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DIDACTICS OF PHILOSOPHY

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Build What You Think. Philosophical Education Using The LEGO-LOGOS Method

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Abstract

LEGO bricks have enormous educational potential. The article analyzes the possibility for using the bricks in teaching philosophy. As a case in point, it describes the LEGO-LOGOS project, a method where the bricks have been successfully used in opening students to philosophical ideas. The project makes use of play (in this case with the LEGO bricks) to introduce students to philosophy and philosophizing. It tackles one of the biggest obstacles in teaching this subject, that is, the resistance of students to formulating and expressing their thoughts, as the method allows for a free and creative expression of ideas and interpretations. The article describes the structure of the classes where the method is to be used and provides an analysis of educational and philosophical assumptions of LEGO-LOGOS, also touching on the possibility for using the method as a tool in the school setting and beyond.

Introduction

It is fair to say that LEGO blocks, or bricks – the humble beginnings of which can be traced back to a workshop in Denmark more than eighty years ago – have come to dominate the global toy market. They are cherished across generations: it is true of those now in their thirties or forties, for whom

the blocks were often a dreamed-of present growing up, as much as it is true of the children of today, for whom a LEGO box became a fixture in their bedrooms. The secret to the popularity of LEGO lies equally in the simplicity of the design and in the multitude of ways in which the pieces can be put together to form new combinations. The basic modules consist of small-sized bricks which interlock with each other in a characteristic way. It is this innovative way of connecting the pieces that makes the blocks a material that can be used to build nearly any object imaginable. Also, one can but marvel at the spectrum of available sets, designed for the user, by following instructions, to put together pre-defined constructions. It is for this reason, as Allan Bedford puts it, "for millions of people around the world LEGO bricks have a common meaning: creativity" (Bedford, 2013, p. 1).

The combination of pure fun and creative challenges hints at LEGO's potential to be used as educational tools. This has been noticed by the company itself, which began emphasizing it in its marketing campaigns. The company finances research related to the notion of learning through play and its influence on the development of students (see Parker & Thomsen, 2019). It also established The LEGO Learning Institute – the goal of which is to conduct research on the use of LEGO pieces as educational aids. A similar rationale was behind the creation of a line of products called LEGO Education, designed to be used in the school setting.

It might be argued that emphasizing the educational aspects of the products was one of the main aims of the company from the very beginning. Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen (a grandson of the company founder) dreamed of creating the International School in Billund, which would provide education where LEGO products play a significant role. In August 2013, this vision became a reality. The school educates children between 4 and 14 years of age, at preschool, primary and secondary levels, with the school itself run by specialists from more than 40 countries. The program is compatible with the International Baccalaureate (IB) system. It is emphasized, however, that elements of fun and creativity in the classrooms are some of the top priorities. Experimenting, taking risks, and asking questions form the basis of the learning process and skill acquisition that are to be used later on in adult life (Russell, 2013).

It is no surprise, therefore, that teachers at all levels appreciate the educational potential of LEGO and can make good use of the element of play brought by the bricks into the classroom setting (Hicks, 2015; Zimmerman,

2016). Mark Warner describes attempts at using LEGO to teach reading and writing (e.g., letter-building, word-building, counting syllables), literacy (e.g., storytelling, story starters, character creation, writing instructions), mathematics (number-building, calculations, multiplication tables, sorting), as well as computer science topics: animations, programming, computer coding (Warner, 2016). Sarah Marsh (2015) describes ways in which the bricks can aid in reading practice and in analyzing works of fiction.

In terms of using LEGO to teach philosophy, one should point to those methods that emphasize the free expression of ideas and use the blocks to facilitate discussion and dialogue. It should be mentioned that there is already a multitude of ways in which LEGO has been used to foster reflection and discussion in the classroom setting: as a multi-sensory approach to reflecting on learning (James, 2013), to explore identity and prompt self-reflection (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006), to enhance participatory development communication (Hinthorne & Schneider, 2012), or to support reflection in learning and teaching practice (Nerantzi & Despard, 2014).

The aim of this article is to describe the LEGO-LOGOS method, which is an example of the successful use of the blocks in education. This method is used to teach philosophy using LEGO as an educational tool. However, the author envisioned the method to be conducive to more than teaching selected topics in philosophy but also to provide a setting where students can experience the joys of thinking and philosophizing.

