Philosophy, Children, and the Schools: Part 2

Liberty

The concept of liberty is as old as philosophy itself. Philosophers have worked with this concept for almost 3,000 years — still the problems about liberty are not solved, and like all metaphysical problems they never will. Philosophy is really working with problems and concepts which cannot be finally defined. This could make us think that we should not work with them either and could give us reasons for not working with these topics with children.

On the contrary! We all know that although philosophers have been working with undefinable topics since antiquity, their influence on human expansion has been great. All science, all politics, all cultural work depend on philosophical thinking. We would still live in the darkness of antiquity if there were no philosophers — and honestly: if everything around us could be defined, what then? In modern times we perhaps do not understand this: we want everything to be clear for ourselves and for our kids — nothing must be accidental, everything must be clear. This view has betrayed people much more than we think. We must not let this betrayal go on to our kids. They must not grow up in a world in which adults behave as if everything was finally interpreted. One day they will realize that it is not so, and it will be too late to understand what is really going on with the world and with themselves. The result will be that they will resign or find themselves surrounded by topics and issues they do not understand.

This is a dilemma — that is the reason why it is so important that we do philosophy with children — philosophy tells the students kindly and calmly that there are lots of concepts which are important to us and which we cannot define and explain.

But one thing is crucial: in doing philosophy the teacher has to build upon the students' statements, answers, and arguments. The teacher must never think for himself "I have the right answer — I will tell the students how things are related". Philosophy with children is the opposite: teacher and students try in common to increase the problem in order to understand and comprehend. Besides this, doing philosophy with children strengthens language, because the students are "forced" to talk and think about problems they have never talked about before. Doing philosophy with children also makes the students more conscious about philosophical concepts. Sometimes a consciousness about topics starts in a talk about something else, and after some days or weeks the student suddenly utters a statement which shows the teacher that this student has been thinking and, in his very special way, is now asking for more knowledge about the topic.

Here is an example to show what I mean! A boy in the second grade is beginning to be a criminal. He steals cigarettes and beer, takes possession of the keys belonging to his school, comes there at night to smash cameras and cupboards, and so on. In the classroom he is a devil, spoiling everything and making his teacher nervous and angry.

One day the teacher and the class have a good talk about trees. They talk about the tree as a Christian symbol, they talk about forests and how beautiful a tree can be in a garden. Finally they talk about the rain forests. One of the students has heard about the felling of these forests, so the talk turns into a talk about the importance of the oxygen in the whole world.

Many days after, this boy comes up to his teacher, puts his hand into the teacher's hand, saying, "You teacher — don't take the oxygen away from me!"

The talk about trees had a disguised benefit — it led to talk about being afraid of Life when nobody cares for you and you feel so alone that you do crazy things. So it is also a question of being aware when the time is right for a serious talk about things which are important for the students, trying to make philosophy out of it.

It is not our intention to make the students familiar with different philosophers and different theories. Rather, the intention is to make students familiar with basic concepts of philosophy in order to "create" cognition of this or that concept.

Liberty is perhaps a commonplace concept — politically and economically — and so we have to remember that political interpretations are subjective — we can say yes or no to them, but they are not philosophical. That is the reason why philosophical education is far more important than political education. So we choose to deal with liberty as a philosophical topic:

What is liberty?

Make all your students try to define.

Discuss.

What does it mean to have liberty?

Can you give me some examples?

How do you feel when you possess liberty?

Give papers to the students and have every student in 5 minutes write down all topics which belong to having liberty. Put the class into groups and have each group find out ten statements which are absolute conditions for liberty. Have every group reduce the ten conditions from all groups to five main-concepts belonging to liberty.

Discuss whether or not these five concepts are the right ones, and if they are the real conditions for liberty. Will it be possible for all people to have these five conditions "fulfilled"? What could hinder these conditions from being "fulfilled"?

Discuss again. Are these conditions the same for all people of the world, or are there also cultural conditions? Why/why not?

We try the definition again:

Liberty is - - - -

It is important to discuss the political views on liberty, because a political view is an "interpreted view" of the concept.

