

International Co-operation

In Germany, participants from other countries have taken part in Socratic seminars for many years, particularly from the Netherlands – where several of them have become facilitators. In Britain, too, the Socratic Dialogue has aroused growing interest and in 1996 the first International Conference on the Critical Philosophy was arranged in Hillcroft College in Surbiton, Surrey, organised by SFCP and supported by PPA. In recent years international co-operation has expanded. The second International Conference on Socratic Dialogue: “The Dutch Experience” was held in Leusden/Netherlands, organised by the Dutch Network and supported by PPA and SFCP. The International Conference “Socratic Dialogue and Ethics” in July 2000 in Loccum, Germany, was the third in this series, organised by the PPA and GSP; the fourth conference “Ethics and Socratic Dialogue in Civil Society” was held 2002 in Birmingham, Britain. Meanwhile, SD has found interest in a number of other countries, including Australia, Japan, Scandinavia, the USA, Turkey, Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and other countries in Eastern Europe.

The Socratic Dialogue

The Socratic Dialogue encourages participants to reflect and think independently and critically. The Socratic Dialogue is practised in small groups with the help of a facilitator, so that self-confidence in one’s own thinking is enhanced and the search for truth in answer to a Socratic question is undertaken in common. The endeavour of the group is to reach consensus, not as an aim in itself, but as a means to deepen the investigation. No prior philosophical training is needed for participation, provided participants are motivated to try the method, are willing to contribute their honest thoughts and to listen to those of others.

As a rule, the topics of Socratic Dialogues are drawn from ethics, politics, epistemology and mathematics. Socratic questions ask for the fundamental convictions and criteria of our thinking and acting.

Over the last years there has been a lot of experimentation with the Socratic method in order to find out if Socratic Dialogue or Socratic oriented forms of dialogue could be used in different fields of practice.

For further information please contact:

PPA /GSP

Dr. Dieter Krohn
An den Papenstücken 21
D-30455 Hannover, Germany
phone: 0049 (0)511-49 69 14
Fax: 0049 (0)511-47 17 00
E-mail: info@sokratisches-gespraech.de
<http://www.philosophisch-politische-akademie.de>

SFCP

Dr. Rene Saran
22 Kings Gardens
London NW6 4PU, Great Britain
phone: 0044 (0)207-32 81 286
E-mail: rene.saran@btinternet.com
<http://www.sfc.org.uk>

bpb

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
(Federal Agency for Civic Education)
Dr. Thomas Weber
Stresemannstraße 90
D-10963 Berlin
phone: 0049 (0)30-25 45 04 12
E-mail: weber@bpb.de
www.bpb.de

Introducing Ourselves

PPA

Philosophisch-Politische Akademie
(Philosophical-Political Academy)

GSP

Gesellschaft für Sokratisches Philosophieren
(Society of Socratic Facilitators)

SFCP

Society for the Furtherance
of Critical Philosophy

bpb

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
(Federal Agency for Civic Education)

Dutch Network

of Socratic Facilitators

International Co-operation

The Socratic Dialogue

PPA

Philosophisch-Politische Akademie
(Philosophical-Political Academy)

PPA is dedicated to the promotion of critical philosophy, particularly as espoused by the German philosopher Leonard Nelson (1882-1927) and his followers, in its application to social and political life. In his writings, Nelson was concerned mainly with ethics, pedagogy and politics, and in all three fields he tried to put his theories into practice. He was an ethical socialist, he adapted Socrates' method of searching for truth, developing the neo-Socratic Method for group work, finally he founded the PPA to further develop and promote his philosophical ideas. Founded in 1922, PPA was, of course, banned by the Nazis but was re-established in 1949.

The Academy organises national and international conferences on political and philosophical subjects, sponsors the publication of books, initiates scientific prize competitions and, last but not least, supports Socratic courses and the Socratic work of the GSP.

In 1994 the PPA established the Series on Socratic Philosophizing ("Sokratisches Philosophieren", LIT-Verlag), that serves as a forum for discussion of the philosophical basis and the practice of Socratic Dialogue. In the beginning of 2005 Volume IX *Socratic Dialogue and Ethics* will be published.

