

Ariadne's Clew

Absence and presence in the facilitation of philosophical conversations

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Abstract¹

Drawing on fifteen years of experience as a practitioner of doing philosophy in primary (ages 3-11) and secondary (ages 11-18) school classrooms, I will describe and attempt to justify (appealing to ownership and philosophical dialectic) two broad, over-arching principles, *presence* and *absence*: the extent to which a facilitator influences (*presence*) or deliberately refrains from influencing (*absence*) philosophical enquiry. While it is expected that the facilitator will and should be present in the discussion, this paper pays special attention to the extent to which a facilitator judges that presence appropriate. I revisit the notion of open and closed questions but, instead of considering the structural aspect (Worley 2015b), I address the psychological dimension of open and closed questioning, what I have called 'Open Question Mindset' (OQM) and its opposite 'Closed Question Mindset' (CQM). I consider two of the main ways in which teachers commonly demonstrate CQM: 'Guess-what's-in-my-head' questioning and 'Guess-what's-in-your-head' questioning/infering. OQM, together with the notion of 'intentional sensitivity'—sensitivity to the student's intentions rather than only to the surface-meaning or logical implications of their utterances—allows me to suggest ways in which one may practically meet the requirements of *presence* and *absence*. One particular aspect of facilitation that I consider, and recommend being mindful of, is *paraphrasing* or *interpreting*, especially with regard to *hidden premises* that might be thought implied by things children say. I recommend consciously refraining from interpreting children's

¹ I would like to thank the editors, Laura D'Olimpio and Andrew Peterson for their very helpful and supportive notes. I would also like to thank Susan Gardner, Steven Campbell Harris, Miriam Cohen Christofidis, Andrew Day, Emma Worley and Pieter Mostert for helpful conversations around the ideas in this paper. I would also like to thank The Philosophy Foundation team for a probing enquiry around 'absence', and the anonymous reviewer(s) of my paper, whose notes were very helpful and well-considered. All of these contributions resulted in a much-improved paper; any shortcomings still remaining are my own.

contributions (*absence*), and instead working hard to elicit or 'excavate' children's intentions and meanings through careful OQM questioning (*presence*).

Key words

intentional sensitivity, open question mindset, presence and absence

Introduction: Absence and presence

When training teachers and facilitators, I often tell the story of Ariadne, Theseus and the Labyrinth (see, for example <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariadne>). Among other things, I use the story to illustrate two overarching principles:

- *Presence*—Ariadne (who represents the facilitator) provides Theseus (who represents 'the children' or 'the participants') with a tool—a clew—to help him navigate his way through the labyrinth (which represents 'thinking' and/or 'philosophy'). A clew is a wooden device which Ariadne asks Daedalus to make; it allows a thread to be gradually unraveled. Ariadne then gives the clew to Theseus. Her intervention represents those interventions made by the facilitator that affect the discussion in a significant way, the practical strategies or 'tools' the facilitator uses and models to the children through his or her questioning and responses to the group. We might think of *presence* as the extent to which the facilitator influences the discussion with regard to either content or process.
- *Absence*—Ariadne is not present while Theseus navigates his way around the labyrinth or when he uses the clew. We might think of *absence* as the extent to which the facilitator consciously and deliberately abstains from influencing the discussion with regard to either content or process.

So, should a facilitator be present or absent? The two principles are complementary, each impinging on the other; the facilitator, therefore, should aspire to both. When considering *absence*, facilitators prioritise the 'ownership' the children have over the content and direction of the conversation, but importantly balance this with the extent to which they are *present*. *Presence* refers to what the facilitator does to serve the philosophical content and direction of the conversation. The facilitator is embarked on a search for the balance between these two principles, or, as the French composer Debussy said, on a 'search for a discipline within freedom' (Romesburg 2001). *Absence-in-the-extreme* would be demonstrated by the facilitator leaving the room and having nothing to do with the discussion whatsoever; *presence-in-the-extreme* would be where the facilitator over-determines the discussion by, for example, asking all the

questions, explaining and highlighting the problems, offering answers on behalf of the class, interpreting the students' ideas after each and every contribution and so on. I am recommending that the place a facilitator should aim to inhabit—like the 'shore' between the beach and the sea—is the unfixed place where these two principles meet—and to some extent overlap. 'Unfixed' because the extent to which a facilitator makes interventions (an expression of *presence*) will also depend on the group they are working with, its age and ability. For this reason, there are no hard-and-fast rules about how and when to intervene—this will to a large extent be down to the judgment of the facilitator—but in this paper I hope to give some systematic guidelines and principles that will help a facilitator make those judgements well. By absenting too much, the discussion may lose its appropriate focus (in this case, its *philosophical* focus) and by being too present the discussion may be at risk of going 'over the students' heads', or of no longer belonging to them, and therefore not being within reach of their understanding.

