RELATIVISM: A THRESHOLD FOR PUPILS TO CROSS IN ORDER TO BECOME DIALOGICAL CRITICAL THINKERS[1]

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Abstract:
According to a number of international organizations such as UNESCO, the development of critical thinking is fundamental in youth education. In general, critical thinking is recognized as thinking that doubts and evaluates principles and facts. We define it as essentially dialogical, in other words constructive and responsible. And we maintain that its development is essential to help youngsters make enlightened decisions and adequately face up to the challenges of everyday living. Our recent analyses of exchanges among pupils who benefited from philosophical *praxis* showed that dialogical critical thinking comprises four thinking modes (logical, creative, responsible and metacognitive) and six epistemological perspectives that range from the simplest (egocentricity) increasing in complexity (passing through relativism) to the most complex (inter-subjectivity). Relativism merits special focus in that a majority of the pupils' interventions that we analyzed are situated within this perspective, and in that relativism is charged with both positive and negative meanings. In its positive meaning, it is associated with reflection, plurality and open-mindedness, but in its negative (absolute) sense, relativism refers to arbitrary decisions, to indifference and the status quo. This is why we maintain that relativism must be transcended. In this respect, we suggest two series of open-ended questions that are designed to provoke a disequilibrium in pupils' certainties and, by so doing, stimulate their reflection towards inter-subjectivity. These questions are associated with the diversification of thinking modes (logical, creative, responsible, metacognitive) and the increasing complexity of these modes (transition from egocentricity to relativism and then to inter-subjectivity).

Keywords: Dialogical Critical Thinking; Epistemology; Relativism; Inter-subjectivity; Philosophy for children.

Relativismo: Um limiar a ser ultrapassado pelos alunos para que se tornem Pensadores Dialógicos e Críticos

Resumo:
Segundo várias instâncias internacionais como a UNESCO, o desenvolvimento de um pensamento critico (PC) é fundamental na educação das jovens gerações. De modo geral, o pensamento crítico é reconhecido como sendo um pensamento que duvida e que avalia os princípios e os fatos. Nós o definimos como um pensamento essencialmente dialógico , quer dizer construtivo e responsável. E nós estimamos que o seu desenvolvimento é essencial para ajudar os jovens a tomar decisões esclarecidas e a enfrentar adequadamente os desafios que constituem seu cotidiano. Nossas análises recentes das trocas entre alunos

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que beneficiam de uma *praxis* filosófica mostraram que o pensamento crítico dialógico (PCD) compreende quatro modos de pensamento (lógico, criativo, responsável e metacognitivo) e seis perspectivas epistemológicas que se escalam da mais simples (egocentrismo) à mais complicada (intersubjetividade), passando pelo relativismo. O relativismo é uma perspectiva sobre a qual convém demorar, pelo fato que uma maioria de intervenções de alunos se encontram nela. Ainda mais porque o relativismo carrega ao mesmo tempo um sentido positivo e um sentido negativo. Em sua acepção positiva, é associado à reflexão, à pluralidade, à tolerância mas, em seu sentido negativo (absoluto), ele remete às decisões arbitrárias, à indiferença e ao status quo. É por isso que nós sustentamos a ideia que o relativismo deve ser ultrapassado. Nessa ótica, propomos duas séries de questões abertas que visam provocar um desequilíbrio nas certezas dos alunos e, fazendo isso, a estimular sua reflexão em direção à intersubjetividade. Estas questões são associadas à diversificação dos modos de pensamento (lógico, criativo, responsável, metacognitivo) e às suas complexificações (passagem do egocentrismo ao relativismo e enfim à intersubjetividade).

Palavras-chave: Pensamento dialógico e crítico; Epistemologia; Relativismo; Intersubjetividade; Filosofia para crianças.

Relativisme: un seuil à dépasser par les élèves pour qu'ils deviennent des Penseurs Dialogiques et Critiques

Résumé :
Selon plusieurs instances internationales comme l'UNESCO, le développement d'une pensée critique (PC) est fondamental dans l'éducation des jeunes générations. De manière générale, la pensée critique est reconnue comme étant une pensée qui doute et qui évalue les principes et les faits. Nous la définissons comme une pensée essentiellement dialogique, c'est-à-dire constructive et responsable. Et nous estimons que son développement est essentiel afin d'aider les jeunes à prendre des décisions éclairées et à relever adéquatement les défis qui composent leur quotidien. Nos analyses récentes des échanges entre élèves qui bénéficiaient d'une *praxis* philosophique ont montré que la pensée critique dialogique (PCD) comprend quatre modes de pensée (logique, créatif, responsable et métacognitif) et six perspectives épistémologiques qui s'échelonnent de la plus simple (égocentrisme) à la plus complexe (intersubjectivité) en passant par le relativisme. Le relativisme est une perspective sur laquelle il convient de s'attarder en ce qu'une majorité d'interventions d'élèves s'y situent. D'autant plus que le relativisme est porteur à la fois de sens positif et de sens négatif. Dans son acception positive, il est associé à la réflexion, la pluralité, la tolérance mais, dans son sens négatif (absolu), il renvoie aux décisions arbitraires, à l'indifférence et au statut quo. C'est pourquoi nous soutenons que le relativisme doit être dépassé. Dans cette optique, nous proposons deux séries de questions ouvertes qui visent à provoquer un déséquilibre dans les certitudes des élèves et, ce faisant, à stimuler leur réflexion vers l'intersubjectivité. Ces questions sont associées à la diversification des modes de pensée (logique, créatif, responsable, métacognitif) et à leur complexification (passage de l'égocentrisme au relativisme puis à l'intersubjectivité).