"LEGO" in Danish means "play well", "well" meaning "wise", i.e., play and learn by doing so. In Greek, the word means "to read" but also "to think" or "to speak". The word "LOGOS" comes from Ancient Greek and has been widely used in philosophy from its very beginnings. In a more general setting, it expresses everything that is thought of, said or written by a person; whereas in a narrower sense it is used to describe scientific endeavors. Therefore, the name of the project should be understood as an encouragement to play, to enjoy learning. By viewing it through its Greek origins, the name can also express the idea that only those who are able to read, think and speak can become involved in scientific endeavors and gain knowledge (Kubat, 2011, p. 196).

The story behind LEGO-LOGOS

Jarosław M. Spychała, a Polish artist and philosopher, is the author of the LEGO-LOGOS method. In 2004, he started work as a lecturer in Ancient Philosophy at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun (Poland). A young and enthusiastic lecturer, he was eager to see the students engaged in what he taught. Unfortunately, he was met with resistance and a lack of interest on their part. He could not understand how his students could be bored with and unresponsive towards the texts that fascinated him so much. He wondered what could be done to make philosophy as interesting and exciting for students as it was for him.

It could be said, therefore, that the first impulse for Spychała to search for a new method of teaching philosophy was the urge to make his classes more attractive and engaging.

However, there was another reason why he was looking for new solutions in that respect. The ability to read and comprehend a given text and analyze what is being read are some of the most fundamental skills required at university level, especially in the context of the history of philosophy. Spychała noticed, however, that a number of students were lacking these crucial skills. And it was not because these students were not gifted enough or that this was something especially hard to acquire; Spychała believed that the problem starts in primary school, where pupils are taught an unnatural way of arguing and arriving at foregone conclusions. And even if pupils are indeed encouraged to give their own opinions and to support them with arguments, the silent assumption behind this practice is nevertheless that such young individuals are still unable to think independently and do not yet have the right to present their own views.

As a result, university students have internalized a mechanism of reading and interpreting texts which aims to arrive at the preconceived notions that they sense the lecturer is pushing them toward, saying and writing what they believe they ought to and not what they really think. Finally, through repetition of this practice, students lose the connection with their own opinions and get into the habit of only using this artificial approach.

Having established that, Spychała began thinking about the ways to free the students from these habits of superficial reading and superficial understanding. He searched for a way to rekindle independent thinking, the kind of thinking that is not aimed at meeting anyone's expectations.

During one of his classes, he told the students that since they did not want to talk or write about what they had read, they should perhaps try drawing it. He asked them to present their interpretations of the allegory of the cave described in Book VII of Plato's *Republic*. The outcome was to be presented as an artwork of any kind e.g., a drawing, a painting or a paper collage. The text was to be considered as a how-to manual. As a result, the classes were not spent discussing the texts as such, but instead on the artwork of the students, with the text being merely a reference point when talking about their creations. When discussing the artworks, one of the students pointed out that a certain picture had been drawn without a careful study of the topic, as the prisoners should be represented with chains preventing them from turning their heads, since Plato writes that they cannot move their bodies at all. However, the picture at hand had them tied with long chains akin to leashes, which would allow them to walk freely, and would clearly be inconsistent with Plato's description. Initially, the students did not even notice that they were indeed discussing the text, for which the artwork was merely an excuse. This meant that they succeeded in achieving the original goal, which had proved so elusive at the beginning. It turned out that such a way of expressing themselves was easier and more attractive for the students as it allowed them to freely express themselves. Moreover, it sparked their creativity, both in terms of envisaging the artwork as well as its subsequent interpretation. The students enjoyed engaging in such activities, which gave an excuse for discussing the contents of what was to be expressed artistically.

However, Spychała noticed that this form of expression also had its limitations. Some students, especially those who considered themselves less artistically gifted, did not feel enthusiastic about expressing themselves in such a way. It turned out that those convinced of their lack of artistic talent (often without any justification) found this a major obstacle to engaging in creating the artworks. Therefore, Spychała began looking for a type of material that would allow similar creative interpretations and at the same time minimize differences in the perceived distribution of artistic abilities among the students. LEGO blocks turned out to be the material that would allow just that. When Spychała introduced the blocks, he was astounded by the change in the students' attitudes. They not only engaged with and enjoyed the process, but also started reading classical philosophy with attention and interest.