What is the opposite of liberty? (It might be oppression, dependence, lack of freedom, etc.) Try to find some concepts and discuss them.

What does it mean to be independent?

What are you dependent on?

What (whom) are you independent of?

Why?
Is it positive or negative to be dependent?
Why?
Can you give me some examples of a positive dependence?
And a negative one?
Is it possible to avoid dependence?
Why/why not?
Are we born with a desire for independency?
Why/why not?

The question is whether our actions are free, i.e. expression of our free will, or we really are tied in our actions — by fate as the fatalists declare — or by our own mind, which again is bound by Nature.

Is there a free will — or is the experience of the free will really imaginary? The concept power is a part of the concept free will. The main concept is very complicated — that is the reason why we must make our students aware of the problems.

Have we a free will?
What does free will mean?
Are you completely free when you choose to do so and so?
Why/why not?
Are you bound in your decisions when you act?
By what? By whom? By yourselves?
Is there anything in our thoughts which binds us?
Can we be completely free?
Is free will imaginary or does it really exist?
What is going on in our minds when we act in a way we do not want?
Ask all your students.
Can you give us examples of an act you sometimes do without really wanting to do it?
Make every student try to give an example.
When does our will decide for us?
How can we feel that we are bound by something which hinders the free will?

This is a difficult topic, but the students can give many examples that can be a help to the whole class.

Can you mention jobs, or occupations which interfere with the exercise of our free will?
Mention things or actions which can bind people.
Is this constraint necessary?
Are there jobs in which you can feel really free?
Are you absolutely free in these jobs?
Or are there restrictions?
Talk about these restrictions.
Do animals in Nature live an absolutely free life? Or are they bound, too?
Is an animal absolutely bound by the instincts? Or is it absolutely free?
Do people have instincts? How are we different from animals?

(There is one important difference: we are able to think: we have a cognitive tool for understanding our surroundings that animals lack.)

What is the real difference between man and animal?
Write at least 5 differences on the blackboard.

Try to make the students understand the main difference shown in the parenthesis above.

Does this mean that freedom is situated somewhere between instinct and thinking?
Or?
Again: are we absolutely bound or absolutely free?
What is liberty?
Liberty is - - - -
Has liberty anything to do with emotions? With reason? With knowledge?
Or?
Does absolute liberty mean TO FEEL FREE

This is a difficult topic — maybe some of your students will opt out of the discussion — but nevertheless you have to discuss the topic and perhaps talk it over again many months later. These concepts are so important for all students that we cannot avoid them. Any discussion is important and every student will receive some benefit.

Is there a connection between war and liberty? How?
Is there a connection between peace and liberty? How?
Is there an absolute liberty? An absolute peace? Why/why not?

If your class is motivated for this debate, and if you feel it has brought some clarification, you could together with your class try to compose a play with the title LIBERTY. Have your students choose their own roles — but see to it that LIBERTY has the main part. Perhaps the class can perform the play for the school. This sort of creative work with the philosophical topics the class has been discussing is very important for an understanding of philosophical issues. Children can not abstract their whole lifetime — perhaps only for a few minutes — that is the reason why the mind in some sort of way must "relax" by working with the same topics in a creative way. This will deepen the comprehending of philosophy.

Violence

From newspapers we learn that violence is growing in society — on many areas of life we use violence where we earlier used other solutions.

Why is violence growing?
Ask all students. Mention examples of violence.

Naturally your students can give many examples, so perhaps you should put the examples into categories:

Violence among children.
Violence against children.
Violence among adults.
Or:
Violence as means of attack.
Violence used in order to gain something.
Violence as defense.
Violence for the sake of violence.
What is violence?
Let everybody try.
What can make people commit violence?
Make everybody answer and write on the blackboard.
Discuss the reasons.
Is violence absolutely negative?
Can violence be reasonable?
Or inconvenient?
Or useful?
How?

Why/why not?

Perhaps psychology can be of some help in the discussion of this topic. The students have to comprehend that there is always a reason for violence, and that this reason is in Man himself (especially in his childhood). Here are some reasons:

Feeling of inferiority
Hatred towards parents
Feeling of being pursued.

