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Correction

In the last issue, Richard Fox’s place of employment was incorrectly stated. It should have read “School of Education, University of Exeter, England.”

A year ago I was asked to conduct a philosophy demonstration session with a dozen fifth- and sixth-graders in a midwestern city. The onlookers were teachers and parents interested in the possibility of having philosophical discussions with kids. As the basis for our discussion, we read together Plato’s story of “The Ring of Gyges” from the Republic.

In the story Gyges, a shepherd in the service of the King of Lydia, discovers a large crater where he is tending his sheep. Going down into the great hold, he finds a hollow bronze horse with window-like openings, in which can be seen a corpse wearing nothing but a ring. Gyges removes the ring from the corpse and puts it on his own finger.

At the next meeting of the King’s shepherds, Gyges happens to turn the setting of the ring inward, towards himself. When he does this, he suddenly becomes invisible, as he discovers from the comments of those around him. When he turns the setting out, however, he becomes visible again.

When it is clear to Gyges that he can become invisible any time he turns the setting of his ring inward, he arranges on condition that they will not be identified as the donors. But, of course, some people also give gifts anonymously in the hope that eventually, when the identity of the donor is discovered, the giver will be admired even more.

The upshot of this discussion was that having the ring of Gyges would probably free people up to do both better and worse things than they now do. These children certainly recognized the restraining influence that the judgments of our family and friends have on our behavior, to say nothing of the police! But, quite shrewdly, they pointed out that acting in the knowledge that others will judge what we do makes it harder for us to have the best motives in doing what we expect others to approve of, as well as harder to do what we expect others to disapprove of, or punish us for.

I have often discussed the ring of Gyges with university students. But these fifth- and sixth-graders seemed more sensitive to the complexities of human motivation than many college students. They were also much more imaginative than most adults in taking the thought-experiment seriously. Thus, one student wanted to know whether, if I were made invisible by the ring, what I was carrying would also be made invisible. If, for example, I had undertaken to remove a TV set from an appliance store and what people could see was a TV set mysteriously rising off its table and floating out the door, the theft would be less likely to be successful than if the TV, too, were made invisible by the ring.

No one had ever raised that question with me before. But, once we had thought of it, we began to think of ways in which even the cleverest and best-equipped thief might be somehow detected. And suppose the thief is not caught, but someone the thief knows to be innocent is punished instead. This is the plot of The Real Thief by William Steig. (See Thinking IV/3&4, p.1) Remorse can be the worst punishment of all.

Much to my relief and gratification, that demonstration class showed that the story of the ring of Gyges is just as effective for raising interesting questions with children about the nature of morality and moral motivation as it is for adults.
Socrates versus Plato: The Origins and Development of Socratic Thinking

George MacDonald Ross

The Socratic Question. Socrates versus Plato. The very title begs the Socratic Question. Most of our knowledge of Socrates comes from Plato's dialogues; yet Plato used Socrates as the mouthpiece for his own views. So how can we disentangle the historical Socrates from the amalgam of Socrates and Plato we find in texts?

Answers to the Socratic Question cover a wide spectrum. At one extreme, Plato's representation of Socrates is taken more or less at face value; by the end of his life, Socrates had evolved the essentials of the Platonic philosophy (perhaps under influence from Plato himself), and Plato merely cast the Socratic/Platonic philosophy in a more developed and dogmatic form. At the other extreme, Socrates was always a questioning skeptic, and it was only after Socrates's death that Plato developed an entirely new philosophical system, which he put into the mouth of Socrates out of piety to his master.

However, we are not here concerned with philosophical doctrine, but with method, and there can be no doubt that the Socratic approach to philosophical inquiry was very different from the Platonic approach. The popular contrast between the "Socratic method" and an "academic" approach (after the Academy, which Plato founded) is soundly based in historical fact. The account I shall give of the main differences between the two approaches will involve a certain amount of exaggeration and caricature; but it will help to clarify the contrast between two extreme positions, both of which have had their adherents throughout educational history. But first, some background to Socrates and Plato.

The Sophists and the Pre-Socratics

When Socrates arrived on the scene, the only providers of post-elementary education were called "sophists"—meaning wise or knowledgeable persons. They worked for a fee, and would give lessons on any subject for which they considered themselves qualified. At the other extreme, Socrates was always a questioning skeptic, and it was only after Socrates's death that Plato developed an entirely new philosophical system, which he put into the mouth of Socrates out of piety to his master.

Historians of philosophy have tended to go along with the Platonic contrast, and to portray Socrates and Plato as heirs to a very different tradition,
namely that of the so-called “pre-Socratic philosophers”. Indeed, the very term “pre-Socratic philosophers” implies that they were “philosophers” in broadly the same sense as Socrates and Plato were, with the added suggestion that they were somehow preparing the ground for a Socratic revolution. There is some truth to this. There is a standard list of pre-Socratics, including such figures as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Melissus, Zeno of Elea, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and Leucippus. Although the list is a disparate one of largely independent thinkers, widely scattered in time and space, there is a central core of philosophical issues they were concerned with—the nature of reality in contrast to how it appears, the scope of rational knowledge, the problem of the one and the many, the role of God, causation, and so on. There is no doubt that on these issues Plato, at any rate, was profoundly influenced by Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Anaxagoras in particular, and that he produced radically new solutions to the old problems. Whether the same is true of Socrates depends on one’s stance on the Socratic Question. If, as is the majority view, Socrates was mainly interested in questions of ethics, politics, and language, then he has far more in common with the sophists than with the pre-Socratic philosophers. But whatever the correct answer to the Socratic Question may be, it is undoubtedly the case that, as far as the methodology of philosophy is concerned, Plato carried on in the tradition of the pre-Socratics, whereas Socrates was closer to the sophists (apart from his disdain for money).

I shall now look in greater detail at the Socratic approach and its debt to the sophists, and then contrast it with that of Plato and his predecessors.

The Socratic Method

(a) Philosophy as an Activity

Philosophy is primarily something you do, rather than a set of philosophical truths to be learned. In order to become a good philosopher, you have to acquire philosophical skills. And, as with most skills, you acquire them through practice in the presence of someone more skillful than yourself.

For Socrates, the core philosophical skill was that of dialogue or dialectic discussion. Nowadays we tend to think of a dialogue as a non-confrontational discussion, in which two or more parties try to achieve a compromise. But Socrates’s method was far from non-confrontational, and the object was not compromise. He used his questioning to test to destruction the accounts put forward by different protagonists, and the process could prove emotionally painful and humiliating. The closest analogy to the Socratic procedure would be a cross-examination in a court of law—and it was the sophists who offered training in legal reasoning.

What Socrates did was to adapt the forensic model to the pursuit of truth. Plato was motivated to distance Socrates from the sophists because of their reputation for perverting the truth for the sake of winning the argument. But Socrates believed that the method was sound, provided that all participants co-operated in having the truth as their objective—winning the argument would then be the same as arriving at the truth.

In the earlier dialogues, Socrates sometimes described the progress of the discussion by means of analogies with the martial arts. The comparison is appropriate. In order to learn the art, the novice spars with the master. At first the master will win easily, with moves like fool’s mate in chess. But gradually the novice learns how to respond, and causes increasing difficulties for the master. The process of training is complete when the pupil has become an equal match. Similarly with philosophical dialectic: a dialogue in which Socrates is the only expert and the other participants are novices is as much a training session as a search for truth; and this is one of the reasons why it doesn’t matter if the search is inconclusive.

(b) Philosophy as Questioning

One of Socrates’s most quoted sayings is that “The unexamined life is not fit to be lived by a human being” (Apology, 38a). What he seems to have meant by this is that the capacity to reflect on what you do is a peculiarly human characteristic, and in so far as you act unreflectively, you are failing to operate at a genuinely human level. Animals have their pleasures, but only humans can be conscious of what their well-being consists in. More generally, humans have a wide range of abilities which animals lack—to make things with tools, to construct civilized communities, to communicate in speech, to frame abstract concepts, to form arguments, and so on. But if they simply do these things without being critically aware of what they are doing, they are only half-way to being fully human. Like so many philosophers after him, Socrates believed that he had achieved a level of awareness which set him apart from other members of the human species at its current stage of development, and that it was his mission in life to bring the rest up to the same level.

But how was this to be done? The term “reflection” is a synonym for “self-conscious” is a fruitful metaphor. When we are fully absorbed in what we are doing, our self-consciousness normally recedes into the background; but it can be abruptly brought back into the fore if we catch sight of ourselves reflected in a mirror. The intellectual equivalent of being confronted by your own image is to be questioned about something you have just said: instead of proceeding smoothly onwards under its own momentum, the flow of thought is turned back on itself. Depending on what question has been asked, you are forced to reflect on the meanings of the words you have used, on the concepts you have applied, on whether the reasons you have given actually support your conclusion, on underlying assumptions, on alternative ways of approaching the problem, and so forth.

In short, the Socratic position is that to think philosophically is to think questioningly and reflectively; and that this level of thinking most completely manifests what it is to be human.

The emphasis on questioning is closely bound up with Socratic skepticism. But the term “skeptic” is ambigu-
ous. In one sense it means someone who claims that no one can know anything. Socrates has only himself to blame if he is taken as being a skeptic in this sense, since he said that, when the Delphic Oracle pronounced that Socrates was the wisest man on Earth, it was because he was the only person who knew that he knew nothing. But Socrates was clearly being ironical when he said this, because he would have been perfectly aware of the paradox of skepticism, that by saying you know you know nothing, you are claiming to know at least one thing. Moreover, unless the answer to the Socratic Question is that Socrates and Plato were at opposite ends of the philosophical spectrum, Socrates had some deep philosophical convictions tending in the direction of Platonism, so that it would be highly misleading to describe him as a skeptic in this sense. He certainly didn’t elevate the denial of knowledge into a philosophical system, as did Pyrrho or Arcesilaus.

However, in its original sense, a “skeptic” simply means one who is thoughtful or reflective. In this sense, Socrates clearly was a skeptic, in that the essence of his view of philosophy was the need to subject any assertion or concept to reflection and critical scrutiny. He didn’t maintain that knowledge was in principle unobtainable, nor that we shouldn’t commit ourselves to beliefs we don’t absolutely know to be true. What he did maintain was that all our beliefs and concepts should be provisional and subject to revision. To be a philosopher is to be ready to give an account and justification of them, and to expect the same of others, however unpopular it may make you.

(c) Philosophy as “Inductive”

Aristotle (Metaphysics M, 1078 b 17-19) saw as one of the principal characteristics of the Socratic method that he used “inductive” arguments. That is to say, rather than starting out from general principles and deducing particular conclusions from them, he started from particular cases in order to arrive at general concepts or truths. This account is broadly consistent with the picture Plato gives us of Socrates in the early dialogues; but in focussing on the logical dimension of Socrate’s procedure, Aristotle overlooks the full significance of what he was doing.

It is not so much that Socrates started out from particular cases, but that he started out from what other people said, whether what they said was a particular observation or a general principle. Depending on the circumstances, Socrates might try to tease a generalization out of a particular observation, or he might offer a particular observation as a counter-example to a proposed generalization. Aristotle was treating Socrates simply as a philosopher searching for the truth, and not as at the same time a teacher striving to make others more philosophical in their thinking.

Socrates compared himself to a midwife. A midwife was herself supposed to be sterile, but her virtue consisted in helping others to give birth, and in judging whether or not the offspring were fit to survive. Again, Socrates was being ironic: he knew perfectly well that he was more capable than most other people of producing original ideas. And one of these ideas was the analogy with midwifery itself, which was perhaps the most radical idea in the history of philosophical education. People will learn to become philosophers, not by being instructed in philosophical facts or in facts about what other philosophers have asserted, but by being drawn from their initial pre-philosophical state into a reflective and questioning awareness of their concepts and beliefs. This means starting from where they are at. It also fits perfectly with the view of philosophy as an active skill: in order to learn, the pupil must make some initial moves, and in philosophy the moves consist in expressing philosophical opinions or arguments.

This feature of the Socratic method is linked with his skepticism (in so far as he was a true skeptic). As mentioned above, skeptics cannot consistently say that they know nothing. One way of avoiding the paradox (which was later taken up explicitly by the Pyrrhonist school of skepticism) is to treat the skeptical principle, not as a known truth, but as a declaration of intent. In other words, skeptics announce that they are not themselves going to put anything forward as true; but if others do so, they are resolved to find arguments countering against the truth claim, whatever it may be. So, for example, skeptics will express no opinion on the question of whether or not God exists. If someone claims that God exists, they will adduce arguments against; and if someone claims that God does not exist, they will adduce arguments in favor. And even in the case of the skeptical principle itself, if a “dogmatic” skeptic claims that there is no knowledge, they will provide arguments that we do know things.

If training in philosophy is analogous to training in the martial arts, the closest analogy for the skeptical philosopher is judo, where the skill consists, not in the application of brute force, but in deflecting the force of the opponent against themselves. Even if Socrates was not a proto-Pyrrhonist, it is nevertheless remarkable how close his technique was to a sort of philosophical judo.

(d) Philosophy as Linguistic

The other principal characteristic Aristotle saw in Socrates’ approach was his search for universal definitions. This puts him very much in the camp of the sophists, who, as professors of rhetoric, were the first to bring questions about language into the center of philosophical debate. On the whole, the sophists espoused highly relativistic and even nihilistic views on the nature of language and of arguments expressed in language. This is hardly surprising, in so far as they earned their bread and butter by teaching people how to manipulate the meaning of words and forms of argument in their own favor. Socrates differed in that he believed that there was a crucial difference between persuasive arguments and valid arguments; and that words have objective meanings, so that definitions are not merely prescriptive or descriptive of actual usage, but can be true or false. But although, as Aristotle implies, he stood halfway between the relativism of the sophists and Plato’s belief in the separate existence of universal “ideas” or “forms”, he was closer to the sophists in seeing the whole of philosophy played out at
the level of language. In short, there is no distinction between a word and an abstract concept, and to have a perfect understanding of the true meaning of a word is to be able to give a correct definition of it—even though the definition is itself a string of words.

If we find ourselves uncomfortable with Socrates's concentration on language, this is largely due to developments in philosophical thought set in motion by Plato and Aristotle (when I say "developments", I am trying to remain neutral as to whether they constitute progress or not). In particular, Plato promoted a new distinction between language and reason, even though the distinction was difficult to articulate in Greek. Liddell and Scott's *Greek Lexicon* puts it beautifully (though from a wholly anachronistic perspective), when it defines *logos* as:

(A) the word or outward form by which the inward thought is expressed; and (B) the inward thought itself—so that *logos* comprehends both *ratio* and *oratio*.

And within "reason", one can distinguish between the capacity to think logically, and the possession of a rational soul which has the capacity to grasp truths which transcend sense-experience. When Aristotle famously defined "man" as "a rational animal", he may well have had one or both of the latter in mind. But the word he used was *logikos*, and taken out of context it could equally well mean that man is a talking animal, or a logical animal, or an animal with a rational soul. Socrates could easily have accepted the Aristotelian definition, but the emphasis would have been on the *talking*—what makes us human is the power of speech; and we are all the more human if we develop the capacity to reflect on what we say by using further words. (Socrates himself uses the word *logos* for an account or definition of a word). It is an open question whether or not Socrates was right to stick with the unitary concept of *logos*.

Many subsequent philosophers have rejected the Platonic distinction between the inward thought and its outer clothing, and have tried to recapture the primal innocence of the Socratic concept.

(e) Philosophy as Open

Even by the standards of his day, Socrates carried out his philosophical activities in a remarkably open way. Unlike others, he didn't reserve his wisdom for a select school of disciples, or for those who sought him out and were willing to pay a fee. Instead, he talked in public—in the market place, outside the gymnasia, at parties, or wherever he happened to be. Moreover, he would talk philosophy with virtually anyone—fellow philosophers or sophists, public figures, playwrights, rich people or poor people, adults or children, and even slaves (the only glaring exception seems to be women—but who knows what may have happened when Plato wasn't playing Boswell to his Johnson?). The only power relationship between Socrates and his hearers was his greater dialectical skill, and the purpose of the exercise was to reduce the differential.

Although he wasn't politically a democrat (his opposition to the Athenian democratic system cost him his life), he was certainly a *philosophical* democrat. He believed that philosophical skills could be developed in anyone who had the power of speech, and it was his life project to spread these skills as widely as possible. But these positions are not in conflict. The reason why he opposed democracy was precisely because leaders and voters lacked the necessary understanding of political philosophy and expertise in the art of government to be fit to rule. If everyone were a philosopher, there would be no need for an autocratic philosopher-king.

(f) Philosophy as Applicable

There always has been, and no doubt always will be, a tension between those who see philosophy as an esoteric discipline of benefit only to the few who are capable of practicing it, and those who see it as a good which everyone should have. Perhaps Socrates's greatest claim to fame is that he saw philosophy as of benefit to everyone. Even a little philosophy is better than none at all; and philosophical reflection helps you do your job better, as well as making you a better person.

(g) Philosophy as Oral

Socrates didn't publish. Why not? Towards the end of the *Phaedrus*, Plato presents Socrates as explaining why the spoken word is superior to the written word. Since by writing and publishing the dialogue Plato was going against the words and practice of his master, it seems likely that Plato was reporting a genuine Socratic position. The substance of the argument is that the spoken word is alive, and the written word dead and frozen. Now there is a point of view from which this argument seems merely silly: words are words, and it makes no difference if they are instantiated in the form of sound-waves in the air or ink marks on paper. This was presumably Plato's own attitude, since almost all of his literary output consisted of written transcripts of actual or imaginary Socratic dialogues.

However, if we see Socrates as primarily interested in the question of how to *teach* philosophy, the position is very different. The experience of reading a Socratic dialogue can never be the same as the experience of participating in one, since the reader is excluded. If the reader had been present, they would have made interventions which would have altered the course of the discussion. There is a crucial pedagogical point here: if a written text departs too far from the train of thought of the reader, the reader will simply lose interest. But the same is true of a lecture delivered by word of mouth. So the contrast is not really between oral and written delivery, but between interactive and one-way modes of communication. In ancient Athens, the written word was slow and expensive to produce, and as a consequence it had a lapidary significance. If Socrates had been in a position to conduct his dialogues over an E-Mail network, he might have been less impressed by the distinction between words you hear and words you see.

The Platonic/Academic Approach

(a) Philosophy as Passive

For Plato, as for the pre-Socratic philosophers, philosophy consisted in a body of truths, which had to be learned and understood. Although
some activity might be necessary to discover or learn these truths, what is ultimately required is that the mind should be receptive, and therefore passive. In teaching philosophy, the master requires teaching skills, but these are not specifically philosophical skills. Whereas for Socrates there is no distinction between being a good philosopher and being a good teacher of philosophy, Plato drives a wedge between the two. What distinguishes master from novice is superior knowledge and understanding, so that the educative process consists in the master providing the student with knowledge. The master is active, and the student is passive.

(b) Philosophy as Dogmatic

Along with most of the pre-Socratics, Plato believed that philosophical truth was objective and obtainable. The essential difference between humans and animals was the capacity to acquire universal concepts and knowledge, as contrasted with the particular and deceptive beliefs acquired from sense experience. The supreme manifestation of such knowledge was that obtained by the philosopher—the philosopher who had succeeded in turning completely away from the distractions of sense experience in favor of the contemplation of the most abstract and universal concepts of all. Once this state had been reached, the soul of the philosopher was privileged to escape from the cycle of rebirth, and remain eternally in the realm of abstract forms.

Although it is right to question prephilosophical assumptions and inadequate concepts, there comes a point when questioning has to stop. Once the pupil has acquired a correct understanding of a concept or truth, it would undermine the educative process to encourage them to treat it as merely provisional, or revisable if looked at from an alternative point of view. The purpose is to provide the pupil with a firm bedrock of objective knowledge, as a basis for the understanding of more advanced and abstract truths.

(c) Philosophy as Deductive

Plato saw the body of philosophical truths as forming a system, in which more specific truths depended logically on more general and abstract ones. Although there might be occasions when it is appropriate to start the educative process by examining beliefs already held by pupils, the ideal is to present them with a self-contained deductive structure.