The second important factor that further shaped the method was a didactic experiment Spychała conducted with history students. He wanted to help the students understand the problems of interpreting historical sources, and issues related to the research methods used within history. The exercise consisted in one person building a construction and then describing it in writing. The next step involved giving this description to ten other students who had not seen the construction before. Their task was to recreate it on the basis of the description. The students were to use the very same blocks that had been used in the original creation. Yet, as it turned out, despite having as a reference the same description and using the same materials, the output creations differed in many respects. This task was designed to make students appreciate the difficulties related to interpreting sources and to encourage a discussion of the emerging issue. Spychała realized that he would have been able to achieve similar goals had he used a more traditional approach (Kubat, 2011, pp. 195–196).

In 2006, during a science and arts fair in Torun, Spychała also presented his method. He organized his workshop at the Philosophical Maze, an event designed to promote philosophy. This workshop, heavily relying on the use of LEGO, caught the attention of teachers from local schools, who became interested in using the method. The workshop also featured an exhibition of Spychała's photographs entitled LEGO *Star Wars – the Bricks that Philosophize*. The aim of the exhibition was to emphasize the ubiquitous character of philosophical ideas in popular culture and to show that philosophy is present in films such as Star Wars and that philosophical ideas can emerge out of a simple game such as putting blocks together. As a result, Spychała began collaborating with a school in Torun. He was asked to prepare a series of classes using the bricks at the primary and secondary levels. This experience allowed him to fine-tune the method so that it could be applied at any level of education and was attractive for children, high-school and university students alike (Kubat, 2011, pp. 195–196).

The experiment was a success and attracted interest from local and national news outlets. Pieces describing the philosophical workshop involving LEGO appeared both in print and on television. A crucial moment was the publication of an article in the *Polityka* weekly magazine, describing the inventive philosopher and his innovative program. With this positive media coverage, Spychała became popular and was soon swamped with inquiries about potential workshops from schools as well as local governments. He

also contacted representatives of the LEGO company, which resulted in him obtaining new building materials to be used during his classes. His ideas also became a hot topic in academia. Supported by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Spychała began implementing his method, The LEGO-LOGOS Project of Philosophical Education, in various schools in Warsaw (Kubat, 2011, pp. 195–196).

Spychała used the momentum generated and, capitalizing on the resulting support for his ideas among politicians at various levels and business people alike, organized an event called Creatio Ex Legendo (Latin for "creating though reading"), which took place in 2007 in Warsaw. The event aimed to promote philosophy viewed from the European perspective, to help in developing cognitive skills and the ability to think critically in children and teenagers and to inspire and motivate teachers and parents to make use of non-standard educational methods. Hundreds of people from more than 30 countries took part in the events, using around 24 thousand liters of LEGO blocks in total. Each day, the participants engaged in philosophizing using the method, created their interpretations of the assigned texts and then got involved in analyzing the constructions made by others. Later on, the works created were put on display to be seen by those not actively involved in the workshops.

Since that time Spychała has been working on the development of his method, training teachers, and trying to extend the method to be applicable not only in an educational setting, but also in business and government.

Typical class structure

Typical LEGO-LOGOS classes last 90 minutes and comprise two equal parts: during the first, the participants read a text and then try to show their interpretation of it as a spatial construction using plastic materials; during the second, the participants take turns presenting their works and by discussing them attempt to learn arguments for individual interpretations.

PART ONE: READING AND BUILDING

The classes usually number 10 people (groups can be between 8 and 12 people; however, in practice, groups of 10 are optimal). Each person takes up a single place, next to the materials selected by the teacher which are

needed to construct the structure. Each participant receives a workshop questionnaire, which contains a copy of the text under discussion. The participants are then asked to read the text to themselves, and later to present it in the form of a construction using the suggested material, thus expressing their own understanding of the document.

To give a specific example, let us focus on the anecdote regarding Thales as passed on by Diogenes Laertios (*Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, I 34), which was used during one of the classes:

> They say that when he went outside the house, led by an old servant lady, to watch the stars, he fell into a pit and started to complain about what had happened, then the old lady said: you, Tales, would like to learn about things which are high in the sky but you cannot even perceive things which are right in front of you!

