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This middle grade novel, which won the Newbery Medal, is about a ten-year-old girl, Lucky. Her mother has been killed in a freak accident, her father is missing, and she is being cared for by her father’s former girlfriend, Brigitte, in a tiny town at the edge of the California desert.

Early in the story, Lucky’s friend Lincoln (so named because his parents want him to be President) asks her to bring a black marker and meet him by a sign on the school bus route. The sign says: “Slow Children at Play.” Miles, a beginning reader intensely interested in signs, has asked Lincoln about this sign; does it mean that children in Hard Pan move slowly, or that they are stupid? Lincoln changes the sign to read, “Slow: Children at Play.” Lucky calls the change “Presidential.”

This small episode sounds the themes of this fine book. Signs matter. A person discovers how to proceed by reading signs. Misreading a sign can be costly. People help each other out by helping them understand. And, finally, children are not slow. They quickly and obsessively synthesize information to make meaning: maps to navigate by, words for communication, models for how to be themselves.

Lincoln’s solution prefigures the actions in the book in another way: it is elegant, economical, and appropriate. No one is going to fuss about “vandalizing public property,” confronted with two accurately placed dots. Throughout the novel, characters solve problems with similar economy and elegance. Brigitte freaks out about a snake in the dryer. Lucky tapes the door shut and bangs on the lid until it leaves through the vent. Brigitte is satisfied, and the snake is safe.

The novel takes place in Hard Pan, an old mining town named for the way the ground resists miners digging down to the silver. Like its soil, the town looks hard and ungenerous: a cluster of trailers and patched-together houses. Only a few people in the town have jobs; most live on welfare or pensions. But, though adult readers know that this is a poor place, the text never presents the town as poor. It is, for Lucky, a treasure house of information and insight. Brigitte speaks French, a language which alternately fascinates and repels Lucky. In her job cleaning up at the Found Object Wind Chime Museum and Visitor Center, Lucky gets to eavesdrop on three different Twelve Step meetings; for alcoholics, for smokers, for overeaters. She overhears stories and secrets, and encounters the idea of a Higher Power, for which she immediately begins to search. In school, she learns accurate natural history, brain physiology, and evolution. (Lucky names her dog “HMS Beagle” in honor of Darwin.) From these lessons, she takes ideas to think about and to think with. The model of her brain as containing many folds and a great surface area suggests to her that she might be able to have more than one feeling or idea on a given topic at the same time, and so she is not surprised when that happens.

The town is also connected to the wider world. People log on to the internet, belong to world-wide associations. Brigitte is taking an online course in restaurant management. Lincoln, a knot enthusiast, belongs to the International Guild of Knot Tyers.

So – Lucky is lucky. She has art and science and religion and technology to help her think about the world and construct her life. Lucky is also intelligent and, in a very non-standard way, erudite. Lots of information is available to her, and she has the stamina, hope, and flexibility to keep re-arranging that information in new combinations, making new connections:

“No, the ants acted like one single machine, instead of zillions of tiny minds and bodies. They had good teamwork. If some died, the others didn’t stand around worrying about it. For ants, there was definitely no “I” in “team.”

Patron’s story is not just a description of Lucky’s musings. Lucky has a nest of problems to solve. She has not yet scattered her mother’s ashes. She has reason to believe that her guardian wants to leave her and return to her home in France. Little Miles, whose mother is mysteriously missing, has attached himself to Lucky in endearing and annoying dependence. With these problems in mind, Lucky goes searching for the guidance of a Higher Power, for some sign about a graceful way forward.

What she finds is right and strange and multi-dimensional and totally beyond summary. For this, one has to read the book.

There’s been a flap in the United States about one part of the story: Lucky hears about a dog being bitten on the scrotum by a rattlesnake. Some people don’t want the word “scrotum” in a kids’ book, perhaps because that limits the book’s read-aloud potential; librarians may not want to explain “scrotum” to six-year-old kids. But I am not convinced this is a read-aloud book; it seems far more a treasure that children will discover and take off to read in private places. More important, this story shows that many different bits of information are useful to human beings in making sense of their lives. They need to know about Higher Powers, brains, knots -- and scrotums.
The ‘Wrong Message’: Risk, Censorship and the Struggle for Democracy in Primary School

Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris

Abstract

This paper has arisen directly from the authors’ experiences of leading professional development for teachers in Philosophy with Children (P4C), a well-established approach to teaching that seeks to foster philosophical questioning, critical thinking, reasoning and dialogue. The paper expresses deep concern about the anxiety shown by many teachers regarding discussion of controversial issues in the classroom, and some teachers’ avoidance of open-ended dialogue about works of children’s literature that might touch on taboo subjects. The authors suggest that this is indicative of a desire for risk-free teaching and is a form of censorship that marginalises children and limits their learning and academic freedom. The exercise of such avoidance and control reduces the potential for schools to become more democratic institutions. Drawing directly on their practice of working philosophically with children in school, as well as on philosophical and other sources, the authors of the paper offer a range of arguments about the processes of education to support the case for challenging such forms of censorship and risk avoidance.

Introduction

In our practice as teachers and trainers of Philosophy with Children (P4C) we have often experienced disquiet and protest from teachers regarding our choice of certain books to begin philosophical enquiry. One London school refused to take part in any further P4C sessions (funded by the Education Action Zone) after a child had started crying during a philosophy lesson. The head-teacher justified her decision by saying “the school isn’t ready yet for P4C”.

This head teacher’s statement lingers with us and raises profound questions. What exactly was meant by the phrase ‘ready for P4C?’ Who is, and who is not, included in the use of the term ‘school’? Does this head teacher’s decision reflect a climate in which children’s safety and security, or supervision and control, seem to be increasingly in the forefront of concern in educational practice? In a system, which seems to be expressing greater interest in ‘emotional intelligence’ where do discomfort and distress fit in to learning?