So, to make it clear in practical terms, if a facilitator asks Student A whether they think what they said has any links or connections with what Student B said, the facilitator is *present* (in this case with regard to *process*) insofar as s/he has highlighted the possibility of a connection between ideas; and is *absent* insofar as s/he has not said (and may be consciously and deliberately withholding from saying) what the connection is, or said what the ideas were, or in any way led them to a particular evaluated, substantive answer. If, when working with a nursery class (ages 3 and 4 years), a facilitator provides 'a position' using a teddy bear ('Teddy says that it's not fair') or provokes a response by having the teddy bear cut the cake in a certain way (in a discussion about *fair distribution* for example), then the facilitator is *present* in that s/he is providing *content* to the discussion, but is *absent* in that s/he not trying to instruct them (and may be consciously and deliberately withholding from instructing them) as to what answer to give to the question. S/he is attempting to provide, perhaps due to prior unsuccessful attempts, what is needed to get the right kind of cognitive or emotional response from the children, in this case, a response that evokes their notion of *fairness*, whatever that may be.

The cursory justifications I gave above for looking to these two principles foundationally appealed to 'ownership' and 'philosophical content and direction', so, I need to say something more about these.

Ownership and absence

In order for children to be able to do philosophy at all they need to know *what* they are saying and *why* they are saying it in the context of the discussion they're engaged in. They need to have something of a 'synoptic view' of the discussion (McCabe 2006). To return to the opening metaphor, having a sense of where one has been and where one is (or may) be going in the labyrinth is among the most difficult things to achieve in a philosophical conversation—with children or adults. In this regard, a central aim of a philosophical enquiry with children is to *maximise*, according to the group's age and ability, the children's grasp of a synoptic view, and children are much more likely to gain any kind of synoptic view of the conversation by owning it. By 'owning', I mean that the conversation should contain *their* arguments and ideas, expressed using *their* language, register and concepts, that they should respond to each other due to *their own* authentic, internal motivations to do so, that they *understand* these motivations and *their own* intuitive responses to their peers, and that they recognise their *intellectual responsibility* within the discussion. Though this kind of ownership is necessary in order that children are able to approach philosophy, it is not sufficient. *Ownership* should be valued by a facilitator of philosophy-with-children insofar as it aids the children in their understanding of a philosophical problem or insofar as it makes philosophy approachable and accessible to them, and because it encourages transfer of their thinking into their lives, not (when doing philosophy anyway) as the *end*. In other words, that a conversation had by children is 'owned' by them does not *in and of itself* make it philosophical. One further point is that it is not necessary for children to have chosen the starting question, or indeed the philosophical theme, subject or issue, for it to be thought that they *own* the conversation. The distinction between having determined the content or starting point of a conversation and having a significant role in determining its progress and nature is often conflated, resulting in a common misconception of ownership and philosophical dialogues: we should be concerned with ownership *within* a philosophical conversation not construed *as* philosophical conversation.

Having said something about why a facilitator should aspire to *absence*, this last point—that ownership is not sufficient for a conversation to be philosophical—brings me to why they should also aspire to *presence*.

Dialectic and presence

The facilitator is *present* insofar as s/he helps the conversation remain philosophical and focused. I maintain that there is a particular focus that the facilitator can systematically help with in a philosophical conversation and that is the *dialectical*

focus. I, therefore, take as my framework a *dialectical* framework of doing philosophy such as that practiced by Socrates and Plato and outlined by McCabe (2006). By 'dialectic' I mean the systematic (according to logic) investigation, examination and evaluation of claims and opinions by the use of questioning and reasoning. McCabe (2006) characterises dialectic as containing the following dimensions:

1. A *logical* dimension—A or B, A or not A etc.
2. A *sequential* dimension—doing things in the right order.
3. A *psychological* dimension—beginning in puzzlement—*aporia*.
4. An *epistemological* dimension—there being an aim towards what McCabe calls a 'synoptic view'.
5. A *normative* dimension—it can be done well or badly.

I do *not* claim that philosophical conversation is reducible to this dialectical framework, there are other aspects, such as the *rhetorical*, the *expository*, the *traditional* or *historical* aspects², and other considerations such as how the participants relate to each other as people. So, if my recommendation for the facilitator to simply facilitate 'moves', as one may do while playing chess, seems over-reductive, bear in mind that in this paper I am only *focusing* on this aspect, which is necessarily informed by the logic of the conversation; I am not *limiting* philosophical conversation to it. I do contend, however, that a quality philosophical conversation should contain the dialectical aspect and that this framework prescribes that a group engaged in philosophical investigation *follow the argument*, that 'whatever direction the argument blows us, that's where we must go' (Plato Rep. 394d, in Cooper 1997). So, according to this framework, the facilitator's role will be determined (in addition to other considerations not addressed in this paper) and justified by the demands and rules of dialectical discourse, or, *where the argument blows*. This normative dimension can be modeled to the children by the facilitator and then even practised by the children themselves.