(d) Philosophy as Conceptual

Aristotle observed that one of the main differences between Socrates and Plato was that Plato made universals or definitions exist apart, and called them “ideas”. This is indeed a crucial difference, since it enabled Plato to deflect philosophical inquiry away from the search for correct definitions of words to the discovery (or in his case the rediscovery) of concepts or ideas themselves. Although he does not say so explicitly, Plato seems to have concluded that the Socratic method led to a dead end, since any definition uses words which themselves require definition, and so on ad infinitum. Perhaps this is one reason why the early, genuinely Socratic, dialogues were generally inconclusive.

Plato believed that the soul had a previous existence in which it was in direct contact with the forms themselves. Since “like is known by like”, he saw no problem over how the immaterial soul could know immaterial realities. On being joined with a physical body, the soul forgets its knowledge of the forms, and is overwhelmed by the immediate presence of sense images. However, sense images bear some resemblance to the eternal forms, and they remind the soul of its previous knowledge. The task of philosophy is to enable the soul to escape the dominance of sense imagery, and to recapture the original intuition of the pure forms. But the original intuition was not mediated by language, and it cannot be expressed in words. So language is not the vehicle of thought, but an encumbrance to thought necessitated by the human condition.

(e) Philosophy as Closed

Like Pythagoras and other pre-Socratics, Plato founded a school (the Academy), which was a legal entity with a constitution, a budget and so on. As such it excluded non-members—or at least it excluded non-members from the esoteric philosophy available only to initiates, and others had to be content with an exoteric version, which merely hinted at the deeper insights.

It is highly unlikely that what actually happened in the Academy corresponded at all closely to the educational program outlined in the Republic; but it must have incorporated at least the main tenets of Plato’s educational philosophy. In particular, Plato held that only a small intellectual elite (the gold of society), as contrasted with the silver and bronze is capable of attaining philosophical wisdom—and Plato is vulnerable to the accusation that he tended to equate intellectual ability with social class. Moreover, even this intellectual elite is not ready for philosophical enlightenment until the age of 50. No philosophy for children in Plato’s world.

(f) Philosophy as Ivory Tower

In one sense, Plato was as convinced as anyone of the applicability of philosophy: “There will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed of humanity itself, until philosophers become kings” (Republic, 473d). However, the philosophers heportrays will be reluctant to become involved in everyday affairs, since their goal in life is withdrawal from the world, and the contemplation of abstract truth. Their community closely resembles a monastic order, the members of which have their basic physical needs taken care of, so that they can concentrate on their own moral and intellectual development. They are a small elite, who condescend to sort out other people’s lives only out of the kindness of their hearts.

(g) Philosophy as Written

Plato recognized that oral discussion and exposition had a role to play in philosophical education, but he didn’t share Socrates’s qualms about freezing speech on paper. His own style was didactic rather than interactive. We know he gave lectures to his followers (for example the famous, but lost, Lecture on the Good), and the later dialogues are so full of lengthy monologues that one wonders why he con-
continued with the dialogue form at all.

One motive may have been to disguise the increasing divergence between the Socratic philosophy and his own. But perhaps the simpler explanation is that the very concept of expressing abstract ideas in written prose was in its infancy. Writing was expensive, and reserved for special occasions: public inscriptions, religious plays, poems, and so on. Most of the pre-Socratic philosophers expressed themselves in verse, and Plato himself started life as a poet. The earliest prose writings were modeled on oral forms of discourse: the chronicler telling a story, or a transcript of a set speech or debate. It is significant that an early prose historian such as Thucydides normally put any commentary on the events he was chronicling into the mouths of the actors—Pericles’s funeral oration, or the Melian dialogue. In the context, it is not surprising that the first philosophical prose should be idealized versions of discussions or talks. The written academic lecture was transitional to the later introduction of the written treatise, which no longer mimics spoken forms, but has its own literary style and language. Among the biggest changes set in motion by Plato’s academy was a shift in emphasis from discussions to lectures, and from oracy to literacy.

Subsequent History

Since the main purpose of this essay is to chart the origins of the contrast between Socratic and academic thinking, I shall mention only a few subsequent developments which are relevant to the situation as it is as present.

The modern university has gradually evolved out of the medieval university system, and it still bears traces of its origins. In many respects the medieval university achieved rather a good balance between the Socratic and the Academic approaches:

- professorial lectures (reading and commenting on texts, necessitated by the scarcity of books) were complemented by more informal, interactive sessions with junior teachers;
- memorizing of facts and theories was balanced by training in the skills of dialectical disputation;
- despite a certain reverence for the written text, assessment was based on oral performance;
- university education was modeled on training in a craft: the undergraduate was an apprentice, the bachelor was a journeyman, qualified to practice the craft but not to take on apprentices (and not ready to settle down to married life); and the master had sufficient experience to be entitled to teach the craft, after payment of a fee to the guild;
- in some cases (especially in Italy and Scotland), the universities were the property of the students, and the professors were their employees.

Many of these traditions still survive or have only recently disappeared: we still give lectures, despite the invention of the printing press; we still assess students on their ability to recall information provided in lectures; in a number of European countries the BA degree is awarded solely on the basis of a viva voce examination; at Oxford and Cambridge the MA is awarded on payment of a fee after a suitable lapse of time; the rectors of Scottish universities are appointed by students; and it is only during this century that fees for attending particular courses have been commuted to staff salaries.

In British universities, the most significant changes in educational practice since the mediaeval period have been the following:

- the almost total replacement of oracy by literacy (students write notes on lectures, they read books and hand-outs and write notes on them, they write essays and receive written comments on them, and they are assessed almost entirely on the basis of written examinations and coursework);
- a shift in emphasis from the development of skills to the reproduction of factual information which can be assessed on the basis of written examinations;
- a concentration on the results of individual effort (the one-to-one tutorial, and the private writing of essays under examination conditions) and the related emphasis on originality, at the expense of co-operative activity and the development of generally achievable competencies;
- a change in the relationship between teacher and student from that of provider of a service, to that of a state employee given control over another pensioner of the state.

These changes can be explained in terms of socio-economic factors such as the reduction in the price of paper; the need to replace patronage and bribery with a meritocratic system for controlling entry into the growing professional classes; the re-modeling of the education system on the basis of scientific and technological values as contrasted with those of the humanities; and the incursion of the public sector into previously free-market relationships.

In eighteenth-century England (though not in Scotland), philosophy virtually disappeared from the university curriculum. It gradually reappeared in the latter part of the nineteenth century—on the back of Classics at Oxford, as an adjunct to science at Cambridge, and in various other guises at the technical colleges which were acquiring university status elsewhere.

It is far from evident that the academic environment in which philosophy was reborn was sympathetic to its traditional mix of values. In order to attain academic credibility it had to conform to a stereotype dominated by science and technology conceived in a Victorian mould. This stereotype was overwhelmingly academic rather than Socratic in character.

The Present Situation

I shall leave it to other contributors to describe current initiatives for promoting Socratic education, and I shall confine myself to some brief remarks on ways in which the educational climate has recently shifted in favor of more Socratic approaches.

Firstly, the climate of educational opinion has moved away from the theory that children are born with a fixed intellectual capacity, which needs only to be filled with information. Intellectual ability is now seen as a range of skills which can be developed through training. No doubt some children can be trained more easily than others, but the purpose of education is to maximize the potential of each child.

Secondly, society has become less polarized between ordinary people on the one hand, and experts and figures of authority on the other hand. In education, it has become increasingly acceptable for children or young adults to question what they are told, and teachers are expected to act as facilitators of learning, in which the learner plays a more active and equal role.

Thirdly, the educational system, along with so many other institutions, has been called upon to justify its con-
tribution to the general good. It is not enough for the success of a school to be measured in terms of the number of pupils it sends to university, or for that of a university to be measured in terms of the number of graduates who go on to an academic career. This attitude condemns the large majority to relative or absolute failure. Educational establishments are increasingly expected to justify themselves in terms of the extent to which they prepare people for life and work.

The present government has not entirely ignored the duties of schools to prepare children for life; but it has tended to focus rather narrowly on religious education as providing the panacea for social ills, at the expense of a more philosophical approach to the problem of turning children into morally and politically aware citizens. Instead, it has concentrated on preparation for the world of work. Many in education have been disturbed by the commercial language that has been used (pupils as “product”, and employers as “clients”), and by the way in which the Employment Department seems to have taken over from the department for Education as the driving force behind educational change. But in many respects the changes the Employment Department has been promoting constitute not so much an abandonment of all traditional educational values, but the restoration of a better balance between the Socratic and the academic approaches.

Both industry and society as a whole need as many people as possible who are not merely knowledgeable in a wider or narrower range of academic and technical disciplines, but who are reflective and critical about what they know, and can continue to learn autonomously outside formal education; who can apply their knowledge to practical situations; who are articulate in speech as well as in writing; who can cooperate with others in solving problems; who can see things from different perspectives, and are willing to revise their own concepts, beliefs and attitudes; and who take a responsible and moral attitude to all that they do.

As an educational program, this could hardly be more Socratic.


Philosophy for Children and the Discipline of Philosophy

Ann Gazzard

The Philosophy for Children program is examined here in terms of its ability to teach philosophy to children or, as the advocates of Philosophy for Children would prefer to say, ‘to bring philosophy to children’, ‘to do philosophy with children’, or indeed, ‘to engage in philosophic inquiry with children’. However, the nature of philosophy itself first needs clarification. Given that even the professional philosophers disagree about its nature and purpose, we need, if possible, an account of it that accommodates these various interpretations and we need then to delineate the components necessary for its successful instruction. Having then a model by which to evaluate programs that hope to teach it, we can turn to the Philosophy for Children program and see to what extent it lives up to the proposed theoretical ideal.

The Nature of Philosophy

‘Philosophy’ lends itself to many interpretations, and over time, this in itself has become a respectable domain of inquiry for professional philosophers. The literature yields three interpretations under which a variety of other views can however be successfully subsumed.

There is the understanding of philosophy as a type of striving associated with seeking to know how to live a better life suggested by expressions like ‘the search for meaning’, ‘the pursuit of truth’, ‘the desire for wisdom’, and ‘the search for the rational life’. Secondly, there is a view which renders it a specific body of problems and/or the history of the ideas of past and present philosophers. On this account, the philosopher is one who exhibits a special competence with the traditional philosophical methods and contents. Thirdly and more recently, there is the view that philosophy is a particular way of thinking most often cast as reflective thinking, something of a meta-discipline which makes possible the elucidation and critical appraisal of virtually any problem from any discipline. Looking at each of these a little more closely we find the following.

‘The Search for Wisdom’: Philosophy as a Striving to Live a More Reasonable, More Meaningful Life

On this view, philosophy involves not only ‘knowing’ in the sense of understanding or appreciating the circumstomces that render knowledge meaningful, but also a disposition to act in accordance with that way of knowing. In other words, it is not enough to know what one must do but one must also have a disposition to act in accordance with that way of knowing. A philosophy program intending to teach this view of philosophy then would need to generate two qualities in its students: first, a capacity for generating the truth-value of propositions as well as a capacity for evaluating different sets of circumstances in order to find those that render the propositions most meaningful; and second, an awareness of the behavior whose appropriateness can be inferred from these deliberations together with the realization that its execution is preferable to any other action.

While not wanting to deny the importance of the first set of qualities to this view, it is important here to highlight that feature of this interpretation of philosophy that renders it unique, namely, its behavioral component. Recommendations for teaching practices that might foster the requisite behavioral disposition or indeed any others are not easy to formulate. It does seem evident, however, that, no matter what else might be involved, the execution of thoughtful action demands a role model. That is, exposure to persons who themselves act in accordance with their considered beliefs is surely useful for developing action based on sound practical reasoning. At the same time, teaching philosophy; on this account of it, also suggests that teachers be able to share with the students a love of the enterprise in which they are engaged, for it is only in this way that they can transmit to their students a real sense that it is worth the effort to strive to live with a greater understanding of themselves and the world.

With respect to the history of philosophy and the traditional philosophic problems, there is no logical reason why philosophy in the sense of knowing about these things would alone make a person wise, more reasonable, or his/her life more meaningful. In other words, the teaching of philosophy on this first interpretation of it need not utilize the history of philosophy or the particular problems which it treats. Of course, an acquaintance with this subject-matter should not detract from the understanding being sought but the point is that it alone will not necessarily generate that same understanding.
Academic Philosophy: Philosophy as the History of Philosophy or Philosophy as the Traditional Problems of Philosophy

Now let us turn to the second interpretation of 'philosophy,' namely, philosophy as a body of content or subject-matter. The subject-matter referred to here covers the history of philosophy or philosophical thought on the one hand, and the classical problems of philosophy on the other. That is to say, on this view a comprehensive understanding of philosophy cannot be reduced merely to an historical account of philosophy. The view of philosophy as content admits of a less myopic construal than the mere rendering of what this or that philosopher has said; it is also substantive in the sense of an appreciation of the traditional problems of philosophy.

In any given period, certain problems come to be identified as peculiarly philosophical problems. For example, in our own historical era, there are such dominant problems as free will and determinism, the mind-body relation and personal identity. If one construes philosophy as a discipline attentive to such problems and the world-views to which they give rise, it would follow that a course in philosophy would need to treat precisely these issues.

Moreover, one would expect that the more lucid the presentation of these problems, the better would be the philosophic education. The program need not, however, have a high level of sophistication in all areas of philosophy, nor even in one. Indeed, this expectation is seldom, if ever, satisfied, even in the case of professional philosophers whose specialist areas accumulate literature so quickly that its absorption requires more attention than can be given. Nevertheless, enough substantial information about the traditional problems of philosophy is needed to foreclose the possibility of either a biased or a too-narrow coverage of them. The good teacher of philosophy then would educate for understanding philosophy with breadth as well as depth. His/her task would be to create an intellectual climate that not only is conducive to student contribution, but one that also provokes students into stretching their thinking at least one step further. The teacher of philosophy, that is, is not so much required to cultivate and produce professional philosophers as to nurture an appreciation of what it is about philosophy that makes it worthy of professional pursuit.

Critical Analysis: Philosophy as a Metadiscipline of Intellectual Reflection

Now let us turn to the third concept of philosophy and determine the extent to which it demands a curriculum consistent or otherwise with the foregoing. Philosophy is often regarded as simply a reflective turn of mind: that is, it is presented as a predisposition to intellectual reflection where the subject of the reflection is most often the conceptual framework in which the problem or issue in question happens to be. For example, to think philosophically about the problem of abortion would entail reflection upon and analysis of global concepts like 'the right to life,' 'the ownership of choice,' 'the morality of murder,' etc. Scientific reflection, in contrast, would focus upon issues like probability of fetus survival, the adoption rate after birth of unwanted child, etc., that is, upon issues formulated by and large in terms of statistical realities. On this view of philosophy, virtually any problem can be treated philosophically, and viewing problems philosophically, including the traditional problems, usually signifies an analysis of the language in terms of which the problems are themselves formulated. 'Philosophy' here is concerned with making explicit the assumptions and implications concealed in the questions and answers that the problems invoke.

To be able to practice this type of philosophy students would need to be taught two things. Insofar as philosophy rests heavily upon the distinction between empirical and conceptual matters, part of what students would need to know is how to make this distinction. And inasmuch as philosophy is here concerned to circumscribe the domain of possible states of affairs and events from those that are not possible, students would need the skills for not only discriminating conceptual possibility from empirical possibility but also for ascertaining the limit-points within each of them. Basic to all these higher-level deliberations, however, is the ability to know what constitutes a coherent description of events, for this ability transcends the empirical-conceptual boundary. That is to say, the philosophy student would need also to know how to determine when an account of a matter reflects a coherent description of events irrespective of whether the domain of inquiry be the nature of a particular empirical impossibility or of a conceptual possibility. It is not sufficient, however, that students merely do this. They need also to be able to articulate for others what they have done, that is, to be able to delineate the features of the matter which constitute its coherency, and accordingly, they would need practice in the verbal and/or written articulation of their thinking.

The traditional problems of philosophy are in themselves of little use in acquiring these skills of analysis familiar to contemporary philosophy. The so-called traditional problems, however, do admit of the contemporary approach and much recent literature is in this vein. Although a study of the traditional problems does not in itself advance the teaching of philosophy as a method of analysis and reflection, the application of the contemporary approach to the traditional problems does. The student of philosophy might well benefit, therefore, from exposure to the contemporary dialogue. It would afford a familiarity with the tools of conceptual analysis as well providing a unique opportunity to experience the intellectual inheritance of the past. Such an approach to teaching philosophy represents one way of integrating the second and third conceptions of philosophy presented here.

The Proposed Model for Teaching Philosophy (lx edited)

The proposed model is that the successful, if not ideal, practice of teaching philosophy requires components drawn from each of the three conceptions of philosophy presented above. By considering the consequences of excluding pedagogy that is peculiar to any one of these interpretations, the necessity of their inclusion in the practice of philosophy should be ratified.
First, let us consider the effects of a philosophy program that fails to generate in its students the desire to know how to live a more meaningful life. Three possibilities suggest themselves. The program would be reduced to either mere thinking skill development, the history of intellectual thought, or some combination of them. In any case, two undesirable outcomes are invoked. First, the processes of critical thinking and reflection are likely to become ends in themselves. Sophism is a good example here. When students are not taught to use their intellectual processes in the context of the search for understanding and meaning, they are open to acquiring the mindless habit of applying them in the manner of a ritual to all problems they confront. While thinking processes might be developed in this way to a high level of excellence, the unreflective application of the respective corporate skills defies the ‘true’ nature of the philosophic spirit. Moreover, the practice of ritualized application closes minds on issues that are fundamentally open. For example, it does not allow for the reassessment of thinking strategies in light of the intricacies and nuances of each situation and upon the acquisition of new information. In other words, students may in the absence of the search for meaning have as their goal skill proficiency. This is unfortunate primarily because it serves to curtail the other uses to which thinking can be put, and it is problematic because it fosters the formulation of problem solutions based on reason alone, that is, upon reason in the absence of experience, the meaning of that experience, and the consequences both potential and actual thereof.

The second undesirable outcome of programs inadequately generating the desire for meaning is that students are unlikely to display much incentive to search for the meaning in their everyday lives. Philosophy programs need to impart a love of knowledge and understanding. Within the context of the classroom, any lack of incentive for understanding or grasping the meaning of information will not be so apparent. However, outside the classroom where the motives of pleasing the teacher and passing examinations are no longer relevant, students are less likely to be concerned with reflection upon and interpretation of everyday experience. Consider, for example, a child who in the context of the classroom applies his critical thinking skills to a passage in his textbook, yet who outside the classroom does not think to apply the same thinking skills to the discourse of a friend. While he can ascertain the validity, worth and meaning of his textbook, he is not afforded the same opportunity in respect of his friend’s dialogue. It is not that the friend’s discourse fails to admit of such analysis. The point is that without the motivation to perform reflective analysis, the range of possible meanings that this child could extract from the interaction with his friend is curtailed. When the desire for understanding remains untapped, children are often left in a state of cognitive dissonance, namely, between how to think about classroom material and how to think about the rest of their lives.

Programs which do not attempt to generate the desire for understanding, therefore, relegate education to something that happens only in the context of the classroom. Insofar as all aspects of our lives need understanding, however, it seems unreasonable to construe the pursuit of meaning as merely a function of in-school education. Every aspect of our daily lives admits of a philosophic interpretation and any program which fails to encourage this could not, therefore, with good reason, claim to teach philosophy.