What we often bump into is a contradiction between the psychological accounts of maturation, emotional development and the capacity for reason, that have tended to dominate views of childhood, and the establishment of a framework for children’s moral, political and social status as learners, as persons and as citizens. It is not about a return to child-centeredness, it is about moves forward to a more democratic pedagogy. In our classroom practice, and in our theorising, we have to constantly ask ourselves the question: what does it mean to be democratic in P4C? We argue that, if we are serious about making schools more democratic, it means re-examining the foundations of the everyday authority we claim as adults.

Unfortunately, few practitioners or schools have emphasised the transformative potential of P4C in terms of its empowering pedagogy and the possibilities for schools becoming more democratic institutions. Many advocates of P4C, including the authors of this paper, have been at pains to point out how far its practice is consistent with many current agenda items for education, such as raising achievement, teaching thinking, creativity, citizenship, inclusion and emotional literacy, justifications that are often motivated by the need or desire to secure funding. Understandably, such an instrumental approach has been criticised (Vansiegelheim, 2005; Long, 2005). Perhaps it is this contradictory position that contributes towards the fearful reactions it generates in some quarters. The practice of P4C has been endorsed by academic philosophers and educators and by politicians. If it is now seen as ‘mainstream’, to what extent does P4C remain a subversive, dangerous, risky or threatening activity?

Teachers have suggested that some of the stories we use in P4C give ‘the wrong message’ to children. Certain books trigger an anxious and censorial reaction, cloaked as protectiveness, which seems to echo a current moral panic. Children’s picture books reflect a wide range of narratives and may portray events such as a robbery, children being taken from their homes, interaction between children and ‘strangers’, or characters such as goblins and witches. Some may provoke...
questions about good and evil, love or sex or what happens when we die. Many children’s stories contradict scientific truths. In Tomi Ungerer’s ‘Moonman’ (1966), for example, it is suggested that the moon itself gets smaller, rather than appearing as smaller to us (Figure 1).

Figure 1 (Ungerer)

There are also picture books that leave us in total confusion about their meaning. So certainty and security cannot be assured in the stories we use for P4C. We deliberately avoid books that appear to be simple messengers for morals as these do not tend to generate thinking and discussion.

Characteristics of our teaching of P4C

There are three critical ingredients in our approach to practising philosophy with children: the choice of material as the starting point for enquiry, our interpretation of the role of facilitator and the mode of organising and managing the class as a community of enquiry.

The stories chosen to stimulate enquiry are deliberately thought-provoking and ambiguous. Many of the stories we use are familiar to teachers and are popular picture books. We do not avoid books that refer to painful, difficult, uncertain, surprising or disturbing aspects of human experience or that may provoke enquiry about controversial social issues. The choice of books is important because both text and images either extend or limit the potential scope for enquiry. If we are overly cautious in our selection of books, then we seriously restrict the opportunities for thinking, however inadvertently.

Classroom philosophy is marked by a distinctive pedagogy. There is no doubt that this makes considerable demands on the teacher and requires special training and skills in philosophising, something neither pre-service teacher training, nor academic philosophy prepares teachers for. In the material we have written for teachers wishing to practise philosophy with children, we have referred to the teacher as playing the combined role of listener, guardian, guide and co-enquirer (Murris & Haynes, 2000). Preparing for philosophy sessions is unlike many other lessons, as the content of the session cannot be known in advance. An important part of one’s preparation as a teacher is to try and remove any personal attachment to the story and to come to it afresh – as if one is reading it for the very first time. Given a teacher’s power and authority in the classroom, her/his disposition is hugely influential on the degree of freedom enjoyed by participants in an enquiry. A philosophical facilitator is self-effacing and non judgmental of the topics chosen, asking open-ended questions when appropriate, guiding the children in their exploration of unexpected alleyways of thought, following the enquiry wherever it may lead but without letting the enquiry drift or lose the agreed focus.

In P4C sessions, children generate their own questions from material chosen, at least initially, by the teacher. Pupils are invited to ask whatever questions occur to them and to challenge and interrogate the material. Children seek to answer these questions by attentively listening to each other’s points of view, thinking out aloud and carefully building on each others’ ideas. They are encouraged to clarify concepts, to develop lines of enquiry, to use examples and counter examples to check the validity of their emerging arguments. The children are respected as the experts on the personal experience they bring to the sessions and as active participants in the creation of knowledge. Personal experiences are treated as examples that can help to illuminate the conceptual exploration in the movement back and forth between concrete and abstract forms. ‘Disclosure’, as in sharing confidences, is not a goal of philosophical dialogue, nor is it forbidden, but making room for children’s personal knowledge is vital. The distinction here is that it is individual and shared meaning, truth and significance that are sought in dialogue, rather than reparation, consolation or healing. However, many children report that it is the freedom to speak about the issues that concern them and the respect that is shown for their expression of ideas that makes philosophical enquiry so valuable and useful in everyday life and can sometimes lead to a kind of resolution of personal situations, either through action or reflection.

Taboo subjects and the ‘wrong message’

The examples of adverse reactions to certain books are quite variable, both in terms of their subject matter and the reasons given for them being ‘unsuitable’. In the story Frog in Love (Velthuijs,1989) green Frog expresses his love for white Duck (Figure 2).
While happy to have the book in the classroom, some teachers have expressed anxiety about how they might answer awkward questions about sex and reproduction, or about race, if the book were used in the open-ended way that we advocate in P4C. The anxiety might be about the possibility of discomfort, of offensive or politically incorrect ideas being expressed, of losing control because of laughter at body talk, of parental complaints, of spontaneous and open discussion without prior preparation or the introduction of more closed activities that allow the teacher to maintain control whenever ‘sensitive’ topics are tackled.

