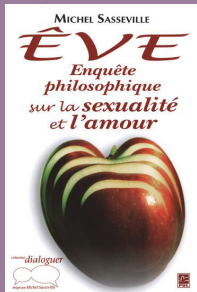


## Caring for the dialogue



*This tool is adapted with permission from Michel Sasseville's Ève : Enquête philosophique sur la sexualité et l'amour, Laval, Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2013.*

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The facilitator of a Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CPI) has the primary aim, at least early in the dialogical process, to ask questions that will advance the inquiry. These questions represent an important opportunity to introduce more rigor into the discussion. They should also allow participants to realize that they are the main authors of the inquiry and they are responsible for the positions they put forth. Over time, the participants themselves will be the ones to ask these kinds of questions among themselves. When this happens, you are in the presence of a community of inquiry that has made great progress. It may also be a sign that you can increasingly act as a co-inquirer with the participants by expressing a hypothesis (an example, a counter-example, a reason, etc.) that will, like all other interventions, require careful consideration from the participants. But until that moment arises, though it can arise much faster than might be imagined, it is best to focus on the questions you can ask during the inquiry process to help move it along. These include the following:

- 1. What intrigues you about this stimulus?**  
(i.e. help participants to concentrate their attention on a specific subject and develop a sense of doubt)
- 2. What question would you like to ask?**  
(i.e. invite participants to formulate questions and problems inspired by the stimulus)
- 3. Does someone want to suggest an idea (like a hypothesis) to help \_\_\_\_\_?**  
(i.e. encourage collaboration and mutual support)
- 4. Why do you say that?**  
(i.e. ask for reasons)
- 5. Could you give us an example?**  
(i.e. ask for examples, encourage participants to support their hypothesis)
- 6. Is it possible to think of a counter-example?**  
(i.e. ask for counter-examples, encourage participants to challenge their hypothesis)
- 7. What is the link between what you are saying and what was previously said?**  
(i.e. establish connections between ideas)
- 8. What are the differences between these two comments?**  
(i.e. help to highlight distinctions)
- 9. What does that imply?**  
(i.e. establish the consequences of positions)
- 10. What does that assume?**  
(i.e. identify assumptions)
- 11. How can we know if what you are saying is true?**  
(i.e. test the hypothesis being presented)
- 12. How do you know that?**  
(i.e. establish the source of knowledge)

- 13. How that enough to say that we know that?**  
(i.e. evaluate the source of knowledge)
- 14. What is the link between what you said and what we have been saying so far?**  
(i.e. seek coherence between views)
- 15. Can someone help us understand this idea better?**  
(i.e. ask for clarification)
- 16. Where are we in our inquiry process right now?**  
(i.e. ask for a summary of the dialogue so far)

The above list offers an overview of the questions you can ask during the inquiry process. But how can you know when to ask them or who you should ask? It will depend on the situation and your judgment, that is to say, your ability to assess all the relevant elements as the inquiry unfolds. There are no set recipes or tips to guide you. Philosophical facilitation is an art that requires a lot of listening, sensitivity to the inquiry development, attention to those who speak more or less than others and who may eventually need your help, either to give more time to other participants or to secure a space to share (and the little extra dose of courage to finally be able to raise their hands and share their ideas).

But no matter the question you ask, it is important to pay attention to the links that are then established between the participants, because of these links may produce the next question that the community will want to ask. These connections, at once cognitive, social and affective, are what cement the community of inquiry. Further, the more you become attentive to the links that are being created or that could be created within the community, the less you will be tempted to focus your attention on what participants need to know.

Remember, the goal of this approach is not that participants come to know what you think you know about the subject of inquiry, but they become increasingly able to think for and among themselves, and that this critical, creative and caring thinking become increasingly stronger. Last but not least, it is crucial that the positions and ideas arise primarily from the participants and not the facilitator. If you find that your interventions and questions take up half the dialogue time, then it is high time to review your facilitation strategy to give more space to members of the community of inquiry. Have confidence in the participants' ability to properly conduct their own inquiry, while also remaining vigilant about the rigor required and the strength of the connections (cognitive, social, emotional, philosophical, etc.) developing within the group.