Let us now turn our attention to those philosophy programs which exclude from their design the traditional subject matter of philosophy, whether it be the historical study or classical problems of the discipline. Programs which generate an understanding of philosophy as certain processes of thinking and/or the search for meaning alone, deny students an appreciation of the great tradition of intellectual thought that has come to be known as philosophy. In so doing, children are denied access to a rich source of ideas and meanings that might contribute to their understanding of themselves and their world. This orientation to philosophy also imputes little worth to the interests of key concern to professional philosophers and the ways of approaching problems that philosophers use. For children, this is unfortunate. On the one hand, it is a familiarity with these intractable problems of philosophy and the philosopher’s unrelenting pursuit of them that might encourage them to confront the perplexities and apparent irresolvable difficulties of everyday life. On the other, it is the same familiarity that develops an attitude less concerned with closure and more concerned with clarification and understanding. Moreover, the philosophic literature exemplifies different ways of confronting problems that children could assimilate; they could find dispositions and processes of thinking to meet their own needs. In short, the respect and involvement that the seemingly recalcitrant problems of philosophy engender in professional philosophers and others can help students recognize that the problems worth attempting and those that it is plausible to attempt are not only the ones whose solutions are guaranteed.

Of course anyone familiar with the classical philosophic problems is aware that the amount of relevant data that can be accumulated in respect of any one problem is boundless. Therefore, the amount of philosophic subject-matter that needs to be included in a philosophy course for it to be considered successful in this regard needs also to be considered. Two criteria for making this assessment present themselves: the intricacy and intractability of the philosophic issue under consideration; and, the prior experience with and competency for dealing with the philosophic issues that the prospective students already have. Requisite to all variants on either of these dimensions, however, is the provision of at least that amount of subject-matter which would serve to prevent philosophic indoctrination or indoctrination into a particular philosophic viewpoint. Instruction, that is, which fails to communicate accurately the range of opinions concerning a particular philosophic issue or which involves the assertion of controversial philosophic views without reasoned consideration.
of the broadly held contending views, can be indicted for inculcating biased views. Of course, there are those persons who consciously seek to teach in this way primarily for the purpose of instilling in the young a specific ideology. Notwithstanding the seriousness of this malpractice, there is also the problem of inadvertent indoctrination; that is, the inculcation of beliefs which occurs as a result of the teacher’s ignorance about the particular philosophic point under consideration. For example, a teacher who comes to a place in the lesson where the mind-body problem arises without having prior exposure to the centuries old debate about this problem, may react so adversely to any account of, say, dualism that intellectual inferiority is automatically imputed to it. Insufficient attention to the subject-matter of philosophy, therefore, can transmute readily in the context of the classroom to unintentional indoctrination. Ignorant of the range and the subtlety of arguments that accrue in respect of any philosophic viewpoint, teachers may remain closed to the philosophic vitality of their students and may unwillingly discourage its advancement. Both teachers and students, therefore, need to be educated in philosophic subject-matter so that the possibility of philosophic indoctrination is greatly reduced.

Finally, let us consider the outcomes of philosophy programs which fail to develop the reflective habit of mind. Three consequences present themselves. First, a student’s role in learning is relegated to that of passive recipient of such information as the educational system chooses to communicate. In other words, students remain ill-equipped or at least they are not encouraged to assess and make meaningful the diverse information with which they are bombarded daily both within and without the school context. Second, pupils are denied the joy and satisfaction that the thinking through of issues both philosophical and otherwise engenders. And third, they are left frustrated in their love of learning and pursuit of truth since the skills which would allow them to achieve these ends are left unstimulated. Without a component designed to encourage the reflective habit of mind, therefore, philosophy programs may amount to little more than descriptions of the different philosophical viewpoints wherein the opportunity to participate in the practice of philosophy and the kinds of thinking that, in the first place, generated those viewpoints, is not provided.

Again, the amount of emphasis that any philosophy program should place upon the development of the reflective habit of mind as opposed to any other aspect of philosophy deserves consideration. It seems uncontroversial that the reflective habit of mind should be developed in students to its fullest potential. So the question then turns to the goal at which this development is aimed. To educate reflective thinking to its fullest potential seems desirable up to, but not including, the point that thinking becomes an end in itself.

To discourage students, that is, from becoming avid little analyzers who analyze ‘everything to death’ seems a more appropriate goal and one more in keeping with the philosophic spirit discussed earlier. That is to say, the search for more meaning and a better understanding of it needs to be encouraged simultaneously, so as to temper the predisposition to chronic analyticity. It orients the capacity for reflective criticism so that it can function as a tool in pursuit of meaning, and a tool of service to mankind rather than as an isolated, critical, yet shallow perspective upon reality. Socrates reminds us of the importance of this framework in the following passage:

Even if we knew how to turn stones into gold, such knowledge would be worthless. For if we did not know how to use gold, it would do us no good... Even if there were some knowledge that would make us deathless, if we did not know how to use our deathlessness, even that would do us no good.

One aspect of teacher performance stands above others as being crucial to the successful development of reflective thinking. The teacher must be adept in the skills that he/she is attempting to teach. For example, a teacher who is not proficient him/herself in assessing coherency would not be able to assist students in recognizing the incongruities in the expression of others, he/she could not help further the students own analytic skills nor could he/she recognize and correct spurious reasoning when it did occur.

In conclusion then, programs for teaching philosophy which do not include practices befitting each of these three interpretations of philosophy fail to make use of the wealth of knowledge that has come to be known as philosophy. As a result, students are denied access to many sources of knowledge that can help them with both their academic pursuits and the fulfillment of their everyday lives. I do not wish to suggest that the exclusion of any one of these components from a course will serve necessarily to vitiate any contribution it might otherwise make to existing educational practice. The point is rather that, in their absence, a course entitled ‘philosophy’ does not afford a contribution to education sufficiently comprehensive to do justice to that discipline. Moreover, a course lacking in any one of these three dimensions is not really teaching philosophy since it misrepresents the discipline by denying its richness, its complexity, and the value it can have to the education of all persons.

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Philosophy for Children and the Proposed Ideal Method for Teaching Philosophy

Now, let us turn to consider the relationship that exists between Philosophy for Children and the three conceptions of philosophy discussed earlier.

The Philosophy for Children program represents the one serious attempt to conflate into a single curriculum these three conceptions of philosophy, namely, the notion of philosophy as a specific body of problems, the notion of it as a particular mental methodology, and the notion of it as a way of bringing more meaning to the thoughts and deeds of one’s life. In what follows, I shall discuss the extent to which the program meets each of these ends.

Philosophy for Children and Academic Philosophy

There are those who have objected to Philosophy for Children on the grounds that it is too limited in terms
of philosophic content to be considered seriously as a philosophy program. The claim is that the program does not do justice to the discipline of philosophy because it does not deliver to its students the arguments of the professional philosophers in the elaborate and intricate terms in which they themselves cast them. The aspersion is that Philosophy for Children, at its best, is only 'watered-down' philosophy. The significance of this objection, however, is given relief by recognizing the two specious assumptions upon which it rests. On the one hand, the position implies a myopic view of the nature of philosophy itself, and on the other, it represents either a naive or a mistaken understanding of the role that traditional philosophic content plays within Philosophy for Children.

First, the view of philosophy from which this objection stems is one which denies philosophy its role both as a technique of intellectual reflection and inquiry and as a tool in service of meaning. That is to say, Philosophy for Children even if it did not include the subject-matter of academic philosophy could be said to teach philosophy with richness and depth by virtue of its teaching thinking and the disposition to search for meaning. Such an exposition of its philosophic worth, however, would not be credited on the narrow conception of the discipline which has furnished this 'watered-down' objection. Second, the objection suggests that philosophy as a subject-matter is something one learns about, and as such, it is not actually relevant to Philosophy for Children because the latter is founded on the view that philosophy is something one does. The view that professional philosophers are the purveyors of philosophy and philosophic ideas is also embedded in this objection, and, in this respect also, the program is understood. It is not that the Philosophy for Children approach imputes disrespect or disregard to the writings of professional philosophers but its particular approach considers the musings of children no less important, insightful, or philosophically than those of professional philosophers or adults. In the Philosophy for Children program, the ideas of philosophy are used as springboards for developing along the lines of sound reasoning the children's thinking that is stimulated by them. Philosophy for Children is founded on the view that philosophy helps teachers, children, and the teachers of teachers alike to broaden their understanding of the world by forcing them to confront well-thought-out viewpoints different form their own and by persuading them to appreciate each one in terms of the foundations of good thinking upon which it rests. So, the traditional subject-matter is included in the program. Moreover, it is included with these ends in mind.

The question now then becomes, 'To what extent are a variety of philosophic views canvassed in the Philosophy for Children curriculum, and to what extent is each one elaborated?' Events that lend themselves to analysis along the lines of academic philosophy unfold systematically throughout the novels. In keeping with his/her characteristic style of thinking, the characters in the novels tend, for the most part, to adopt a standpoint consistent with a traditional school of philosophic thought. The ensuing dialogue portrays children involved in the rational arbitration of these views. The arbitration usually draws upon the discovery of the problems that each view classically evokes together with the types of reasoning each requires for its elucidation and validation. Each philosophic viewpoint, traditional and otherwise, is elaborated to the extent that it provides a meaningful point of view to children the same age as the readers for whom it was intended. At the same time, the views are expressed in the novels in the language of the prospective readers so as to ensure that the readers have access to the patterns of thinking entailed by them.

Academic philosophy then has two roles in this curriculum. On the one hand, it guarantees the reader exposure to many viewpoints different from his/her own, and on the other, it discloses the patterns of thinking needed to support these views. The selection of philosophic views that are presented for any issue is made according to the criteria of meaningfulness and reasonableness. The first criterion for the selection of viewpoints from the philosophic literature is that they be meaningful to the child in terms of shedding light on his/her experience of the world. That is, viewpoints are selected on account of their being relevant to the contemporary world of the child and not because they espouse this or that particular conception of things. The second criterion, reasonableness, is used in the sense that the philosophic positions are selected and elaborated in a way that assumes that readers are intelligent persons capable of reasonable behavior. This is done by modeling the children of the novel along these lines. The Philosophy for Children curriculum has been criticized on these grounds. The criticism is that the curriculum is suitable, therefore, only for select groups of children, namely, the middle-class, or the gifted. The indictment misunderstands, however, the intention of the model. The point is not that there are only some children who are intelligent and reasonable and that Philosophy for Children is thus for them. It is rather that, in order to encourage all children to behave more reasonably and more intelligently, it is necessary to show them what reasonable and intelligent behavior entails and that it is not beyond their capability. That is, Philosophy for Children works from the principle that children need models of young persons similar to themselves who behave or think in ways that evidence intelligence, reflection and reasonableness. That is to say, children are not unlike adults in that they often only live up to our expectations of them.

The amount of philosophy in Philosophy for Children, in the sense of philosophy as a subject-matter is not, moreover, restricted to what is given in the novels. The Philosophy for Children curriculum provides two further sources of materials rich in the subject matter of the discipline. First, there are the Teachers' Manuals, and second, there are bibliographies, some complete, some still in progress, which provide the philosophic and literary sources for the ideas raised in each chapter of each novel. The manuals expand upon the philosophic views contained in the novels providing the teachers with a brief analysis of the
issues. Exercises and discussion plans are also included to help them tease out the relevant intellectual intricacies of the views in the classroom. The bibliographies, on the other hand, list those classical and literary sources which have been considered responsible for the inception of the views and which have served as catalysts for the further reformulations of them. Philosophy for Children considers it the teachers’ responsibility to acquaint themselves with the intricacies of the philosophic debates from these bibliographies. For it is only in this way, its advocates claim, that they can furnish the necessary next steps to further their student’s thinking about them.

It is easy to see from the foregoing that Philosophy for Children is not remiss in the respect that it shows academic philosophy either as a system of ideas worthy of pursuit for its own sake or as a body of knowledge relevant to the contemporary world.

**Philosophy for Children and the Reflective Habit of Mind**

The Philosophy for Children curriculum is designed with one of its main aims the development of children’s thinking, in particular reflective thinking. In the context of contemporary education, Philosophy for Children is not unique in having the development of thinking skills a primary objective. What makes this program unique, however, is the context in which thinking is taught, namely, the interplay between philosophy and everyday life. Students learn, that is, to develop and refine their thinking by discussing with their peers the classical problems of philosophy as they manifest themselves in everyday life.

The distinction between analytic and/or creative thinking and reflective thinking should serve to make more perspicuous what is taught in this program. Reflective thinking entails processes that are both analytic and creative in kind, yet its meaning is not satisfied in these terms alone. As problematic as any account of analytic thinking and creative thinking might be, it is generally agreed that analytic thinking dissects and reconstructs issues in terms of the logic of their assumptions and implications and it searches for the rational in terms that best approximate coherency and consistency. Above and beyond any other cognitive demands that the analytic process might make, it requires the ability to reason systematically adhering whenever possible to the principles of formal and informal logic. Creative thinking, on the other hand, is generally understood as that thinking which generates new ideas and connects old patterns of ideas in new ways. It is thinking that is itself readily to finding new problems, reconceptualizing old problems and producing innovations whether it be in art, in science or in the home. Perhaps most peculiar to this process is the ability to play with ideas; to use objects and ideas in ways, that is, that are unfamiliar, illogical, non-functional and/or symbolic. The reflective process of thinking makes use of both critical and creative processes, yet it is not circumscribed by them. Reflective thinking is aimed primarily at a deeper insight and a more comprehensive understanding of whatever it attends to. To think reflectively implies, in part, the ability to distance oneself cognitively from the issue at hand while simultaneously remaining engaged by it. The thinker needs to consider the issue from a perspective broader than that afforded by the specific dynamics that constitute it. He/she must not only review the issue in terms of the current circumstances that afford its meaning and the consequences thereby implied, but he/she must also formulate alternative circumstances and consider what meaning the same issue would then have. Moreover, the issue itself needs to be recast in various forms so that the different sets of circumstances that such alterations would generate can be apprehended.

Like most other programs that attend to the development of thinking skills, Philosophy for Children provides countless opportunities to enhance children’s analytic and creative abilities. Unlike these other programs, however, Philosophy for Children considers the cultivation of reflective processes one of its primary goals, and it uses dialogue as the cornerstone of this process. Resting on the assumption that thinking is primarily internalized dialogue, Philosophy for Children aims to produce reflective thinkers as a consequence of their participation in a reflective community of inquirers. Not only do children have the opportunity to reflect there upon issues that are of interest to them, but they also learn what it is to reflect upon their own thinking by virtue of seeing how the other participants think about the very same issues. At the same time as this is taking place, the community as a whole is engaged in the complex, interpersonal dynamic of reflection. Different points of view are put up against one another, and the community considers each from this eclectic perspective. As the participants internalize this process, therefore, they come to acquire a more comprehensive mode of reflection. The participants are no longer limited to the ways of thinking that are peculiar to their own intellect but, as individuals, they come also to reflect in ways that are characteristic of the group as a whole. Of course, the strength of this paradigm of education for reflective thinking depends upon the extent to which the claim that thinking is internalized dialogue, is true. While there is a strong intellectual tradition supporting this view, it is well to remember that the nature of thinking is not an uncontroversial issue. There are different conceptions of thinking and, for the most part, they engender different practices in respect of its teaching. For example, there are the popular views, namely, that thinking is produced by cognitive structures, and that thinking functions as computers do; and there are the less popular views like the view that thinking is internalized action. These different views also have a substantial history of intellectual support, and as such, they provide a challenge to the view in which Philosophy for Children is couched. The relative strength of the assumption upon which Philosophy for Children rests, therefore, needs to be weighed against these competing claims from academic psychology.

Inasmuch as thinking actually is internalized dialogue, however, Philosophy for Children by way of the community of dialogical inquiry provides a suitable means for advancing thinking,
in particular for advancing reflective thought. In other words, it offers a pedagogy that provides well for the teaching of that particular way of thinking that has come to characterize philosophy and that promises to have solid theoretical underpinnings in contemporary academic psychology.

Philosophy for Children and the Search to Know How to Live Better

In 'Philosophy in the Classroom,' Lipman writes at great length about the importance of meaning to the integrity of life, and he cites many reasons for studying philosophy in this vein. The children's novels and the teacher's Manuals in and of themselves, however, focus more upon the development of thinking skills and the development of reasons for belief. That is to say, Philosophy for Children would provide an adequate method for generating the search for a more meaningful life if it were undoubtedly the case that clear and valid thinking and the establishment of sound reasons were the sole purveyors of meaning. However, the relationship between reasons for belief and knowledge is controversial and the relationship between knowledge and its meaning is not symmetrical. The search for meaning is, therefore, not as straightforward as the earlier writings of Lipman and his co-workers suggest.

Manifesting itself as 'education for reasonableness,' Lipman's later writings focus more intently upon philosophy as the search for meaning. His notion of 'education for reasonableness' is complex. The aspects of it that are relevant to our present discussion, however, are the intricate connections between good reasoning and the more meaningful life that he unveils. His central contention is that it is not until individuals can think reasonably, that is, reason soundly, with good judgment, a sense of proportion, and in a way that is humane, and can do this for themselves that they can hope to come to terms with the reasonableness of their own lives, of the society and of the institutions in which they find themselves. In order to find the meaning that lies within these various aspects of reality, that is, and in order to make the changes that are necessary to invest these things with more meaning, the notion is that one must first be able to think clearly and reasonably about them.

Of course in this regard, the success of the program rests heavily upon the teacher's awareness of such connections and his/her ability to convey in the context of the classroom the value of them. Here, more than in any other area of teaching philosophy, is the success of this program or any other philosophy program teacher dependent. That is to say, the successful teaching of philosophy, on this account of it, rests entirely upon the teacher having a certain attitude to knowledge or disposition to the philosophical. Inasmuch as attitudes and dispositions may be cultivated, teachers can be trained along these lines. Yet the processes for doing so are not all that clear cut. Whatever else might be involved, however, it seems that at least a persistent and ongoing struggle with philosophic notions both with oneself and with others is needed, and this takes time. It is perhaps for this reason that most of the teacher-trainers in Philosophy for Children are 'hand-picked.' The written prerequisite to become a teacher-trainer for the program is a doctorate in philosophy together with some experience of teaching. Yet the requirement is actually more than this. The prospective teacher-trainer must evidence a particular attitude or disposition; an attitude that transmutes readily in an educational setting to teaching that is 'pedagogically strong, yet philosophically self-effacing.' Generally speaking, the expression is used to refer to teaching that, on the one hand, abides closely by the practices of philosophic inquiry and, on the other, does not afford the teacher's own particular viewpoints to affect his/her students' thinking any more than any other participant's might.

No doubt the criticism will be averred that these practices of teacher-training amount to little more than 'a one-man show.' In logical terms alone, there is no counter response. From a more practical point of view, however, it may be well to admit that selection procedures for most professions entail the consideration of personal attribut-
es such as dispositions and attitudes. In terms of enabling Philosophy for Children to function according to its intended design, therefore, one could do much worse than have the selection of prospective teacher-trainers carried out by persons with a lifetime of experience in philosophy and enough understanding of and commitment to its practices to generate an extensive school curriculum.

Notwithstanding this, teacher-training at this point in time presents two major problems for the Philosophy for Children program. First, the method of training teacher-trainers does not yield many new teachers in any one year. Training involves participation in at least two 20-day workshops, and these are only held twice per year. Moreover, the number of actual participants at any one time is limited to ensure an engaging level of philosophic inquiry. While the procedures are admirable, alternative models need to be developed: (i) to accommodate the growing number of teachers that now need training as a result of the growth of the program itself; and (ii) to provide refresher sessions for teacher-trainers apart from the two expensive and time-consuming workshops currently available.