Having discussed the topic until now, it would be a good idea to make a creative work: make posters, drawings, poems and so on. Here are some angles you might use:

Violence as a form of life (show a group of young people living as terrorists — a group who want to reach their goal through violence)

Violence as defense (show a group of people who knows no other way than using violence)

Violence against what is apprehended as violence (an imaginary attack on a nuclear plant)

Violence is ugly (try to make surrealistic pictures and collages)

Violence is beautiful (make a picture in extravagantly romantic style)

Make your students produce their own ideas.

Start a discussion about the students' works: What do your posters show? Is their any connection between them? Do any of the pictures tell anything about how violence starts?

Talk about psychical and physical violence.
What is psychical violence?
Can you give examples?
Can you give examples of physical violence?
Which sort of violence do you find the worse?
Why? How?
Again:
Why is violence growing?

Is there a connectioin between violence and bigger freedom? Why/why not?

Is there a connection between violence and bigger freedom? Why/why not?

Is there a connection between violence and video?

grow up?
How?
Is there a connection between school-fellows and violence?
How?
Would it be a good solution to educate more police?
Why/why not?
How can we solve the enigma of violence?
Is there anything in our minds which promotes violence?
What?
Is teasing a sort of violence?
Have you met violence in school?
How? Why?
What did you do?

After these talks we can try to come closer to the philosophical concepts behind violence. They might even have been mentioned during the talks.

Can you tell me some concepts which lay behind violence? Ask all students.

Try together with your students to find concepts such as:

power
powerlessness
wickedness
fear
guilt
conscience

It is very important that your students find the answers themselves — the teacher has to guide the talk in order that the students mention the concepts themselves. This ensures greater understanding.

You can now strengthen the talks you have had about violence. Now your students will see in a deeper way — maybe they might not have imagined that there is a connection between violence and the mentioned concepts — nobody might have told them — therefore it is so important that the teachers work on it. There is always a reason behind violence, sociologically, politically, psycologically — and philosophically. Our teaching of the kids can either hinder or promote violence. That is more important than anything else. A Danish artist living in France said in a TV-interview, that if education in the schools is changed so that teacher and students really talk about what is going on in the world and in the human mind, there might be a future for mankind! (Ib Schmedes)

Is there a connection between violence and power?
Let everybody try.
Between powerlessness and violence?
Wickedness and violence?
Fear and violence?
Continue with the other concepts.
And then:

Can you stop violence by power if fear and violence are connected?
Or power by violence?
Can you struggle against powerlessness by violence?
Why/why not?
What could you suggest as means against violence?

If it is so that violence is growing, is the reason then that more and more people feel guilt?
If yes: why?
If no: what is the reason that violence is growing?

Is there anything in the human mind that hinders goodness?

Is there anything in our minds that can ensure that we avoid violence?

Talk about conscience, morals and ethics.

Perhaps it will be possible that the class prepares an exhibition of the posters the students worked with and perhaps also a mounting of pictures from films, video-commercials, cuttings from newspapers related to the topic violence.

What is the opposite of violence?

Use the topics you find in the exhibition to create a contrast and to encourage debate. It might be concepts as:

Love
Romance
Softness
Gentleness

If you have the time you might make the students dramatize a text of their own. This drama might be per-

formed during the exhibition.

Is there a connection between violence and drugs?

Do people use drugs because of a feeling of powerlessness?

Is there a connection between alcohol and violence?

Why do some people grow more violent when they are influenced by alcohol?

It is very important to connect learning with traversing topics, which are talked about both cognitively and creatively. Besides you have to bring in philosophical concepts. The goal is to strengthen the independent thinking of the students. You could take up the following subjects in the same way:

Film
Video
Music
Fashion
Hatred
Humanism
Charity
Sex

Every topic can be arranged as a project.
Every topic can be creative.
Every topic can be dramatized.
Every topic can be talked about philosophically.

The following short-story might be copied if you want to use it in your lessons about violence. You can start with it, or take it in the middle of the course.

A Boy Named Ivan

"Why are you always so damned bad-tempered?"

Ivan and his Dad were taking their dinner, and Dad was quiet and contemplative as usual.