The students are tasked with illustrating the text, using a structure made of the materials provided, according to their own comprehension. The participants are not limited in any way, but neither do they receive instructions on the construction. They do not know how or what they should be building. It takes about 45 minutes to complete the construction, or longer if the participants require it. Naturally, a shorter time limit may also be provided. The teacher should match the length of the first part of the class to the speed with which the group works, which is often influenced by the age of the participants, their maturity and previous creative experiences.

PART TWO: ANALYSIS AND DIALOGUE

When the constructions are ready, the students gather to inspect all the works one by one. The aim here is to identify the respective elements of the construction and try to guess the intentions of the constructor, who at this stage remains silent, providing no clues. In this particular case, the students were to locate Thales and the old lady and map out the scenery of the story. After everyone has commented, the constructor reveals their own story and compares what had been said with their own intentions. At this point, a discussion emerges regarding the accuracy of the construction as compared with the textual source. This discursive phase becomes more and more interesting as the number of constructions already visited increases, and students can identify and compare the differences among the various interpretations. One

notices that at this stage the students become more involved not only with the classes themselves but also with the discussion, and more actively try to find out what the story is really about. This sense of involvement is fueled by the students' puzzlement at the fact that the very same textual source, the understanding of which had not seemed controversial to them, appears to be open to a plethora of other possible interpretations. The students were faced with the fact that the others do have different, equally justifiable and no less attractive ways of viewing the story. The fact that the story itself was quite short in this case seemed to magnify this impression.

In scientific research, the anecdote about Thales, and indeed many similar stories, remains of great interest (although it remains outside the mainstream interest of researchers). This is because they were commonly accepted as an element of Hellenistic biographies, whose representatives excelled at putting together different interesting, often funny and unusual stories, and using them to embellish the lives of their famous contemporaries. These three stories, though originating in different times and varying in their details, appear to contain a similar message and have a common narrative structure. One could indeed say that they only needed to change the name, and then the whole story could be "pasted" into the biography of a different person. These similarities led historians to believe that the stories had literary value only and contained nothing of interest – they offered no philosophical message and were useless as a historical source for research on the life of Thales and other characters depicted in them.

It turns out, however, that students do not view the Thales story as a meaningless tale but as a story full of lessons applicable in real life. It provides advice, guidance, and warning, showing the reader how to live and philosophize.

Below we provide a number of interpretations of the story given by students, as quoted by Spychała (2017, pp. 72–73), which will be helpful in understanding the essence of the classes:

> [1] Humans succumb to the might of the sky, crushed with its magnificence and beauty; we look at it, but see nothing. This happens because humans are not able to concentrate. Everything is interesting to us, everything is awesome and captivating, but at the same time we cannot stop and take a closer look. The only way to know the secrets of the cosmos is to restrict ourselves to looking at a fragment, so as not to be distracted by the magnitude of the phenomena. This way, by concentrating on

a part, step by step, we can learn it all. Thales therefore does not fall into the pit by accident, but actually enters into it on purpose, in order to limit his perspective and allow himself to experience it. The old lady, however, is a personification of common mentality, ridiculing the philosopher's actions. For people are much like the old woman, who keeps on speaking, not understanding the intentions of the philosopher, showing only ignorance.

[2] Thales appears in the story in the form of a young man taking his first steps into the realm of philosophy. Full of youthful enthusiasm and ambition, he reaches immediately for the skies themselves, for knowledge. However, without experience, he faces defeat. The old lady, a mentor with years of experience, an old philosopher, speaks to the young adept, saying that if he wishes to reach the peak, he must start with the basics. Learning the principles requires a knowledge of *elementarium*. Thales, therefore, being a young philosopher, should have started his philosophical education by learning of things that surrounds him, the *physis*, to be able to reach what is above it, the *metaphysis*.

[3] Thales symbolizes a man brash and eager, certain of his abilities, who claims that he can freely reach towards any secret. His attempt to understand the sky is his attempt to learn celestial secrets. The sky, in turn, is home to the gods, therefore learning celestial secrets is nothing more than learning secrets of the gods. However, they guard their secrets closely and punish greatly those who are too eager to know them. Thales turned his vain curiosity towards the sky and paid for it by falling into the pit. The old lady here is a messenger, sent by the gods to issue a warning, and let him know that everyone who attempts to learn the secrets of the gods will be punished and sent to hell.