Second, there are as yet no written guidelines or manuals for the teacher-trainers. Granted that participation in numerous workshops constitutes the central necessary core of training, it would be advantageous to have a compendium of guidelines that could serve both as reminders to teachers of the various teaching strategies appropriate to philosophy and of the subject-matter of philosophy itself. For example, such a manual could include things like: (i) background reading on different philosophic problems, together with some general suggestions for the amount of reading useful for the teachers of different age groups; (ii) a list of literary works specifying the philosophic topics to which they pertain and the lines of relationship between them. Ideally, works suitable for different age groups would be part of this delineation; and (iii) a list of different procedures that have been found useful in establishing classroom environments supportive of philo-
Taking all of the foregoing into consideration, however, the program remains better equipped to teach philosophy than any other method currently available. The other methods, that is, tend to exaggerate even further the problem of teacher-dependency based success. For example, programs in elementary philosophy designed by individual teachers are likely to generate a love of the discipline and an understanding of its imports to the life of the mind. Yet the individual teachers' interests and abilities that generated their enthusiasm to do this are equally likely to define the scope of the philosophy taught in the program. That is to say, the philosophical subject-matter covered will be a function of two things. First, it will manifest the teacher's knowledge of the range of philosophic problems that actually exist. And second, it will manifest the philosophic problems in which he/she is most interested and feels most competent to teach. The extent to which the program develops thinking and the disposition appropriate to conceptual analysis will similarly manifest the teacher's interests and abilities. To circumvent this problem, the teacher must be aware that this aspect of philosophic practice actually exists and that it is a worthwhile activity. Moreover, he/she must be knowledgeable about thinking as well as adept in its skills. Without the former, thinking could not be included in the program and without the latter, it could be included but it would likely fail. In other words, philosophy programs designed by individual teachers can only hope to incorporate dimensions from the three conceptions of philosophy to the extent that the teacher is aware of their existence and has the interest and ability to teach them. Philosophy for Children, on the other hand, provides adequate prescriptions for each of these.

In conclusion, Philosophy for Children is at present a superior program for teaching philosophy to children by virtue of its strict pedagogical requirements, its systematic curriculum, and the depth and breadth with which it spans the traditional philosophical material. Of course the program is not without its problems. Yet the preceding discussion indicates that Philosophy for Children obviates many of the problems that the other programs face by virtue of its systematic curriculum and pedagogy, and its extensive foundations in its founding discipline, namely, philosophy.
Evaluating Philosophy for Children

John Niklasson, Ragnar Ohlsson and Monika Ringborg

In recent years the validity of different methods of testing the effects of implementing the IAPC program, as well as evaluating the results has been discussed. Christina Slade ("Creative and Critical Thinking", Analytic Teaching, Vol. 13 No. 1 Nov. 1992) and Marina Santi ("Philosophizing and Learning to Think: Some Proposals for a Qualitative Evaluation" Thinking, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1993) both advocate qualitative methods which analyze the structure and content of classroom discussions. Slade proposes that in this way we will be able to evaluate the progress in both critical and creative thinking (between which there is no necessary incompatibility according to Slade). Santi's opinion is that analysis of transcripts of children's discussions will make it possible to find qualitative indicators of the cognitive progress of the group.

We agree with them on the main aims of evaluation methods for philosophy with children. Analyzing transcriptions of discussions is one method we used in our research project on philosophy with children. For some years, we have had an on-going research project with Philosophy for Children in some Swedish compulsory schools. The project is financed by the National Board of Education in Sweden. In a few classes ranging from grade 1 to 3 (the children being 7-10 years old) we have had continuous philosophy lessons for three years. In one class we used mainly Elfie and Kia and Gus. We had two lessons a week and in the main followed the method worked out by Professor Matthew Lipman of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State University in New Jersey. In another class, with the same student composition, we used other books, mainly Le petit prince by Saint-Exupery as well as Swedish books for children. This class got fewer lessons than the other class. Our intention was to test for long-range effects of Philosophy for Children with slightly different methods and materials. Two-and-a-half years after the last lesson in grade 3 we returned to the classes, now in the 6th grade, to see whether we could find any significant differences "Two-and-a-half years after the last lesson in grade 3, we returned to the classes, now in the 6th grade, to see whether we could find any significant differences between the children who had been trained in philosophy and children who had not."

Two assistants—one a philosophy student and the other a student of pedagogics—who had no previous contact with the classes were instructed to give two lessons in philosophy in four different classes. Two of the classes had had no philosophy at all, the other two belonged to the above-mentioned classes.

Three of the classes, including the experimental class, belong to the same school in a suburb of Stockholm. This suburb has average sociological levels and cultural patterns. It is neither a high nor low status milieu. But the fourth class, where we tested the material and which was included in the written report, is different: these children live in a relatively high status area of the city of Stockholm. Their parents are mostly middle class, many of them have occupations within the media branch or do some artistic work. Some "immigrant" children attend this class, but these immigrant families are rather special: the parents usually are researchers within academic disciplines. Consequently, these children are rather above the average when it comes to verbal performance, general education, self-reliance, and so forth. This class was chosen as one of the control groups, because we wanted to compensate for the possibility that our experimental class by luck should be very intelligent and prone to argue. If it was found that the philosophy class argued better and more self-reliantly than even this rather special class, our results would have a higher degree of validity. However, in this experiment, the assistants knew that this was not an experimental class,
which certainly diminishes the value of the comparison. On the other hand, we have also performed some written tests with the same groups of children, where we could cover up the source of the papers. And all tests tend in the same direction: “our” children are rather special.

The pedagogic assistant was instructed to observe the “climate” of the classes, to make notations of how involved the pupils were in the discussion, how many joined in the discussion, whether they talked to each other or just to the teacher and so forth. The philosophy assistant wrote four short texts, two about distributive justice and two about time travels. He also acted as the teacher during the lessons. The two assistants tried out the texts and the lessons in one class. Then they gave the same lessons to three other classes. In each class, the philosophy assistant gave two lessons of about 40–45 minutes each. One lesson was focused upon principles of distributive justice. The other discussed problems connected with time and the possibility of time-travel. Both lessons had the same structure: the children were presented with one text, the “teacher” asked about the children’s opinions upon the text. Next the discussion commenced. When the discussion appeared to be exhausted and the same arguments seemed to return, a new text with a slightly different angle on the same problem was presented and discussed. The discussion about distributive justice thus had two starting-points: the first was a short text adapted from the Manual to Matthew Lipman’s *Lisa* about the fair distribution of candies. The second text was adapted from a Swedish philosopher, Torbjorn Tannsjo (it was taken from an unpublished manuscript: *Classical Hedonistic Utilitarianism. A Defense*.). For the lesson on time two texts were used, the first was adapted from Gareth Matthews *Dialogues with Children* (pp 76–79), the second from some IAPC manual (we have been unable to trace the text when writing this article). All texts are included in the Appendix.

None of the assistants were trained in the pedagogical methods developed by the Institute for The Advancement of Philosophy for Children. They had to find their own methods. It seemed to us that this would be the “fairest” to the classes who had not been trained in philosophy. If we were to find differences between the classes this should not be dependent upon the children being acquainted with the method. This fact explains why so many children are silent in all the classes: the philosophy teacher made no conscious effort to pull everyone into the discussion; we wanted to see if there could be detected differences between the classes, which could be seen by anyone.

The assistants were asked to note their spontaneous reflections upon the classes directly after the lessons. When the lessons had been transcribed from the audio tapes, each assistant made a detailed analysis of the lessons, with a different focus: the pedagogy assistant was to focus on patterns of communications, student interest and involvement and so forth, and answer a number of specific questions related to these aspects; the philosophy assistant was to focus on philosophically interesting ideas, the quality of argumentation, and so forth. The two questionnaires were formulated in advance; some of our questions were taken from an evaluation scheme constructed at the British Center for Philosophy for Children.

Thus we got eight detailed reports on the discussions in these four classes. We here present the summaries of these reports. Note that these reports and the summaries were written before the assistants knew which of the classes had had philosophy continuously for three years. The experiment-class is the one called “The Tuesday-class” and the class from the high-status area of the city of Stockholm is the “Wednesday-class”, which the reader can keep in mind when reading the report.

**Philosophical Discussions in Four Different Classes. Summary of the philosophy assistant’s report**

“There are some similarities (as well as differences) between the four classes I have had the opportunity to discuss philosophical topics with. The similarities and differences primarily concern their thoughts on philosophical topics and the way they present their ideas or tackle the arguments of their friends. I will make a short summary of what I found characteristic for each one of the four classes.”

**The Wednesday Class**

(“High-status.Ed)

“The Wednesday class was the most talkative. They seemed to find the philosophical problems discussed very interesting. On several occasions, many students gave long exegeses on what might be the most just solution, how we should relate to time or on other problems that arose. Nevertheless, they rarely offered arguments for their positions. Fairly often, I had to ask them to bring forward arguments. There are some examples of students using thoughts of others as bricks in their own argumentation, but it did not happen very often.

“In the four lessons during which we discussed justice with the different classes, only three students in this class and one in the Thursday class consistently argued for one and the same theory of justice throughout both texts on the subject. In this class, two girls and a boy consistently claimed that an equal distribution is the most just one in all situations. This could be seen either as a sign of dogmatism or as a sign of deep conviction based on thoroughly thought-out argumentation. Which of the two applies to this group of students is hard to tell and I have chosen not to comment on that question. Most other students seemed to be of the opinion that the choice of justice system should depend on the specific situation.

“The Wednesday class did not find the characters in the stories plausible, and they consistently commented on details in the text. They criticized the text on several occasions, but their criticism rarely had anything to do with the central problems expressed in the text. Philosophically formulated examples often highlight the issue in an almost overly clear manner. This can in some respects make the examples less plausible but not less interesting. From a scientific point of view, it is very important to be able to imagine the possibility of something, plausible or not. The students in the Wednesday
class did not show any skill at this.
Inger: "I think it is really interesting, but strange though. If someone came in like that the caretaker would not be that pleased to see two small boys in there. He was really friendly that caretaker. I think that seems strange as it was a dangerous place to be."

"To some extent, all classes gave examples of what I felt was irrelevant criticism of the text, in this respect the Wednesday class was by far the worst."

The Monday class
"The Monday class seemed both uninterested in the philosophical problems that were raised and bothered by my questions. I often had to act as a producer of questions, rather than as a guide through the texts. On the other hand, the class always commented on the problems I presented. None of the students used arguments of other students to any larger extent. Furthermore, the students often changed their views. I did not find any one who consistently argued for one and the same idea. In the justice lesson, I believed that this could be interpreted as if the students meant that what should be considered just always depends on the situation. However, this cannot be linked to any specific statement. The most popular theory of justice was the acquisition theory of Locke, which is unique for the class."

The Tuesday class
(The experiment class: Ed.)
"Although the students were rather passive in the beginning of both lessons, this was the group where the discussions worked best. At one time during the discussion of time travels, I remained quiet for ten minutes and allowed the students to pursue the investigation themselves. It worked excellently. They did not deviate from the central subject nor did the discussion get out of hand.
"The class immediately seemed to perceive where my questions were aiming and the students spontaneously came up with ideas that I had to present myself in the other classes. The participating students not only listened to each other’s argument, but also elaborated on them and used them in their own arguments.
"During the discussion on whether one travels in time when passing the dateline, the following was said:"
Fredrik: "But it's the same thing if you want to change time. If it is 12 o'clock at night and you set your watch back an hour, then you don't reach the time passed."
Teacher: "You don't?"
Ester: "No, you are always at the same place."
Fredrik: "If it is 12 o'clock at night and you wind the clock forward an hour, then you're not in the future."
Ester: "No, but the clock only shows the time. It is not the time."
"They did not hesitate to ask their fellow students (or me) for elucidation of the argumentation."
Ted: "Yes, but you can't travel through time."
Teacher: "Why not?"
Kristian: "That that has happened has happened. It can't happen again."
Fredrik: "How do you know that?"

"It is interesting to note that Fredrik seems to be of the same opinion as Kristian, but still wants him to give reasons for his view.

"When my reasoning or their fellow students' theories were criticized, one could perceive a degree of modesty and mutual understanding. The students explained why they found the argument or theory indefensible (often with an example). I found that the students had a critical approach to both what I and their classmates had to say. This was the only class that criticized me. The students also interpreted the texts in a fruitful way and envisaged different consequences of the theories that were discussed.

"The students rarely stuck to a single theory for more than a couple of minutes. All sorts of ideas were argued for and rejected. However, most students could be said to accept the idea that justice is dependent on the situation."

The Thursday class
"A problem arose when I was about to start my analysis of the Thursday class. The analysis was complicated because very few students were present at the first lesson, and the second lesson was dominated by one single student. However, there is no doubt that the Thursday class showed little or no interest in the problems of time and justice. I often requested arguments underpinning the students' comments, but they mainly chose to be silent.

"A common feature was inconsistent argumentation of the class. Exceptionally, one boy, throughout the second text on justice, spoke in favor of distribution by merit. The boy remained quiet during the discussion of the first text on justice. It is uncertain if he believed that distribution by merit should be used as a general principle or only in specific cases. Among the other active students, the most popular solution was to leave the doll—the object to be distributed—to avoid the problems of distribution."

Conclusion
"The fact that all classes defended philosophically interesting views and that the students used arguments and theories known from the history of philosophy ought not to be interpreted as if all students are great philosophers. I tried to give the discussions a philosophical bias and the texts that were used illustrated both well-known and interesting standpoints.

"Nevertheless, there is one class, or rather some students in one class, who showed several distinguishing qualities. I am referring to the Tuesday class, where the students had a critical attitude to what was said during the discussion, had no problem with abstract thinking and also seemed to be able to see the consequences that implementations of a theory might bring. Another sign of philosophical qualities could be that no one presented a firm idea of justice. Philosophy is known for not producing truths, thanks to its high demands on what should be considered as true. Despite my conclusion that none of the Tuesday class students had a firm idea of justice, I do not think it should be seen as a sign of philosophical quality. I support this assertion by the fact that altogether only four students consequently argued for one and the same theory of justice. Thus, not having a firm idea of justice does not make the Tuesday class unique.

"The only standpoint I have found common to all classes is that Sara ought not to have the doll. Sara represents a Buchanan contract theory. I believe that the students would have another attitude towards Sara if her character were to be slightly changed."

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Most students regarded Sara as evil. They felt that evil people do not deserve advantages. Most students wanted Elin to have the doll. Elin was designed to represent Rawls equality theory, but the students came up with other arguments to support Elin as well. One was Bentham’s utilitarian argument and the other was an argument based on virtue. The virtue argument was also used as a justification for why Sara ought not to have the doll. If the characters were changed but their arguments were kept intact I do not believe that all students would have argued in favor of the same characters in the text. For example, one might try to turn Elin into a vicious little creature and Sara into a kind, reasoning person.

"Are you guys serious?" says Elin. "You’ve got millions of dolls, while I’ve got none. You’d be stupid if you don’t give the doll to me."

"It saddens me to see us quarrel,” says Sara. “Sooner or later we’ll start a fight and someone will get hurt. Why not give me the doll right away, so that no one gets hurt? Whatever we do, I will get it eventually because I’m the strongest."

"The virtue theory was not the most prominent among the students, but it was important in determining how things should be distributed justly.

"I have been unable to identify a common denominator relating to the discussion on time, except that the students’ intuitions as regards time problems seems far weaker than their intuition as far as problems of justice are concerned.

**Communicative Interaction in the Classroom in Four Different Classes.**

**Summary of the pedagogics assistant’s report.**

“The purpose of my observation was to investigate in a contrasting way the differences and similarities between the pattern of communication of the four different classes. The guidelines through the observation were the following eight questions:

1. How does the pattern of communication (PC) develop during the lesson? (By “pattern of communication,” is here meant the verbal interaction between the pupils and the teacher and between the pupils themselves).
2. How does the PC change from lesson I to lesson II?
3. Is the PC different depending on what text is discussed? I was also interested to evaluate some further dimensions of the discussions:
4. Flexibility—i.e., the children’s ability to see a problem in different perspectives.
5. Argumentative accuracy—i.e., how often the children gave reasons for their standpoints, and how relevant and well formulated these were.
6. Tolerance of uncertainty—i.e., could the children deal with the fact that reasons can be given for several different solutions to the same philosophical problem?
7. Openness—i.e., were the children prepared to see the pros and cons of new possibilities which came up in the discussion?
8. Independence—i.e., how independent were the children in respect to the opinions of the teacher, other authorities, and their classmates?

"Since I had no acquaintance with the classes and no background information about them, I could just observe what happened during the lessons and analyze the transcripts from the tape. I could not speculate about what factors made the children say what they said, nor could I formulate any hypotheses about the reasons behind the children’s behavior. Thus, in a way, my observation was rather pure and ascetic. Since I had two opportunities to observe each class, I do believe that some of the patterns which reoccurred were not accidental but somehow were characteristic of the different classes.

"The differences between the four classes, as far as the PC’s are concerned, are significant, although the discussion of text I in all classes has a similar PC—at Teacher—>Students Interaction, i.e., the teacher asks and the students respond with “yes,” or “mmm...” or try to guess what answer the teacher is aiming at. But after the first half hour or so of the first lessons, the differences between the classes became significant.

"In some classes, the students were responding collectively and in other classes they hardly ever responded collectively. In some classes there was no interaction at all between the classmates. This was most obvious in the Wednesday class and the Thursday class. In the Monday class the students responded collectively, but one main reason for this can be that the teacher asked the class as a whole—"Do you all think...—more frequently than he did in the other classes.

“The different PC’s in the classes during Lesson II are most easily described graphically, as follows:

(See Figures 1, 2, 3 & 4 at back of this section.)

“The differences between the Monday, Wednesday and Thursday classes on the one hand and the Tuesday class on the other hand are significant. The figures show that there is a much more intense communication between the pupils in the Tuesday class than between the pupils in the other classes. The figures also show that a larger part of the Tuesday class takes part in the discussion. There are also more pupils who make many contributions to the discussions compared with the other classes. (One boy is noted for 124(!) utterances.) A further analysis of the arguments given shows furthermore, that the students in this class were discussing the subject matter in a more conscious way that the others. They were able to grasp the abstract principles discussed. The students in the Wednesday class were especially noted for using material from their life domain, rather than discussing in the symbolic domain. The students were more subjectively connected to the subject than the students of the Tuesday class.

“The following differences during the discussions about text III and IV are of interest. The PC of the Monday class was changed from lesson I to lesson II. Only one student was active during lesson II, compared to four-five students during lesson I. “Active” is here defined as making more than 10 contributions to the discussion. During lesson II in the Monday class, the interaction was almost exclusively between one student and the teacher. The students did not interact at all with their classmates.

“The PC of the Tuesday class was almost the same during the two lessons, but the PC of the second lesson was even more intense and dynamic, almost dialectic of character. The interaction of the active students was, however, too marked by the students’ personal roles to be really constructive. In that way the interaction was static.

“The PC of the Wednesday class was the same during the two lessons, i.e., Teacher <—>Students interaction.
"The PC of the Thursday class changed dramatically, because of one dominant student, who was absent during lesson I. The interaction during lesson II was primarily between that student and the teacher and had the character of private conversation. The other students tried to break the dominant interaction without succeeding.

"In all four classes the students were not as active in the beginning of the lessons as they were at the end of them. The students of the Tuesday class became especially more active as the time passed and they did not seem to care when it was time to finish the lesson. They continued to discuss the subject long after the lesson officially ended. The teacher eventually had to stop the discussion.

The flexibility and the ability of seeing the subject-matter in different perspectives varied between the classes as well as in the same class, depending upon what was discussed. Text II was the most discussed text, where more children took part in the discussion than was the case with any of the other texts. This might depend on the vicinity between the children's own experiences and those of the kids in the text, but it might also be a result of the text presenting five distinct standpoints to choose between, which might have facilitated the discussion.

The great exception was the Tuesday class. The students of this class also showed flexibility when discussing texts about time travels which were far from their own experience. Some individuals in the Monday class showed the same flexibility and ability as well.

The students of the Wednesday and the Tuesday classes showed the highest argumentative accuracy. However, the difference between the two classes is due to what basis the students were discussing the subject, from the life-domain or in the symbolic domain: the Monday class mostly chose their examples from their own experience, while the pupils of the Tuesday class could keep more in touch with the abstract subject-matter. The other two classes were heavily dependent upon the teacher and seldom gave reasons for their standpoints.

Most students in all four classes seemed to be satisfied with pure facts or anecdotes. During the discussion of Text II, the students showed some tolerance, due to the several solutions they came up with.