Mots clés : Pensée critique dialogique; Épistémologie; Relativisme; Intersubjectivité; Philosophie pour enfants.

Relativismo: un umbral que los alumnos ultrapasan para llegar a ser pensadores críticos y dialógicos

Resumen:
De acuerdo con una serie de organizaciones internacionales como la UNESCO, el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico es fundamental en la educación de la juventud. En general, el pensamiento crítico es reconocido como el pensamiento que duda y evalúa los principios y hechos. Lo definimos como esencialmente dialógico, es decir constructiva y responsable. Y sostenemos que su desarrollo es esencial para ayudar a los jóvenes a tomar decisiones iluminadas y adecuadas frente a los desafíos de la vida cotidiana. Los análisis recientes de los intercambios entre los alumnos que se beneficiaron de la praxis filosófica muestran que el pensamiento crítico dialógico comprende cuatro modos de pensamiento (lógico, creativo, responsable y metacognitivo) y seis perspectivas epistemológicas que van desde los más simples (egocentrismo), aumentando en complejidad (pasando por el relativismo) hasta las más complejas (intersubjetividad). El relativismo merece atención especial porque la mayoría de las intervenciones de los alumnos que se analizaron se encuentra dentro de esta perspectiva, y porque el relativismo recibe significados positivos y negativos. En su sentido positivo, se asocia con la reflexión, la pluralidad y apertura mental, pero en su sentido negativo (absoluto), el relativismo se refiere a decisiones arbitrarias, a la indiferencia y el status quo. Por eso sostenemos que el relativismo debe ser trascendido. En este sentido, sugerimos dos series de preguntas abiertas que están diseñadas para provocar un desequilibrio en las certezas de los alumnos y, al hacerlo, estimulan su reflexión hacia la intersubjetividad. Estas preguntas están relacionadas con la diversificación de los modos de pensamiento (lógico, creativo, responsable, metacognitivo) y la creciente complejidad de estos modos (transición del egocentrismo al relativismo y luego a la intersubjetividad).

Palabras clave: Pensamiento crítico-dialógico; Epistemología, Relativismo, Inter-subjetividad, Filosofía para niños

RELATIVISM: A THRESHOLD FOR PUPILS TO CROSS IN ORDER TO BECOME DIALOGICAL CRITICAL THINKERS

Many authors maintain that the 21st century presents modern societies with new and complex challenges which young generations must learn to face. Among others, the arrival of social media requires individuals to be able to choose, among all the information at hand, the most relevant according to the contexts and the objectives pursued. The challenges are significant, since traditions, acquired knowledge and tried-and-true procedures can no longer provide all the answers. Individuals must now be able to transform the ways in which they act and think in order to adapt to new realities.

In a context where mere transmission of knowledge is no longer a panacea, where true comprehension of events and complex problem-solving become basic requirements, the development of generic competencies[2] such as critical thinking (CT) is increasingly perceived as a significant tool in youngsters' education (among others, UNESCO, 2007, 2011). There is good reason for this, since, according to a review of the literature, CT would offer youngsters intellectual autonomy (Cuypers & Haji, 2006; Mejia & Molina, 2007); favour stability of acquired knowledge (Peters *et al*., 2002; Torff, 2006); and when exercised on the self, would enable each person to learn to know themselves and to improve their experience (BCME, 2000). CT would enable better social integration (OME, 2005) and the making of informed ethical decisions (Darling, 2002, 2006; Fong, 2002; Thomas, 2001). It would also help increase the complexity of youngsters' representations of the world (Daniel & Gagnon, 2011) and enable them to more adequately resolve concepts or problems under discussion (Golding, 2009).

The constitutive elements of CT vary according to the definitions proposed by researchers and philosophers, but in general the latter recognize that CT is thinking that doubts methodically (Lalande, 1991), that participates in the examination of a principle or a fact to produce a judgment of appreciation on this principle or fact (Foulquié, 1982), and that questions its own evidence, prejudices, beliefs and interests (Tardif, 2012, p. 67).