² The ancient educational framework known as 'Trivium', which has been somewhat recently revived (Kessels, Boers & Mostert 2009, Robinson 2013), characterises education as having three dimensions: *grammar* (knowledge), *dialectic* (enquiry), *rhetoric* (persuasion). What I have described as 'historical' and 'traditional' dimensions of philosophy could be thought of as falling under the *grammar* dimension, what one would learn following a *history of ideas* course, the 'expository' dimension under *rhetoric*. One may also think of philosophy as dividing into *method* and *content* (dialectic being primarily concerned with the former), but I sometimes want to add that there is an unsystematic *pondering* (or *responsive*) aspect to philosophy, too; where it all begins.

Part 1: Open Question Mindset

Guess what's in my head!

I'd like to begin by considering one of two common psychological mindsets of teachers when engaged in questioning their students (philosophically or non-philosophically): 'guess-what's-in-my-head' questioning, and later on I'll come to the second: 'guess-what's-in-your-head' questioning/infering. Firstly, 'Guess what's in my head' (GWIMH) questioning is when the teacher has a specific answer that he or she is looking for. For instance, the teacher may ask a closed question such as 'What is the capital of France?' where the teacher is expecting a specific answer: 'Paris.' Of course, there are times when this kind of approach is useful and sometimes necessary, however, GWIMH questioning is often seen as problematic because of the dynamic created between the teacher and students when this is done excessively. Children can spend much of their time trying to 'read' what the teacher is really asking them and this often excludes the children's own ideas and can result in the children feeling 'lost' if they cannot answer the question for which the teacher is seeking the answer. This is also especially a problem in a *philosophical* enquiry if the children are looking to the teacher/facilitator to provide substantive and definitive answers to the question, particularly if they do so, not by asking the teacher explicitly, but by 'fishing' for an answer from the teacher by answering with a GWIMH mindset ('Is it ... Paris?'). This is problematic because the very nature of a philosophical problem entails that either the teacher *has* no substantive or definitive answer, or, if they do, it is only a 'candidate answer' like those of the children, as open to critical examination as any other. And, given that a well-facilitated philosophical enquiry will typically not have the children responding in a GWIMH way, once we identify why this is the case (one aim of this paper), philosophical facilitation has something to offer teachers and facilitators of *any* subject with regard to dialectical focus and question-style.

GWIMH questioning and open and closed questions

If there is a particular correct answer which the teacher is seeking, such as trachea rather than windpipe, then closed questions often become a 'guess what's in my head?' exercise. (Wellington 2002, p. 114)

As we see in this example, GWIMH questioning is often associated with the use of closed questions (yes/no or short, one-word answers), but there is no necessary logical or structural relationship between GWIMH questioning and open or closed questions. A teacher/facilitator may use a closed question to initiate either a closed-ended

discussion or an open one. Here is a closed question for a closed-ended discussion: 'What is the capital of France?' and here is a grammatically closed question (Worley 2015b) for an open-ended discussion: 'Is the mind the same as the brain?' And conversely, the teacher may use an open question for either an open-ended discussion ('What is poetry?') or for a closed-ended discussion: think of when teachers ask grammatically open questions like, 'What do you notice about this poem?' and someone says, 'It's too long!' and the teacher then says, 'Anything else?' So, if what appears to be an open question can be closed and what appears to be a closed question can be open, how then are we to make sense of open and closed questioning?

OQM questioning

Though the structural features of a question may have an important role to play in questioning (Worley 2015b), they are not in themselves sufficient to determine openness or closedness in questioning; there is also the *intention* of the questioner to consider. For open questioning, whether or not open or closed questions are used, the questioner should have what I call an *open question mindset* (OQM). OQM is an attitude of mind marked by openness to the kind of answer given in response to a question. If we take what would appear to be a straightforwardly closed question such as 'What is the answer to $2 + 2$?', a teacher with a closed question mindset (CQM) would be looking for one answer, '4', and will probably not probe much more for further information. An OQM teacher would be looking only for the answers the children offer and would certainly probe for more information, such as finding out *why* the answer that was given *was given*. The following contrasting examples illustrate the difference rather starkly but plausibly.

CQM

Teacher: What is the answer to $2 + 2$?

Student A: Is it 22?

Teacher: No. Anyone else?

Student B: Is it 4?

Teacher: Yes. Well done!

OQM

Teacher: What is the answer to $2 + 2$?

Student A: Is it 22?

Teacher: That's interesting! Could you explain why you think it's 22?

Student A: Because if you put 2 and 2 together you get 22.

We may now be able to draw a picture that illustrates the kind of psychological shift required to move from CQM to OQM.