[4] Thales, a man in awe of scientific discoveries and obsessed with the idea of knowing all and becoming all-powerful, wants more and more. He believes he has the right to be able to achieve everything he wants. His attempt to understand the sky is an attempt to cross the earthly horizon, to bypass the human condition, to be more than just a man, someone even greater than Icarus, who wanted to be nothing more than a bird. Thales dreams about the stars, which can only be seen by the gods, so in reality he dreams of becoming a god. He is not a god, however, and every time he tries to "play god" he faces defeat, and falls.

[5] Thales is an example of a man cheated by fate. He reaches for the stars as did Adam, who let Eve seduce him and took the apple. He did

something he should not have. And so Thales let the old woman, representing philosophy, lead him astray. She pushed him to the verge of pride and arrogance, where he fell into the pit. Philosophy and science are the new incarnations of the devil, who again tests Man's ambitions. Knowledge can help, but it can also lead astray.

[6] It is impossible to include here all the interpretations and it is equally difficult to select the most interesting ones. However, I would like to mention one more interpretation, which is not only an interesting proposition in itself, but also reveals an important aspect of the students' works – the form. When the participants were trying to interpret the anecdote, they used blocks to show the figure of Thales and the old lady, the pit, the stars etc. But one girl surprised everyone with her work – the participants could not find any of the elements mentioned. It appeared that the work was reflecting the inside of Thales' mind. The girl explained that the anecdote about Thales is an illustration of a thinker who is lost in his own thoughts. Thales falling down into a pit is an example of a man plunging or even locked away in the darkroom of his own mind, where he dreams impossible dreams, symbolized in the anecdote by stars. The old lady is the voice of the thinker's conscience, calling him to abandon those ideals and exit the dark pit, towards the light, to find joy in simple, everyday things. For the most important thing in life is not to dream about life, but to live one's life.

Considering the descriptions above, one can observe that young people read the anecdote of Thales in two ways: first, as a methodological message on dealing with philosophy and science (to move away from what is easy towards that which is more complex), and second, as an ethical message, showing the moral boundaries for human learning (a lust for knowledge cannot justify all actions). It would therefore seem that young people find rich deposits of substance and precious sources of creative inspirations in places where many scientists have found nothing of interest (Spychała, 2014, p. 318).

THE END OF THE CLASS

When the participants have analyzed all the works, their task is to briefly describe their own interpretations one more time. Unlike typical school lessons, the goal of the summary is not to point out the only correct way to understand the anecdote. It is more important to awaken curiosity and

provoke students to think on their own about the problem outside the classroom setting. This approach was inspired by Plato's principles of forming so-called Socratic dialogues. Two characters discuss the meaning of a term, quoting different interpretations. However, they end up disagreeing on how the term is to be understood. The reader (or listener, as contemporaries would often read texts aloud) invested a lot of time and energy in the text and would thus feel dissatisfied, irritated even, because the effort did not result in a definitive answer. Contemporary scholars of ancient philosophy believe that this was Plato's way of arousing interest and encouraging readers to find their own answer. And indeed, this is the goal of collecting the interpretations, without saying which one should be regarded as correct.

Philosophical and Pedagogical Background

The foundations of the LEGO-LOGOS method are related to the philosophical ideas of Socrates and Plato. Spychała often quotes Plato when explaining his approach (2014). According to Spychała, the LEGO-LOGOS classes can be considered a practical realization of Plato's epistemological views (as expressed in Book VI of the *Republic*) regarding ideas:

> And, along with me, take these four affections arising in the soul in relation to the four segments: intellection in relation to the highest one, and thought in relation to the second; to the third assign trust, and to the last imagination. Arrange them in a proportion, and believe that as the segments to which they correspond participate in truth, so they participate in clarity. (Plato, Republic, 511e, trans. Allan Bloom)

According to the above, the human mind moves from the realm of the sensual and tangible to the realm of the abstract, immaterial, or spiritual. This is the necessary path to the Truth. It can be said that those participating in Spychała's classes go on a similar journey. They start from making their thoughts tangible using blocks, and move – via an analysis of what is being constructed – to the most general notions, i.e., ideas. Using Plato's terminology: initially they "use visible forms", that is, they attempt to reshape their immaterial thoughts in physical form in order for them to be "seen" or to become "visible". Spychała seems to share with Socrates and Plato a sense of disbelief in the ability of a textual form to truly convey knowledge. In order to obtain knowledge, one requires a moment of direct seeing,

personal experience that is expressed in Plato's "seeing". To see means to experience directly: no one can see something for me, since seeing is a personal act. Hence, the importance of personal engagement and experience that accompanies play (Spychała, 2014, p. 352). Books are mute to humans until they experience the stories enclosed in them. Thus, philosophy cannot be taught; it can only be experienced. If it is understood thus, it can be then used to analyze and reshape one's life. The mission of philosophy in schools is to encourage students to go on a journey, rather than to point out the exact route they should take. We must all choose our own path. For philosophy to be helpful in this process, its form has to respond to the natural way children philosophize – by harnessing their curiosity.