In the reflection/critical reflection debate, more and more authors favour the development of CT because they believe that "if only reflection is considered, we risk self-absorption, even self-indulgence, sheltered from questioning and confrontation" (Bourgeault, 2012, p. 113-114) – therefore risk slipping into absolute relativism (Taylor, 1992).

[2] Along with a majority of authors (among others Lipman, 2003), we understand critical thinking as a generic skill in that it inscribes itself transversely in all disciplines. From this perspective, critical thinking in school presupposes that knowledge is presented to pupils as social constructions that temporarily create a consensus and that it is useful to question, rather than knowledge transmitted as absolute truths that it is useful to memorize (see, among other, King & Kitchener, 2001).

Our research works shed light on *dialogical* critical thinking (DCT). They are situated within Lipman's (Lipman et al., 1980) and Vygotsky's (1985) perspectives, which highlight the importance of peer interactions and facilitation by the teacher in the pupils' learning process. In this paper, we attempt to answer three questions: 1) What is DCT and how does it develop in kindergarten and elementary school pupils? 2) What is relativism? 3) How can teachers stimulate pupils' thinking beyond relativism?

1. What is DCT and How Does it Develop in Pupils?

To answer this question, we conducted research projects[3] with 28 groups of pupils aged 4 to 12 years, from different French-speaking, English-speaking and Spanish-speaking cultures. All of these pupils "philosophized" using the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach (Lipman *et al.*,1980). The methodology used to analyze the data collected differed from that usually used by researchers who study CT: Our methodology, influenced by the Grounded Theory approach, was qualitative (vs. quantitative); it consisted in analyses of transcripts of exchanges among pupils (vs. questionnaires or individual tests); the analyses were conducted in groups of pupils (vs. individuals); and these groups were either in kindergarten or in elementary school (vs. college or university).

Globally, our results show that, within the framework of a philosophical *praxis*, CT is not a product, but a research process. And, far from being technical, CT is collaborative and intrinsically motivated by individual and social responsibility. To reflect this particularity, we named it *dialogical* critical thinking (DCT).

How does DCT manifest itself and develop? Results of the analyses show that DCT not only implies logical thinking such as is reflected in the majority of developmental models related to critical thinking (Kwack, 2007) but also mobilizes four thinking modes, namely logical, creative, responsible and metacognitive[4]. Logical thinking refers to formal and informal logic; it is mainly characterized by coherence in discourse and argumentation. Creative thinking refers to divergence in thinking; it is characterized by novelty and unexpectedness. Responsible thinking refers to beliefs, actions, principles and ethical and social values.

[3] Research projects were subsidized by Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). In a first project, researchers and collaborators were: L. Lafortune and R. Pallascio (Quebec), C. Slade (Australia) and Teresa de la Garza (Mexico). In a second project, researchers and collaborators were: M. Gagnon (Quebec) and E. Auriac (France).

[4] Firstly, the definitions of CT proposed by American philosophers starting in the 1960s support, directly or indirectly, diverse modes of thinking. For example, Ennis' definition is based on the logical and creative thinking modes; that of Paul is based on moral attitudes; that of Lipman is based on logical and creative thinking and on caring thinking and self-correction. Decades later, when researchers attempted to operationalize the concept of CT, the focus was placed on the development of logical thinking (see, among others, the models of King & Kitchener (1994) and Kuhn (1999)). Today, CT continues to be mainly associated with the logical mode, to the detriment of the other thinking modes.

Metacognitive thinking refers to retrospection regarding thinking, tasks and behaviours, and to correction.

Complementary analyses have shown that thinking (whether logical, creative, responsible or metacognitive) is not a static product; it underlies a dynamic process in that each of these modes can be manifested in a simple or in a complex manner. For example, with regard to creative thinking, stating a personal example implies simple thinking, whereas evaluating divergent perspectives presupposes more complex thinking. To reflect the developmental process of thinking, we relied on the notion of "epistemological perspectives". These perspectives (which we named egocentricity, post-egocentricity, pre-relativism, relativism, post-relativism/pre-inter-subjectivity and inter-subjectivity) reflect the pupil's representations of the world, from the most simple to the most complex.

Following is a presentation of the pivotal epistemological perspectives (for more details on each perspective, see Daniel & Gagnon 2012, and for the operationalization of the developmental process of DCT, see Appendix A). Egocentricity is the perspective that underlies the most simple meanings and representations. It implies certainty as well as dualistic, concrete and not-well-thought-out representations of the world. These representations are not influenced by divergent points of view.

Relativism is an epistemological perspective that presupposes a rupture in these representations. Pupils seem to become aware that the world is not so simple (good/bad, right/wrong) as they realize that others have a variety of beliefs, points of view, etc. This realization leads to active listening to others and an openness to others. It leads to the development of relationships between points of view (vs. units that are independent from each other). These relationships are convergent, that is, the points of view envisage the same end and are oriented toward the same direction; they do not include evaluation of the points of view.