Another of Velthuijs’ books, *Frog and the Birdsong* (1991), has provoked anxiety because the story includes the death of a blackbird and the other characters’ actions and reactions to it. The story in question is particularly valuable because it is humorous and does not focus exclusively on feelings, but rather encourages us to think about what death is, the different emotions that it arouses, and it plants the seeds for thinking about what happens after death. The carefully chosen words of the dialogue provoke the reader and viewer to explore the concept of death and to question ‘truths’ we take for granted, such as the belief that everything dies (Figure 3).

The moral of the story, that life goes on, seems irrelevant when children are allowed to construct their own meanings of a story and allowed the necessary space to speculate. When anxiety for giving the right answers disappears, children often surprise us with the theories they construct in order to make logical sense of a story. For example, in order to explain that a blackbird can sing a song in a tree after it has been buried has led, for example, to unexpected, but fascinating theories about reincarnation, as many 4 to 7 year olds have suggested that the blackbird that appears at the beginning of the story is the same one as the one that is shown in the final picture of the book (Figure 4).
We have found that the subject of death is one that many teachers feel uncertain about discussing in the classroom, and they have often reported to us that this is for fear of upsetting children. It is the subject that most opens the chasm of uncertainty and inevitability as well as the plurality of beliefs that are usually avoided in schools.

Tomi Ungerer’s *The Three Robbers* (1961) has provoked extremely strong reactions from some teachers, including the suggestion that this book should not appear at all in a primary classroom. In this picture book, three robbers come across a little orphan girl who is on her way to live with a wicked aunt. Since there is nothing else to steal they take the little girl (Figure 5). Her arrival appears to mark the beginning of their reform from thieves to providers of an institution for lost, forgotten and abandoned children, funded by their ‘loot’. Teachers have told us that this book gives the message that it is safe to go off with strangers and that teachers have the duty to point out that it is not safe to do so, if using a story such as this. This position expresses both the desire to protect children and the suggestion that there is a clear and unambiguous way of identifying a dangerous adult. The teacher is one who helps to train the child in keeping safe and this training can be reduced to the simple instruction ‘avoid strangers’.

![Figure 5 (Ungerer)](image1)

*Outside Over There* (Sendak 1993) has also caused quite profound disturbance among some adults who work with children. In this powerful and marvellously illustrated book a girl Ida, whose father is away at sea, is charged with helping to care for her younger sibling. The book hints at its content on the back cover ‘While Ida is busy playing her wonder horn, goblins come and kidnap her baby sister. In order to save her, Ida must go outside over there…. ’ (Figure 6).

![Figure 6](image2)

The language and the imagery have qualities of fairy tale and many engaging themes such as paternal absence, guilt, darkness, responsibility and resentment, childhood, fear, courage and adventure. The goblins appear cloaked and unfathomable but turn out to be ‘babies just like her sister’. This story has been found unsuitable on the grounds that it may frighten some children, particularly because of the inclusion of characters such as goblins. Elsewhere we have come across teachers wanting to ban books that feature witches. Sometimes teachers report that they have had to remove such books under pressure from some parents who have insisted that they do not want their children to have access to such material.

Given the fears expressed by some teachers, how do we see the responsibility of teachers in P4C sessions? Rather than going along with the censorship sometimes imposed upon philosophical practice by restricting the use of certain books or the discussion of certain topics, we need to resist this and explore the reasons behind such anxieties. This paper suggests a particular take on this urgent moral and political debate by offering seven different threads, each containing arguments against censoring the kind of books mentioned. Beyond the scope of this paper is the further unravelling of these threads, although it is our wish and intention to engage in further work on this subject. For clarity’s sake the threads have been ‘pulled apart’ under various headings, but of course they are tangled and interwoven.
Literary Argument: In the interests of a broad education children should enjoy the freedom to explore all the themes that are raised by the full range of children’s literature

Children’s literature, like all literature, has always been highly controversial and its potential to influence, to indoctrinate or to subvert is self-evident. We acknowledge the sense of danger that many teachers feel about the personal experiences, questions and taboo subjects that may be raised in open-ended dialogue when using certain books. Some teachers are prepared to have the very same books on classroom shelves as long as they are used individually and are not used for whole-class philosophical enquiries. The danger seems to be located often in how we use the literature, not necessarily in the content of the books themselves. At the same time, it is often not the topics that seem necessarily the reasons for the concern (e.g. friendship, power, bullying, stranger) - after all, the more psychologically based ‘circle time’ sessions in schools also raise such personal, emotional and social topics. So, what is the difference then that P4C makes and that sometimes provokes the desire to censor? Also, what are the characteristics of the picture books that are more likely to cause anxiety than others, or than e.g. specially written educational material? To answer some of these questions we take a closer at those authors that have often provoked a strong reaction.

To some extent they share certain characteristics and intentions as writers of children’s books and perhaps this offers clues to explain why they appear to some as unsuitable. Velthuijs, Sendak and Ungerer were born within eight years of each other between 1923 and 1931. All three have earned wide international acclaim and won prizes for their contributions to children’s literature and to illustration. Their stories also share a willingness to tackle challenging and complex subject matter handled with boldness, wit and compassion.

Sendak, who spent most of his life in North America, says that many of his stories are based on Jewish tales and his characters on family members. He has reported that what interests him is what children do when there are no rules, no laws and when they don’t know what’s expected of them emotionally. He argues that those adults who claim to know what it is that scares children do not know it at all.

Ungerer, raised in Alsace, lost his father at 3. He lived with his mother in Strasbourg during the Nazi occupation. His mother tongue French was banned in school and his independence of mind and spirit appear to date from this period of his life. He describes himself, among other things as ‘a ferocious moralist and moulder of children’s minds’ (Vincent, 1999).

