The Philosophy Foundation
THINKING CHANGES

WHERE AM I?

Starter Activity

Draw a large outline of a person with plenty of room to write words inside on a piece of paper, and photocopy enough for each child in the class. Ask the children to think of all the things that it is that makes us who we are. Provide a couple of examples that demonstrate the range of characteristics you expect: 'guitarist' and 'curious', or 'British' and 'tall'. If you have time or would like to extend this over a couple of sessions then they could draw their own portraits and fill them in themselves. Try to encourage a wide variety of answers.

The next stage is to categorise the list so that it becomes reduced to general features such as 'preferences/aversions' ('likes/dislikes' for younger ones), 'physical characteristics', 'personality traits' etc. These portraits make good classroom displays and can be referred to for discussion purposes. The aim is for the children to realise that there is more to who we are than what we look like and what we like to eat.

Stimulus

In order to get the children to explore the concept of personhood ask this question: do we become a different person if we swap the following, with someone else (write these up one at a time so as not to overload them):

- Our lunch boxes
- Our clothes
- Our gender
- Our skin colour
- Our limbs
- Our brains

If you get as far as brains then you may want to do the following (or this could be for a second session):

Imagine, sometime in the far future, there are two friends, Jenny and Alma, and they are very different kinds of people: Jenny is popular and pretty and Alma is studious and intelligent but each is jealous of the other. So much so that they each want to be the other person. Eventually they decide to both go along to a company called 'Brain Swaps Limited' where they undergo an operation in which their brains are taken out of their bodies and then replaced in the other girl's body: Jenny's body now has Alma's brain and Alma's body has Jenny's brain. Draw a diagram (see attached) to help the children understand.

Task Question:

- Where is Jenny and where is Alma?

Nested Questions:

- Have they now achieved what they wanted: to become the other girl?
- Would Jenny still be Jenny and would Alma still be Alma?
- Would they be in each other's body? Or would Jenny simply have Alma's thoughts and vice versa?
- Are we our brain or are we our body?
- What is the self?
- Is it different or the same as the brain or body?