Inter-subjectivity is characterized by a constructive skepticism, which manifests itself through evaluation and divergent relationships. In this perspective, statements are conceptualized; they include an argumentation expressed in negotiation form, as well as a justification that is explicitly articulated and based on criteria; they are not presented as (closed) conclusions, but rather in the form of questioning, underlying a search for different meanings (vs. for a single truth); they sometimes explicitly include self-correction; they reflect social or ethical concerns and they aim to transform the group's perspectives toward a common good.

In this paper we focus on relativism because the majority of pupils' interventions we analyzed were situated within relativistic perspectives, that is, in pre-relativism and relativism in those groups that had engaged in one year of

philosophical *praxis*, and in post-relativism for the groups of pupils aged 8 to 12 years who had two years or more of P4C experience (Daniel & Gagnon, 2012).

2. What is Relativism?

Positive Meaning

Within the framework of the developmental process of DCT, relativism may be associated with theories of caring (see Belenky *et al*., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Thayer-Bacon, 1993, 1997). Relativism is an epistemological perspective that implies that pupils are concerned with their peers. It is in relativism that pupils move away from specific and personal representations (characteristic of egocentricity), open up to a plurality of points of view and are introduced to tolerance. Relativism encompasses respect for others - in their similarities and differences - as well as an attitude of acceptance, inclusion and open-mindedness; it presupposes listening attentively to peer points of view. Stimulating relativism (understood in its positive meaning) in school is essential, in that it represents a protection against technical CT, centered essentially on the rules of formal logic. It also represents a protection against "radical individualism" in which the individual's preoccupations are turned toward self interest rather than peers' interests.

In the classroom, after a philosophical workshop, pupils feel good about themselves because their thinking was better articulated than it was in the less complex epistemological perspectives, and because their peers listened to their points of view. In parallel, teachers derive satisfaction from a relativistic exchange among pupils. Indeed, they observe that their group of pupils can think in a reflective and caring manner, two types of thinking that are not frequently manifested in traditional schooling. In short, in the classroom, the teacher and the pupils perceive only the positive sense of relativism.

Absolute Relativism

However, relativism also carries negative meanings. In its absolute sense, it considers that different points of view are not only possible but equivalent. Absolute relativism refers to arbitrariness, indifference and the status quo; it may lead to accepting everything without questioning and without prioritizing (Collins, 2004; Comte-Sponville, 1995; Kuhn, 1999). Indeed, absolute relativism sanctifies the individual and conceives his freedom to be an end in and of itself. And if the end of all action and discourse is found in complete individual freedom, then no critique is allowed. This movement, which is growing in contemporary societies, has major implications on "narrowing horizons" (Bourgeault, 2012, p. 113) and, subsequently, on individual and social impoverishment (Taylor, 1992).

In the classroom, it manifests itself in the fact that pupils' points of view are not confronted by their peers - or by their teacher (see Luke, 1996) -, which implies that no intellectual effort to evaluate the statements of their peers is required of

them. Our understanding is that pupils interpret their (relativist) achievement as a well-deserved comfort zone after having reached a cognitive and epistemological threshold. And teachers feel that pupils' discourses represent their cognitive and epistemological limits because they significantly surpass the types of discourses that are usually expected in school – and that continue to perpetuate vertical exchanges between a teacher and a pupil, in which the former asks questions from a manual and the latter provides the expected answer from that manual (see Dewey, 1983). In other words, relativist discourse/thinking is understood as a culmination, a fulfillment by pupils and teachers. As a consequence, neither teacher nor pupil attempts to surpass relativism and the result is a cessation of the pupils' developmental process of DCT.

Relativism in a Community of Inquiry

We should note that, in a philosophical community of inquiry, if no members dare to question, to evaluate, to argue, to negotiate, with a view to improving the perspective of others and the community, the pupils' representations of the world will not progress; they will not become more complex. In this sense, our position is that transcending relativism should be an aim of philosophical workshops. We consider that it is the teacher's responsibility to guide the thinking of pupils toward inter-subjectivity, in order to prevent pupils' thinking from stagnating in relativism and succumbing to absolute relativism. Here, let us recall that we conceive the development of DCT as an inclusive process. In this sense, moving beyond relativism does not mean rejecting this perspective understood in its positive sense (reflection centered on peers and convergent relationships), rather it means that more sophisticated epistemological perspectives (reflection centered on divergent relationships and aiming at a common good) must graft themselves onto relativism in order to enable pupils to enrich their thinking process.