Velthuijs was born in The Hague and his parents were interested in theosophy, mysticism and psychoanalysis. When war broke out he wanted to join the resistance but was too young. As a graphic designer he made political prints, cartoons, posters and book jackets. The images in his book have a timeless quality that invite contemplation and he writes in an economic style. The stories are acted out by a small group of animals, simply drawn but capable of expressing subtle thoughts and emotions. Joanna Carey writes:
Although he is essentially a humorous artist, Velthuijs is never afraid to address difficult subjects, and with the gentle authority of the composition and the luminosity of the colour, these perceptive, consistently beautiful illustrations bring a sense of order and harmony to a sometimes uncertain world. (Carey in The Guardian, 11/12/04)

The power of all three authors is clear, but these comments and reviews seem to suggest that all share a strong sense of responsibility and a desire to engage young readers with emotional and moral concerns. They reveal the difficulties in front of us all and, to some extent, withhold judgment. They invite us to think deeply about the links between our emotions and our moral standpoint and they achieve this without preaching, moralising or putting across a particular ‘message’.

In the UK, there is currently renewed debate about the importance of children having access to a wide range of quality literature and being given the freedom to read and enjoy it. Much of the impetus for this has come from leading children’s authors such as Michael Rosen, Philip Pullman, Jamila Gavin and Michael Morpurgo, concerned about the impact on reading habits of current approaches to teaching literacy, which they argue are narrow, instrumentalist and often joyless. Elsewhere, we have offered explanations why quality picture books engage not only children’s imagination (Egan, 1993), but the imagination of adults too (Murrís, 1993, 1994, 1997).

The boredom children display in the face of specially created instructional resources disappears when teachers introduce books that do not moralise or patronise, but communicate to young readers that they are taken seriously as thinkers by offering rich, complex and ambiguous pictures and texts. They need to be given the freedom and support to make sense of it themselves drawing on their own strategies and life experiences. Even in texts that purport to offer open-ended approaches to literacy learning (Arizpe and Styles, 2003), the techniques described often involve teachers retaining control of questions and these are carefully constructed for pupils to arrive at the ‘right’ answers.

The ways of life of the majority of children are not reflected in the curriculum. Neither does popular culture feature in the literacy framework. In literacy lessons, pieces of text are decoded and analysed for their grammatical parts or viewed as examples of a particular genre. Although the national curriculum for English schools advocates the teaching of critical thinking and reasoning, a barrage of directives from central government have accustomed many teachers to obedience. Despite some new encouragement to extend creativity, enjoyment and personalised learning (once again from central government), it seems that teachers only dare to put this (back) on the agenda, because they have been told to do so.

**Authenticity argument:** Children require genuine dialogue to experience independence of thought and to develop scepticism

The conditions for self-correction and thinking for oneself are best when teachers loosen the reigns and share responsibility for the form and content of an enquiry with their pupils. A teaching of philosophical thinking that includes pupils’ voices and participation is bound to be uncomfortable, because of the ambiguity of not knowing — neither knowing the direction an enquiry will take, nor the meaning of the abstract concepts into which the community is enquiring. Although great care is taken to build a safe environment to investigate philosophically, our concern is that too much teachers’ care and protection can suffocate the voicing of original ideas. When teachers feel endearment and smile when children express novel ways of understanding the world, it seldom leads to the teacher’s re-examination of beliefs and assumptions. Endearment seems to presuppose vulnerability and inequality, the kind we experience when watching a lioness licking her cubs, but only when they are safely behind bars or on television (Kuier, 1981). Similarly, a DvD showing children dialoguing about the need for “bad in the world”, because a peaceful world would imply “drinking endless cups of tea” and “always be nice to each other” (SAPERE Training DvD) usually provokes smiles and endearment. Children’s speculations are seen as unusual, sweet, perhaps even foolish, but ultimately harmless. Their theories and epistemological wanderings do not touch adults’ belief systems or change educational programmes that take for granted that, for example, a peaceful world is a goal we should all strive for. Children’s insights genuinely provoke a (re-) thinking of what we ourselves believe. Philosophical listening to children requires what Fiumara (1990) calls ‘thinking otherwise’ (see Haynes & Murrís, 2000).

In P4C sessions we often find that children test the genuineness of the philosophical space that we have opened up for them, for example, by asking and voting for controversial questions. This should not come as a surprise as it is an unusual space in schools. The behaviour resembles that of junior footballers their first season of getting used to a full-size pitch, unsure how to make best use of the larger space. Children get bored when this space is neither genuine, nor used appropriately.

It is telling that the notion of ‘academic freedom’ is not used in the context of young children’s education. Kelly makes the point that such freedom is not a privilege reserved for academics, but that “openness in the face of knowledge” is “essential to the development both of knowledge itself and of democracy” (Kelly, 1995, pp 128,129), therefore, essential for primary education. The freedom to ask pertinent questions and to speak one’s mind sits uncomfortably with political correctness, which forms one of the largest threats to authentic and autonomous thinking in schools. Putting people in politically correct strait-jackets seems to be the current response to moral relativism. It is all too tempting to follow...
the crowd, to do what ‘one does’ without ever being able to make this ‘one’ specific, or traceable (following Heidegger’s notion of Das Man).

If we allow children the freedom, in the existentialist meaning of the word (Bonnett & Kuyper, 2003, p 328), to have a choice and to be made responsible for how they respond to the situations they find themselves in, we make it possible for children to be authentic in class. Bonnett and Kuyper identify the anxiety this burden to be authentic provokes at a personal level and the temptation to evade such responsibility. This would suggest that teachers, who at a professional level are also responsible for children’s opportunities to express themselves authentically, are under even greater strain not be inauthentic by blaming external circumstances such as the curriculum, the school’s catchment area, the parents or the school’s senior management.

