

Philosophy for Children

Ioanna Kuçuradi

According to Aristotle virtues, both ethical and intellectual, are *ἕξεις*. As is well known, we acquire our *ἕξεις*, and especially those deepest rooted ones, in an early age.

The capacities of establishing connections correctly, thinking clearly and critically, not missing the object while judging, drawing implications, grasping the ethical problems in the situations we are faced with – all these are *ἕξεις* we need to develop, whatever we do in our lives. They are capacities to be developed as early as possible. They can be developed by philosophical education.

In spite of the crucial role of philosophical education, philosophy is either not taught at all in pre-university education in many countries, or, where it is, it is taught, with few exceptions, without any connection with our everyday life. How to change things?

For many years I was thinking – I would rather say dreaming – how we can introduce philosophical training which develops capacities, like those I just mentioned, in primary education. Thus, I was happy to meet, more than fifteen years ago, and totally by chance in a catalogue, the work done in this respect by Matthew Lipman and the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State University, and subsequently to learn about the work already started in various countries. But I was awfully delighted when, in the early nineties, I persuaded a friend, an experienced teacher of philosophy in secondary education, to start such a project in the Philosophical Society of Turkey.

We started this project, after receiving the necessary permission, by translating and adapting to our situation Ann-Margharet Sharp's *Pixy* and the manual for teachers.

The aim of this training programme is to incite inquisitiveness and thus help the trainees to raise questions related to their lives and environments – questions to be answered by the trainers by other questions, so that the trainees, by reasoning and establishing connections, can find on their own the answers to their questions. This presupposes well-trained teachers, able to use the socratic method of inquiry.

This is why, after the implementation of two pilot-projects, we trained a group of philosophy teachers who implemented the programme with children of 9–12 years of age, in fifteen orphanages in seven towns in Turkey.

In order to promote philosophy for children worldwide UNESCO's Division of Philosophy and Ethics organized a meeting of experts in March 1998.

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Another initiative promoting philosophy for children in the past eight years, has been the organization of national and international 'Philosophy Olympiads' for high-school pupils.

This initiative started in Bulgaria and was immediately expanded in south-eastern Europe. A group of philosophy teachers from Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Poland,

Romania, and Turkey constitute the core of this initiative which goes on expanding – into South and North America.

These Olympiads are a competition for high-school pupils who have already taken a course of philosophy. Participants are expected to write an essay on one sentence, among four related to main areas of philosophy and selected by the international jury from philosophical texts.

The International Federation of Philosophical Societies decided to take under its patronage the organization of the International Philosophical Olympiads, starting in the year 2002, and because these Olympiads are in line with the ideals promoted by UNESCO, it suggested that UNESCO, which has supported the International Olympiads in the last three years, also joins the Federation in this patronage.

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