

PHILOSOPHY WITH PROFESSOR THOMAS SCHRAMME

TALKING POINTS

COMPREHENSION

1. What is the difference between empathy and sympathy?
2. Why might we struggle to understand someone who has had completely different life experiences to us?
3. What philosophical challenges have arisen from recent technological developments, and how are philosophers questioning issues related to new technology?

APPLICATION

4. 'Some people think that philosophy is a superfluous activity, nice if you have the time for it, but not a serious economical pursuit.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? How will Thomas's work benefit society as a whole?
5. How might Thomas's research change the way we discuss certain topics, such as political or cultural debates?
6. List some specific examples where people may need to empathise with others. How would you empathise with someone in that situation?

ANALYSIS

7. What is the motivation for philosophers like Thomas to study empathy and interpersonal understanding?

SYNTHESIS

8. If you were a philosopher, what philosophical questions would you address?

EVALUATION

9. Do you think it is essential to have shared life experiences with someone, in order to empathise with them? Or is it possible to empathise with someone with whom you have nothing in common?
10. Do you think you are a good empathiser? What could you do to improve this skill?

ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO AT HOME OR IN THE CLASSROOM

- What skills and personal attributes do good empathisers have? Write a list, including those mentioned in Thomas's article and any others that you think would be useful.
- Analyse yourself and think about how good you are at using each of these skills. Score yourself for each, from 1 (you do not think you have the skill or attribute) to 5 (you are confident in your ability to use the skill). Be honest with yourself, as this will benefit you more.
- Write down ideas of how you could develop each skill or attribute. What experiences may help you to improve these skills?
- Think of some scenarios where you may need to show empathy, such as discussions with people who have different political or moral beliefs to you. What skills would you need to use in each scenario? How would you ensure you showed empathy and understanding to the person who disagreed with you?

MORE RESOURCES

Learn more about the research project *How does it feel?* conducted by Thomas and his colleagues:
www.uni-due.de/philo_ude/how-does-it-feel

Can translators empathise with the authors of the texts they are translating? Read Thomas's blog post about the debate surrounding the translation of Amanda Gorman's poems:
www.publicethics.org/post/empathy-understanding-and-translation

Public Ethics contains blog posts about ethical issues in the news: www.publicethics.org