Another and related locus for teacher’s anxiety is the nature of philosophical questioning, an art that cultivates what Kelly calls ‘habits of scepticism’. It presupposes flexibility of thought, openness to new ideas and the cultivation of ‘non-attachment’. The bewilderment and perplexity that accompanies philosophical questions characterised by a Wittgensteinian ‘I don’t know my way about’ induces states of anxiety in some teachers as it is associated with personal weakness. Authentic philosophical questioning can push teachers to the edge of what is comfortable and acceptable in class. Buckreis wonders: “Can authority, for some teachers, be a substitute for security?” (Buckreis, 2005)

Observing teachers’ interactions with children raises profound questions about the ownership of knowledge, teaching and learning. Drawing on Stanley Cavell’s work, Paul Standish, reflects on the pathological and existential dimension of skepticism and wonders what a non-consumptive relation to knowledge could be like (Standish, 2005). His desire to “dispossess learning of its possessiveness” resembles Walter Kohan’s description of teaching in P4C as an “encounter” (Kohan, 2002). Standish reminds us of the connection between control and knowledge, poignantly expressed in Heidegger’s use of Be-grip the Dutch word for concept. The verb grijpen highlights the invasive, almost aggressive ‘grabbing’ nature of conceptual knowledge. We grab a child when we are angry, or when we have little time to spare to save it from danger. Significantly, it is a fear-based response.

**Epistemological argument** Knowledge is contestable and children can be included in the public process of constructing new knowledge and understanding

The belief that P4C is a subversive, dangerous, risky or threatening activity seems directly related to adults’ epistemological beliefs and attitudes. Ambiguity and uncertainty in front of children is something we seem to find particularly hard to tolerate. We need the certainty of right and wrong answers and feel lost and confused when questions elude simple resolution. In P4C sessions the picture books generate enquiries into the complex meanings of abstract concepts leading to more questions than answers. A mostly answer-based curriculum provides a well-rehearsed view of what knowledge is and offers a sense of security, however ill-founded. Some teachers’ believe that young children need certain knowledge before they can start to question anything. That claim may have something to do with adults’ own discomfort with not being in control and with primary teachers’ tendency to want to offer their classrooms as a kind of sanctuary in which childhood can be kept free from the threats of the outside world. In addition, a climate of fear for the safety of children, along with public mistrust of the education system, leads many to prefer teaching from a script and holding on firmly to the position of teacher as all-knowing subject. Sharon Todd refers to the adoption of such a stance as the ‘sanitisation of teaching’ (Todd, 2002), where teachers simply avoid any possibility of ambiguity.

However, avoidance doesn’t educate. Each of us needs to find a balance between children’s right to make decisions and judgments for themselves and adults’ right and responsibility to make choices on behalf of children. As teachers we constantly deal with such moral dilemmas – having to choose between protection and participation. A way forward is to distinguish between (cognitive) uncertainty and (emotional) insecurity (Haynes, 2004). Though we may have a duty to try and minimize insecurity, uncertainty motivates to go beyond the known. In a dialogue, everyone will hold their beliefs more tentatively as we become more aware of the precarious nature of all our beliefs. Kelly argues that our psychological needs have contributed to a curriculum that is focused on subject and knowledge content and to the questionable, but popular conception of knowledge as infallible, as an ever-expanding body of facts that can be transmitted (Kelly, 1995). Of course, in the 20th century, there has been a major epistemological revolution in how we view objective and certain knowledge (including in mathematics and science). Knowledge is increasingly seen as subject to challenge and modification, uncertain and open to historical, social, political, individual and emotional influences. For example, it has been argued that ‘even’ emotions can be understood as conceptually rich engagements with one’s environment (Solomon, 1993; Nussbaum, 1990). A much broader view of rationality includes the importance of the fact that we have bodies interacting with a natural and urban environment, that these bodies are gendered, young once and gradually ageing; also, that we have a history and always find ourselves in a historical, social, political and moral context. All these factors influence how we understand and make meaning. Knowledge acquisition is a public process with people agreeing and disagreeing about what counts as knowledge – something that can be questioned, challenged, evaluated and possibly changed (by everyone, including young children). It follows that knowledge should be presented to children as contestable and always open to revision. Any opposition to this, Kelly says, is opposition to the very notion of democracy itself. He writes:
The great intellectual message of the twentieth century is that which was put rather crudely by Nietzsche in the assertion that ‘God is dead’. In other words, rationalism has had its day; certainty of knowledge in all spheres has had its day, and we must learn to live with the realities of change, and cope with the uncertainties these create. For the intellectual world we now live in is characterised by this shift to a new knowledge paradigm. (Kelly, 1995, p 63)

**Pragmatic argument:** Children are bound to raise controversial issues and it is preferable that these are explored through reasoning and dialogue.

Even if it were desirable, a sanitised curriculum is not realistic and will widen the gap between school and what happens outside school. Children discuss these issues anyway (because they want to know), but without structure or skilled facilitation, this possibly could cause more distress and harm, and is a wasted opportunity to develop deeper and better informed judgments.

As J F Rowling commented in an interview on BBC’s Radio Four (10 December 2005), the issue is not so much whether children should be exposed to scary, or upsetting topics, but the environment in which this takes place helps us decide about its appropriateness. In classroom communities of enquiry trust is built up over a long period of time and the fact that children themselves raise the questions suggests that the trust is present. Such trust can neither be enforced nor planned.

**Political and moral argument:** Participation in a democratic community is the most effective way to build, maintain and extend democratic values.