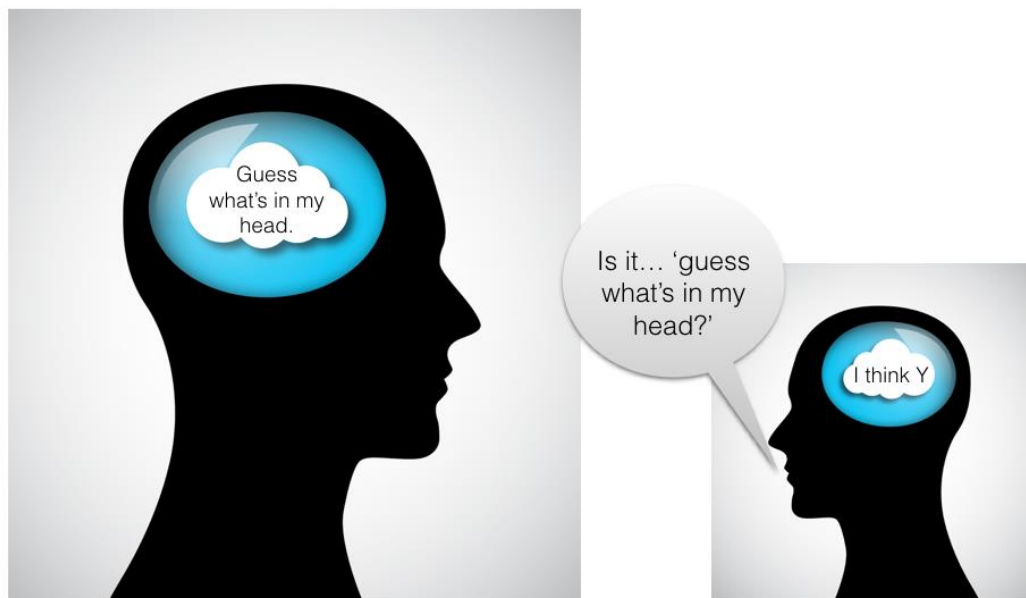


Figure 1: Closed Question Mindset (CQM)

In Figure 1 we see a situation where the questioner has an answer that they are expecting or seeking. The key thing here is that what's expected from the respondent may very well be at odds with what the respondent thinks or wants to say. What adds to the complexity of this situation in classroom settings is that the teacher does not reveal what they are looking for and so the student has to infer it, often beginning their answer with 'Is it ...?' This is commonly heard when children answer questions in classrooms. When classroom discussions are conducted by an OQM facilitator (e.g. a well-facilitated philosophical enquiry) this response-prefix begins to drop off (Figure 2).

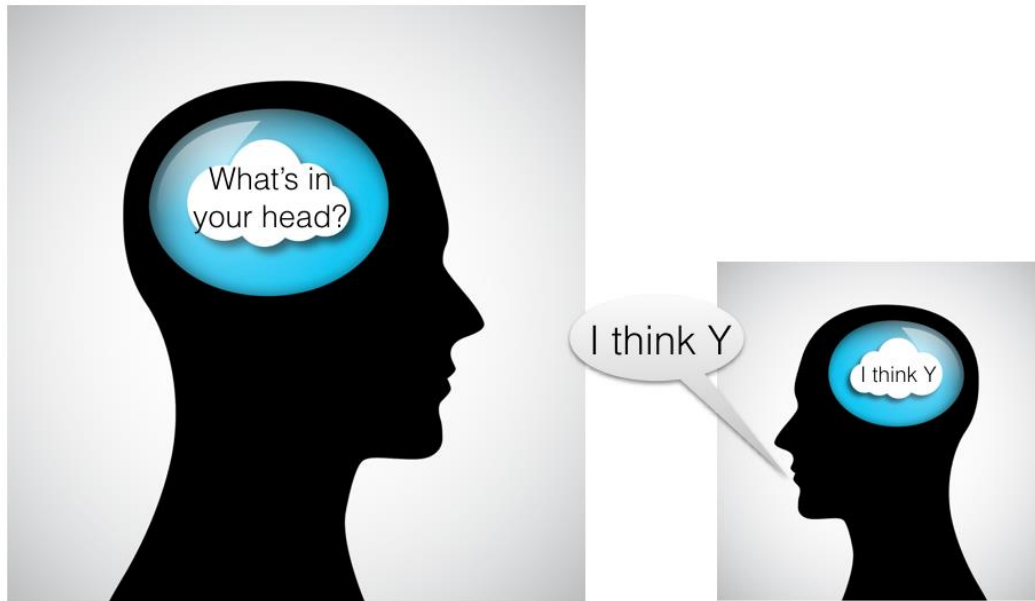


Figure 2: Open Question Mindset (OQM)

Here we see the questioner in a mindset where they are genuinely asking the respondent to report what they are thinking. So, a teacher may well employ grammatically closed questions that are either cognitively/conceptually open or closed yet may do so within the spirit of an open question mindset.

Perhaps the most interesting (and realistic) example is when a teacher uses a grammatically open question for a closed-ended objective but still employs OQM:

Teacher: What is poetry?