"I can't stand it. I have to do the cooking and the cleaning, and you just sit staring into the air."

This was the first time Ivan spoke like this — for weeks he and his Dad had not been speaking to one another. They dined without a word, Ivan washed up and Dad read his paper on the couch. The TV was on, and when the news was over Dad went out with the word: "You'll see me at eleven."

This was not a life for a boy of sixteen. He had problems in school because he spent his time there thinking of his Mom, who left the family two years ago. He thought about all those evenings when he was lying in his bed hearing Dad beat his Mom until she screamed. Then there was the silence, and he thought she was dead. And then his Dad's rude laughter. It was a rape — he understood this when he grew up. His Dad violating his own wife — almost every night! And then these crazy teachers who pressed him all the time with insane questions exactly at times when he felt very bad. This was also a sort of a rape, because when he rarely wanted to talk about his problems, they shut up and left him alone with his own thoughts.

Only Jim from the other class could make things funny for him. When he came to Ivan's house it was wonderful, he just rushed in saying "Life is wonderful. You ought to have ten lives and not only one. Do you know what happened on my way to your house?" And then he told a lot of things. He was the very joy of life himself.

Jim experienced a lot. It might have been his imagination, but he was always able to tell something crazy, and Ivan got happy for a second.

Dad was still eating — quietly. After dinner Ivan started to wash up and he got very surprised when Dad suddenly touched his shoulder, saying, "I have something we have to talk about."

"Now?"

"Yes, now. Come with me."

Ivan could hear his heart hammer — it must be something very serious, since Dad was never as kind as he seemed to be just now. And then they were sitting on the couch, and Ivan felt warm somewhere inside. Quite crazily he said, "Shouldn't you read your paper — I can sit somewhere else, if you like."

Dad heard him and said, "We've been alone for two years now."

Ivan nodded. "I miss Mom."

"You were not good to her. Well, we'll not discuss that now."

No, luckily not. The first year after Mom had left them Dad had blamed Ivan, suggesting it was his fault that Mom left, leaving the family in ruin.

"You are the one who was not good to Mom," Ivan said. "And you beat me all day long when you and Mom had been quarrelling. Why should I be the victim?"

Dad got furious. "Listen boy. I want to talk serious with you, and you just get angry." He grabbed his throat. "If you don't want to talk with me you can damned well stop it!"

Ivan felt despairing and furious. "Choke me," he shouted. "Why don't you kill me so that you can be free! Choke me!" His voice was so shrill that it might be heard in the other apartments of the house. But he did not care. "Choke me, you damned dog! You dare not — you're a coward!"

"I tell you I'm not a coward." But he gave up and went for his coat in the hall. "You'll see me at ten, but I won't come alone. I bring Lilah with me — she's going to live here."

"You are a dog! Can't you live without women? I think you have found some floosie somewhere. You're the biggest coward I've ever met."

Then he heard the door bang. He fell down into the couch and wept — his head was almost thrown to pieces from inside. He banged his hands into the pillow, crying, "You coward!" He stayed for a long time, but calmed down. He could feel a decision grow from inside — a strong decision: he would leave! He would not stay one day more in this rotten flat. Just slip away — away from all the things he hated.

Somewhere deep in his mind he knew that he was a coward too. But anyway, there was only one possibility — to overcome the cowardness and grow to an adult somewhere else.

He went slowly to the kitchen, took the dishes and forks and knives and took it to the garbage chute, opened and threw the whole thing away. He almost wished that he himself went with the whole lot down into the garbage can. He felt the desire for revenge grow inside, hoping that Dad had been standing behind him in this very moment.

He stood for a moment listening to the crash from the darkness of the garbage chute. Then he heard the door to the street, and he was immediately aware that it was Jim. He whistled happily and came rushing up the stairs, two steps at a time. Not today, he thought. Any other day, but exactly now he wanted to be alone with his escape into the unknown — into a world which could not be worse than the one he had here with Dad. He hated him more and more.

"Why do you stand here dreaming?" Jim laughed.

"I don't dream."

"I see. I'll cheer you up on this very grey day — if you invite me to a beer."

