



# The Philosophy Foundation

## THINKING CHANGES

It is important, for anyone writing or training about doing philosophy, first of all to spell out what they mean by it so that the reader has some idea about what kind of philosophy they will encounter and, when training people to facilitate philosophy, to provide criteria. The Philosophy Foundation's account (written by Peter Worley in consultation with other TPF members) will attempt to capture something of its spirit, structure, content, method, aims and hopes. Although we have endeavoured to identify those features that are less contentious, and though we have drawn our standard from academic philosophy as practised in European, British and American universities, our account is inextricably personal to us and culturally specific. So, consistent with the philosophical spirit we've tried to illustrate here, one might wonder whether philosophy is – at least in addition to what we have said it is – something other than what we have said it is; to accept our account uncritically would not be very philosophical, after all. That said, we hope that what we do say is useful in understanding where TPF is coming from, but also to understand where the subject of philosophy is coming from too, and therefore how it will fit into your classroom, business or life.

So, here's The Philosophy Foundation's attempt to say what philosophy is - certainly as it pertains to our aims when doing philosophy and training others to facilitate it:

Philosophy, done well, should be a rigorous, structured, sequential conversation (with others or oneself) that is both collaborative and oppositional, that attempts to explore, explain and justify the structure and content of our thoughts in response to perceived problems and puzzles about reality, knowledge, value and meaning. Philosophy employs a method/process (more often than not ongoing) of reflection, reasoning and re-evaluation, by employing the appropriate intellectual virtues or excellences, in order to make good, though provisional judgements about what seems possibly (metaphysically) true, possibly (morally) right, and (logically) coherent. The aim is to improve our understanding (also understanding what we don't understand) of: the world, ourselves, our experiences and other people, by refining how we think about those things. The hope is that by doing philosophy we learn to think better, to act more wisely, and thereby help to improve the quality of all our lives.

So, in this we can see that there are three main dimensions to philosophy: a method that TPF recognises as dialectical, that is to say: the systematic examination and evaluation of opinions through questioning and reasoning, or 'the 4 Rs': responsive, reflective, rational, re-evaluative); there is a special kind of content: broadly captured as the following: metaphysics (reality) epistemology (knowledge) and value (including political philosophy, ethics and aesthetics); and finally there is the aims of philosophy, that can be captured as cognitive (towards human understanding) & eudaimonic (towards human flourishing and well-being).