There are variances in and between the four classes when it comes to openness, but the most important difference was between the Tuesday class and the Wednesday class. The students of the Wednesday class showed no openness at all, while the students of the Tuesday class listened to the arguments of their classmates, changed their positions in view of new arguments, and built their own arguments on those of their comrades. They seemed more open to different solutions of the problems.

The students of the Tuesday class showed the highest independence. They discussed the subject among themselves and rather independently. The teacher was most of the time a partner in the conversation, rather than an authoritative person. The students in the Wednesday class were also independent versus the teacher, but their independence seems to follow a more conventional pattern formed by the society.

Conclusion
What is most striking about these reports is the difference in communication patterns. This is neatly illustrated by the drawings of the pedagogic assistant. The philosophy pupils talk to each other, they use the arguments of peers, they question their arguments. They even question the arguments of the "teacher". (This might be a problem for these children later in school.)

Furthermore, these children seem more involved in the discussion. They focus upon the central problems and carry on the discussion themselves. Though they often sighed during the three years of philosophy and questioned the value of philosophy, more children in this class seem to have developed more of a feeling for philosophy than the other classes.

The quality of their argumentation seems also higher, but here the results are uncertain, since one of the assistants was impressed by the eloquent children in the Wednesday class. A closer look at the arguments used shows that the relevance and ingenuity of the experiment class is higher, although they might not be able to formulate what they think as easily as the Wednesday class. But when compared with children from their own milieu, "our" children show greater skill in formulating their thoughts.

The result seems to confirm the idea that systemized training in philosophy according to the IAPC method results in significant differences in the way the children discuss philosophical problems. The differences are not so striking when it comes to the ability to propose philosophical ideas: many children seem to be able to discuss philosophical problems and come up with good ideas, which confirms the hypothesis behind Philosophy for Children, that children in a way are natural philosophers. The most significant differences are to be found in the way the children talk together, how they use the ideas of their comrades, and how they are able to question the ideas of the "teacher". The philosophy-trained children seem more autonomous and self-reliant. At the same time they form a community of inquiry in a way the other children do not.

Of course, no certain conclusions can be drawn from such a limited material. But the experiment can be performed several times (as long as we have classes who have been trained in philosophy and money for the evaluation). We have instead tried to evaluate the results of Philosophy for Children by using several different methods in the same classes. Since some patterns are constant and these patterns convincingly can be explained by the training in philosophy, we have reasons to presume that these patterns are effects of the philosophy lessons.

These findings might not astonish people who have long been involved with Philosophy for Children. Nonetheless, we were surprised that these effects were so clearly shown, and that they remained after two-and-a-half years without a single lesson in philosophy. As other evaluations which have been carried out within the project seem to show, these qualities seem to spread to other subjects, like math. We'll address this issue another time.
Text I—The Ginger Biscuits

Only a week was left before the Christmas holiday and Gerd Karlsson, who taught class 6A, intended to surprise her pupils with lemonade and ginger biscuits. The lemonade did not cost much and she bought a lot, but the biscuits were expensive so she only bought one tin. When the last lesson of the term came, the children sat round her in a circle on the floor and Gerd told them that she had a present for all of them.

“What kind of present is it?” the class asked her inquisitively.

“Lemonade and ginger biscuits,” came Gerd’s reply.

The children got very excited and when Cerd came to her, she found that she had not been very fair.

“Of course, but what do you mean by ‘fair’?” the class asked her.

“Well, the fairest way would be to give most biscuits to those who best deserve them. Shouldn’t the children who have done best this term get most of the biscuits?” was Gerd’s suggestion.

The class became really upset when she said that. “No, no, that’s not fair at all!” they shouted out. “What has fairness got to do with how clever you are or how hard you work? Fairness has got nothing to do with how good different people are. Each of us is an individual, and as individuals were all equal. Treat us as equals and give us the same number of biscuits each,” was their argument.

“I see, so you think that fair shares would mean that everyone got the same number of biscuits?” Gerd asked.

“That’s right! Fair shares are equal shares!”

“Okay, that’s what we’ll do. You will all get three biscuits each,” Gerd said.

But just when she was going to share out the biscuits, someone knocked on the door of their classroom. It was Anita, one of the other teachers who wanted Gerd to unlock her classroom for her because she had left her keys at home. Gerd left the classroom to help Anita. When she came back, she found that the class had grabbed all the biscuits. The biggest children had their hands full of biscuits, smaller ones had got hold of one or two, and the smallest child had only got a few crumbs.

Gerd was very angry and the class became very ashamed at their behavior.

“I said that everyone should get a fair share of the biscuits. You said equal shares would be fair shares. So now I want you to give me back one biscuit each as punishment for not waiting and grabbing them while my back was turned,” Gerd said, and thought that she herself had been very fair.

Text II—The Doll

Five girls were on their way home from school together. One of them told the others that she had found a way of getting into the dustbin room in the block of flats where she lived. She suggested that they should all go there to play. Elin pointed out that they were not supposed to play in the dustbin room, but the other girls answered her in chorus, “Don’t mind that!” They decided to meet outside the door of the dustbin room after their tea.

When all five had arrived, Agnes led the group to the dustbin room. She was the only one who knew how to get in. They climbed through a broken window and after fumbling around for a while, Lisa found the light switch. Just as she switched on the light, she caught sight of something lying at her feet. “Look what I’ve found,” Lisa shouted to the others. They all rushed up to her to see what it was. On the floor in front of them was a doll someone had thrown away. “I want it!” they all shouted at the same time.

“It’s mine,” said Agnes, “I showed you how to get in here, without me you would never have found the doll.”

“No, I’m going to have it.” Elin answered.

“After all, you’ve all got dolls at home, but I don’t have any, my parents can’t afford to buy me any dolls.”

“I’m going to have it,” said Lisa. “I was the one that actually found it.”

“I should get it,” rejoined Katarina. “I’ll get the most enjoyment from this doll. I’ve got a collection of dolls in this series, and this is the only one missing from it.”

“If I don’t get the doll,” Sara announced, “there’s going to be trouble, and as I’m stronger than any of you, I’ll get it anyway.”

Text III—Frasse and the Time Machine

Frasse and Hampus walked into the dark corridor. “Clang!” the enormous door they had walked through swung shut behind them. They heard a key turn in the lock.

“Frasse, I think we’ve been locked in,” said Hampus nervously.

“There must be a way out at the other end,” Frasse responded hesitatingly.

There was just enough light in the corridor for them to see their way. The further they went, the more frightened the boys became. They came up to an enormous white door with brass handles and a massive combination lock. On the door, in large red lettering, it said, “Extreme Danger—No Admittance.” Underneath in smaller black letters was written, “MRF Time Project.”

“What do you think is in there?” Frasse whispered.

“No idea,” Hampus answered very slowly. “I think that MRF stands for ‘Military Research Facility’. But how can a time project be dangerous?”

“Well, it scares me,” Frasse responded. “Come on, let’s get out of here.”

The boys walked away from the white door quickly and got to the other end of the corridor just as a man in a brown uniform appeared. He was holding a key-ring with two keys on it. He was obviously locking up for the night. “Hello, what are you two doing here?” he asked in an irritated voice.

“We’re meeting my sister, Annelli,” Frasse explained. “She works in the science library.”

“Well, you’re in the wrong building, then,” the man answered. “You should be in the next building. This is the applied physics lab.”

“Oh, thank you,” said Hampus, relieved at getting away from such a spooky place.

As the boys slid past the guard, Frasse stopped, gathered up his courage, and stammered: “E-e-excuse m-me, d-d-o you know what’s in the room behind the white door where it says ‘No Admittance’?”

“Oh, that,” laughed the guard in a somewhat ominous voice. “You wouldn’t want to go in there, then your parents would see neither hide nor hair of you again!”

Frasse persisted. “Why not?” he asked.

The guard became grave. He stooped down, lowered his voice, and explained carefully. “That, boys, you understand, is a time machine that they experimented with. If you get shut in there and set the figures properly, you won’t be living in 1984 any longer. It might be a hundred years earlier, 1894, or perhaps 1920, or..... who knows where you might end up.”

“Oh,” said Frasse, “is it really true?”

“You’d better run along to the library,” the guard replied. “You don’t want to start messing about with time machines, do you now?”

“Thank you,” said Frasse. He and Hampus set off for the next building.

When Frasse and Hampus met Annelli in the science library, they told her in excited voices what they had discovered. Annelli, however, scornfully laughed at the idea of traveling in time.

“A time machine,” she laughed. “Heavens above! And you believed what that guard told you!”

Frasse began to lose his temper. “You think you know everything,” he said angrily. “But the laugh would be on me if you travelled in that machine and ended up in.... in 1974. Two hundred years away!”

“That’s impossible,” Annelli answered calmly. “If you think about it, you can work it out for yourself. It just cannot happen. If I went back to 1794, there would have to be someone who was 18 years old in 1794 and who had been born 18 years earlier.... in 1776. But this someone, i.e., me, was born in 1976. It’s impossible for one and the same person to be born in 1794 and two hundred years earlier at the same time. Whatever they’ve got behind that white door, it’s not a time machine. You can work that out without even knocking on the door. All you have to do is think. The guard must have been making fun of you!”

Frasse was seething with anger. His big sister could really be a pain. She was so full of herself! But he calmed down and began to think about what she had said. Was she right? Could you really, without even going into the room, know that there couldn’t be a time machine behind the white door. That whatever “MRF Time Project” meant, it did not refer to a place you could travel in time from? We would know that, if we knew that time travel was impossible. But could you really be so sure about it? Was there a way that would make it possible? A way that even smart-boots Annelli hadn’t thought of?
Omar lived in a desert. There was nothing there but sand. Omar wanted a tree, so on his tenth birthday his father planted a sapling, which hardly came up to Omar’s knees.

But Omar was still unhappy. “The tree is still only a baby one, it’ll take years and years for it to grow,” he said to himself. For the next few days, Omar walked around imagining a tree of his very own that he could climb and build a den in and.... But deep inside Omar knew that it was going to be in his imagination. But then one day his mother asked him to clean the old oil-lamp that had belonged to his grandmother. He rubbed the lamp and suddenly, thick grey smoke started coming from the spout. Terrified, Omar threw the lamp on to the floor, but he didn’t run away. The smoke seemed almost to be alive and Omar watched it take the form of a genie. “Master, what is your wish?” asked the enormous genie in a voice like thunder.

Omar knew all about genies even though he had never seen one himself. His best friend, Alladin, had told him about genies in lamps, the wishes you could have and all the other things you need to think about when you are dealing with them. Omar thought so hard it hurt, but the only thing that he really wished for was that his tree would grow. “This tree is so small,” said Omar. “I want it to look the way it will in fifty years, when it is fully grown.”

The tree began to grow straight away. Omar watched breathless as it shot into the sky and its branches began to spread and spread. In an instant, it had grown to its full height. Omar’s hand went to his mouth in astonishment. But then he felt something odd. He had a beard! He looked at his hands which were wrinkled and larger than he was used to. “I’ve turned into an old man,” he said in terror.

“Genie!” he shouted. “All I asked for was to show me the tree fully grown!”

“Yes,” said the genie, “and that’s what I’ve done. But I couldn’t do only that. I can’t change one thing without changing everything else as well. To grant your wish, I had to move the whole world forward in time. How else could it be done?”
We Think More Than Before About Others and Their Opinions
(AN EVALUATION REPORT FROM ICELAND)\textsuperscript{1}

Hreinn Pálsson

In the fall of 1986, I conducted a participant observation study (Pálsson 1987) on the basic conditions for operation of communities of inquiry. The purpose was to document the presence, absence, or the genesis of communities of inquiry among twelve-year-old students in two classrooms in Iceland, taught by two teachers with ten years of experience in teaching. Communities of inquiry were not found to be present in the classrooms studied. In one of the classrooms such a community was established and major interactional changes took place in that classroom. Students accepted responsibilities for setting an agenda to their lessons and they monitored their own procedures; they questioned and reprimanded one another, they reminded the teacher of who should really be holding the floor.

In the fall of 1987, I found no channels of implementing Philosophy for Children in Iceland, but to offer philosophy courses on the open market. At first, I offered courses to 10-12 weeks long and each group has 8-12 members with ten years of experience in education. Communities of inquiry were established in the presence of the principal among six classrooms in Iceland, taught by two teachers with ten years of experience in teaching. Communities of inquiry were not found to be present in the classrooms studied. In one of the classrooms such a community was established and major interactional changes took place in that classroom. Students accepted responsibilities for setting an agenda to their lessons and they monitored their own procedures; they questioned and reprimanded one another, they reminded the teacher of who should really be holding the floor.

The stated aims of the project were:
(1) To train the students for active participation in a democratic society;
(2) To improve study skills in other subjects;
(3) To foster more positive attitudes towards school;
(4) To increase the social togetherness between students and reduce conflicts;
(5) To improve the students’ reasoning.

Soon after they started the project, the teachers started to identify them-
selves as the "Dialogical Community". Apart from casual meetings, the group met once a week to share their experience and discuss proceedings of the project. Each teacher kept a diary and a log was kept of all the meetings. In this vein, the teachers became the researchers of their own practice, their experience and discuss proceedings of the project. Each teacher kept a diary and a log was kept of all the meetings. The weekly meetings and the meetings with the trainer were pathways for self-correction of the group.

In their final report (Elin and Torfhildur 1993), the teachers reported that progress had been made towards four of the five stated aims. An abstract of their reasoning follows:

1. The teachers were convinced that philosophical dialogue prepares students for active participation in a democratic society. They point out that the talkative students, the ones who always have something to say, learned to respect the opinions of others and that a dialogue is not only a process of making statements but of reasoning. They report that the silent ones, or the silent majority, learned to listen, discuss and contribute to the group's discussion.

2. Standardized tests are not used in elementary schools in Iceland. The teachers in Síðustúkóli admit the difficulty of evaluating the carry-over effects to other disciplines, for such an evaluation to be accurate they would have needed more time. However, they state that the supervisory teachers of the fifth grade are in agreement on the students' progress. They note that the silent majority is now more willing to participate in discussions and that they are less afraid of initiating and they claim that the emphasis on reasoning results in better writing. Still, the teachers claim that they note no carry-over effects from philosophy to other disciplines.

We should not two things here. On the one hand, the teachers seem to be in agreement on a carry-over effect on the meta-disciplinary level, i.e., doing philosophy affects the students' attitudes and behavior. On the other hand, they do not note any direct transfer from discipline (philosophy) to discipline.

3. The teachers claimed they had no safe basis for not keeping about more positive attitudes towards being at school as a result of the philosophy project. They note that an aim of this kind must be a long-term goal. The teachers noted both positive and negative attitudes towards philosophy among the students, but they did not note a carry-over to attitudes towards school in general.

4. The teachers note that according to the students themselves, they have learned many things that should lead to increased social togetherness and reduced conflicts. For example, the students claimed to have learned to talk together, to give reasons for answers, to try to search for the positive sides, to think before acting. However, the teachers did not notice any clear examples of a corresponding change in the students' everyday actions. The teachers conclusion is that the students know more about the conditions for good interactions without being able to translate it into action, which may require increased age and maturity.

It may be noted here, that while at work, the community of inquiry requires a certain kind of action on behalf of students and teachers. In my experience, as a teacher, one tends to disvalue the importance of the community of inquiry; we have the unrealistic expectation that the students could (and should) have all the time in the same manner as they do in the community of inquiry.

5. To back up the teachers own evaluations I provided a translation of the New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills. The fifth-graders were pre-tested in the fall of 1992 and post-tested in the spring of 1993. The sixth-graders at Síðustúkóli served as a control group. The results are shown on Table I. The text has 50 multiple choice questions and correct answers, out of 50, are listed under the heading "Score", the equivalence of correct scores in percentages is listed under "%" and then the standard deviation follows.

The improved score for each grade is significant at the .001 level although it is evident that the improvement is on a much larger scale in the fifth grade. Such a comparison is not altogether fair as the groups are of different ages and no equivalence of correct scores in percentages is listed under "%" and then the standard deviation follows.

### Table I. Síðustúkóli Akureyri 1992-93.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Fall 1992</th>
<th>Spring 1993</th>
<th>Improvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Std. dev</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>7.65</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>7.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>7.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>7.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>7.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The improved score for each grade is significant at the .001 level although it is evident that the improvement is on a much larger scale in the fifth grade. Such a comparison is not altogether fair as the groups are of different ages and no attempt is done to evaluate increased reasoning skills that come with age. According to figures fro the IAPC (cf. Table II) much improvement does not occur after grade 5 and the fluctuation of the score between years has not been explained. The improvement in scores, between years, is listed in the column labeled "Gain".

### Table II. US Averages from 1986 on the New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Gain</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Std. dev</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>13.13</td>
<td>2411</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>7.71</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>6.34</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to compare figures from Table II to Icelandic figures gathered at Árbæjarskóli, in Reykjavík reported in Table III. (Árbæjarskóli was established in 1967 and it has over 900 students in 59 classes from grade 1-10). At Árbæjarskóli we seem to have a "stage" of rapid growth around the age of 12 and also, although to a much lesser degree, around the age of 14. In the USA, the periods of growth are around age 10 and 14. The Icelandic students are roughly 2-4 points behind US students in grades 6-9, a similar trend was noted by Slade (1990) when she was working with a group of international origin at a very expensive school in Brussels.

### Table III. Icelandic Averages from Árbæjarskóli Reykjavík, Fall 1992.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Gain</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Std. dev</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>13.13</td>
<td>2411</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures for grade 10 are to be taken with great caution as the students were free to attend and about half of the group was absent when the test was given. It is safe to assume that those who attended were those who were more conscientious and positive towards being at school.

In Árbæjarskóli, the test was given after a representative Heimskirkinn had given each class an awareness session about philosophy. We had two teaching hours with every class and as the test was preceded by an awareness session, the groups had different amounts of time to spend on the test. The "N" in Table III stands for the number of students who finished the test, but the total number of students is listed in the column "Total". In grades 5-8, three classes were tested in each grade, but five were tested in grade 9. Preliminary analysis shows that the scores of the students who could not finish the test was in line with those who did finish.

As can be seen by comparing Table I and Table III, the score at Sidúskóli was lower than at Árbæjarskóli; 3.35 lower for the 5th-graders and 1.08 lower for the 6th-graders. Statistical analysis shows (see Table IV below) that the performance of the four groups (2 pre-test and 2 post-test) at Sidúskóli are significantly different at the 0.001 level except when the two post-groups are compared. Thus, is evident that the fifth-graders have at least moved up to the level of 6th-graders; the figures indicate, in fact, that they have moved up to the 8-graders at Árbæjarskóli.

The figures from Árbæjarskóli show a gain of 3.36 between 6th and 7th grade, accordingly, it seems natural to assume that 6th-graders should improve their grade by two points from fall to spring. On this basis of comparison, there is no significant difference between the pre- and post-test of the sixth-graders at Sidúskóli. If we further assume that due to some unknown circumstances, the 5th-graders at Árabvískóli had a bad day when they took the reasoning test; they really should have scored 26.85 as the fifth-graders at Árbæjarskóli; 3.36 lower for the 5th-graders and 1.13) from fall to spring. Let us also assume, like we did in the 6th-graders, that the 5th-graders at Árbæjarskóli indicate 1.13) from fall to spring.

For example, the students claimed to have participated in discussions and that they are less afraid of initiating and they claim that the emphasis on reasoning results in better writing. Still, the teachers claim that they note no carry-over effects from philosophy to other disciplines.

### Table IV. Average Scores for the New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Gain</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Std. dev</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>13.13</td>
<td>2411</td>
<td></td>
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experience, they noted, among other things, differences between the fifth and sixth grade in the time required to finish the test; the sixth-graders needed the same amount for the pre- and post-test whereas the fifth-graders needed less time by spring.

Table IV: Summary of paired t-tests on repeated measures at Siduskóli.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Avg</th>
<th>Std.err</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p (two sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall-spring</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall-Spring</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring-Spring</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus-Spring</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among other things, we noted differences between the fifth and sixth grade in the time required to finish the test; the sixth-graders needed the same amount for the pre- and post-test whereas the fifth-graders needed less time by spring.