Student A: It rhymes. [Teacher writes 'rhyme?' on the board and mentally ticks it off her 'aims and objectives' list]

Teacher: Thank you. Does anyone have anything to say about that?

Student B: Poetry doesn't have to rhyme but it *has* to have rhythm. [Teacher writes 'rhythm?' on the board and ticks it off]

Student A: [To Student B] Why does it have to have rhythm if it doesn't have to rhyme?

Teacher: [To Student B] Would you like to respond to that?

Student B: Okay, maybe it needs one or the other; it's just prose if it's not got either.

Teacher: Interesting. Thank you.

Student C: I think a poem is a worded thought.

Teacher: What a lovely expression: 'a worded thought'. [She writes up 'a worded thought' on the board even though it's not on her list] Can you say more about that? It's certainly not on the list of things I have here! [Pointing to her lesson plan document then leaning forward to listen with an encouraging smile]

Student C: Something you think that you find the right words for ... (and so on)

Opening up

An OQM-teacher will often use a certain type of question that is content-free and that requires students to say more about their contribution, and by doing so reveal more about their thought process leading to their contribution. These are 'opening-up strategies' and, though not an exhaustive list, here are some of the most common opening-up strategies, for opening-up grammatically closed questions (Worley 2015b) typical of an OQM teacher:

- Can you say why? (*Justification*)
- Can you say more about that? (*Elicitation*)
- Could you say what you mean by ...? (*Clarification*)
- Can you give an example? (*Exemplification*)
- What do you think that tells us about ...? (*Implication/entailment*)
- What would that depend on? (*Dependence*)
- In what way are they different/the same? (*Comparison*)
- Can you say how? (*Explanation*)
- Could you say why you don't know/you're not sure? (*Explaining uncertainty*)
- Could you say why you're confused? (*Explaining confusion*)
- Would you like to respond to that? Do you have anything to say about that? (*Inviting response*)

All of these examples share in requiring only that the respondent reports their own authentic cognitive content (ideas, thoughts, concerns, confusions, responses etc.) whether correct, incorrect, or neither within the context of a certain dialectical structure (e.g. 'I think it is the same thing', which implies the following dialectical demand: to provide a *reason* or account for why they think it the same). In virtue of

being content-free, these kinds of question also help the teacher/facilitator refrain from adding substantive, cognitive content of their own; a good example of how *absence* (in the content sense) and *presence* (in the process sense) may be achieved. It should be noted that, although these examples are good question structures for an OQM teacher, given what I have said above about the independence of OQM/CQM from open and closed questions, they may, of course, be used with a closed question mindset. So, though questions like these *encourage* OQM questioning they are not sufficient for reaching OQM; one needs to remain mindful of one's attitude too. It is worth mentioning that OQM not only comes from one's attitude, but also from non-verbal communication such as body stance, eye contact, voice tone and facial expression.

Part 2: Intentional sensitivity

Now that OQM has been explained I would like to take a more forensic look at what OQM means regarding what is said and how what is said is understood.

Engaging in a philosophical conversation is, among other things, about participants developing and exercising intellectual virtues that include certain sensitivities, such as *structural* sensitivity, *conceptual*, *semantic* and *relational* sensitivity both in and towards themselves and others. However, in order to achieve greater understanding of one's peers (an overall aim of any educational conversation), participants must not only be sensitive to the logic, meaning, concepts, relations and structure within words, phrases, sentences, propositions and discourses, but they must also be sensitive to the *intention* behind them: what the speaker *wishes* to express. This is equally true of the facilitator when questioning. Intentional sensitivity may be expressed *cognitively* (e.g. 'Have I understood you?') or *dispositionally* (e.g. listening attentively). This implies a responsibility of interpretation that rests with the participants and facilitator, highlighting an important human aspect to philosophising or intellectual discourse. We could, like a computer, nit-pick about the logic of utterances or, more humanely, work together towards resolving conflict between utterances by attending to what is intended by them.

Saying what one means and meaning what one says

Intentional sensitivity can easily be overlooked, at great expense in an intellectual conversation. Think back to a discussion in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll, Tenniel & Gardner 2000) in which the characters explore the following question: 'Is saying what one means the same as meaning what one says?'

(Appropriately, this is not explicitly stated as a question in the book.) The answer to the question is *no*. A child knocks on his friend's door; when it is answered he says to his friend, 'Are you coming out to play?' The friend says, 'I've got homework to do.' Strictly speaking, according to the *prima facie* structure and meaning of the utterance, the boy's question has not been answered, yet we would expect the first boy to understand what is meant by 'I've got homework to do,' namely: 'No, I'm not coming out to play.' This is an example of what John Searle (1975) calls 'an indirect illocutionary speech act', or: what is not said but what is meant and implied. So, we see here that what is meant is not the same as what is said: the intention is, in some way, distinct from the words used to express that intention. To understand how this might be consequentially important, consider the following example from the film *The Imitation Game* (Tyldum 2014) in which one of Alan Turing's colleagues says to Turing three times, 'We are going to get some lunch,' and Turing ignores him. Growing annoyed, the colleague then says, 'Alan, I've just asked you three times if you'd like to join us for lunch,' Alan says, 'No, you didn't; you told me that you were going to get some lunch.' In this case, Turing did not 'read between the lines' (the illocutionary meaning) to understand the meaning beyond what was actually said (assuming that he is not willfully failing to infer the illocutionary meaning). Here, a gap between intention and utterance has resulted in a misunderstanding and some social discord between the two men.