Ivan turned to Jim. "I don't know really!"

"Of course you know! We'll make a cozy corner here — I think the most cozy corner in the whole world is here at your garbage chute!"

Ivan could not help laughing. He went for two beers, and they sat down on the floor.

"What's wrong with you." Jim asked.

"Nothing."

"Now I know: you have problems with the girls. But do you know something — they are crazy — all of them. I have the experience, you know — I have known a damned lot of them."

They laughed. Ivan felt a release and emptied the whole bottle. "Oh, what a swamp," Jim said. "No, you see, girls are floosies. I spent a fortnight of my precious time on Dawn. I even felt in love with her for some time. And do you know something — she took herself off, saying, 'You are a good boy, Jim — but not good enough for me. You are an amateur.' She talked as if she had experience. No. they are floosies all of them." Ivan laughed and opened another bottle. "You are talking too much, Jim. I have a hunch that you talk a great deal more than you act . . . Don't talk big to me! I don't care how many girls you know — I really don't care — but I think you are covering up something."

"Of course. I cover my big shyness. Can't you feel that I really am the most honest and most shy boy in the whole wide world? But I do like to be with girls, and I do know that I do it to cover up my cowardness. You really have to do something. If men were not cowards there would be no kids in the world. That's my philosophy!"

They drank more beer and made a terrible noise. Ivan felt that Jim was right. Cowardness could be released in so many ways. You could be an idiot, just living Life and not bothering about anything like meaning and morality. Or you could make the cowardness come up to the surface, feeling uneasy, being afraid of the world, being nothing.

"I don't know what's best," Ivan said.

"Neither do I. But let the pleasures determine for you. That's what I mean: we ought to have ten lives — then there would be some time to consider what to do. When we have only one, it's better to act rapidly!"

"What do you think about my Dad?" Ivan said.

"Well, I'm an honest boy, you know — but my honestness knows the bounds! I won't say anything about that — not here at the garbage chute. There could be hidden microphones — I've heard about that before."

"What do you think," Ivan went on.

"O.K. He's a coward — a very real coward!"

"And me?"

Jim went to the chute and looking inside. "No, I don't think they are here. You are — is it really so damned necessary?"

"Yes."

"You are going to be like your Dad."

Ivan nodded. He turned the bottle in his hand and said, "Do you know what he said today? He's bringing a floosie — she's going to live with us."

"Get away, old fellow! Through the chute. There is room enough, and it is faster than the stairs."

Ivan laughed. "Sometimes I think you are a mind-reader. If you hadn't come I wouldn't be here anymore."

"Were you really trying to go down that chute?"

"No, I threw out all the dishes. But what am I to do with this Lilah?"

"Who is Lilah?"

"That girl my Dad is taking home in half an hour."

"Beat the teeth out of her!"

"Be serious." He laughed.

"I am. She can't smash your life, can she?"

Ivan got up. "Now I know. I'll stay — maybe Dad will be a little more human having a girl around."

"Does he beat you?"

"How can you know?"

"Does he?"

"As long as I can remember."

"That's what I said. He's a coward."

"It's too easy to say that!"

"And you hate him?"

"What do you feel about your Dad?"

"So and so. We both have business of our own. We don't work together. I could throw up thinking on him. Well, I have to go home. I am looking forward to hear about your meeting — what was her name!"

"Lilah."

"O.K. I'm off. I'll take the stairs — this damned chute is too dirty. If you need help I have contact with the police. Just dial me, and I'll do something!"

Ivan took the bottles, threw them into the chute and went in. He switched on the TV making the music so loud that his own fear was deafened. Why on earth was this girl coming to live here? He and Dad would never find each other. Well, it was Dad's business — you could not rely on adults. He really did not trust anyone anymore — not even Jim. Everything was a betrayal.

He had a strange feeling inside, a feeling of growing. Was that the way to be adult? Then he could firmly understand that it was followed by problems. Everybody was idiots, the teachers, the neighbors, Dad. He felt like throwing up, when he heard the key being put into the keyhole and he heard his Dad's voice: "Here we are, Lilah. Now be sweet to Ivan, he's not easy."