The political and moral arguments rest heavily on the view that, through an expression of faith in the participants, trust in the process of collaborative democratic enquiry and willingness to allow time and space for the classroom community to develop, an ethos of justice, equality and care can develop. This is not a new idea. Kohlberg argued that young people need opportunities to operate as moral agents within what he and his colleagues termed a ‘just community’. We argue that there are no good reasons for not creating such opportunities for children from the beginning of their joining educational communities. For John Dewey, education begins with experience. His account of pedagogy attends to process. He sees children as active participants in knowledge making, rational and collaborative and he sees schools as essential parts of the community:

> I believe that much of present education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life. It conceives the school as a place where certain information is to be given, where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to be formed. The value of these is conceived as lying largely in the remote future; the child must do these things for the sake of something else he is to do; they are mere preparation. As a result they do not become a part of the life experience of the child and so are not truly educative. (Dewey – My Pedagogic Creed)

Learners become more active and start to take responsibility for their own wellbeing and that of others. Over time, everyone (including teacher) starts to build on each other’s ideas. We need the courage to trust that, when given the opportunities to be self-regulating and the security of knowing that teachers will support their choices, children can determine for themselves what they can manage to think about and question. This is a cumulative, slow burn process over time and not one in which corners can be cut. We are often asked questions about what to expect from children in philosophy in relation to their ages. We usually find that ‘maturity’ of a person who is able to take part in philosophical dialogue is directly related to familiarity with, and experience of, the process and this can be unsettling for many adults who have not had similar opportunities to question and reason with others.

The democratic nature of P4C does not always sit easily with the undemocratic nature of schools. Childhood is deeply contested ground. The battle for children’s minds is a profoundly political one. The democracy of P4C does not end with just voting for which question they would like to discuss. Following A.V. Kelly, we understand democracy as a moral, political concept, not an empirical one.

Providing structured opportunities to explore deep differences is a democratic way of teaching - important not just for the sake of the children we teach, but also for the sake of the democratic society we live in. Kelly writes:

> In a democratic society, moral principles must be self-accepted rather than uncritically imbibed; they must be freely chosen rather than externally imposed; the democratic citizen must, in Kantian terms and in literal terms, give him or herself the laws he or she obeys. He or she must do this, however, in the light of an awareness of the collective ‘good’ of the community. Individualism must be tailored to communal responsibility. (Kelly, 1995, p 172)

Advocates of excluding young children from decisions about the appropriateness of books have to justify why young children should not be treated equally and why, as citizens (not just citizens-to-be), they cannot exercise their freedom to help shape the rules they themselves will also be subjected to.
Legal argument: In accordance with human rights, children should enjoy rights to freedom of thought and expression.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), to which Britain is a signatory, makes explicit reference to children’s rights to information, freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Participation Rights make provision for children to take an active part in their communities. These include having a say and the freedom to express views, join groups and to assemble. Some prefer the idea of adults taking proper responsibility to ensure children’s participation to the idea of rights for children. Either way, the onus is on adults to mediate conflicting rights (such as protection and freedom), and to create opportunities to listen to children. While we recognise this as a deeply problematic process, we argue that it is one we have to be willing to embrace.

Socio-philosophical argument: The process of education should address children as beings in the here and now, not just as becomings in the future

Writing in the Guardian newspaper, Ruth Lister (6/10/05) argued recently that the dominant construction of pupils in the education system is that of the future citizen worker. Little or no value is attached to the present being of the child. Kohan (2002) argues that as long as we persist in conceiving of education as a one-way process of forming the person of the child, we cannot enjoy mutually educative and reciprocal philosophical encounters. One of the expectations underpinning our approach to P4C and a further reason for exploring difficult issues with children is that our views can be, and indeed often are, influenced by our classroom dialogues.

Kohan (1998) argues that one of the functions of philosophy is to question dominant forms of discourse and their interpretation. It is a form of social critique and creativity to propose alternatives. He argues:

*Children will build their own philosophies, in their own manner. We will not correct the exclusion of children’s philosophical voices by showing that they can think like adults; on the contrary, that would be yet another way of silencing them.*

(1998)

Conclusion

1 Our enquiry had started off with their question ‘What happens when we die?’ and the girl who started to cry had just lost her uncle. While the children were making their drawings at the end of the session (some had drawn coffins with people crying next to it), their classroom teacher had left the room and informed the head teacher as she thought it inappropriate for children to make drawings of coffins. It is worth mentioning that the head teacher had told Karin Murris that the school was interested in doing ‘emotional literacy programmes’.

2 The Substance of Young Needs Review (Health Advisory Service, 2001) defines mental health: “to include the ability to develop psychologically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually, the inability to initiate and sustain relationships, the ability to empathise with others and the ability to use psychological distress as a developmental process”(our italics). It is not the purpose of this paper to put forward a rationale for P4C. This has been offered elsewhere in Lipman, Murris among others.

3 We also find that many teachers want to choose a book in order to influence the topic for discussion, for example, there has been bullying in the playground so the teacher feels that they can choose a certain book to act as a ‘vehicle’ towards particular questions and issues. In our P4C training, we emphasise the importance of providing a time and space through P4C when children, for a change, make the choice about the agenda for discussion in the classroom.

4 The term P4C refers to the practices of philosophically very different practitioners and practices, so we have elaborated a little on what is important to the authors of this paper.

References


Philosophical Intelligence: What is it and how do we develop it?

Robert Fisher

Abstract

This paper argues that Philosophical Intelligence is an important form of human intelligence best developed in children through philosophical dialogue. Howard Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) is critically reviewed. MI theory, it is argued, requires clearer definition and a theory of pedagogy to make it practical and applicable in school settings. This paper focuses on redefining the concept of existential intelligence and on identifying a workable pedagogy through which it can be developed. Gardner’s ‘existential intelligence’ is redefined in terms of Philosophical Intelligence and linked to the historical tradition of philosophical enquiry. The community of enquiry provides a pedagogical basis for developing Philosophical Intelligence. Ways that Philosophical Intelligence can be developed through communities of enquiry are illustrated with recent research using ‘Stories for Thinking’ and other forms of stimulus.

Introduction

If one learns from others but does not think, one will be bewildered. If, on the other hand, one thinks but does not learn from others, one will be in peril.

- Confucian Analects 11.15

In philosophy sometimes you think ideas you have never thought.