GSP

Gesellschaft für Sokratisches Philosophieren
(Society of Socratic Facilitators)

GSP was founded in 1994. Its purpose is to develop Socratic Dialogue (SD) in practice as well as in theory in the tradition of Leonard Nelson and Gustav Heckmann (1898-1996), who developed Nelson's Socratic method further, and to train facilitators. An increasing number of Socratic courses have been organised by GSP in co-operation with PPA, in different parts of Germany. The interest in our Socratic work has grown over the years, and with it the need for more facilitators. Since the 1980s courses have been held three to five times a year, recruiting up to 40 people each time who work in small SD groups of 7 – 10 participants. Weekend seminars were introduced in response to demand.

Furthermore, annual academic conferences related to the methodology of SD have been added. In addition, GSP contributes to the training of teachers in school, university and

adult education. This is valuable for those who want to establish the subject "practical philosophy" in their curriculum. In recent years our international co-operation has immensely expanded. GSP is increasingly involved in the organization and the carrying out of international Socratic courses and conferences. The last conference "Globalization and Socratic Dialogue" took place in November 2004 in Berlin, supported by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal Agency for Civic Education).

SFCP

Society for the Furtherance
of Critical Philosophy



SFCP, the sister educational charity of the PPA, was established in Britain in 1940. During the Second World War it supported an experimental school, founded in Germany in the 1920s by the Kantian philosopher Leonard Nelson and his co-worker Minna Specht, which had taken refuge in Britain from the Nazis. Subsequently, other elements of the Society's objectives came into prominence.

Support was given to philosophical conferences, publications and a journal. In recent years, SFCP has sponsored scholarly research at doctoral and post-doctoral levels; arranged Socratic seminars which have included students in secondary schools, teachers of mathematics, education managers and other groups with very mixed backgrounds for half days, full days and weekends.

SFCP has also organised conferences to address various issues, including ethics in practice, civil society and the third sector, and relations between Eastern and Western Europe. In 1998, SFCP established the *Occasional Working Papers in Ethics and the Critical Philosophy* and has recently published *Enquiring Minds: Socratic Dialogue in Education* (Trentham 2004) and *Ethics and Socratic Dialogue in Civil Society* (LIT Verlag 2004).

With the introduction of citizenship into the UK school curriculum and the growing interest in philosophy, SFCP is focusing more on acquainting teachers with the Socratic method as a valuable tool for these developing subjects. In 2004 a pilot course introduced educationists to the Socratic approach to learning and teaching.

Many activities involve networking to extend interest in Critical Philosophy and SD among professionals across disciplines and to encourage the fostering of ethical practice in everyday life.

The Society has a mailing list to which anyone interested in SFCP activities can be included.

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
(Federal Agency for Civic Education)



The work of the bpb centres on promoting awareness for democracy and participation in politics. It takes up topical and historical subjects by issuing publications, by organising seminars, events, study trips, exhibitions and competitions, by providing extension training for journalists and by offering films and on-line products. The broad range of educational activities provided by the bpb is designed to motivate people and enable them to give critical thought to political and social issues and play an active part in political life. Considering Germany's experience with various forms of dictatorial rule down through its history, the Federal Republic of Germany bears a unique responsibility for firmly anchoring values such as democracy, pluralism and tolerance in people's minds. Now, in the age of the media society, the bpb applies modern methods of communication and makes cross-use of the media.

The bpb has a wide range of services on offer to teachers and anyone involved in education and youth work. It addresses young people directly by dealing with topics and using media that suit their age. It develops special media packages and advanced training activities for young people in sports clubs, in the Bundeswehr or in the police.

Dutch Network of Socratic Facilitators

The Neo-Socratic Dialogue was introduced in the Netherlands around 1980. Now there are about 25 Dutch facilitators. Most of them are united in a "network", born out of the desire to exchange and learn from each other's experiences ("intervision") and so to improve their skills in facilitating Socratic Dialogues. Another purpose of the network is to promote the different forms of SD, with different participants, but also in the context of business consultancy. In the network many aspects of the method of SD have been investigated; new 'arrangements' for SD and training programmes for facilitators have been developed.