Ivan turned up the TV, sat down demonstratively with his back to the door pretending that he was sleeping. He felt his Dad walk softly towards him — he guessed he was staring at him — and now he turned down the TV.

Ivan got up. "Why do you do that! Is it forbidden to look at the telly in peace?"

"You were sleeping, Ivan."

"I was not sleeping. Get away and leave me alone."

Dad exaggerated his friendliness. "Say hello to Lilah, will you."

"I don't want to say hello to anyone. Keep your floosies for yourself!"

Dad's anger was growing, but Lilah stood in the door. She smiled, put out her hand to Ivan. "Hello, Ivan!"

Ivan happened to look into the girl's eyes. She was not a floosie — she was not much over 18, a few years older than he. What did Dad do?

"Say hello to me," Lilah said again smiling. For the first time he experienced a smile which was honest. Reluctantly he gave her his hand, looking down.

"I'm sorry," Dad said. "Ivan is so hot-tempered, but he doesn't mean anything."

Ivan turned round and stared Dad into his eyes. "You know damned well that I mean it. You're the most measly dog I've ever known. Why do you drag Lilah here for? As far as I can see, she's too good for you."

Dad blushed and in a second he slapped Ivan's face. Dad took Lilah's hand and said, "Let him look after himself. Let's go to the kitchen, I'm hungry. I brought some burgers from the MacDonald. Let this creature be alone."

Ivan sat down, staring scornfully at his Dad; he happened to catch Lilah's eyes, as she went out with Dad. He was completely confused. In the middle of the rage against Dad and the hatred to what was connected to him, he felt a joy because of this girl. Although she had not said much, he felt she was on his side. Her eyes looked at him with a sincereness he had never met, although he had been longing for it his whole lifetime.

With a peculiar feeling he switched on the TV again. Five minutes later he opened the door to the hall, listened to Dad's and Lilah's voices coming out from the kitchen — then he slipped into his own room. The TV was still on — they might believe he was still in the room.

He lay down on his bed, staring into the ceiling, because a sorrow and an anxiety forced its way in his mind. He felt the tears in his eyes — a boy of sixteen lying on his bed weeping as a little child — it was ridiculous, and he felt as small as ever. In a little while Dad and Lilah would leave for the bedroom — and he would possibly rape this young girl.

Suddenly he got up with horror in his face. Would he beat her? Was that the way to love, when you were an adult? Did Jim do the same with the girls he knew? Oh, he was so unexperienced! In a way he wanted to be unexperienced, if love and violence was the same thing.

He lay down again, listening to the TV from the other room. What was the value of anything? Maybe you fall in love with some girl and you think she is the most wonderful girl and the most honest girl in the whole world — and when you love her most, you kick her, you beat her, you tear her to pieces. This was hell! He clenched his fists: if he heard as much as just one beat from Dad's room, he would rush in there and tear off their hair and kick and scream and do everything — do all that he really hated. But Lilah — was she like that? How did she look without clothes? How would it be to take her hand? He looked at his own hands. How could he overcome his anxiety to talk to a girl? This hatred stopped everything in him. He lay down on the pillow, sobbing.

Slowly his sobbing stopped and he was about to fall asleep, when he heard Dad and Lilah walk towards the bedroom. He listened so intensely that the hatred was beating in his head. Was this the beginning of a new rough-and-tumble? He could not understand this.

He fell asleep. When he awoke it was midnight. Sleep-drunk he got out of the bed, took off his clothes and slipped under the eiderdown. Then he heard a breath from the door. He listened but dared not look. It was Lilah. "What do you want?" he said from under the eiderdown.

"What do you think?"

"Don't know." He got up. "Where is Dad?"

"Asleep."

"Asleep.?"

"Yes, he started his drinking — maybe because I told him that he treated you wrong."

"Oh, come on. You didn't say that. Then you would be the first one."

"He wanted me to join him in his drinking, but I hate beer. I know it too well from my own home."

"What do you mean?"

"My parents were alcoholics. It's a long time ago. I want to forget it."

Ivan ran his fingers through his hair. "I'm sorry," he said stupidly. "I've been asleep — I look like a mess."

