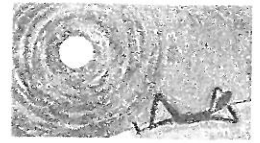


Reflections



Following our Enquiry yesterday, here are just a few thoughts about the themes and issues which arose, with some comments on how this may look with a group of students.

Enquiry Question: To what extent do we need to be free?

Definition of concepts

As the group progressed through the enquiry, the importance of an agreed definition of 'freedom' became a focus of the dialogue. This is a crucial part of the P4C process, encouraging pupils to analyse such concepts, exploring differing perceptions and searching for an agreed (or at a least working) definition.

Students do not always naturally recognise the importance of this and there are many activities which can support them in developing this skill (eg. 'concept stretchers' on p4c.com).

Returning to the question

During the enquiry, one member reminded the group of the original question and suggested the group's thinking needed to return to this. This is often a key feature of the facilitator's role during the early days; ensuring pupils keep the question in mind in order to work together towards an 'answer'. This is not to say that other lines of enquiry cannot be pursued but it can help to refocus thinking if the dialogue does not seem to be moving forward.

One strategy to encourage this with students is to place a 'joker' card in the middle of the circle. If at any point in the enquiry a member of the group feels the thinking is moving too far away from the original question, they can pick up the card and explain their thoughts to the group.

Acknowledging internal conflicts

Some members of the group expressed the identification of conflicting thoughts as the enquiry progressed. This is exactly what P4C should do! For some students, it may be the first time they have scrutinised their beliefs in any detail and, although it may feel rather unsettling to begin with, this is an important part of developing 'reasonable', analytical thinking.

"Dubito ergo cogito; cogito ergo sum. (I doubt, therefore I think; I think therefore I am)" Rene Descartes

Many thanks again for your enthusiastic and thoughtful participation!

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