Is transcending relativism in elementary school a realistic objective? Some of our research results reveal that elementary school pupils are capable of moving on to this perspective if they are adequately and regularly stimulated in this sense (Daniel *et al*., 2005). These results can be explained by Vygotsky's educational principle, according to which, in a context of reciprocal or guided teaching, as soon as pupils master what they are learning (here, relativist thinking), they are able to qualitatively modify its structure and transform it again to make it more complex (Vygotsky 1985). Whether we refer to specific competencies[5], or generic competencies such as DCT, the learning structure remains the same, and Vygotsky's principle can be applied. On the other hand, if the teacher does not stimulate the pupils to go beyond relativism, they will not transcend this epistemological perspective on their own. For example, a large body of literature from studies conducted with college and university (undergraduate) students

[5] A specific skill refers to a particular field of learning (mathematics, geography, history, etc.) while a generic skill spans all scholastic subjects.

shows that, without any specific educational intervention (or without teacher guidance), the students' thinking is reflective but not critical (among others, Berland & McNeill, 2010; Forges *et al.*, 2011; Kuhn, 2009).

3. How can Teachers Stimulate Pupils' Thinking to Transcend Relativism?

Several authors maintain that in order to stimulate the reflective process, it is necessary to create a doubt or a cognitive conflict in the pupils' convictions (among others, Beaulac & Robert, 2011; Dewey, 1933; Doise *et al.*, 1975; Doise & Mugny, 1997; Sorsana & Troadec, 2007) to motivate them in the development of the divergent and evaluative relations.

Questioning pupils in order to disturb their certainties can be interpreted by some as anti-educational in that it interrupts the construction of a personal point of view, and represents a needless constraint for the child (see Levine, 2004). Nevertheless, we consider that the teacher's questioning remains a necessary constraint in that it fosters the emergence of thinking and "favours the establishment of reflexive patterns" (Perrenoud, 2001, p, 76). Indeed, through interruption with questions, the pupils' representations are destabilized; this makes ideas more problematic, leads to a more sustained argumentation (Berland & McNeill, 2010) and to a critical inquiry process that results in a more complex resolution of the problem, or a more sophisticated representation of the concept being discussed (Dewey, 1933; Lipman, 2003; Lipman *et al.*, 1980; Golding, 2009). Also, when the teacher facilitates pupil interactions of a "dialogical critical" nature, the teacher's questions constitute a model for the pupils, who integrate the questions into their way of thinking. Gradually, pupils come to pose these critical questions to their peers and to themselves, which is the aim of any philosophical community of inquiry.

What questions from the teacher can lead pupils to transcend relativism?

Analysis of numerous transcripts of exchanges in the "philosophizings" of various age groups leads us to conclude that it is desirable to work on two levels, namely the diversification and the sophistication of thinking. Diversification refers to the mobilization of at least four basic thinking modes, whereas sophistication relates back to the developmental process that can be observed through the epistemological perspectives.

Diversification of Thinking

Philosophers and psychologists who study CT recognize that *logical thinking* is the foundation of critical thinking in that it implies conceptualization, argumentation and evaluation (among others, Berland & McNeill, 2010). However, we maintain that in order for DCT to occur, thinking must mobilize other modes than only the logical. *Creative thinking* suggests syntheses and analyses based on

new relationships, develops different hypotheses, raises unexpected issues (Burnard *et al.*, 2006; Craft, 2000), etc. – all of which are mental acts that incorporate doubt and generate disruptions in pupils' certainties. Another thinking mode that is fundamental to the mobilization of DCT is the *responsible mode*. This mode implies an evaluation of the (positive and negative) consequences of hypotheses, analyses, points of view, etc., prior to their acceptance. It represents a balance between the right to expression and the responsibility to do so with empathy; it anchors the evaluation of actions, events, values and points of view with the objective of a common good. The responsible mode results from the integration of the person's cognitive and affective levels (Dewey, 1980; Gibbs, 2003; Nucci, 2001; Selman, 1971a, 1971b; Turiel, 2006). Finally, in order to develop, DCT depends on *meta-cognitive thinking*, since that is the preferred mode that allows for retrospection and eventual self-correction (for a review of related literature, see Ku & Ho, 2010).

Although these four thinking modes are inherent in fully developed DCT, the results of our analyses conducted with groups of pupils who had practiced P4C indicate that they predominantly mobilize logical thinking; sometimes mobilize creative thinking and rarely mobilize responsible or meta-cognitive thinking (Daniel & Gagnon, 2012). In order to diversify pupils' thinking, we propose that teachers make use of the following questions (Table 1).

In order to stimulate logical thinking, questions such as[6] "*How is your point of view related to the question being discussed? Can you reformulate your idea so it can help us progress in our research?*" are likely to encourage coherence in the pupils' statements and structured progress in the exchange. At the pedagogical level, such questions have an influence both on enriching the group's perspective, since the more coherent and articulated the statements, the more significant they are for pupils, and on the emergence of a modeling of the thinking structure expected in the philosophical exchanges. Furthermore, questions such as "*Why do you say that…? When you say… what do you base your statement on?*" are fundamental because they are likely to stimulate the statement of justifications based on reasons and criteria and thus help pupils move away from unfounded opinions and beliefs.