She sat down on his bed, and Ivan was looking into two sparkling, black eyes, filled with life and honestness. There was something about her that made him warm inside. But there was also a feeling that it was dangeroud to surrender to another person. He was an idiot!

Lilah caressed his hair. "What hair — it is completely tangled! Where is your comb?

"On the chair."

She got up, took the comb and sat down again. "Let me comb your hair," she said. She combed his hair softly. He felt that the danger and the powerlessness were attacking him — felt that he could not do anyting and did not know what to do, so he jumped out of the bed. And there he was, without clothes. He found his pants and kept them in front of him. "You see, how stupid I am! I'm so shy, that even the walls are blushing, and I jump out of my bed!"

Lilah laughed and put her arm round his shoulder. "Just stay, and Mom will comfort you."

"What the hell do you mean?"

"Why not. It's a mother you are missing, isn't it? I know how it is."

"But Dad?"

"Never mind. He's sleeping, We can do what we like."

"And what should that be? Let me get out!" He forced himself from her and put his clothes on.

Lilah sat down on the bed, laughing.

"You are crazy," he said.

"I know. And you are too insecure. Sit down here."

He sat down and felt like a baby when she tried to kiss him. He felt the fear, while he was lying staring into her black eyes — felt that these eyes were going to swallow him.

It was a trap. His whole life was a trap, so he got filled up with powerlessness and hatred. "I don't want it!"

"What?"

"What you want."

"I want to be good to you. Really, I mean it. I just came in here in a wrong way, just like you." She took his face and kissed his nose. Ivan felt his own hands touch her hair — then he got up and screamed: "No!!!"

He rushed to the door, opened it and rushed out. He ran for dear life, down the stairs and out into the street. He breathed the chilly air and heard Lilah shout from the window: "Ivan — I meant what I said. Honest!"

He turned round and rushed down the street. He saw the lights of the cars as in a fog. It hammered in his head, and the heart pained in his temples.

He ran, ran, ran until the air was pressed out of his lungs. Exhausted, he collapsed in the gutter and did not feel the water from a big car passing by.

Then he threw up; his stomach twitched in convulsions through his throat — everything got dark and red inside him and he did not any longer hear the grown-up, masterful voice, which said, "Are you ill, young man? Oh my God, look — he's drunk. That's how the youth is: filling themselves up with beer. Good gracious!"

Language

At the first glance you would not consider language as a philosophical concept. But this concept has been much worked with by philosophers for many years. It is difficult to define what language is and difficult to explain which role language plays for the human mind.

One of the questions is: can there be thinking without language? Normally we say that language is the tool for thinking — and this is partly right — but is there another form of thinking — can you think intuitively, emotionally, metaphysically and so on?

If you can think in these other ways there must be something that language cannot express — especially for people with a very small vocabulary. The more words you know and are able to use in your language, the more of the emotional, intuitive and metaphysical thinking you will be able to express. The problem about modern people's language, and especially children's language in the first school years, is the shading, which only can be learnt through use and talks about the words and their meaning.

Students must appropriate as many words as possible during the time they go to school, but especially in the first classes — that is the reason why talking with children is so important. You cannot talk too little with children, and when they grow up you should talk about the philosophical problems connected to the topic language over with them.

The great question is whether language is the basis for philosophical formulation or philosophical thinking is the basis for language. We cannot discuss this with our students — it is too complicated — but the teacher him/herself might spend a good deal of time wondering about this. Children change their minds and their ways of thinking, and in the last few years some big changes can be seen: children do not interpret their environments logically, but much more emotionally and religiously. This means that we should be careful in our teaching to give them logical "patterns" for dealing with problems, because we then give them patterns for interpretation which are far from their own way of thinking.

Luckily philosophy can show many others ways for comprehending life than just logic — teachers must, all their lives, be very much aware how children change and be very much aware how children think. Changes in society might very well depend on children's thinking far more than on political changes. Here is something to think about for the teacher!!!

Here are some ways to talk with the students about language:

Why do you think you have to have lessons in your own language every day?

Let everybody answer — listen to all the answers, praise them and take out those which are most relevant to philosophy.

