

SOPHIA Meeting Guidelines for Philosophical Dialogue

A SOPHIA Meeting Resource

Author: James William Lincoln, SOPHIA Secretary



What is Dialogue?

“Dialogue is the tool we use to compare one person’s “take” with another’s. It provides an opportunity to identify and evaluate our assumptions. ... Meaningful dialogue springs from listening in order to understand, rather than searching for an opportunity to critique others or to drive home one’s own point.”*

What is Philosophical Dialogue?

“Doing philosophy can transform the way you understand yourself, other people, and the world. Philosophical dialogue is a shared activity that uses words, concepts, and personal experiences to make sense of life.”*

Suggested Guidelines for Philosophical Dialogue at a SOPHIA Meeting

- 1) **Start at the beginning:** Do not assume that people have read the discussion prompt ahead of time.
- 2) **Use common language:** Do not assume that people have a background in philosophy.
- 3) **Be inclusive:** Invite people to describe their views & try to understand their position from their perspective.
- 4) **Foster community building:** Focus on making people feel heard rather than pushing an idea.
- 5) **Have fun workshopping ideas:** Focus on developing ideas.
- 6) **Speak clearly and succinctly:** Be exact and clear in what you say.

SOPHIA’s Values and Mission

Mission

The mission of the Society of Philosophers in America (SOPHIA) is to use the tools of philosophical inquiry to improve people’s lives and enrich the profession of philosophy through conversation and community building.

Core Values

1. Building philosophical community and engagement – *Philosophy is for everyone.*
2. Philosophical inclusiveness – *Philosophers learn from others.*
3. Respectful communication – *Everyone has a voice.*
4. Professional excellence and public relevance – *Philosophy goes beyond the realm of academia.*

Suggested Reading Quoted Above

* *Under review:* Christelle, A., S. Hay, J.W. Lincoln, and E. T. Weber, "[Foundations for Communities of Philosophical Conversation.](#)" *Public Philosophy Journal.*