- Child aged 6

Intelligence has traditionally been defined in terms of students’ ability to understand and communicate through the use of language and mathematics. Educational psychologists have emphasised these aspects in devising tests of intelligence (IQ). In the UK as elsewhere schools have been urged to focus their teaching on literacy and numeracy and in most countries students’ educational progress continues to be assessed mainly in terms of language and maths.

Other researchers have posited a different view of intelligence, arguing that visual arts, music, drama, dance and other disciplines also comprise forms of enquiry, communication and understanding every bit as important as language and math (Langer 1942, Goodman 1976). The theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) claims that each student has eight or more modules each of which addresses different aspects of intelligence (Gardner 1983, 1999). The implications of this theory are that teaching should be geared to the whole range of human intelligence and that students’ progress should be assessed across many domains (Golding 2004). This paper argues that if this theory or model of intelligence is right then Philosophical Intelligence should be recognised as an important domain of human intelligence, best developed in children through philosophical dialogue.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences

An intelligence is the ability to solve problems or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings.

- Gardner (1983)

Howard Gardner claims that all human beings have multiple intelligences (MI) and that each of these multiple intelligences can be nurtured and strengthened, or ignored and weakened. He believes that neurological evidence shows that each individual has nine intelligences. He defined the first seven intelligences in Frames Of Mind (1983) and added the last two in Intelligence Reframed (1999). Some of these ‘intelligences’ link closely to traditional subjects that are taught in school such as verbal-linguistic (language), mathematical-logical (math), musical (music), visual-spatial (art and design), bodily-kinaesthetic (physical education) and naturalist intelligence (science).

Two of Gardner’s intelligences – interpersonal, that is the ability to respond to others, and intra-personal, the ability to be self aware - link closely to what Goleman (1996) calls emotional intelligence. The last intelligence in Gardner’s list - existential intelligence, is the most problematical. It is problematical for Gardner partly because he has found no locational evidence for it in the brain. It is also difficult to

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define and does not seem to correspond to a school subject. It is this intelligence that is better defined as Philosophical Intelligence and the ‘school subject’ that best develops it is Philosophy for Children.

Gardner’s MI theory has been met with uncritical acceptance by many in the educational world who welcome its emphasis on a broad and balanced view of children’s abilities and of the school curriculum, but it has also has met criticism for a range of reasons (Klein 2003).

Critics have argued that it fails as a theory on theoretical, empirical and pedagogical grounds. Firstly they challenge Gardner’s claim that intelligence is situated in discrete modules in the brain. Neurological research shows, they argue, that all of Gardner’s intelligences rely on connections that are distributed across the brain (Klein 2003). Some functions are localised but these are limited. For example what Gardner calls ‘logical-mathematical intelligence’ refers to regions that are responsible for quantifying and comparing numbers — the ‘number sense’ that all humans possess. But its powers are very limited. It cannot on its own devise or evaluate solutions to mathematical problems. What is needed for mathematical intelligence to solve problems is a whole brain system that includes verbal and spatial reasoning, motor activity and self regulation (Butterworth 1999). The whole brain system is required for each intelligence to fully function including what Gardner calls ‘existential’ intelligence.

Critics further argue that the modular functions that Gardner calls ‘intelligences’ are primary abilities that educators and cognitive psychologists have always acknowledged. MI theory they argue simply serves up old wine in new bottles. It is also culture-dependent. MI theory states that one’s culture plays an important role in determining the strengths and weaknesses of one’s intelligences. Critics counter that intelligence is most clearly revealed when an individual confronts an unfamiliar task in a culturally unfamiliar environment (White 1998).

Such criticisms however do not seem substantive. Whether we call them ‘intelligences’, ‘intellectual capacities’, ‘mental abilities’ or ‘thinking skills’ what are referred to are common capacities of human minds to respond to stimuli in more or less effective ways. Culture does play an important role in developing these capacities, but they are also revealed in the ways an individual confronts unfamiliar tasks in unfamiliar environments. Intelligence can be developed through practices that may or may not be culturally-embedded.

Even if the MI theory were sound critics argue that implementing MI theory is impractical in schools. Faced with overcrowded classrooms and lack of resources MI theory may be seen as utopian. It has proved difficult to compare and classify students’ skills and abilities across classrooms in valid tests of multiple intelligences. The practical implications of educating and assessing different intelligences, including Philosophical Intelligence, need to be faced. MI theory requires a theory of pedagogy to make it practical and applicable in school settings.

Critics argue that the concept of MI is not well defined, that it lacks rigour and precision and is an incomplete model. MI theory, it is claimed, takes no account for example of ‘practical intelligence’ or any of other abilities that humans have to solve problems which are not labelled by Gardner as ‘intelligences’ (White 1998). Notions such as bodily-kinaesthetic or musical ability it can be argued represent individual aptitude or talent rather than intelligence. Some wonder if the number of ‘intelligences’ will continue to increase. Although the model may be incomplete Gardner’s general point that there are many ways for human beings to be smart or intelligent, and that these vary between people, seems undeniable.

Gardner claims that it would be impossible to guarantee a definitive list of intelligences and admits that intelligences like ‘existential intelligence’ lack clear definition (Gardner 1999). He does not say what forms of pedagogy will develop individual intelligences. What the theory needs therefore are clearer definitions of these mental capacities and of the pedagogies that can help develop them. This paper focuses on redefining the concept of existential intelligence and identifying a workable pedagogy through which it can be developed.

**Existential Intelligence**

*The proclivity to pose and ponder questions about life, death, and ultimate realities.*

- Gardner (1999)

Gardner has not fully endorsed or described this intelligence but he suggests that ‘existential intelligence’ is a sensitivity to and capacity for tackling deep questions about human existence, such as the meaning of life, why do we die, and how did we get here. Traditionally this kind of questioning has been called philosophical.

