Meghan R. Callaghan

Phil 501- Metacognitive

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Connecting the dots

Philosophy is full of messy problems, just like life. In using critical thinking and reflection, a person can recognize, analyze and discover new insights and solutions to these messy philosophical real-life problems. This process also leads to widening one’s perspective and seeks to help one become more sympathetic to other points of view. Through this course, I have grappled with messy problems, analyzed the arguments for and against the problems, and have come to new understandings of how these messy problems impact my life and society.

Context is everything. When I first took a philosophy course as an undergraduate my worldview was constructed narrowly. I hesitated in learning to understand and accept other perspectives that differed from my own and I was somewhat apathetic towards working through problems. I was the typical 19 years old; I thought I had all the right answers up my sleeve and that I did not need to bother in thinking about issues that did not directly involve or impact my everyday life (self involved much?). Luckily through that course as an undergraduate I was challenged to wrestle with big issues, it was required! These issues or topics that involved questions such as; what is reality? How I do I know what I know and why? And how does this inform my life and my belief system? Grappling with these philosophical questions intrigued me. I enjoyed thinking through the process and realized the benefits to understanding different sides involved within each issue. The class did its job, it broke my self-involved worldview.

Jump five years or so and I’m in the same context of a philosophy course and am of course still wrestling with messy philosophical topics. I would like to think that growing older has improved my mindset in dealing with/thinking through philosophical issues, but I still find myself jumping to conclusions before the process of reading and critically examining the issues from multiple perspective. In some ways, this ever-present fault is one reason why I was intrigued and interested in the CCT program. In CCT, I’m remolding my cognitive skills to stop and think before I assume I know what is best in a situation or within a certain issue. CCT is intentional in designing courses and assignments that allow its students to individually focus on ideas that have relevance and importance within each of our lives. Through my journey in the CCT program, I have found a theme emerging within the areas of research that I am drawn towards.

Connecting to past and present courses within my CCT portfolio, I find myself attracted to marginalized groups within society. Whether it’s children, LGBT youth, women, or people without socioeconomic means, my interests tends to encompass these groups and how they receive, gain, acquire and use knowledge in a way that can work for them amongst their collective social norms. Philosophy allows me to ask the deeper messy problems that pertain to issues these groups face. Questions like, what kinds of knowledge claims are being represented? Who is making these claims? What biases do the different stakeholders bring to this belief? Who is silenced or left out of the conversation within this problem? Tenants from creative thinking have proved to be useful in philosophy; those of divergent thinking, using metaphor to reframe the idea, and playfulness or asking silly questions. Children have the ability to ask questions without fear. They are society’s greatest examples of philosophical thinking.

Garth Matthews in his book *Philosophy of Childhood* gets to the heart of children innate ability in being philosophical without knowing it. Most alarming Mathews goes on to explain how through socialization (going to school, being in the community, i.e. growing up) children lose their ability to be philosophical. Therefore, when a child becomes of age and begins to really question the different meanings and realities of life, they have already become jaded in the process of being able to critically think for themselves. Socialization under this perspective could be considered oppressive. Oppression occurs when marginalized children do not have the capacities, freedom, or curiosity to think through issues of importance. As someone who regularly holds a position of privilege within most social identities, it is wrong and easy for me to point the blame at the marginalized group for not revolting against the dominant norms of socialization in the US. I have come to an understanding that my role is to speak, advocate, and create programs and spaces for these groups to discuss things that matter to them. My CCT courses have made this apparent to me and are providing me with the skills, confidence and excitement for working with marginalized groups.

As a CCT student, I receive questions all the time from outsiders as to why did I choose to do a Masters in Critical and Creative Thinking? How is it going to help you later on? My response is always the same. I’m learning the process of knowing what I know. I’m developing skills of inquiry which will help me as a life- long learner. I see the program as a stepping stone towards a Ph.D or another Masters program, or as a way to evaluate my goals and aspirations in life. Being intentional in what I choose to research and reflect on not only benefits me personally, but I’m more successful in retaining the knowledge and further developing the questions I research. Philosophy has helped in shaping and refining the kinds of questions that interest me.