Could we not learn the language in our homes?

Why do we have to learn the language at school?

Which of the following is most important when you are taught language at school:

Reading?

Spelling?

Grammar?

Reading literature?

Learning to express oneself?

Learning to express oneself by writing?

Make each student give reasons for his statement.

Discuss.

How did you learn to read?

How is the reading process in the mind?

Do you remember your first lessons in reading in the first grade?

Let all students tell about this.

How was your best reading experience?

What does it mean to read?

Could you mention situations in which it is very important to be able to read?

Write on the blackboard.

Which one is the most important one?

In which fields do you know that language is important, and on which fields can we replace langauge with other terms?

What is language?

Language is - - - - (definition)

How do we use language besides during reading and writing?

Try to make the students see that language is used for thinking.

Does this mean that you are speaking silently with yourself, when you think (when I give you a question)?

Are you really discussing with yourself?

Do you use language, when you think?

How does this inside talk happen?

Is it just like dreaming?

If yes: that means that you are thinking day and night, does it not?

If no: What is the difference between thinking and dreaming? (in dreams pictures pass before your "inner eye" and

the connection between these pictures gives the dreamer an experience of THE dream).

What happens to the dream, when you wake up?

Do you think about the dream, or do you forget it?

Is thinking the same — a long row of pictures, or is thinking a constant inquiry to oneself?

Can you give examples?

If thinking is an "inner speech", does it then mean anything how good your language is?

Why/why not?

Does the school teach you to think?

Is your thinking better if you have a rich vocabulary?

Let us imagine a man who comes to our country. He has not learned the language, but he knows so many words that he can go shopping, talk about the weather and so on. He knows the necessary 600 words.

Will this man be able to solve problems in his thinking on his new language?

Can you mention problems he cannot solve and even think about?

Write a row of such problems on the blackboard.

Can you mention problems you cannot solve with the language you have now?

Write on the blackboard.

Are there problems on the blackboard which I cannot solve?

Does all this mean that our goal is to know as many words as possible?

How do you learn all these words?

Why is it so important to be able to think?

Do experience and talking with other people mean anything? Are there any of the problems on the blackboard which we can solve without using thinking?

Which of them?

How can we solve them? (It would really be interesting if your students could give examples!)

Can we think with our emotions?

Let us imagine a painting.

Can you say that this painting has a language?

A picture-language?

Does the painting express anything that language cannot express?

Can you say the same about music?

Ballet?

Theater?

Talk about the posters we worked out. Did some of these posters express thoughts? Could language do it better? Or worse?

How do small kids express their thoughts?

Talk about small kids drawings and that they have to express their thinking through drawings, movements and so on, because their vocabulary is so small.

Make your students together (in groups) find 3 important problems in society which need a solution.

Make them try to express this in drawings, posters, music, drama and so on.

Have them thereafter try to express the same thoughts in words (poems, short-stores etc.)

Which expressions are the best ones?

Are there differences in the message from the different forms of expessing?

Which of them is the best one to solve the problem we raised?

What is language?

Language is - - - - .

Tell your students about children who can neither hear, see, nor speak.

How can we teach them to give a message? (sign-language)

Do these children have anything to express?

What can they tell?

How do they experience the world?

How do they think?

Do they have a language?

How do you learn to think, if language is a sort of a tool for thinking:

By talking?

By learning grammar?

By writing exercises?

By spelling?

If our students discover how important language is for all people, we have reached part of our goal: to teach children to think and comprehend their environments. They will be more independent for the rest of their lives, they will possess a tool for their thinking, and they will have learned how to tackle a problem, whatever it is. When the children become adults they will be able to think independently and they will be able to reason about anything they meet.

Sometimes a teacher feels that this and this lesson was a mess, because he could not get to the point he wanted or because the students, that special day, were rather indisposed. But no lesson in philosophy is in vain — every lesson brings the students a little bit further and you can be quite sure that he has heard what was talked about and that there will be "tracks" in his mind for the next day.

That is the reason why it is so wonderful to work with children: you are forced to see the world with new eyes every day — and you can keep young!

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Courtesy of SK-Forlag, Denmark