**Evaluation by the Students**

Although the students’ performance, and the evaluation of the teachers were quite positive, I sensed the teachers uneasiness in making bold statements about the students perceptions during the experimental process. In an attempt to evaluate the students’ perceptions I designed a questionnaire based on Jackson (1993). Whereas Jackson used a 5-point scale between “Strongly disagree” and “Strongly agree,” I used a 5-point scale between opposites where 1 was in most cases the highest grade, 10 points is the highest “grade” in the questionnaire. The changes in the design were meant to increase the validity of the responses, i.e., the students needed to be careful when deciding where to put their vote. For example, a possible line of the students’ thinking could be: “Aha, philosophy was fantastic. Let’s give it a perfect score, a 5”—the result would be contrary to the intention.

The students answered the questionnaire in the beginning of the school year 1993-94, a year after they started on the philosophy project. The main reason for not using the questionnaire by spring of 1992 was inadequate preparation on my behalf. However, fall 1993 has its advantages: The experience has settled in the students’ minds (some people say that education is what remains when you have forgotten what you learned), and there is no

**Philosophy helped me to understand my classmates:***

Better: 52.5% Neutral 44.1% Worse: 3.4%

(1) I can listen more to them. We can talk more together. (2) They often talked about strange things that I didn’t understand but now I do. (3) I am beginning to understand them better. (4) I have never understood them. (Even though I know their opinions it does not mean that I understand them. {There is a philosophical touch in this reasoning although I would have liked to see the circle around one, but not around four!})

**Philosophy helped me to understand my teacher:**

Better: 56.2% Neutral 38.6% Worse: 5.3%

(1) Now I understand my teacher much better, like her thoughts. (1) I understand my teacher better and I can listen to her. (2) We talked so much together, all of us. (3) There was no need for that, she talked so clearly. (3) I understand the teacher no better. (5) No, definitely not.

**To accept the opinions of others is,** after the philosophy:

Easier: 62.5% Neutral 32.1% Harder 5.4%

(1) It seems to me like one thinks more about others and their opinions than before. (2) I always used to have problems with accepting the opinions of others. (3) I stick to my opinions. (4) Others tell the same as I, but they get the floor.

***

The majority (65%) of the students have no doubt that doing philosophy helped them express themselves. However, only 35.2% think that philosophy helped their classmates understanding them. The figures in question 2-6 seem to reflect doubts about the self; they see themselves as better talkers, it is easier to accept the opinions of others and to understand them, but the question is: Do they really understand me? The students observation
III. PHILOSOPHY AND...
I told my family or friends about the philosophy classes:
Often: 63.2% Neutral: 19.3%
Never: 17.5%
(1) I just liked it so much. (1) I like to talk with my parents. (2) Rather often as mom was getting bored on me. (2) They really wanted to know how this was. (2) I told them about it because it was fun. (3) They never asked me. (4) I was too lazy to do that.

Philosophy made studying in other disciplines:
Easier: 53.6% Neutral: 42.9%
More difficult: 3.6%
(1) I understand everything much better. (2) I didn’t know what differences of kinds and degrees was. (2) I think I learned a lot. (3) Yes and no. I don’t know.

I recommend philosophy in more schools:
Definitely: 72.8% Neutral: 16.9%
Definitely not: 10.3%
(1) It is good for them. (1) Because it is good for kids to think a little. (1) It is so much fun that others got to try it. (1) It helps kids to understand better. (1) I think that everyone needs to learn philosophy. (2) I don’t know how kids in other schools think, but I would recommend it. (3) I don’t care. I want us to be the only ones [that have it]. (3) It is boring. (5) It is tiresome.

Philosophy and other disciplines are:
Similarly: 8.6% Neutral: 3.1%
Different: 60.4%
(1) Like the reading. (2) Not that very much alike other disciplines. (3) They are not that much alike. (3) Some are differences of degrees and some of kinds. (4) Because I like some disciplines but philosophy was boring. (5) Philosophy is more fun. (5) There is more thinking in philosophy.

[It is interesting to see that 73% of the students recommend philosophy in more schools although the enjoyment was not at that level. The students also see philosophy as being different from other disciplines.]

IV. ENJOYMENT

I thought that philosophy was:
Fun: 61% Neutral: 27.1%
Boring: 11.9%
(1) The teacher was good and she listened to us. (1) It was fun to give reasons and discuss things and it was also fun to find examples from the readings. (1) I like it so much to dig into things. (1) Because the book we read was fun. (2) I found it boring to read the book but still I want to continue with it. (2) The discussions were fun. (3) Sometimes it was fun and sometimes it was boring. (3) It depended on whether I was tired or not. (4) One always needed to give reasons for everything. (This is one of those points that makes the day for the teacher but the student evidently thinks that “giving reasons” cannot be compatible with being “fun” but only with “boring”). (5) I had a boring teacher.

The lessons were:
Too long: 55.1% Neutral: 25.9%
Too short: 19%
(1) I became tired of sitting for so long. (1) You got bored at once. (1) I was so bored after 60 minutes but the classes were 80 minutes. (2) You got so tired to sit. (2) Just a little bit too long. (3) I thought they were just fine. (3) I thought they were just right. (4) Because there were almost always questions after the class. (5) It was so much fun that I could easily have stayed longer.

The group was:
Too big: 5.2% Neutral: 75.9%
Too small: 19%
(2) Just good enough. (3) Just fine. (3) It couldn’t be bigger and it couldn’t be smaller. (4) It was fun talking together about our thoughts. (5) Everyone should have stayed together.

The story we read was:
Fun: 50.8% Neutral: 23.7%
Boring: 25.7%
(1) I like exciting and funny stories. (1) The kids thought a lot. (2) I liked it very much but yet I understood not everything but some of the things that were in it. (3) I learned a lot but the story was not especially funny. (3) Some of the chapters were boring. (4) It was often boring. (4) Because it was never the same. (5) It was so much of stupid imagination.

V. OPEN QUESTIONS ON WORST AND BEST
What I liked worst about philosophy was:
Thirteen students mentioned the reading. Ten complained that the lessons were too long. Three claimed that everything about it was boring. Three complained about the novel. Four complained about finding ideas for setting the agenda. One student claimed he understood nothing to begin with. Eleven students said “nothing” or “I liked everything”. Two complained about boring questions. Two complained about their teacher. One student wrote: “Because you always have to give reasons for everything.” Eight other “single” reasons were given.

What I liked best about philosophy was:
Eight liked best reading the story about Harry. Nine cited the talking; Fourteen cited games; eleven cited everything; three cited nothing; two cited the questions. Nine made comments of different kinds, for example, “Philosophy helped us to understand others,” and “When we had to figure out a difficult puzzle and at the same time think about may other things.”

Discussion
In Svóskóli a threefold evaluation was used; the teachers researched their own practice, the questionnaire was a pathway for the students to express their opinions of the project, and the New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills provided an objective basis to judge the students’ performance.

The success at Svóskóli is, in my opinion, largely due to the initiative and solidarity among the teachers themselves. How they went about their research was very much in the spirit of a community of inquiry; the purpose of their weekly meetings was to share experience, reconstruct it, and then correct their practice. For sure, it would have been interesting to have a more detailed record of exactly what took place at those meetings; carrying such a task out would have required more personnel than available.

It is a known fact that doing philosophy with children is teacher-dependent but in this study there was not attempt done to dig into the teaching styles of the individual teachers. In fact, I have never observed any of the teachers in action with their groups. Our intention was, on the contrary, that I would observe them when I came to visit, but there was a common
agreement among the teachers, that they would learn more by observing me teaching their students.

This arrangement gave me the opportunity to experience the groups as a teacher. Although living in a small community, being the same age, watching the same TV shows, the difference between some of the groups was huge. Each group had a character of its own. I remember especially one group that I had a hard time with. They all sat quietly, that was the problem. I used every trick in my bag but standing in front of that group was like standing in front of a black hole; my questions caused minimal response from the students. Doing philosophy with children does not only depend on the teacher, it also depends on the group in question. Every group of students must be met on their own terms; the teacher has to scaffold his or her teaching their students. As a teacher, I try to prevent students from treating themselves and their classmates as things.

The results of the New Jersey Test were not analyzed in such a way that each teacher would be one variable; that could have produced an unfair basis for comparison as no attempt was made to evaluate the different character of the groups. However, the results from the questionnaire were checked with regard to the three different classes (not with regard to the six philosophy groups). The most noteworthy cases follow, (see Appendix A to get a clearer view of the questions), the letters A, B and C represent the classes. Remember, 3 is neutral and the lower the number, the better, except for the last question.

These figures certainly indicate that it would be worthwhile to study the communities within each classroom rather than across the classrooms as was done in this project. Such a research would require qualitative methodology, often referred to as ethnography, and it could be added on top of a similar project.

Although objective and easy to conduct, the New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills is not in the spirit of Philosophy for Children when children are set up to solve the puzzles without help from classmates or teachers. It is not a test of Philosophy for Children, it is a reasoning test that should be used along-side other means of evaluation.

An experienced philosopher can, no doubt, stay on top of a discussion among 25 students and such a size has the advantage of variety in opinions. One of the students commented, on the questionnaire, that all of the class should stay together for the philosophy sessions. However, if all students would talk equally no one could talk for two minutes altogether during one regular teaching hour of 40 minutes. Also, it is frightening to an experienced teacher, inexperienced in doing Philosophy for Children, to conduct a discussion among so many students. The teachers at Síðuskóli solved this problem by dividing each class in two and thus they had philosophy sessions of 80 minutes. The sessions were continuous with no breaks. This arrangement puts a lot of load on the teacher’s shoulders; the students are few but the trick is to keep the dialogue moving. That is no easy task and no wonder that some of the students complained about the length of the sessions.

One of the things that surprised the teachers was how many slow readers there were in the groups. The students took turns by paragraphs when reading Harry and that often took some time. Although the slow readers had difficulties with the reading, the students mastered, in general, the thinking that was required. In their answers to the questionnaire it was evident that some of the students really disliked the reading and others really liked it. Possible explanations for this situation are many. For one thing, Icelandic fifth-graders have much fewer hours of schooling than, for example, students in the United States. It is not customary for students to read aloud while all the classmates and the teacher is in the audience. As a result, we decided that in the future, we would recommend using Harry with sixth-graders rather than with fifth-graders.

**Conclusion**

The project at Síðuskóli confirmed that after only 40 hours of training, elementary school teachers can be quite successful in doing philosophy with their young students. The difficulties in implementing Philosophy for Children, in a setting like Iceland include: (1) Regular classes are too big.
and some means have to be found to reduce the number of students. (2) The teachers need to be paid or somehow rewarded for the extra hours it requires to do philosophy. Preparation is very time-consuming in the initial steps. (2) Follow-up visits by the philosopher who was in charge of the initial training are of great support to beginners.

There are indications that the style of doing philosophy can very much between communities of inquiry. To better understand the processes involved, ethnographic case studies of several classrooms are needed.

The author wishes to thank the Icelandic Science Foundation for financial support and the Educational Research Institute of Iceland for their assistance in analyzing the data on the New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills. However, all responsibility of the article lies with the author.

"Community of Inquiry" does not translate well into Icelandic; a direct translation would be "Rannsóknarfélág" or "Community of Investigation". I have chosen to translate "community of inquiry" as "community of dialogue" or "dialogical community."

NOTES

References:

How did you like philosophy?

Here are some questions about the philosophy course from last year. In each question, you have to place the course between opposites. Number 3 is neutral. Circle the number that fits best with your opinion. It helps if you give examples or short explanations to support your answers, but it is not obligatory to do so. The purpose of the survey is to find out how you liked philosophy and where we can do better.

1. I thought that philosophy was:
   Fun ........................................ 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Boring
2. Philosophy helped me to express myself:
   Better ...................................... 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Worse
3. Philosophy helped me to understand my classmates:
   Better ...................................... 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Worse
4. Philosophy helped my classmates to understand me:
   Better ...................................... 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Worse
5. Philosophy helped me to understand my teacher:
   Better ...................................... 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Worse
6. To accept the opinions of others is, after the philosophy:
   Easier ...................................... 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Harder
7. I told my family or friends about the philosophy classes:
   Often ...................................... 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Never
8. Philosophy made studying in other disciplines:
   Easier ...................................... 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Harder
9. Philosophy got me to think:
   More clearly ................................ 1 2 3 4 5 .......... More unclearly
10. Philosophy made me think:
    More ........................................ 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Less
11. The lessons were:
    Too long ................................... 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Too short
12. The group was:
    Too big ................................... 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Too small
13. The story that we read was:
    Fun ........................................ 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Boring
14. I recommend philosophy in more schools:
    Definitely ................................... 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Definitely not
15. Philosophy and other disciplines are:
    Similar .................................... 1 2 3 4 5 .......... Different
16. What I liked worst about philosophy was:
17. What I liked best about philosophy was:
The Effect of Philosophy for Children on Language Ability

Michael Schleifer and Louise Courtemanche

The present study concerns a group of children in a Northend school in Montreal, Quebec. This school is in a district inhabited mainly by recent immigrants from more than fifty countries. Ninety-three percent of the school is made up of children whose first language is neither English nor French. Not surprisingly, many children have difficulty with language communication and expression. Although French is the official language of instruction, the second language spoken at home is almost invariably English (information based on a questionnaire). This makes French the third language.

Twenty children, aged ten to twelve, participated twice a week for eight months (two one-hour periods) in a discussion of philosophical materials from Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery. These twenty were selected randomly from a larger group, all of whom had been singled out as having profound difficulty in oral language. This makes French the third language.

All children were seen individually by a research assistant who was ignorant of the hypotheses of the research. Meetings were in October, and again in June. Each child was shown a cartoon (see Appendix II) and instructed as follows:

1. Look at the cartoon so you can tell me the story afterwards. Tell it to me like you are the only one to know it. Take your time to prepare, and tell me when you are ready.

The oral presentations were recorded, and the audiocassette tapes were subsequently heard by two other assistants not involved in the present study. These evaluations were given the definition of twelve criteria. Their ratings showed 98% inter-judge reliability.

The twelve criteria were:

1. Syntaxic Error: Incorrect use of negations, forgetting “ne” or “pas,” etc.
2. Simple Sentence: A sentence without any verb, or only one verb.
3. Complex Sentence: Any sentence with more than one conjugated verb.
4. Conjugation: Correct or incorrect form of verbs: passé composé or infinitif.
5. Agreements: Gender or number agreements that could be heard.
6. Connectors: All those words which connect parts of a sentence, or two sentences to each other. For example, parce que, car, qui, ou, quelques minutes plus tard, etc... How many different kinds of connectors were used? For example, et used eleven times counted only as one connector.
7. Linearity: Was the story told exclusively band by band? Was there a jumping between bands to create a sense for the listener?
8. Relevant details: Were the details chosen to help clarify the story? Were they only reporting what was observed?
9. Organizational Effort: Is there evidence of a beginning, middle and end to the story? Are the personalities named to help comprehension? Are they made to speak of their intentions, their thoughts or their feelings?
10. Vocabulary: How many appropriate or inappropriate words are used?
11. Fluidity: Does it take a long time to get started? Are there marked hesitations? Is the delivery very slow or very rushed?
12. Length: How long did the presentation take, including hesitations?

The results show clear improvement for a majority of children who had the benefit of the Philosophy for Children discussions. Seven indices showed marked improvement for 19 out of 20 children. These were: Simple sentences (reduced), Complex Sentences (increased), Vocabulary (more precise and appropriate), Linearity (reduced), Relevant Details (increased) and Organization of Presentation (from weak, to very good), and Connectors (increased use). Syntactic error, Conjugation, Gender-Agreement,
Fluidity and length of Presentation showed little change.

The comparison group also showed improvement on some of the same indices. These included Vocabulary (15 out of 20), Simple to Complex Sentences (12 out of 20). In contrast to the philosophy group, the comparison group did not improve significantly on Organization of Presentation (5 of 20), Linearity (4 of 20), Relevant Details (7 of 20), and Connectors (3 of 20). On these last five variables, the differences between groups were highly significant according to a chi-square test \( p < .01 \).

There is reason, then, to conclude that the discussions did improve the capacities of children at communication and expression in the French language. It is of note that some of the specific gains were related to organization of presentation and the use of relevant details. This could be related to the emphasis in philosophy-discussions, on making one’s point clear and understandable to the others. Of particular note, too, is the finding of increased use of connectors in the post-test, many of which were not even mentioned by any children in pre-testing. This list, which we provide in Appendix I, recalls much of the emphasis upon reasoning and logic which is part of Philosophy for Children, particularly in the Harry novel, which was used in the present study.

### APPENDIX I

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Connectors</th>
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<td>après mais quand</td>
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<td>après ça maintenan</td>
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<tr>
<td>après quelques minutes parce que (à cause que)</td>
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<tr>
<td>avec pendant</td>
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<tr>
<td>ce que pis (puis) après</td>
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<tr>
<td>comme quand</td>
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<td>des fois quand même</td>
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<td>encore que</td>
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<td>et quelques</td>
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The Effect of Philosophical Discussions in the Classroom on Respect for Others and non-Stereotypic Attitudes

Michael Schleifer and Ginette Poirier

"Philosophy goes for the problematic as a moth is drawn to a flame or as a combatant is drawn to his opponent’s jugular; indeed, it is not unusual to observe philosophers seeking their own jugulars at times. The significance of this quest for the problematic is that it generates thinking."
Matthew Lipman, Philosophy goes to school, p. 33

The doing of philosophy with very young children is consistent with a view of cooperation in education which I have elucidated and defended in the past (Schleifer, 1993). This Piagetian view sees cooperation as an end in itself rather than a means to improved learning. In contrast with the cooperative-learning approach of Slavin (1990) and Johnson (1989) there is no emphasis on results, or rewards, or on implicit competition between teams. Children doing philosophy create a community of inquiry in which they reflect and question together. This intervention is consistent with the approach to cooperative education which we have defended as pertinent. As Piaget insisted, true cooperation involves mutual respect. The spirit of doing philosophy involves, we believe, precisely the kind of respect Piaget had in mind.

Although there exist reports of the effects of cooperative learning on race interactions, (Slavin and Oickle, 1981; Johnson and Johnson, 1989), these analyses do no more than suggest (Hillkirk, 1991) that the quality of cross-ethnic relationships and cross-handicapped relationships were improved. The data upon which the analyses rest are problematic (Slavin and Oickle, 1981), and based upon the question, “Who are your friends in this class?” It is surmised that interracial interactions in small cooperative groups may overcome stereotypic attitudes, at least that Whites hold about Blacks. Since the results with Blacks are almost always discrepant, various extreme suggestions have been made such as “Black attitudes to Whites are typically more positive than White attitudes to Blacks”, or “Blacks are more cooperative than Whites”, or “The peer group may be more important for Blacks than for Whites” (Slavin and Oickle, 1981 p. 179). These suggestions indicate how tentative the proofs are of an effect of cooperative learning on stereotyping. They are, furthermore, symptomatic of the very kind of over-generation which leads to stereotyping. In contrast to the cooperative learning approach, the present paper will present the results of an experiment with very young children introduced to philosophical discussions. The effect of these discussions held by the entire class (rather than small “teams”) on their attitudes to race, gender, and the handicapped was directly assessed. The results will be discussed in terms of tolerance to ambiguity.

SUBJECTS
Twenty-six children in each of two second-year classes from a working-class neighborhood. The children were all native Francophone Montrealers.

