

**What Matters? What is Important in Truth? What is Crucial in the End?
Leading Principles in Philosophical Practice¹**

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“In the history of philosophy, the following applies in general: Tell me what you think of Socrates, and I’ll tell you what your philosophy is.”

— Odo Marquard

Abstract

In this paper we discuss three important questions of philosophy, and their relation and their implications for philosophical practice. These questions are What matters? What is really important? What is essential in the end? All this considering that Philosophy has been inconvenient, and to some even annoying, while others perceive philosophy as a disturbance of their much beloved routine of their everyday lives. Socrates, the proto-philosopher, did not get involved with the ordinary questions and worries that his dear fellow humans had in their rather scattered everyday lives. He knew what really mattered. As a conclusion, a sublime and highly ambitious goal is set for philosophical practice; one in which the Socratic heritage is both accepted and modified. Philosophical practice is all about getting people to understand what they themselves say.

Keywords: *philosophical practice, Socrates, philosophy, philosophical consultation, philosophical practitioners*

What Does Taking Philosophy Seriously Mean?

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Abstract

The practice of philosophy is torn by theoretical concerns about the nature of philosophy, which is nowadays a divided discipline. The aims and means of practical philosophy, as well as the relations it entertains within academe, from both a practical and theoretical point of view, are the object of further controversies. *Taking Philosophy Seriously* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018) approaches these issues by proposing a framework for all factions of philosophical practice without doing away with their divergences. To that purpose, it differentiates between perfectionism as radical philosophy for the few and meliorism as democratized philosophy for the many, and points to the latter as the contemporary challenge of philosophy both in the academy and outside of it. In this article, I explain what meliorism involves and how philosophical practice may promote it, after showing how the topics addressed in *Taking Philosophy Seriously* enlighten contemporary issues within the practice of philosophy.

Keywords: *meliorism; democratized philosophy; perfectionism; radical philosophy; theory; practice; Taking Philosophy Seriously*

The Philosophical Consolation

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Abstract

The human being suffers. Of his limits, of his finitude, of the distance between his being and his aspirations, of the fracture of his self, scattered between various aspirations or impulses, of the tension between his individuality and his surroundings. To compensate, to treat his pain short of curing it, we invent for ourselves consolations, various ways of existing that allow us to survive morally, psychologically, existentially. We can also call those consolations “life project,” “way of being,” “dedication,” or “meaning of life.” We call it “consolation,” and we try to address this issue from different perspectives, looking at different types of consolation, in order to understand how each of us consoles himself, each in his own way, although some general schemes can be identified.

Keywords: *suffering, self, desire, fracture, healing*

Philosophical Interventions with Psychiatric Patients

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to present a case involving a philosophical intervention with Gina,* a hospitalized pregnant psychiatric patient, and to show the philosophical issues involved in securing adequate treatment and a successful discharge for the patient. The case involved individual, group, and organizational philosophical practice and serves to suggest the kinds of theoretical and practical philosophical issues this challenging new area of philosophical practice encompasses, as well as the kind of expertise philosophical practitioners will have to develop to be effective in doing philosophical interventions. It also will serve to illustrate what is wrong with both some psychiatric care, and some dimensions of the anti-psychiatry movement.

Keywords: *Philosophical counseling, philosophical interventions, philosophy of psychiatry*

**Philosophical Biography:
Its Relevance to Philosophical Practice**

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Abstract

I distinguish between conceptions of “philosophical life” that follow the Platonic tradition and those that do not. I explore, in light of the latter, the relationships between “having lived philosophical experiences” and philosophical counseling or training of counselors, which are involved with adding such chapters to the biography of the counselee or trainee. I distinguish between “break-through” and “normal science” philosophizing, and explain why merely “normal science” philosophers or trainees, for whom philosophy never mattered personally, are not morally fit to do, or train towards, counseling. I deal with implications to the question of whether there is a connection between the biography of a philosopher and the validity of his philosophical theoretical claims and approach to philosophical practice, and suggest considering philosophical statements as committing speech acts rather than propositions, whose merits or demerits are logically independent of the virtues or vices of the persons asserting them.

Keywords: *philosophical biography, philosophical experience, philosophical counseling, “normal science” philosophizing, commitment, responsibility*

Deep Philosophy as a Personal Transformative Philosophy

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Abstract

Deep Philosophy is a new form of philosophizing which is practiced as a contemplative group activity. Participants contemplate in togetherness on philosophical ideas while thinking and communicating from their inner depth. This approach, consisting of various exercises and procedures as well as a theoretical basis, has been developed by our international Deep Philosophy group. In this paper I explain three of its central principles: First, Deep Philosophy is truly philosophical, in the sense that it deals with fundamental life-issues in the spirit of the philosophical tradition; second, it is deeply personal, since it is designed to touch us deeply and inspire us; and it is self-transformational in the sense that it aims to awaken within us a dormant dimension of understanding.

Keywords: *Deep Philosophy, philosophical practice, contemplation, inner depth, self-transformation*

The Community of Inquiry and the Importance of Teacher Mediation

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Thinking is not a case of spontaneous combustion; it does not occur just on “general principles.” There is something specific which occasions and evokes it.

—Dewey, (1910), *How We Think*, p.12

Abstract

What is a Community of Inquiry? Philosophy for Children (P4C) understands the formation of our young students as the result of a critical-collaborative work between different cognitive agents: pedagogical and didactic agents, conceptual agents and social agents. According to this philosophical approach, the relationship between these three kinds of agents explains the fruitfulness of this constructivist pedagogical proposal, oriented to develop an analytical, critical and reflective attitude on part of the students that allows them to generate knowledge in contexts of uncertainty and complexity. What kind of aspects integrate a *community of inquiry*? The purpose of this brief proposal is not only to provide an answer to this question, but to emphasize the importance of *teacher mediation*, i.e. the direct intervention in non-standard *learning-teaching* process where *practice* is the constant in the construction of meanings and collaborative understanding of contents, by its members.

Keywords: *community of inquiry, teacher mediation, problem-based learning, project approach, Matthew Lipman, John Dewey, Philippe Perrenoud.*

Philosophy for/with Children in Public Children's Libraries

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Abstract

The role of public libraries is changing in Japan. Now many public, especially local libraries try to play a more active role to provide local residents with opportunities for developing local cultural autonomy and cultivating participatory citizenship in the area, especially for the younger generation. P4C can play an important role for this purpose. We have been practicing P4C for two years as an educational program at a children's library in Edogawa Ward, Tokyo. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the educational effects by children's answers to a questionnaire, and the future possibilities of collaboration of P4C with libraries. First, we shall introduce how we have conducted philosophical dialogue with children of 10-12 years old in cooperation with librarians and staff in the Edogawa Ward child's library. We shall give an overview of our practice in 2016-2017 and show the descriptive data on educational effects that are observed in children's writings in portfolios and their answers to the questionnaires. We shall conclude that P4C could motivate children to read books, and that book introduction by librarians can deepen children's understanding and thinking on the themes.

Keywords: *philosophical practice, philosophy for/with children, P4C in libraries, picture books, citizenship, education for thinking*