others who work with children and youth.
- ◆ *Philosophy Club*
In our Philosophy Club children learn to discover, problematise and analyse concepts and thoughts embedded in questions, texts, stories, works of art etc. The Club meets regularly near downtown Oslo. At the Philosophy Club home page we publish thorough minutes from each Club meeting.
- ◆ *Weekend Courses*
In addition to the Philosophy Club we arrange philosophical theme camps for children and youth. Here we combine philosophical dialogue with other cultural activities, e.g. drawing and painting, literature and reading, animals and nature, play, dance, drama etc.
- ◆ *A Visit from the Philosopher*
We carry out individual visits to have dialogues with children or youth (or adults). Exactly what we do, how we do it, and what we talk about, we decide in collaboration with you. Main target groups: schools and kindergartens, museums, governmental, municipal and private institutions, organisations etc.
- ◆ *www.skoletorget.no*
Skoletorget (which means "the school market/square") is a site for the primary and secondary school in Norway. We offer teaching material in the six subjects: Norwegian, English, Social Studies, Religion, Mathematics and Natural Science. The idea is to encourage pupils and teachers to see philosophy as an integral part of all school subjects.