INSTRUMENTS
a) Generalizations
Two questions from our adapted and modified Reasoning Skills Test (Schleifer, Lebuis and Caron, 1987) were used with content familiar to the children (see Appendix A).

b) Racial and Sexual Stereotypes
A modified version of PRAM II (The Preschool Racial Attitude Measure II, Williams, Best, Boswell, Mattson and Graves, 1975) was used. Despite its name, this test has been widely used in elementary schools as well (Clark, Hocevar and Dembo, 1980).
24 items, half of which refer to skin color, the others to gender difference. The 12 questions on skin color were retained; several of those referring to gender were modified to be more pertinent (see Appendix B). For example, children are shown a picture of a Black man and a White man. They are told: “One of these is very bad. Which is the bad man?” Justifications for choices were elicited in the individual interviews.

c) Stereotypes of the Handicapped

The measure was a revised version of the test by Abrams, Jackson and St. Claire (1990). Seven items were used in the present research (see Appendix C). Each child circles his choice for each item both for a “normal” person and for a handicapped person, with 1 being the least and 7 being the most. The scale is explained, and the children try it with practice items. They are told that there are no “right or wrong” answers, but we are interested in knowing their ideas.

PROCEDURE

The Philosophy for Children program was introduced into the school in October. One of the “novelettes” developed by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp entitled Kio and Gus (Kio et Augustin in our French adaptation), was used with youngsters in one of the two second grades. Different themes are suggested in the episodes of the novel, including people and nature, perception of the world, and differences and similarities (one of the protagonists of the novel is blind). The teacher of the second-grade class introduced the philosophical discussions in her class. She was accompanied by a member of our university team, who occasionally led the discussions. Philosophy was done once a week until the end of June.

The three questionnaires were distributed in two grade-two classes in October, one doing Philosophy for Children, one offering the standard curriculum. These were distributed by the two classroom teachers. In addition, open-ended interviews were held individually by a research assistant with a randomly selected group of children (7 from each class). At the end of the school year, both questionnaires and interviews were administered a second time. In the first interview, the reasons and justifications for the choices were elicited. In the second interview, two additional questions were asked:

Question 1: Two children are asked to remain behind during recess. Passing near the classroom, you hear the teacher make the remark: “You are always messy with your schoolwork.” Is she addressing the Black boy or the White boy?

Question 2: You are the captain of the soccer team, and must choose the members of your team. You are down to two people, a boy and a girl for the final position. Whom do you choose? Why?

RESULTS

a) Generalization

About half of both the experimental and control group responded with false generalization at initial testing (see Table I). Both groups recorded improvements over time for the question concerning American-Indians (see Appendix A) with greater improvement for the experimental group. For the second question (the Chinese driver), the experimental group alone recorded significant progress over time.

b) Sexual Stereotypes

The initial ratings on the 12 questions relating to boy/girl differences showed high stereotyping for both groups (80%). The post-tests showed little improvement for either group (the experimental group still gave 73% stereotypical answers, the control group 80%). An analysis of the answers question by question reveals that #13 “Who likes to play ball?” and #15, “Who is good at Nintendo?” and #17, “Who likes to play soccer?” show an improvement for the experimental group from 54% stereotyping (13/24) for each of these questions in the pre-test to 16, 7% (4/24) in the post-test. The control group’s responses remained at about 50% for the pre- and post-test. Clearly the results on sexual stereotyping were affected by the content of the questions. It should be noted that the methodology of this test forces a choice. This may account for the high level of stereotyping for both groups at both times. For example, if show two people, and asked to choose the one that wore earrings, it is perhaps reasonable for any person—adult or child—to choose the girl rather than the boy. However, according to the test-criteria the choice listed would count as sexual stereotyping.

b2) Racial Stereotyping Initial

Responses showed racial stereotyping at about 50% for both groups. Post-tests showed improvement for both groups (controls giving 32% such responses and the experimental group only 10%). The absence of racial stereotyping in the post-test is reflected in the large numbers who opted for “I don’t know”. In pre-testing, only two children gave this response, and only for four questions out of twelve. On post-testing, half of the “control” children and 23/24 of the “experimental” children offered this response. For questions #6: “Who is pretty?”; #8: “Who is bad?”; and #22: “Who is ugly?” no stereotypical responses were offered by the children in the experimental group in the post-test.

c) Stereotypes of the Handicapped

The scores are the difference between the attributes to the “normal” and to the handicapped persons. The greater the score, the more the inferred stereotyping. The scores for the experimental and control groups were comparable to each other in pre-testing. On post-testing, neither group changed its overall score significantly. (These are summarized in figures I and II). Certain questions, however, showed improvement for the experimental group (B, D, and E) whereas others did for the control group. Question D which concerned differences, showed the greatest changes for the experimental group and none for the control. In post-testing, their ratings show that they consider the handicapped person no more different from them than any other “normal” person.

INTERVIEWS

At pre-testing, six of the seven experimental children, and all seven
of the controls justified their choices. Reasons for choosing the Black boy as “bad” included four “I don’t know’s” and three “He looks bad”, in each of the two groups. In post-testing, six of the seven control children had chosen stereotypic responses, and gave similar justifications. All seven experimental children had responded non-stereotypically to the test measures as described above. The new questions about choosing soccer, and guessing whom the teacher was referring to (see above) elicited 5 of 7 stereotypic responses for the control group and only 2 of 7 for the experimental group for the soccer question (They chose the boy). There were no racial stereotypes for the experimental group.

**DISCUSSION**

Children exposed to philosophical discussion learn, among other things, about the problematic. Rather than draw too hasty conclusions, or jump to a too-wide generalization, they learn to consider different facets and points of view. As they become more sensitive to these traps and dangers, they also realize that differences can be misleading. Like similarities, differences exist, but what is to be implied from these differences is often tricky. In the novellette *Kio and Gus*, used in the present project, there is much discussion of this difference/similarity theme. In addition, the related subject of appearance and essence is treated with various examples. Argusvine, who is blind, explains to her friend that the outward behavior of the cat would lead one to suppose that he hates washing himself with his tongue. Further reflection, however, might lead one to wonder whether the first impression was right. Perhaps the cat, in essence, really likes this, appearances aside. In another episode, Kio tries to determine if a whale really wants to save his grandfather’s life or whether this is only a case of “appearance”.

These considerations about similarity/difference, and appearance/essence can be subsumed under the notion of a tolerance to ambiguity. Recently, attribution-theory has been applied to youngsters who are violent and aggressive. These studies (for example Hudley and Graham, 1993) set up intervention programs with an emphasis on changing cognition through discussion. One of the major successes has been through altering attributional bias, that is the tendency of some youngsters to immediately attribute malicious intent to the other. What is of interest is that the success of this change is due to children learning to cope with ambiguity. Given a situation which is ambiguous, it is all too easy to attribute hostile intention to the other, with the violence that inevitably follows. What is more difficult, but ultimately rewarding, is the tolerance for the ambiguity, and the acceptance of the possibility of doubt with no immediate clarity or resolution. What the children in some of these aggression-studies have learned seems to be similar to what the children in the present study have also begun to grasp: the lesson can perhaps be best summarized by repeating Lipman’s word cited at the outset. Children in the present study—like the violent youngsters in the attributional studies—must learn to accept the problematic. Instead of jumping to a too-hasty conclusion, they must learn to continue their reflection, their thinking and base their judgment on what is solid. In the psychological studies, children seem to be able to develop better judgment which leads to better behavior. In the present study, children likewise learn better judgment which helps in part to diminish prejudice and stereotypes.

**REFERENCES**


An Orange for the Teacher

A.G. Thompson

Do you recall any teacher claiming that $2 \times 6$ (two times six) is the same as $6 \times 2$ (six times two)? I recall an argument with a university professor of mathematics who assured me the two problems were identical. Mathematically. The answer is the same for both. I argued that taking six pills two times a day is quite different from taking two pills six times a day. Sure, in both cases twelve pills are consumed.

I have the same ambivalence with $1/2 \times 1/2$. The words one-half times one-half make no sense inside my head. I get no picture. But $1/2$ taken 1/2 of a time does provide me with a picture, it does make sense inside my head, and I can understand more easily that the product will be about $1/4$. For me it’s the language that baffles. How about $1/2$ divided by $1/2$? No picture. Makes no sense inside my head. Those words have no real meaning for me. And, teachers with whom I’ve worked agree.

If multiplication is a form of addition, what happens when we work with the multiplication of fractions? If division is a form of subtraction, what happens when we divide fractions? $1/2$ divided by $1/2 = 1$. I’ve had scores of teachers, with heads down, claim that the answer ought to be $1/4$. And, under the same circumstances, teachers initially claim that $1/2$ times $1/2 = 1$. They were getting no picture in their minds, either. No mental image. Just words. The hope is that memory will kick in and the correct answer somehow will emerge. My hunch is that students with number ability superior to that of the teacher are in trouble. Such students intuitively know that something is awry. These students’ minds are full of questions about this stuff but meaningful answers are slow in coming, if ever.

Bringing meaning to the learning experience is to establish a kind of logic out of what too often is meaningless. Too frequently the teacher does not conceptualize what is to be taught even though that teacher may have “taught” this or that content for many years. Teachers often pull from their memory what was once “learned” and parrot what needs to be “taught”. Prescriptions are read from the text. How to get the correct answer is the focus. Batches of problems are completed by students. Teachers check wrong answers using an answer book. Grades are given to the students. And so, the level of learning for many students approximates that of the teacher. That level of learning may be nothing more than memory, without significance and without the potential for reducing the “learning” to any meaningful practice. In such situations, teachers fear questions by superiors or even average students because of the teacher’s inability to explain in a meaningful way what is happening mathematically. Nor has the teacher been able to restructure the content as it might be found in the real world of learners.

When teachers successfully analyze and synthesize content to be learned, and when they have some idea about how that content can be reduced to practice, the teacher ought to be gaining new insights as to what is going on within the mathematics and can therefore relate that mathematics to the real world. Such insights can only enhance the teaching/learning task.

Many teachers fear math, hence the “teaching” is dogmatic, without any examination of the whys and wherefores of problems in a reality context. The logic of the content is not explored. A community of inquiry within the classroom is impossible because students might get too conceptualized by the teacher. Such situations are threatening. Too, some educators are hard-pressed to accept the fact that some students, at any educational level, will have greater mathematical ability than the teacher.

To teach any content at a level better than that at which one learned, teachers must “fuss” intellectually and imaginatively with what is to be taught. As a teacher I must question ME about, “How can I bring this or that content into the meaning of learners while appealing to their imaginations?” “What do I really KNOW about this content? Does the content make sense inside my head?” “What questions do I need to ask myself to determine MY level of competence with the content?” “Do I know how this content fits within the lives of these learners?” “How can I concretize the abstractions of the lesson?” “How might I appeal to the imaginations of learners with this content?” “Does this content appeal to my imagination?” “What delivery systems are available for presenting the content?”

I don’t recall whether it was Mae
West or John Dewey who said, “Knowledge keeps no better than fish.” Whomever the source, as the teacher I had better have some notion about what the content is “good for” if I’m going to take kids’ time and effort to learn whatever I think I’m teaching.

I was discussing the above thoughts with a group of experienced teachers in Guatemala. They laughed openly when I asked if they find themselves having to teach “stuff” about which they know little. The teachers identified several content areas in math which were confusing. It was agreed that I should attempt to reconcile my thoughts stated above with their responsibility to teach fractions. I had to admit that I had no ready answers about their concerns at that moment but that I’d have to “fuss” with their questions for some hours or days before I could return with some alternative approaches for teaching/learning fractions with meaning.

The next day, Saturday, I found myself walking through the Antigua food market. I passed butchers working on beef, vegetable vendors pushing carrots by the gross, and flower stalls offering a cacophony of scent and color. I wandered through an area where bananas were sold by the dozen or the stalk when my attention was drawn to tailored mounds of oranges, limes and grapefruit. My eyes yelled, “Eureka!” as my mind got inside the grapefruit, limes and oranges. I purchased three hands of oranges (five oranges to a hand). Those oranges are called Washingtons. They are large. Easy to peel. Easy to segment. Juicy, sweet.

The following Monday I met with the teachers and passed out the Washingtons. “What do I have in my hand?” I asked, holding a bright green, but very ripe orange. “An orange,” the teachers agreed. “How do you know it is an orange?” I asked. Responses included:

- It looks like an orange.
- It smells like an orange.
- It’s the size of an orange.
- It’s not an apple.
- It has pores like an orange.
- It has a belly button.

Well, maybe we do have an orange. “What’s inside the orange?” was my next question.

- Pits
- Seeds
- Pith
- Juice
- Vitamin C
- Color
- Segments
- Taste
- Flavor

A helper listed all the responses on the chalk board. I circled the word “segments.” “Maria, how many segments do you think are inside your orange?” Her guess, based on experience, was written on the board. All teachers respond to the same question.

“If you have all of the segments, how much of your orange do you have?” “I have the whole orange. Nine-ninths equals one whole.”

“Ok, let’s peel our oranges and see how many segments each of us has.”

“How many parts does your orange have? How many of the parts do you have? Can you write a kind of number on the board to represent all the parts under discussion. The group reports the number of segments for all the oranges. Each reports the fraction statement for each whole orange. The learners have become “sources of content.”

“If you give half your orange to your neighbor, what fraction, part of the orange, will your neighbor have?” “What fraction will you have?” This worked well until we got to Samuel, who, with several other members of the group, had an odd number of segments: 11, 9, and 13. The community of teachers inquire about this. Never had they met up with that in a math text. The group decides those oranges can be divided evenly. The neighbor would have 5.5/11 or 4.5/9, or 6.5/13. The “stuff” of fractions start to take on a different kind of meaning for the teachers. Meaning and significance deepen further when I say it is time to eat our oranges. The group’s collective salivary glands are in overdrive.

“How many senses have we?” I ask. The response is quick. Smell, taste, touch, hearing, sight. “How many
icance to the ideas and concepts involved in the learning.

Oranges are a significant part of each Guatemalan’s life. Oranges grow in every nook and cranny. Oranges are squeezed with the frequency of babies in Guatemala. In unison, the teachers sang, “Whenever a child in my class sees an orange I want that child to think FRACTIONS, DENOMINATORS, NUMERATORS, and whatever else was emphasized in the lesson.” For that group of teachers, the orange will always be the vehicle of choice for initiating the study of fractions.

But, learning about fractions too often begins with a textbook. Why not begin with an orange, a lime or a grapefruit? Under those circumstances might we not find the textbook almost as tasty as a Washington?

A final aspect of this approach to initiating the study of fractions is to have the class check the number of buttons on his shirts, the number of teeth in mouths, the number of fingers, toes, ears, eyes, family size and whatever and put those items into fraction form. Another opportunity for learners to become sources for content. What happens when the normally disinterested learner becomes THE source for content? Need we mention what this might do for the interested child? It seems to me that when learners become sources for content a community of inquiry has a better chance for becoming a reality. Thinking deepens.

Meaning takes hold. The experience has significance. Why? Because the learning has to do with ME.

After the demonstration is completed, thirty third-graders enter the setting and the lesson is repeated while the teachers observe. At the end of the lesson, the teachers contrast the children’s lesson with theirs. They agree the two lessons were basically the same. Even the vocabulary. The teachers indicate surprise at the abilities of the children to discuss differing points of view when given the opportunity. They note that the demo teacher never identifies a “wrong” response for either group but refers any questionable response to different participants for clarification, or the teacher redirects the discussion by asking another question. Questions are formulated to elicit more than a single acceptable response. Reasons, “good reasons” are required to support ALL responses. Children are more open and accept differing ideas less defensively. Children demonstrate interest in learning even though they didn’t know the demo teacher. The teachers could easily identify learners with exceptional ability as well as children who need re-teaching of the topic or those needing content at a different level of difficulty. “Non-readers” can and do participate, often with insights superior to “readers”. All of the children demonstrate a WANTING to know.

Was the lesson offered merely to demonstrate to teachers how any classroom can become a community for inquiry if attention is given to how content can be structured and restructured to appeal to the imaginations of the participants. The child’s world is full of stuff like the orange which can serve as a vehicle for learning. But we as teachers must practice the process of being able to “see” the potential relationships between hits, that, and the other thing with content to be taught. And the more we practice that process the easier such teaching becomes. The richer the meaning. The richer the significance. Too, that knowledge can be put to work.

Just as we too quickly get into the textbook for the study of fractions, I believe we too quickly get into texts expounding thinking skills development, communities of inquiry, logic for children and whatever. Always begin with the theoretical. Any scholar worth salt is first and foremost a theoretician except maybe for Albert E. Is Mr. X a theoretician or a practitioner? As if they were mutually exclusive. Ask anyone except the brain surgeon what’s preferable, theory or practice. Is it “theory to practice” or “practice to theory”? Maybe both? At the same instant? Sometimes?

Our teacher group just happened to be studying a chapter of a book about philosophy in the classroom for children. There was unanimity that that chapter took on new meaning and real significance because of the demonstration teaching. One participant noted that the demo classes were but a series of pictures. Snapshots. Adding with the Chinese, that one picture is worth a thousand words.

I, for one, refuse to work with teachers about the topics touched on in this paper unless I can put the theories into practice by making teachers the learners, and then by teaching a typical group of children with the teachers observing. Then, and only then, can teachers decide whether the so-called theories have meaning and significance. Then, and only then can teachers decide if the theory is, in fact, reduced to practice.
Interview with Angélica Sátiro

Irene DePuig

Irene: In the first place, we would like you to explain to us why you are here [at this conference in Majorca.]

Angélica: I have come with two purposes: first, to participate in the evaluation workshops; second, to keep the exchange with IREF going. In my view, this far transcends the organization of workshops itself. It also consists, for example, in personal and working relationships that involve making projects, creating materials, etc. It is an enriching encounter, not only because of the sight-seeing and the cities we visit, but also because of the cultural and professional growth that it grants to me. I think this encounter conveys a special force.

Irene: However, you were especially invited to give workshops on evaluation.

Angélica: Evaluation is a very difficult issue. It is very complex. Usually, citing "an evaluation" tends to make people dedicated to education uncomfortable. At every level, to "evaluate" presents problems of resolution. Since it is such a complex issue, people tend to avoid it and continue doing what they have always done. I have seventeen years of experience in education, and working with Philosophy for Children has offered me an opportunity to carry on a more systematic research on evaluations and to come up with a clear—though not complete—and definitive alternative.

Irene: Could it be said that in your practice as an educator you were trying to find a solution rather than trying to put the issue off?

Angélica: Yes, but I also wanted to search out a non-traditional method, a new path so to speak. I attempted also to frame a feasible proposal, with would be both practicable and understandable. The shaping of this work program became more clear when I became involved in the Philosophy for Children Program. The problem of evaluation was present in all subjects, but in the classes involving philosophy, it seemed to me, evaluation presented more of a challenge. I was able to apply my intuition and my previous experiences to gain an understanding about how to present what I had garnered in a useful fashion. As a result, I have given workshops on evaluation many times in Brazil: in Belo Horizonte, Brasilia, in the south of Brazil. I also presented a workshop in Lisbon during an Hispanic-Portuguese conference last year. The reception I received convinced me that my proposal had some universal features and merit. Subsequently, this sense of importance was given more weight by the conferences. It is evident from the discussions that the areas of concentration will involve pre-school as well as the high school levels and that the matters of evaluation are cross-cultural.

Irene: I would like you to explain to me your claim that "evaluation is difficult, but my proposal is feasible".

Angélica: My proposal is based on a general assumption that can be described as "evaluation as human dynamics", and it is related to a broader idea of man as an evaluating being. It is a
way of understanding and approaching the issue of evaluation from within the concept of humanity. Only human beings evaluate, evaluation is part of human activity. Since the concept of evaluation is so broad, it must be recognized that there are many different ways to evaluate. I call the evaluation method I have developed “figurative-analogical”.

Irene: Could you give us a more detailed idea of your method?

Angelica: Figurative-analogical evaluations are so called because they rest on certain assumptions. For example, it assumes that when evaluating, we always draw analogies—either with numbers, or words, or letters. Another assumption is that evaluation is intrinsic to the thinking process and not something we can put off until the end of the process, or the end of a period or cycle. Instead, it is implicitly contained in every human learning process. The concept of the “figurative” is related to the form of evaluating, since many of the forms that I suggest have images as elements. There are other elements as well, but icons as elements are very important. Another assumption, that it is possible to work not only with words, but also with different ways of communication is a part of my concept. I stand for a global concept of education, and cannot think of education as merely verbal. This broad concept leads me to think of evaluation in the same terms as children work, and they make much use of images. Besides, this domain interacts with aesthetic issues. I think that the act of knowing is related to the epistemological presuppositions that the act of learning has aesthetic components.