In order to stimulate creative thinking, questions such as "*Can you illustrate what you are saying with an example? Who can give an example to clarify X's point of view?*" allow pupils to clarify their statements or those of their peers. It was observed that pupils sometimes use an example to explain a point of view that they are not yet able to justify logically. In addition, questions such as "*Who can provide a counter-example? Who has another point of view on the question?*" help pupils

[6] Naturally the questions presented here are just a few examples, not an exhaustive list linked to each thinking mode and each epistemological perspective.

bring forth several aspects of the problem or the concept being discussed and favour critical dialogue among the pupils.

To stimulate responsible thinking, questions such as "*What would happen if everyone did x (action, gesture…)? Is x (behaviour, point of view, rule, value…) acceptable in all contexts?"* are likely to help pupils question the principles underlying their statements (as well as those conveyed by society) and avoid hasty generalizations, which are at the root of negative biases (sexism, racism, etc.) that can lead to violence. Questions such as "*Is x (behaviour, rule, value…) useful to many people?"* help pupils situate themselves within an altruistic utilitarianism. Finally, questions such as "*What are the consequences of x (point of view, decision, behaviour…) for yourself? for others? for society?"* help pupils anticipate the scope and consequences of their point of view or decision, and help to " instil a space between impulsion and action" (Korczack quoted by Meirieu, 2012).

To stimulate meta-cognitive thinking, questions such as "*What are we doing right now (on the cognitive level, discursive level, social level)? Do you want to modify your point of view after hearing your peers' points of view? Did we philosophize today? What thinking skills were mobilized during our exchange (examples, definitions, hypotheses…)?"* help pupils reflect on their thinking skills, points of view, behaviours.

Table 1 - Questions Linked to Diversification of Thinking

EXAMPLES OF TEACHER'S QUESTIONS TO FOSTER THE 4 THINKING MODES	**THINKING MODE**
- How is your point of view related to the question being discussed? *- Can you reformulate your idea so it can help us progress?* *- Why do you say that…?* *- When you say… what are you basing your statement on?*	**Logical**
- Can you illustrate what you are saying with an example? *- Who can give an example to clarify X's point of view?* *- Who can provide a counter-example?* *- Who has another point of view on the question?*	**Creative**
- What would happen if everyone did x (action, gesture…)? *- Is x (behaviour, point of view, value…) acceptable in all contexts?* *- Is x (behaviour, rule, value…) useful to many people?* *- What are the consequences of x (point of view, decision, behaviour…) for you? for others? for society?*	**Responsible**
-What are we doing right now (on the cognitive, discursive or social level)? *- Do you want to modify your point of view after hearing your peers' points of view?* *- Did we philosophize today?* *-What thinking skills were mobilized during our exchange ?*	**Meta-cognitive**

Sophistication of Thinking

Pupils also need to increase the complexity of their thinking. Increasing sophistication is observed in particular through two movements: decentering and abstraction (Table 2).

Decentering means moving away from a central position to place oneself in another person's perspective. It occurs progressively by breaking free from personal experiences to take into account peers' interests and engage in the improvement of a common good. Also, decentering implies the capacity to internalize the points of view of others and to change and even transform one's thinking to understand the world by combining one's own thinking with that of others[7]. Finally, decentering of one's own representations enriches the comprehension of a fact or event since it leads to the inter-subjective construction of plural and diversified relationships. Decentering leads to transformation and correction.

In parallel, abstraction is a movement that makes its way from the particular to the general and then to abstraction; it progresses from units to simple relationships and then to complex relationships. Abstraction consists in differentiating ideas from concrete objects, in drawing out the elements or qualities of an object through mental analysis. It enables the organization of representations into categories. It leads to conceptualization and categorization.

Table 2 - Movements of De-centering and Abstraction

Pivotal perspective	Decentering	Abstraction
Egocentricity	Representations centered on personal experience	Units based on concrete and specific experience.
Relativism	Representations that take others into account	Simple relationships anchored in somewhat generalized experience.
Inter-subjectivity	Representations oriented toward a common good	Conceptual and complex relationships.

Below are some questions[8] intended to encourage increasing complexity in the pupils' representations (Table 3).

[7] Here, sophistication does not imply a synthesis between objectivity and subjectivity as in D. Kuhn's model (1999,2001), but it refers rather to a dialogical construction of points of view and perspectives – dialog being understood as a pyramidal construction (Bucher, 1978).