In order to begin to consider the second of the two common psychological mindsets I mentioned earlier, 'Guess-what's-in-your-head' questioning/infering, imagine a classroom scene in which a child makes a claim, 'It's a bird, so it flies'. I shall now employ the analytic tool of formal argumentation to analyse the child's claim. But before I do, I'd like to make an important distinction between *descriptive* and *intentional* use of formal argumentation. *Intentional use* is when the person expressing the idea in an argument-form does so intentionally, for instance, a philosophy professor constructing an argument for a paper or presentation, conscious of what is the conclusion and what are the premises and how they might link. *Descriptive use* is when an observer of an idea presented represents that idea in argument-form whether or not the originator of the idea intended to do so, or is even aware that this can be done. This is often the case when children's ideas are represented, as not only do the children not generally intend to structure their idea within standard argument form, they generally do not even know that such a systematic discourse exists. I mention this because, as you will see, the application of this system of discourse to statements and claims made by those not intending standard-form structures can be problematic when one attempts to infer any implied meaning. So, with this distinction in mind I'll

now return to the classroom claim: 'It's a bird, so it flies.' Here is the child's claim in standard-form (descriptive use):

Premise: It is a bird,

Conclusion: So, it flies.

This is a good example of how children express themselves when making claims. Often children will say the inverse, 'It flies *because* it's a bird', though either formulation is plausible. What is often missed out in either formulation, many will point out, is the *hidden* or *suppressed premise*, in this case, many may reasonably suggest, that the hidden premise is, 'All birds fly.' Those committed to this hidden premise will construct the child's argument like so:

Premise: It is a bird,

[*Hidden premise:* All birds fly,]

Conclusion: So, it flies.

Those committed to this hidden premise, in this case, would not have demonstrated the intellectual virtue of *intentional sensitivity*.³ The sort of thing you might hear in the classroom when a teacher or facilitator is making this kind of assumption about the child's position is, 'So, you're saying ...' or 'What you mean is ...' and so on. In this particular case a teacher/facilitator making this assumption may have said, 'So, you're saying that all birds fly'. One very likely alternative possibility is that the child may mean something like this [the square brackets represent the assumption or intention not stated]:

Premise: It's a bird,

[*Hidden premise:* Most birds fly,]

Conclusion: So, it [probably] flies.

Or:

Premise: It's a bird,

[*Hidden premise:* all the birds I've seen fly]

Conclusion: So, it [very likely] flies.

³ It is, of course, possible that the child *is* intending to make this argument, and if so, it would be *valid* but not *sound*. If the premises are true then the conclusion would indeed follow, it is simply false that 'all birds fly', not only because of living counter-examples (penguins, ostriches, kiwis etc.) but also because any bird may break a wing or for whatever reason lose its power of flight.

Another possibility is that the child, without yet being aware of it, holds contradictory beliefs (this is especially possible if the child is very young):

Premise: It's a bird,

[The child does not believe that all birds fly and if asked will say 'No, because there are penguins, ostriches etc.⁴]

Conclusion: So [therefore], it flies.

Excavating and 'the absence test'

In order to demonstrate OQM, a teacher/facilitator refrains from assuming or prejudging the hidden premise; instead, they elicit from the child, through careful OQM questioning, what his or her beliefs/ideas/thoughts are so that the child is invited to make *as explicit as they are able, and in his or her own words*, the nature of their argument and the content of any hidden premise(s). However, it must be noted that the student reporting his or her own cognitive content may be in one of a number of cognitive states: for example, they may or may not be aware of what the hidden premise is (or indeed what *a* hidden premise is), they may or may not be aware of any premises at all, or simply not able to articulate them. For this reason, the teacher/facilitator ought to attempt to 'reveal' these hidden aspects through questioning, rather than attempting to 're-construct' them with phrases like, 'So, what you're saying is ...' (where what follows the ellipsis is not the student's own words but those of the teacher/facilitator). For examples of the kind of questions and questioning strategies they should use to do this, refer to the previous section 'Opening up' or to Worley (2015a, 2015b). In this respect, the teacher/facilitator is like an *archeologist*. The archeologist tries to unearth artefacts carefully and to preserve not only the artefact but also the way in which the artefact is found. In the case of the teacher-questioner, a commitment to *excavate* means that if the student is unable, even after careful questioning (*presence*), to articulate the hidden premise(s), implication(s) or entailment(s) of what they have said, then the OQM teacher/facilitator accepts this (*absence*), resisting the temptation to re-construct, on the student's behalf, the hidden aspects of their reasoning. However, there are other things the facilitator can do

⁴ I have not called this a premise because it is not functioning as part of the argument, it is simply a belief the child has that he or she may not even be aware of until made aware of it. This raises interesting questions about the nature of a premise: does it need to be something that the arguer is aware of? If not, must it be a belief the arguer holds? And what counts as holding a belief?

