



KANT'S BOX

STIMULUS:

“

Imagine a box. Now imagine emptying the box. The aim is to have nothing in it at all.

”

Task Question: Do you think this would be possible?

The methodology of the facilitator is that whenever someone introduces something that is still there you anchor them by saying ‘ok, lets remove that to, have we finally emptied it completely?’.

Nested questions:

- ✓ Is there something that we can never remove?
- ✓ Once everything has been removed what do you think you would be left with?

Stimulus:

“

I want you to imagine that everything has been removed from the box, including everything that has been mentioned (list them: germs, atoms, sides of the box etc.) so that we have an empty space. Can we remove the space?

”

Task Question 2: Would it be a space or would it be nothing?

Nested question:

- ✓ Is space the same as nothing?
- ✓ What is space?
- ✓ Does space exist?
- ✓ Can you touch space?

STIMULUS:

Introduce Leibniz, Newton (and Kant if children talk about how space is dependent on thinking, e.g. ‘You can only have space if you can think about it’, is one response we’ve had), and ask them to consider who they agree with and why. Diagrams may help in the description of each philosopher’s ideas. This is how you introduce it:

Draw a box on the board and ask them to imagine it is an empty space.

“

There was a scientist / natural philosopher, called Newton, who thought the space was always there even if there was nothing in it.

(You can introduce the term 'absolute space' if you think the children can cope with it)

Draw another box next to that one, with two circles in the box.

There was another philosopher called Leibniz, who thought that there was only space when you have two objects that have space between them.

Draw a two-headed arrow between the objects.

(Introduce the term 'relative space' if you think the children can cope with it).

Task Question 3: Which philosopher do you agree with and why?

Introduce Kant in a similar way if possible: Draw another box, with a man standing next to it and a think bubble coming out of the man around the box.

Kant thought that space is in our mind.

Repeat Task Question 3 above.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Sometimes a child may say space is a vacuum, bring in dictionary definition of vacuum. Either look it up there and then or bring it in yourself:

Dictionary definition of vacuum: space entirely devoid of matter.

Task Question: If you have a vacuum can you take the space away?