

# Learning to do Philosophy

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Philosophy has often been said to have similar goals with some religions in that it seeks knowledge of the divine and so provides us with an ideal for our lives. However, what separates philosophy from religion is the means it uses to achieve those goals, for, in philosophy understanding is cultivated as the primary condition for reaching knowledge and wisdom. But this path of understanding doesn't just jump into view spontaneously; it must be cultivated by the use of models and many examples. The movement from understanding to knowledge requires the mastery of the art of contemplation because there, too, understanding plays a leading role. The models our philosophy follows are those of Plato because within his dialogues are the models we need to master for the pursuit of our study. We will, of course, include other thinkers in the Platonic tradition as well as those who complement the Platonic vision.

Those seeking to master Philosophical Midwifery will quickly learn that the kind of problems they experience can be identified as blocks to their goals and as such they can become fit objects for a Philosophical Midwifery exploration. If one were to add to one's goal the study of ancient Greek, the Greek tragedies, Homer, and Euclid one would be able to see more deeply into what it is to be a Hellene.

Those who desire to study Platonic thought more deeply will be asked to answer a series of questions on Plato's dialogues, Plotinus' *Enneads*, Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, and other works. Since deeper study of Platonic thought, by its nature, will surface more intense philosophical problems, those who desire deeper study will be expected to practice midwifery in both roles: pregnant with a problem as well as midwife. It is expected that they will also agree to have their Philosophical Midwifery sessions reviewed. With continued application to this learning it is expected that they will be willing to demonstrate their competence in the art before those who have already been tested and have gained recognition for their own practice of Philosophical Midwifery. It is also expected that these candidates will attend work shops, seminars, and contemplative retreats at specific times and places to be announced. It is expected that they will be able to engage in Platonic dialogues on such topics as Excellence, Justice, Beauty, Art, the Idea of the Good, and the Good, or the One.

Our program is as rigorous a program as it is a profound challenge, and we certify only those who have met our standards of excellence. Any person who has been denied certification can appeal the decision, and if additional evidence is given, a change in decision is possible. However, this does not mean that those who have been denied certification will be unable to participate in other aspects of our program; it only means certification will be delayed until deficiencies are made up and corrected. It is expected that those who encounter difficulties and fail to achieve the degree of excellence required in our program will take these difficulties and failures as their object of exploration in their Philosophical Midwife sessions.