(*presence*) by inviting the group to consider the idea. Challenges, re-constructions, paraphrases (and so on) that help the child articulate him- or her-self better may well come from the group in the course of a natural, peer-group-centred dialogue. This is what the facilitator is working towards: for the group to recognise a problem for themselves (McCabe 2006) and begin to articulate it; careful 'excavation' of the students' contributions when deemed necessary so that the idea is articulated as well as it can be by the student and in their own words; so that it is not unduly influenced or 'coloured' by the facilitator beyond the dialectical demands (see McCabe's outline of these demands), and to hand over to the group *as often as possible* so that they enter into critical engagement with one another whilst developing and retaining a synoptic view of the discussion (McCabe 2006). The facilitator intervenes only, for example, to clarify, to find out more, to invite students to respond to relevant earlier contributions, or to keep the discussion philosophically focused and systematic, that is to say sequential and logical (McCabe 2006), responsive, reflective and re-evaluative (I have previously written and spoken about the '4 Rs' of philosophy: Responsive, Reflective, Reasoned and Re-evaluative: see Worley 2015c). An observer of the session should not be able to ascertain what the facilitator's own views are on the issue under consideration, either from their interventions, their tone or other non-verbal cues. This is what I call 'the absence test'. Given the facilitator's *presence*, however, what an observer may notice is, for example, the facilitator's interest in the ideas being expressed; in excavating arguments and intentions; in connecting ideas and responses; in ensuring contributions are clear and heard by the group; in ensuring that the discussion remains philosophical; in critical engagement, and in subsequent responses to critical engagement.

Guess what's in your head!

Now I can say more about the second common psychological mindset mentioned earlier: 'Guess what's in *your* head' (GWIYH). With 'GWIYH' I have used a similar turn of phrase to mirror 'GWIMH', however, GWIYH will not usually be a *guess*; the teacher or facilitator, if acting in good faith (in other words, to genuinely attempt to understand and accurately represent the child/student), will be making—probably very reasonable—inferences based on what has been said. 'Very reasonable' does not, of course, mean 'correct'. An OQM teacher/facilitator neither prejudges what the child is thinking (GWIYH) nor expects the child to pre-empt what the teacher/facilitator is thinking (GWIMH) but to do what s/he can, either by refraining to intervene (*absence*) or by judicious intervention (*presence*), to have the child/respondent merely report

their own authentic cognitive content in relation to the question or topic being discussed.

Consider the following argument from an 8-year-old girl in answer to the question, 'Do statues do anything?' (All these premises were said explicitly as a consequence of careful OQM questioning, so none are hidden premises):

1. Statues stand there;
2. Standing is a verb;
3. Verbs are 'doing' words
4. So, the statue is doing something.

Is this a good argument? Well, as far as I can tell, it would be valid if by 'verbs are doing words' she meant 'verbs are *only* doing words', but, of course, they are not; they are also *being* and *happening* words, and the statue is in a state of being described by 'standing', not a state of action, though the use of the word 'standing' leads one to think so. However, she may not know this about verbs; adult teachers don't always know this either. So, given what she believes, this could be understood to be a good argument, and by 'good' I mean *reasonable*. If she had been taught only that verbs are 'doing words' (very likely at the age of eight) then her position, reflected in her argument, would seem to be reasonable enough, though mistaken. In this way, one may be thinking well though mistaken. However, there is a further twist to this tale revealed by OQM. On this particular example, it turned out that, as a result of careful questioning, what she meant by 'doing' was something more like 'active', and later on she explained: 'It's [the statue] doing something because it *exists*, and existing is a kind of *doing*. If it wasn't,' she said, 'it couldn't exist.' So, my initial analysis of the argument is reasonable but, appropriately for the point I'm making, in some way mistaken: she was not using the word 'doing' as a simple word function, she meant it more philosophically, in a much deeper sense. What she meant by 'doing' was not apparent from the structure and articulation of her first argument. So, though it may appear that the girl's view had been successfully 'excavated' when she outlined her argument above, the point is that we had not gone far enough: there was yet more meaning for her to reveal that was not represented in the formal argument (*descriptive* use) that was constructible from what she had said.

