



# Philosophy in KS2

**Year 5/6/7**

## ***Root them in the problem:***

Start the lesson with a statement, picture or clip introducing the problem they need to solve:

This world is perfect.

Use this statement to broach the subject of the world and what might be perfect about it. There is a lot in the news about how terrible the world is right now so this statement might be thoroughly disagreed with by the class.

Try to take real life intenses and remove them from the object or the people doing them.

Example:

A: The world is perfect because my mum is so kind to me.

B: What does she do that is kind?

A: She reads me bedtime stories and cuddles me.

B: So, bedtime stories and cuddles are part of this perfect world?

They may also say that the world isn't perfect because of murder or climate change. This huge topics could end up being huge distractions during the lesson so ask the class to think about what it is about these topics that is so terrible. They may offer an answer that involves early death, injustice or destruction of the beautiful world. So these possibilities are terrible because of their outcomes.

## ***Get them talking:***

Pose some questions to the class, these should be simple but have the potential for many different answers:

For Socrates and Plato, the world wasn't perfect because the people were not striving towards 'the good'. What could that mean? What is good in the world? Is this different from perfect?

The pupils may talk about things they like or people that they like. They might talk about public organisations that do good like the NHS or they might refer to their parents and friends. Ask them what is good about what these things are? What is good about these people? What is it that they do? Try to separate the person or thing from the good action....

Example:

A: A nurse is good.

B: What is it that the nurse does to make them good?

A: They look after sick people?

B: So looking after sick people is 'good'?

A: Yes.



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## ***Start the debate:***

Pose a controversial solution to any problems arising in the previous section:

None of these ‘good’ things is as good as it could be.

(Show slide 5)

Ask them class to think about this idea and see what they come up with. Introduce the idea that if there is a ‘good’ then there could be a better. If there is a better, then there could be an even better. If there is in even better perhaps there is an ‘ultimate good’. (see slide 6 – 7)

## ***Final Section:***

Step outside the argument and look at it critically. Ask the class to summarise their points of view and ask if they are truly justified.

Just because you can think about something better doesn’t mean it can be better – does it?

Think about the world and its limitations. Can the ‘perfect’, the ‘ultimate’ ever be realised (made real) on earth?

This step is designed to get the children over the hurdle of Socrates/Plato’s argument that the good must exist as an idea as this world is not perfect. This fit with the idea of Plato’s Cave in ‘Philosophy Lesson Year 6 Platos Cave).

## ***Teaching:***

Link this to any in depth exploration of the subjects covered with some direct teaching. Look at the type of thought or school of thought you are exploring. What would a philosopher/theologian/believer/thinker say about the argument we’ve just explored?

Go through slides 7 to 17 to examine what Plato thought about the ultimate good. Using hierarchy Plato demonstrates a Socratic argument. This is a logical procedure where you are asked to agree with or reject certain propositions. Socrates points out that there is a hierarchy – a good, better, best – of all things and that the good is no different. If something is good, it could be better etc. He argues that if there is a better then there must be an ultimate good. You can show a way to disagree with this by talking about numbers: if there is a number 1 there is a 2 but that doesn’t mean that there is an ultimate number.

## **Go Further:**

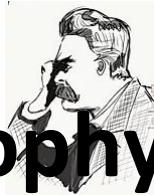
You can use the script below to show a dialogue of this idea:

S: There are good things? Like hugs and beautiful paintings?

X: Yes, there are good things in the world.

S: Are these good things always going to be good?

X: No, they will eventually be destroyed as time goes by.



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S: But there will be other things in the future that will also be considered good?

X: Yes.

S: So, can the good be viewed as being caused by these things, like a beautiful flower or a singing bird, both of which will one day die?

X: Yes.

S: Is there also the possibility that one thing may be 'more good' than another?

X: Yes.

S: So, is there a possibility that one thing may be better and that there may be an even better version somewhere?

X: Yes, this is possible.

S: Is it also possible that there is, in some way, a perfect good? And this is so perfect that it cannot be any more perfect?

X: It is conceivable.

S: And, so it is not possible that this perfect good might be separate from the things that cause us to see it? Like the flower we were talking about a minute ago, dying after it has been picked, can the good live on after an object has died?

X: Yes, in my memory.

S: So, there is an idea of good in your memory?

X: Yes.

S: And where did this come from?

X: Memories?

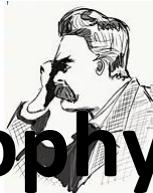
S: The memory of a good thing? But how did you know if was good in the first place? How did you recognise that it was good when you saw the beautiful flower?

X: I don't know.

S: Is it possible that you knew what was good before you saw it in that flower?

X: Maybe.

S: Then perhaps we could say that you knew what was good when you saw it and that you knew what was good when it had gone?



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X: Yes, Socrates, that is right.

S: So, is it possible that there must be someway that you learned about what is good before you came to see it?

X: Yes, I must have done.

S: Have you ever been taught what a beautiful flower looks like?

X: No, I haven't.

S: Have you see a beautiful flower before this and compared the two?

X: I might have done but how did I know the first one was beautiful?

S: Good question. But I am the one asking you! Where did this idea come from then? How did you know it was a beautiful flower?

X: I don't know. Maybe I was born with the knowledge within my soul?

S: Ah ha! Then can we say that some eternal part of you knew something of this eternal good? That is to say the good that you knew before and knew after and will see again?

X: Yes, Socrates – that is so.

This is an interpretation of Socrates' argument in Plato's *The Republic*. Each object, as it exists in the world is a really a shadow of the thing it represents. We see a beautiful flower and that is really a passing shadow of an eternal 'lower' form of the beautiful flower that exists in the realm of the forms. That perfect form of a beautiful flower is 'lower' as it participates (or contains) the even higher form of beauty itself. These more abstract forms are almost the highest kinds of form.

So:

Beauty > Beautiful Form of a Flower > beautiful flower in the world.

The only thing higher than this is the form of the 'good' as it is contained in the form of beauty. So:

The Good > Beauty > Beautiful Form of a Flower > beautiful flower in the world.