The concept of the “analogical” is used because it is related to a relatively simple kind of knowledge—making comparisons and establishing similarities and differences. It also involves creative elements with which we are familiar through concrete metaphors as well as metaphors in literature.

Therefore, the expression “figurative-analogical” expresses much of what is assumed in an evaluation of this nature.

Irene: What is your impression with regard to the profile of the groups that attended the workshop, and their degree of interest and commitment?

Angelica: I have given my workshops to many different people and when one has experience in working with groups, one can detect which are the more fruitful. Both in Palma and Barcelona the experience was very rewarding. I am sure that the attendees will implement many new ideas. Those who attended these workshops were receptive to my proposal and the embraced it.

Irene: But that must be the case on every occasion with other groups...

Angelica: Not always. This experience has exposed me to a large group of persons willing to do new things...to doing research and making a real effort to do a first-rate job. That is not always the case. The issue of evaluation is a controversial one. Some—even influential persons in IAPC—disregard the issue. I believe evaluation is deeply related to correction. I also believe that self-evaluation is a kind of self-correction. In discussions, some tend to agree, others do not even consider this a problem since they don’t believe it to be a philosophical issue. The argument that pedagogy is required to deal with evaluation is advanced. However, I believe that it is because we working philosophy that we cannot disregard the issue of evaluation. Philosophers, I say, may be confused. It is so evident that with the Philosophy for Children program evaluation is directly connected with the central issue of theory of knowledge, ethics, anthropology, etc. So I cannot understand why some could claim that evaluation has nothing to do with philosophy. You can understand me, because I know that at IREF you have designed other proposals of evaluation.

Irene: To be honest, evaluation in general was still an assignment to be done. Until this workshop took place, we did not have the whole curriculum. At present, we can talk about many schools that apply Philosophy 6/18 with children between six and sixteen years old, and that provides a different perspective for us. The truth is that we had timidly worked on evaluation in various ways; indirectly through art exhibitions, or else through semi-structured questionnaires and especially through the analysis of classroom recordings. I think the latter is the domain in which we can explore further because we have a wide experience in it. But let us go back to you: could you share with us your plans for the future, your near future as well as a farther one?

Angelica: You’re aware I am employed by "Pitagoras" which owns schools throughout Brazil and even in China and Africa. In Porto Belo, I am "Director of Projects". That makes me responsible for some educational projects, such as Philosophy for Children, which, by the way, is being adopted in fifteen schools in Brazil. We work in pre-school, elementary school, and we are now starting in some high schools. In Brazil, each school is bounded to different regulations according to the law of the state the schools happens to be in. Some states have compulsory philosophy courses, some do not.

My plans for the future are related to Pitagoras. I also supervise other projects, but the primary project for me is Philosophy for Children. Without realizing it, some of the projects transcend my duties in Pitagoras. For example, my research on evaluation would be valuable in a book. The impact of the research would be useful for all groups in Brazil, whether they apply Philosophy for Children or not.

In other words, my immediate project is to write a book about evaluation as human dynamics, exploring in depth analogical evaluation. For the future, I will do further research about other methods of evaluation. I don’t
I am eager to see what effect the materials will have on schools. Third to meet more people. I would also like to go back to Palma de Mayorca. What I would most desire is that people came to the conference of children for children. The idea I have is that this conference be a space where children can express what they think about themselves, about society, about multicultural integration, etc. I think that the participation of both Catalonia and Majorca and their people would be wonderful.

Irene: We shall try. Anyway, we promise to advertise the proposal as soon as we have a schedule for the conference. Thank you very much for being with us and sharing your time.

Translation by Andrea Pac.
How the Category of Exchange Gives Meaning to Our Experience

Maura Striano

"Most relationships among men can be considered under the category of exchange. Exchange is the purest and most concentrated form of all human interactions in which serious interests are at stake," writes G. Simmel.

Exchange is viewed by Simmel as a bilateral process more than an unilateral one, involving reciprocal effects. We can thus refer to exchange as a reciprocal relationship and a fundamental one, as Simmel points out.

This author connects the category of exchange with the category of interaction, clarifying that apparently interaction can be viewed as a broader concept and exchange a narrower one, but both concepts are strictly connected in human relations in a way that makes every interaction a kind of exchange.

"Every interaction is properly viewed as a kind of exchange, this is true of every conversation, every love (even when required unfavorably), every game, every act of looking one another over. It might seem that the two categories are dissimilar, in that in interaction one gives something one does not have, whereas in exchange one gives only what one does have, but this distinction does not really hold. What one expends in interaction can only be one's own energy, the transmission of one's own substance. Conversely, exchange takes place not for the sake of an object previously possessed by another person, but rather for the sake of one's own feeling about an object, a feeling which the other previously did not possess. The meaning of exchange, moreover, is that the sum of values is greater afterward than it was before, and this implies that each party gives the other more than he had himself possessed."

According to Simmel, then, the category of exchange is extremely significant in shaping human experience.

"The ordinary vicissitudes of daily life produce a continuous alternation of profit and loss, an ebbing and flowing of the contents of life. Exchange has the effect of rationalizing these vicissitudes, through the conscious act of setting the one for the other. The same synthetic process of mind that from the mere juxtaposition of things creates a with another and for another—the same ego which, permeated by sense data, informs them with its own unified character—has through the category of exchange seized that naturally given rhythm of our existence and organized its elements into a meaningful nexus."

In this perspective, then, this category can be viewed as a mean to give meaning to human experiences, giving value to the objects involved in these experiences and shaping human relationships in a significative way. Exchange, thus, cannot just be viewed in an economical perspective, but requires to be taken in all its existential value, involving intellectual and emotional dimensions.

Harry, chapter 12 begins with a conversation between Harry and Lisa. The two kids are confused about an experience which obviously overwhelmed them: their classmate Dale had left the school after having realized that his own beliefs and his family's contrasted with the ones carried on by the school itself. It's like there were no words to talk about the fact. Harry and Lisa feel that nobody wants to talk about what had happened, nobody wants even to think about it because there's something wrong, something awful and not talking about it means that nobody could really conceptualize and understand the experience. That's why the two kids feel a strong need to clarify their thoughts.

As Lisa states, trying to "think about the correct way to think" is extremely important in order to handle problematic and complex situations involving various issues.

Sometimes, when a fact or an experience has the power to threaten consolidated paradigms, leading us to discuss acknowledged values, priority scales, world-views, people don't want to think about it because they are afraid of being forced to change and reassess the frames of their experience.

But talking and thinking about thinking aren't the only way to understand and give meaning to experiences. There are other things, like actions and gestures, which can veicolate thoughts and feeling, building up a non verbal dialogue that can be extremely useful in our individual and social understanding.

"At that moment, for no reason at all, Lisa thought of Dale" we can read in Harry, chapter 12 "as he was when he said he wouldn't be coming back. No one said anything to him, because no one had any idea of what to say. Then Harry had fished a penny in a good luck horseshoe that his father had given him two years before. Harry put it on the desk in front of Dale. Dale seemed on the verge of tears, and
Harry thought he would rush out of the room. But Dale managed to sit there, while Lisa gave him the favorite charm from her bracelet, and Fran gave him her teakwood barrette, and one by one, everyone in the class gave Dale something. By now he’d gotten over his embarrassment, and began stuffing the things in his shirt pockets and pants pockets. It was only when the last person had given him a souvenir fit was Millie Warshaw, who had first thought of giving him a gerbil, but then decided on the ring she’d traded for bubble gum wrappers - it was only then that Dale walked silently to the door, turned for a moment to wave, and then was gone.

Somehow, everyone who was left in the class seemed more precious to Lisa than before. They had shared an experience. It hadn’t been a pleasant experience, yet it had left her feeling more fond of her classmates than she had ever felt before.

“I wonder why?” thought Lisa “I wonder why?”

What was happening in Harry’s classroom?

A kid was going away. It was a painful experience for all his classmates, but no one was able to speak.

At the end, something happened.

Harry gave a penny to Dale, and Dale took the souvenir his friend had given to him. Then all the other kids offered gifts to their classmate.

We can refer, here, to Simmel’s theory: an experience is being conceptualized, the group, the community is trying to give meaning to it by applying the category of exchange, and this is not just an economic category.

The kids in Dale’s class are not just giving him objects, they’re carrying values in their giving, choosing things that are particularly significative to them, and thus filling with meaning their experience. Is this an exchange?

Dale is not giving any object to his friends. He’s just leaving, but by leaving he’s giving them a message: his dissent, his disappointment, his sorrow. He’s also not giving anything back, but, as we can see, he is staying in the class and he’s taking the things the other kids want to give him. By doing this Dale is giving them his acceptance, he’s praising the objects he’s receiving, and by this praise these objects are becoming gifts.

We come here to the question: why do people feel the necessity, especially in particular circumstances, to exchange objects, to make them gifts, as well as to offer the others gestures, actions, expressing determinate feelings and thoughts which can be viewed as non material gifts? And what is the nature and the use of a gift?

The assumptions and the implications of the action of giving involve a wide web of relational patterns, in relation to different contexts and situations.

Here I’d like to deal just with some of the implications and the meanings of giving, referring to a particular situation.

We have before pointed out that applying the category of exchange to a situation helps us to give meaning to the contexts, the objects and the relationships among the actors involved in an experience, and this appears to be particularly significative as we see that in every human society (from the primitive to the more complex and sophisticate ones) the social process of exchanging gifts is widely acknowledged and constitutes one of the basis of social relationships, as M. Mauss points out:

This author views the exchanges in the archaic societies he has studied as “total social phenomena,” as they are not merely economical, but juridical, moral, aesthetic, religious, mythological and sociomorphical as well. Thus their meaning can be attained only observing the complexity of the different concrete situations in which the exchange takes place.

In his studies Mauss focuses his attention on three types of obligation that he found widely distributed in human societies in both time and space: 1) the obligation to give, 2) the obligation to receive, 3) the obligation to repay. These forms are, to Mauss, substantial in the development of human civilization and have specific functions in the articulation of the social order. It is important to point out that even in the most archaic societies a gift is considered not merely as an object, but as a mean to create a bond between persons and groups. And this power to create a bond comes to the object given from the feeling and the belief that there is something living in that object, something that speaks about human essence, something carrying feelings, emotions, energy...

That’s why Mauss writes that “to give something is to give a part of oneself”.

Since one is giving a part of himself, others feel an obligation to receive it as a precious thing as well as to repay it.

The binding nature of the exchange of gifts in archaic societies is also pointed out by B. Malinowski who stresses on the importance of the giving and taking as the basis of reciprocal and mutual relationships among individuals and groups.

If we go back to Harry, we see that it’s because Dale seems to be giving, by leaving, a part of himself — a suffering and wounded part — that the others feel the obligation to repay him some way.

They’re giving him things, while he’s giving them something else. Can we view it as an exchange?

Is this exchange a reciprocal and “fair” one? What is the meaning of giving here?

The nature of gifts, seems to have always been founded on the necessity to establish and maintain bonds between individuals and groups in order to gain material and spiritual benefits through these bonds.

In Harry the kids are trying to gain a sort of relief by giving, so that they won’t feel too guilty towards their classmate not having had the courage to take a position, not having had the possibility to deal with the shame and sorrow that Dale’s leaving implies ...

They’re also trying to handle the feeling of grief carried by every loss, giving a meaning and a closure to their experience and building an imaginary bond with who’s leaving.

We can see that gifts keep on having this nature in our societies in different situations and contexts. A gift meant to express affection, to express love, for example, is a mean to “touch” the other, to get into a stricter contact with somebody, as R. Barthes writes that through the gift “a third skin unites us.”

A gift, though, it’s also a mean to intrude in the other’s life, to provoke his/her responses as he/she feels obliged to receive and repay as well as to refuse. Also a refuse is, as a matter of fact, an answer which implies the establishment of a relationship between two persons (as well as a
reflection on the relationship) and in this way the gift has expressed its social function.

Getting back to the episode in *Harry*, chapter 12, we come here to realize that, through the ceremony of giving, a new and deeper kind of relationship between the classmates has taken place: they have all shared an experience, and a particular one. All the kids have performed a role in an ancient, never-ending human ritual, making sense of the situation they were living through the exchange of things, that, in this perspective, became something extremely precious: a mean to keep alive a dialogue between people, continuing to shape their life’s experiences in a meaningful way.

**References**


**Notes**


2. Ibid., p. 44.

3. Ibid., p. 44.


5. Ibid., p. 47.

6. Ibid., p. 60.


8. Ibid., p. 1.

9. Ibid., p. 10.


Laura Purdy’s *In Their Best Interest?* is an admirable work of applied ethics, whose main strengths lie in the care and thoroughness of its examination of the ramifications of granting equal rights to children, the good use it makes of the historical and developmental evidence bearing on the likely consequences of liberating children, and the moral passion and insight it brings to its topic. In arguing against equal rights for children, it also provides a moral justification for “infusing philosophy throughout virtually the entire curriculum” (p. 165), in order to develop good judgment in children. Because it is both well-informed and convincing in carrying out these aims, it is a book which should be of wide interest to parents, students, and most of those involved in education school faculty who instruct children, the good use it makes of the historical and developmental evidence bearing on the likely consequences of liberating children, and the moral passion and insight it brings to its topic.

Chapter One argues that the libertarian claim, that children are not substantially less rational than adults in the relevant respects, rests on setting the threshold of relevant rationality too low within the cognitive domain and also ignores the “enabling virtues,” such as self-control, which contribute vitally to the effective execution of intentions and plans. If rationality has to do with having good reasons for what we do and believe, and so awareness of alternatives and a reasonable estimation of their desirability, then children’s lack of experience does make them less rational, or capable of good judgment and action, than adults, the argument goes. To this, Purdy appends the claim, substantiated at length in Chapter Three, that the available evidence suggests that the acquisition of self-control and other enabling virtues are fostered by an upbringing that imposes reasonable limits on children.

Chapter Two broadens the debate over children’s rights, which has been dominated by concern for children’s self-fulfillment, by defending the legitimacy of attending to children’s moral development. Working from a broadly consequentialist and feminist perspective, Purdy argues that since society has a legitimate interest in the moral development of children, and the developmental evidence shows that adult guidance and the imposition of reasonable limits on children is important to that development, it cannot be true that justice requires granting equal rights to children. To resist this, the libertarian moral stance would have to ignore both the individual’s difficulty this creates for justifying the governance of children by adults. A traditional “protectionist” response to this problem has been to argue that children are less rational than adults, that they lack the capacity for effective self-governance, and that in the absence of this capacity there is both justice and utility in guiding and protecting them, irrespective of any wishes in the matter they may have. But defenses of “protectionism” have failed to provide evidence for its crucial claims about children’s rationality, thereby inviting liberationist arguments based on more benign assumptions about children’s abilities and how they would develop in the absence of constraint.

Liberationists thus argue that “justice requires us to grant children equal rights,” and they supplement this “argument from justice” with an “argument from consequences,” which holds that “the consequences of [granting those rights] will not be harmful.” (p. 21). Part One of Purdy’s book, consisting of Chapters One and Two, aims to refute the former argument, and Part Two, consisting of Chapters Three through Six, aims to refute the latter. A concluding chapter provides a measure of balance, by acknowledging that children’s freedom, like anyone’s, should be limited only when there is good reason to do so, and by arguing that children’s rights should be expanded in some respects. (Purdy mentions as examples “their sexual and reproductive rights, and some civil rights” (p. 285)).
desirability of autonomy or rational self-governance over mere self-determination (i.e., doing whatever one most wants to), and the necessity of moral education to a decent social order.

Chapter Three reviews the evidence from which one may infer the consequences of granting children the same freedom as adults, namely accounts of experiments in liberating children, and psychological research on child development and the effects of different styles of parenting and care. This fills out and substantiates the empirical claims relied on in Chapters One and Two, and provides grounds for concluding that the consequences of liberation would be detrimental to both children and the prospects for creating a society of reasonably responsible people.

Chapter Four continues the attack on the liberationist's "argument from consequences" by sorting through the probable consequences for families of liberating children, and Chapter Five does the same for schooling and work. Chapter Six finishes out Part Two with responses to a pair of liberationist supporting arguments, including the argument that society is morally obligated to furnish children upon demand with "child agents" who can provide them with whatever expertise and decision-making capacities they need in order to be as rational in their decisions as adults. An important argument running through all of this is that liberation would expose children to an even greater risk of manipulation and indoctrination that they are already subjected to. While the right kind of learning can reduce that risk, it is not at all clear that the availability of experts-for-hire would. Not even the fullest array of such experts could make up for a lack of prudence, or ability to make good all-things-considered judgments, any more than the ability to hire not only a good cardiologist and interior decorator but also a marriage counselor and corporate headhunter would.

The case for compulsory schooling and a strong system of public education infused with philosophy and critical thinking is developed in Chapter Five on the strength of the developmental evidence, the dangers of manipulation and indoctrination alluded to above, and a variety of grounds adduced at various points in the text for concluding that we human beings face a grim and miserable future unless our collective judgment improves a lot. "Unless the educational establishment stands up to the predictable outcry against a hard-hitting emphasis on critical thinking," Purdy writes:

"...most of the goals I have been discussing are in serious jeopardy. Children will not be helped to judge the values they are being taught, they will not be able to recognize misleading or dangerous claims, and they will not be able to contribute to revamping human practices in ways that will help us surmount the mortal threats now confronting us. This demand for emphasizing critical thinking might seem utopian, but unless we can rise to the challenge, it is beginning to seem doubtful that there will in any case be much of a world in which to enjoy equal rights." (p. 167)

The sense of urgency regarding the need to cultivate good judgment is hard to quarrel with, and Purdy's reminders of the immense environmental, economic, and social challenges to be faced is a healthy antidote to the narrow-minded theories of curriculum which currently dominate teacher certification programs. As valuable as a schooling in multicultural awareness may be, for instance, it is no substitute for the knowledge, skills and habits of inquiry, and virtues of mind and conduct that our children will need if they are to find creative solutions to the range of problems they will face.

It is in Purdy's arguments for the preservation and strengthening of the public school system, however, that the book begins to run up against the limitations of what can be accomplished within the confines of an extended refutation of liberationism. It may be, as she says, that the regulation that would be required to ensure the right curriculum, the right pedagogy, and sufficient educational equality, is not something we could count on being "instituted at the same time as equal rights for children" (p. 170), but stepping back from the debate over children's rights, it is hard to say whether it would be more difficult to bring about the right teaching through a regulated private system or through an overhaul of the public one. Given the complexity of the empirical questions bearing on this, the more cautious stance would simply be to take a stand against any privatization scheme that would allow parents' beliefs to influence the content of education in any way would be detrimental to the goals outlined.

A second and related limitation of the constructive side of Purdy's project is that although it makes a powerful case for adult authority over children, and defends the public school as a suitable venue for developing virtue and good judgment in children, it does not take us very far toward an account of the authority of communities or their schools to do what she says they morally ought. So although her general picture of the boundaries of parental authority vis-a-vis a public school is attractive, it raises a number of important and difficult questions about authority over children which one might have hoped to see answered here, even though they are beyond the scope of the book's central purposes.

There are a few small matters I would quarrel with, such as the characterization of Aristotle's view of the family at p. 4 and the endorsement at p. 64 (n. 21) of Okin's dubious history of the place of women in western political theory. The appeal to Piaget on the age at which inferential reasoning is acquired at p. 34 is of doubtful value. The repeated consideration of the liberationist argument, that some adults are less rational than some children (beginning at pp. 27-8), could also have been cut short and sharpened up by invoking at the outset the idea that the only feasible course for public policy and law is to rely on presumptions of rational competence or incompetence resting on group norms for appropriate age groups, and subject to override when an individual's demonstrated competence or incompetence warrants it. These are at worst minor annoyances, however, and scarcely make a difference to the success of the book's central arguments. They are arguments we would do well to heed.

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