This matters because paraphrasing children's ideas and arguments, usually with phrases like 'So, you're saying ...' or 'In other words, X is saying ...' and so on is fairly widespread in philosophy-with-children practice. This is supported in research conducted by, for example, Joseph Oyler, in which the practice he documents and

describes not only shows a good deal of paraphrasing being done by the 'expert teachers' (Oyler 2015)⁵, but in it he also identifies paraphrasing as a key 'facilitator move', and one which the facilitators think is important for them to do (the moves are *distilling, paraphrasing, identifying or completing a warrant, locating, naming moves, probing reasoning* and *redirecting*; Oyler 2015). I have been arguing that a tension exists between the perceived importance of paraphrasing and what Oyler identifies as one of three 'pedagogical principles': to 'Let the inquiry be student driven' (Oyler 2015), or what I characterise as 'ownership'. I should highlight here that I am *not* suggesting that paraphrase *never* be used by a facilitator, only that it be employed with care. One may be able to see how paraphrase may be used to 'close a student down'; for example, 'So, in other words, Matthew is saying ...' (Oyler 2015) —especially if this were said with an authoritative tone⁶. One can also see how paraphrase can 'open them up'; for example, 'So—correct me if I'm wrong—but are you saying ...?' —especially if this were said with the right tone and body language that gives explicit and implicit permission to correct the facilitator; what might be called an 'open intentional sensitivity mindset' —if you will—inviting the student to correct or elaborate. As with the mindset (OQM/CQM) that determines whether a question is open or closed irrespective of its structure (see earlier argument and Worley 2015b), similarly, the mindset of the questioner making use of paraphrase may also determine whether the paraphrase has an adverse or favourable effect.⁷ However, I advocate caution here because we cannot take it for granted that children know implicitly to do this, as adults would. It is so natural for us to enter into this kind of tacit agreement with adult conversers (i.e. when I say 'So, you're saying ...' what I mean is: 'I will say what I *think* you are saying with the understanding that you will correct me if I get it wrong.') that we sometimes forget that this symmetry doesn't necessarily exist between an adult-facilitator and child-participants. From a practical, self-evaluation point-of-view, if the facilitator makes use of a paraphrase, then when reflecting on his or her practice, s/he

⁵ To be clear, Oyler only draws upon three practitioners, and is tentative about what we can conclude from them, however, he has chosen what he calls 'expert teachers', and, given that he draws some general principles from these experts, this implies some kind of exemplary practice. For more evidence, type in 'P4C' into a video search engine and view a few P4C sessions: it is my claim that you will see plenty of evidence that paraphrasing is standard practice. Though only anecdotal, in fifteen years I've seen very few—if any—examples of facilitation of philosophy with children that did not make use of paraphrasing as one default response to children's contributions.

⁶ I have no idea what the tone was of the example used from Oyler. I am also not suggesting that it did close the student down on the occasion that it was used in Oyler's example, just that this phrase often does have that effect, especially if accompanied with the said tone.

⁷ Thank you to the editors for pointing out this link between open and closed questions and paraphrasing.

should ask herself, 'Did I *need* to paraphrase?' (If not, then I'd recommend it not be used) or 'Did its use impact *negatively* on the discussion?' —did the child become 'lost' or say, 'No, that's not what I said,' (If so, then, again, I'd recommend it not be used, or at least that it be used carefully). My recommendation is to *minimise* (not necessarily *eliminate*) its use, according to need and impact. So natural is paraphrasing though, that a conscious and deliberate effort is usually required from the facilitator to monitor (*presence*) or omit (*absence*) its use, hence the need to appeal to the *Ariadnian* notions of *presence* and *absence*. It is to this extent that *absence* can be, like *presence*, understood to be an active principle.

Conclusion

The (advanced or beginning) facilitator's perennial dilemma is concerned with how much s/he should intervene in a philosophical enquiry and how much s/he should refrain from doing so. Drawing a metaphor from the ancient Greek mythical character of Ariadne, I have tried to help the facilitator with this dilemma by outlining two yin-and-yang-like principles: *presence*, the mindful interventions within a dialogue, and *absence*, the mindful refraining of interventions within a dialogue. The facilitator, aware of the demands of each, is urged to take a middle way between them, attending to the dialectical needs of the dialogue and the group while minimising—though not eliminating—interventions and influence over the discussion with regard to both content and process. In order to achieve this balance, the facilitator avoids an attitude of mind I have called 'Closed Question Mindset' (typically 'Guess-what's-in-my-head' questioning and 'Guess-what's-in-your-head' questioning/infering) and adopts an 'Open Question Mindset', where s/he elicits the *intention* of the students rather than merely their surface meaning or implications. Through the 'excavation'-style of questioning, the facilitator provides the students with opportunities to reveal their intended meaning before premature assumptions are made about them. This is done that the students can better understand themselves and each other without facilitators having to reach for their own interpretations, distillations, summaries, signposts and paraphrases to help the dialogue along; in other words, without the facilitator doing the work for them and thereby risking *misinterpretation*, taking the enquiry from the children into the facilitator's own hands.

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