Every mother admonishes her child to not to play with fire, yet we all know that unfortunately children do not always heed this advice. Why is it that they put their hands into fire anyway, even if they are told not to do so as it can be harmful? According to Socrates, to know something means not only to hear that something is bad, but also to experience it. In other words, knowledge is born as the result of a merging of the intellectual, common information and emotional, personal experience. Knowledge is a state, in which the emotional explains that which is intellectual and only then can one speak of having knowledge. Positive emotions are easily awakened in people, and especially in children, through play. The idea of using games in the teaching process has been known for a long time and is practiced in many schools. But playing in school is more often not fun enough, because the games are in fact simulated – no children play at school the way they play at home. It is therefore important to recreate, in schools, the playful environment the children have at home, and, at the same time, to use the emotions accompanying this process in teaching them. Only natural, spontaneous and fun games and situations can awaken natural reflection. Hence the need for a toy which would be associated by children with their own games they play at home. On the other hand, the toy has to meet certain criteria in order to be used as an educational tool. It has to be easy to use, be able to take different forms, be applied as an element of a stable construction; it has to have a clear association with fun, a high aesthetic quality; it has to offer the ability to be reused and meet with the same amount of interest among boys and girls (Spychała, 2017).

The references to Socrates and Plato are also visible in the way the reading assignments are chosen for the LEGO-LOGOS classes. The reading

list includes Plato, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, Leonardo Da Vinci, Descartes and others. All the reading choices are made using well-defined criteria with a strong ethical core, built around the myth of Hercules at the crossroads (Spychała, 2017). Importantly, the message behind the myth is still culturally valid and can be applied to many facets of human life. Therefore, during his workshops Spychała often refers to various individuals, the lives of whom exhibit the same Herculean problem, for example Jesus Christ or Lord Vader.

The myth describes the dilemma of young Hercules, standing at the crossroads and having to choose a way. On one of the roads appears a beautiful girl called Kakia (Greek for "evil"). She lures Hercules her way, promising an easy, effortless, pleasurable life, as this is how she views happiness. On the other road appears a modest, less attractive woman called Areté (Greek for "the most perfect one"). She encourages Hercules to choose her road. It is not an easy one, and the person taking it is certain to embark on a difficult journey, requiring a lot of effort. In the end, however, those who are brave will obtain true happiness.A hero was often used to convince mortals that everyone can obtain happiness, owing neither to chance nor to the will of the gods, but to their own hard work and effort. Moreover, true happiness begins at the moment the right choice is made, here and now, in this world, during our lifetimes.

The modest Areté, the narrow gate that Jesus encouraged his disciples to choose, or the light side of the Force (in *Star Wars*) are in essence different names for the same, tough road of toil and effort, the path that leads to true happiness. On the other hand, Kakia, the flung-open gate and the dark side of the Force are names for an easy choice that inevitably leads to a defeat. In other words, the situations of Hercules, Jesus Christ and Lord Vader are universal and each of them makes a similar choice, despite justifying it in a different way. When analyzing their stories, one becomes aware that humans choose their moral stance by means of taking certain actions. A person is not born good or evil but becomes it. Accordingly, Spychała chose appropriate reading assignments that reflect this message and during the classes, their truth is revealed by means of direct experience.

Conclusions

The LEGO-LOGOS method was met with enthusiasm by teachers and is becoming popular in schools across Poland. However, its status is still

that of an educational innovation and the method itself is more often used during extra-curricular classes as it viewed as complementing more traditional methods. Yet, there is a growing number of teachers that use modified versions of the method not only when teaching philosophy but also during other classes. Jarosław Spychała is constantly being invited to schools, where he runs workshops for teachers willing to make use of the method in their classes. Recently, he has been invited to give such workshops in Germany and Italy, showing that the method is growing in popularity outside Poland.