[8] We avoid questions such as "*Who wants to share their experience…?"* because they generate a series of personal anecdotes within a group of pupils (younger and older alike), generally conjugated in the "I" form

To help pupils decenter from their personal experience and generalize their points of view, questions such as the following can stimulate thinking toward more complex epistemological perspectives such as post-egocentricity and pre-relativism: *Does what you say about x (i.e.: your dog) apply to all x (i.e.: all dogs)? Does it apply to all y (i.e.: all animals)? Does it apply to all z (i.e.: all living beings)?* Each question remains linked to the pupils' statements (i.e.: about a dog) and represents a very gradual transition toward decentering and abstraction; an increasing complexity in their thinking becomes possible in that the questions remain within the scope of the development of their proximal zone (Vygotsky, 1985). Furthermore, questions that include a neutral determiner like "the" (instead of "your") help to generalize. For example, below is an excerpt of an exchange in a group of children 5 to 6 years of age, situated in pre-relativism:

> *- Teacher: Do the babies think or not?*
> *- P1: (Yes because) the babies have brains like humans.*
> *-P2: The problem is just that the baby has a small brain because when we grow up our brain begins to grow.*

This excerpt shows that the teacher's use of a neutral determiner ("the") results in the use of the same type of determiner by the pupils, and also helps them construct a point of view that is decentered from their specific experience (they do not speak of their little brother or sister) and generalized (they use concepts such as brain and humans).

In order to stimulate pupils' reflection to move toward relativism, it is important to guide the pupils in the explicit formulation of relationships with peers' points of view. Hence questions such as "*Do you agree with the idea expressed by X? In relation with what X just said, do you think that…? Who wants to pursue X's idea?"* favour active listening regarding peer statements and thus contribute to enriching one's own points of view as well as those of the group. For example, in a group of 5 year-old children who reflect upon the severity of a bite, P1 responds that it is worse to get bitten by an animal than by a person, and he explains:

> *- P1: Because animals have sharper teeth.*
> *- Teacher: Who can help P1 complete his idea?*
> *- P2: Because all our teeth are flat except for two and they are all sharp in animals that's why animals can bite harder than humans.*

This excerpt shows that the teacher's question favoured the construction of convergent relationships that benefit the speaker and the community of inquiry: not only did P2 listen actively to P1 and understand the meaning of his statement,

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and which, because they are specific, do not stimulate peer thinking nor even the speaker's thinking. With this type of question, thinking remains at its simplest level: egocentricity.

but after reflection, he enriched it by comparing the teeth of animals to those of humans and by adding a clarification regarding the number of sharp teeth.

Finally, to help pupils surpass relativism and reach more complex perspectives associated with inter-subjectivity, it is useful to ask questions that will stimulate their thinking toward the construction of relationships that are, in this case, evaluative: *Who can expand on…? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such an action, tradition, value…? What are the positive and negative aspects of such a point of view, of such an action? Among the criteria we have just mentioned, which one seems the most reliable, appropriate or useful…?* Following is an example from a critical dialogue among a group of pupils aged 11 to 12 years who philosophized on the hierarchy between humans and animals (see Daniel *et al*., 2005). Since the pupils had more than two years of experience in philosophical *praxis*, the teacher did not have to intervene, as the pupils had integrated the questions leading to an inter-subjective reflection:

> - P1 (Determining criteria)*: If it's about intelligence I think that humans are first on the list. I think humans are the only ones who can do mathematics. Humans invented English and mathematics. Math is like another language that was invented. You use it to understand things to do the things you need to do properly, to understand the reasons behind things. Like why the sky is blue and why you can't float or fly. So we invented mathematics to explain these things. But animals just think sky and they don't really think they don't really think about the sky.*
>
> - P2 (Doubting, bringing nuance, questioning behaviours and values)*: I don't know really (…) it depends because we invented mathematics but we can't blame them for that. You can't say that animals are stupid because they don't do mathematics. It is our mathematics not theirs. We don't sit down with animals to teach them the way we do things, they have their own way of doing things. People think animals are stupid because they don't do things like us but if animals thought they would probably think that we are stupid because we don't do things like them. So I don't know. And humans look at us. We have massive holocausts and we kill thousands of people. I think animals are more intelligent than us in certain things and that we are more intelligent in other things.*
>
> –*P5*: *Then there are like two different paradigms.*
>
> P6 (Highlighting distinctions and divergences): *Yes, there is the intelligence of thinking how to make things and there is the intelligence of how you're going to use those things. We are both the most stupid and the most intelligent.*

This excerpt showcases the richness of thinking in pupils who have mobilized DCT, and brings to light components of inter-subjectivity such as research criteria, providing nuance, questioning behaviours and values, etc.

