PHILOSOPHICAL SENSITIVITY


Although much has been written about the nature of philosophy and how the discipline can be defined, little attention has been paid to the ways we develop the facility to reflect philosophically or why cultivating this ability is valuable. This article develops a conception of “philosophical sensitivity,” a perceptual capacity that facilitates our awareness of the philosophical dimension of experience. Based in part on Aristotle's notion of a moral perceptual capacity, philosophical sensitivity starts with most people's natural inclinations as children to reflect about life's fundamental mysteries; when this capacity is cultivated with training over time, our attentiveness to the philosophical features of ordinary life becomes almost second nature. In much the same way an aesthetically sensitive person notices certain qualities of experience not readily perceptible by others, philosophical sensitivity involves the development of a particular way of seeing the world.