One of the biggest advantages of the method is that it is highly engaging for the students and allows them to develop their creative skills.

Combining elements of play and reflection creates a space for the free expression of thoughts in a creative dialogue. Such a space is usually lacking in schools. This is emphasized by the authors of *Opening Up a Space for Children's Thinking and Dialogue* (Murris & Haynes, 2009). According to the article, questioning and creative thinking are often stifled by the institutionalized structures of power and control. Teachers not only teach but also control the behavior of students. This does not mean that it is impossible to foster a questioning approach and creative thinking in schools; however, it requires effort to reshape the standard educational space into a place where students can be the creators of knowledge.

There are three levels that combine into fostering an atmosphere conducive to freethinking: the creation of an intellectual and emotional space for students' questions and contributions in the classroom; the need for teachers to become highly skilled in listening to and observing students' dialogues, and in asking questions that enable students to build on each other's ideas; and recognition of every student's voice, in terms of expressing their thoughts and in terms of strengthening their participation in everyday learning and life (Murris & Haynes, 2009, p. 176).

Murris and Haynes believe that literature can be so effective in creating space for an open-ended enquiry and for students to develop confidence in voicing their opinions. Their article demonstrates the benefits of using picture books as parts of creative dialogues in the classroom at early stages of education. The authors show that pictures and picture books can be funny and imaginative and give children a rich and varied source of ideas to think and feel with. Short stories with illustrations drawn by children help them begin using their own imagination in the process of creative interpretation. The child-friendly esthetics and style of picture books makes them feel more

self-confident, which is conducive to the atmosphere of freedom necessary for creative thinking.

A similar mechanism is at play during the LEGO-LOGOS classes. The use of blocks as creative material means that the participants feel more at ease and gain self-confidence in expressing their thoughts, which is especially true in the case of children. Self-confidence in thinking is a very important element of shaping the habits of creative thinking and questioning what is being given.

Yet another advantage of the LEGO-LOGOS method is that it is flexible and adaptable. It has proved to be the perfect tool for working with children, teenagers and adults alike. The underlying principles and framework can be reshaped, taking into account the specificity of the students and other circumstances.

It can be easily adapted to work both in small and larger groups of students. Also, the time of the classes can be adjusted to anywhere between around 90 minutes to even a couple of hours, depending on the chosen scenario. In addition, the way the classes are structured is flexible: one can focus on individual presentations of the interpretations or work in groups and negotiate a common vision. Equally, one can start with individual approach during one class and then move to a group setting in order to work on a mutually-agreed-on version of the whole. Obviously, the teacher can select the reading assignments as he or she sees fit.

In the end, even the bricks themselves can be replaced with other materials, as they are not essential for the method as such. LEGO can be replaced with paints, crayons, cut-outs, playdough, clay etc. However, as mentioned, the blocks are the tried-and-tested building material, as they seem to be the most conducive to creating a sense of enjoyment and fun for all the participants. The most important thing is that the material used and the mode of expression chosen allow them to freely present their ideas. The method of artistic expression should be selected so that it does not emphasize the need for specific skills or talents. For that reason, building with bricks is best replaced with creating collages, the materials for which are readily accessible and the activity itself does not require any special skills.

The LEGO-LOGOS method makes use of the natural environment where children's play takes place (in this case, it is the use of LEGO) in order to teach philosophy and encourage philosophizing. It begins with reading classical philosophical texts, which are then interpreted by the participants

in the form of LEGO creations. A careful study of these constructions and their comparison with the texts themselves makes students appreciate and understand the texts better and allows them to present their own creative and original philosophical interpretations. The main goal of the project is to foster the natural abilities of young people to philosophize, think creatively and express themselves artistically. It also develops linguistic skills, logical thinking, emphasizes reading comprehension skills and encourages engagement in a dialogue. The project also showed potential in equalizing the educational chances of disadvantaged groups in society, including students from rural areas. Importantly, the LEGO-LOGOS project enables students from various countries and with differing cultural backgrounds to meet and allows them to find points in common by analyzing classical philosophical texts. The classes encourage openness and tolerance towards others in terms of their opinions, allowing people from various cultural backgrounds to come closer and act together. All this makes the method an attractive and interesting educational tool.

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