In closing, we would like to clarify two points: Firstly, the questions suggested in tables 1 and 3 are provided only as examples. They must be completed and adjusted by the teachers according to the theme being discussed in the classroom, the pupils' age group, etc. Also, one must bear in mind that very often these questions must be followed by one or even two "whys" in order to lead to an open dialogical exchange. Secondly, we do not claim that simply by posing

such questions from time to time the pupils' epistemology will be transformed. And although questioning has the power to generate doubt, and therefore to initiate a process of inquiry, it is not a magic wand. Nevertheless, assiduous and systematic practice of questioning stimulates more sophisticated and complex intellectual activity in pupils, as demonstrated by numerous empirical studies published to date on this theme.

Table 3 - Questions Linked to Sophistication of Thinking

EXAMPLES OF TEACHER'S QUESTIONS TO INCREASE COMPLEXITY IN THE PUPILS' THINKING	EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES
- Does what you say about x (i.e.: your dog) apply to all x (i.e.: all dogs) *- Does it apply to all y (i.e.: all animals)?* *- Does it apply to all z (i.e.: all living beings)?*	**Post-egocentricity and Pre-relativism** (toward generalization)
- Do you agree with the idea expressed by X? *- In relation with what X just said, do you think that…?* *- Who wants to pursue X's idea?*	**Relativism** (toward convergent relationships)
- Who can expand on… ? *- What are the advantages and disadvantages of such an action, tradition, value…?* *- What are the positive and negative aspects of such a point of view, of such an action?* *- Among the criteria we have just mentioned, which seems the most reliable, appropriate or useful…?*	**Post-relativism and Inter-subjectivity** (toward evaluative relationships)

Conclusion

In our contemporary societies, individuals' rights are a value that seems to gradually dominate social responsibility. The resulting individualism could lead people into an absolute relativism, which has consequences on individual and social impoverishment. The P4C approach represents a means to help youngsters make enlightened and responsible choices.

This paper focused on three questions: 1) What is DCT and how does it develop in kindergarten and elementary school pupils? 2) What is relativism? 3) How can teachers stimulate pupils' thinking to transcend relativism? To answer the first question, we presented the developmental process of DCT, which can be differentiated from traditional CT in that DCT implies four modes of thinking and six epistemological perspectives. To answer the second question, we defined relativism in terms of both its positive and negative expressions. We observed that relativism is the epistemological perspective that pupils and teachers tend to settle

into and in which a majority of the interventions of pupils between the ages of 4 and 12 years are situated. Finally, to answer the third question, we suggested two series of open-ended questions likely to create cognitive conflicts in pupils' minds during a philosophy workshop and thus help them to transcend relativism. These questions are linked to the diversification of thinking modes (logical, creative, responsible and meta-cognitive) and their increasing complexity (transition from egocentricity to relativism to inter-subjectivity).

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APPENDIX A. Model of the Developmental Process of DCT

MODES/ EPISTEMOLOGY	LOGICAL	CREATIVE	RESPONSIBLE	META-COGNITIVE
EGOCENTRICITY	Statement based on the perceptual experience of a specific and personal fact.	Statement that gives meaning to a personal and concrete point of view.	Statement that is related to a personal and specific behaviour tied to a social or moral belief.	Retrospective statement about a personal and specific task, point of view, feeling, etc.
POST-EGOCENTRICITY	Statement based on experience (personal or of someone close) + reasoning.	Statement that gives meaning to a personal point of view (but distanced from self).	Particular/concrete statement tied to a moral or social rule (learned). Not contextualized.	Retrospective statement about a personal task, point of view, feeling, etc. (distanced from self).
PRE-RELATIVISM	Somewhat generalized statement that is not justified or with an implicit, circular or false justification.	Statement that is new, divergent or that presents different situations/solutions/hypotheses (units) in relation to a personal idea or to someone else's idea.	Statement linked to a somewhat generalized action in a moral or social perspective.	Descriptive retrospective of a personal task, point of view, feeling, etc. (distanced from self).
RELATIVISM	Incomplete/ concrete justification (explanation) based on reasoning and experience. Sometimes prompted by an adult.	Relationship that gives meaning to a peer's point of view (by completing it or adding a nuance or a new relationship).	Statement that explains a will to understand/include others (from the immediate environment).	Descriptive retrospective of another person's task, thought, etc. (from the immediate environment).
POST-RELATIVISM/ PRE-INTER-SUBJECTIVITY	Justification based on "good reasons" that stem from simple reasoning.	Relationship that presents a different context that takes into account the group's perspective.	Statement that justifies a desire to understand/include others (distant environment).	Descriptive retrospective of another person's task, thought, etc. (distant environment).
INTER-SUBJECTIVITY	Justification based on criteria. Conceptualization based on simple reasoning. *Conceptualization*	Evaluative relationship that provides a different meaning and transforms the perspective. *Transformation*	Doubt that underlies the evaluation of categories (rules, principles, social/moral values). *Categorization*	Evaluative statement that expresses a change in perspective (correction/self-correction) following the integration of criticism. *Correction*