Gardner argues that children show ‘existential intelligence’ when they pose, and sometimes answer, life’s larger questions, such as:

- Why am I here?
- Why are we here?
- Are there other dimensions, and if so what are they like?
- Can animals understand us, or do animals go to heaven?
- Are there really ghosts?
- Where do we go when we die?
- Why are some people evil?
- Is there life on other planets?
- Where is heaven? Why does God live?
This paper argues that what Gardner calls ‘existential intelligence’ is better described as Philosophical Intelligence (PI) and that PI involves more than posing existential questions. It links to a long historical tradition of philosophical enquiry and to recent research into ways of engaging children in philosophical discussion. So what is PI and how is it developed?

**Philosophical Intelligence**

*Philosophy is the way you sort out problems in life when nobody knows the answer*

- Simon, aged 11.

Philosophical intelligence refers to capacities of mind that are revealed when an individual poses or confronts a conceptual problem and uses words to express meanings and find solutions. As the philosopher Wittgenstein (1953) put it: ‘Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language’ (Philosophical investigations, 109). Language can be bewitching because we easily assume the world conforms to the ways it is described in words. We may be led to believe for example that objects given the same name share some essential feature. As Socrates reminds Euthyphro: ‘Bear in mind that I did not bid you to tell me one or two of the pious actions but the form itself that makes all pious actions pious .’ (Plato, Euthyphro 6d). We need philosophical intelligence to help us be more attentive to the ways in which we describe the world. As Wittgenstein said: ‘The confusions which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work.’ (Philosophical investigations, 132).

It is because words and concepts can be manipulated for undeclared purposes that philosophical intelligence is necessary. A computer can be programmed to accept any message it is given. There are people who wish to do the same with human minds. We need to guard against the bewitchment of our intelligence by our own use of words and by the way that others use words to inform and persuade. The key process in this battle to avoid confusion and false belief is by questioning and probing. Albert Einstein had a sign hanging in his office at Princeton which read ‘The important thing is not to stop questioning’. Linguistic intelligence enables us to access and communicate through language - philosophical intelligence prompts us to ask: ‘What do you mean by ...?’ ‘Is it true?’ and ‘How do we know?’

In the opening page of his ‘Letter on Humanism’ Heidegger (1947) says that: ‘Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home.’ Words express concepts or ideas. ‘Real concepts are impossible without words,’ said Vygotsky (1978) ‘and thinking in concepts does not exist beyond verbal thinking.’ Daniel aged 7 put it this way: “You can only speak with words because you can’t speak with clicking; you can only speak with words!”

Not all concepts expressed in words are philosophical. In philosophy it is the concepts or categories with which we think about the world that are the topics of enquiry. The ‘mark’ of a concept being philosophical, in any field of enquiry, is that it is common, central and contestable (Splitter and Sharp, 1995). Every discipline has its share of such concepts and so every discipline can be said to have its ‘philosophical’ dimensions.

We gain insight into the nature of philosophy by looking at historical exemplars of philosophy and philosophers. Such historical or evolutionary definitions do not give us any set of ‘essential’ properties, nor are they intended to. But they do identify a method of enquiry as a strand of human thinking that stretches across cultures and time. Western philosophy can be traced back to the works of Plato and, in a sense, we are still trying to answer the questions he and Socrates asked. ‘Philosophy begins in wonder’ said Aristotle. Asking and answering philosophical questions is where philosophy begins. Philosophical intelligence is in evidence when human engage not only in existential questioning but also in the thinking needed to solve conceptual problems.

Philosophical enquiry only becomes useful when intellectual inquiry is applied to the problems of life. As Kierkegaard (1846) noted in his diary: ‘Philosophy says: that Life must be understood backwards. But ...that it must be lived forwards. The more one ponders this, the more it comes to mean that life in the temporal existence never
becomes quite intelligible, precisely because at no moment can I find complete quiet to take the backward-looking position’. Philosophical intelligence is expressed in the capacity of the mind to reflect back on experience in order to make it intelligible and to seek solutions to the recurrent problems of human existence. Some of those problems stem from the activity of the mind contemplating its own existence, others stem from the challenges humans face living in the world.

For Hegel (1821) ‘philosophy starts in the universe of mind as well as the universe of nature.’ Scientific method can help us investigate the world of nature (partly through using of what Gardner calls ‘naturalist intelligence’) but philosophical intelligence is needed to organise our ideas and concepts into mental maps and models of the world. PI involves processing information and trying to find meaning at a conceptual level, traditionally by asking philosophical questions such as What is love? What is truth? What is beauty? PI also involves critical thinking, creative thinking and the exercise of judgement. We extend our knowledge through reasoning (part of what Gardner calls ‘logico-mathematical intelligence’) which enables us to test the links between ideas. Human reasoning is a dynamic process developed through the social practices of dialogue. In translating our thoughts into words shared with others we need the logical tools of reasoning (the giving and judging of reasons and evidence) to provide justifications for our beliefs.

As Kant (1781) said, ‘Philosophical knowledge is the knowledge gained by reason from concepts’ but PI is about more than reasoning, inference and deduction. We also move beyond experience when we exercise our capacity for questioning and speculation (creative thinking). PI involves the exercise of creative thinking through generating and building on ideas, posing hypotheses, applying imagination, making links to new ideas and reflecting on alternative possibilities (‘possibility thinking’). We need creative thinking to discover or invent relationships between ideas, reasoning to test the validity of these and acts of judgement to decide what to believe. ‘Philosophy informs us, ‘as Hume (1739) said, ‘that every thing which appears to the mind, is nothing but a perception, and is interrupted, and dependent on the mind.’ We need judgement to assess perceptions, arguments and evidence. Judgement is informed by philosophical intelligence when it poses and seeks answers to questions such as:

- What is the meaning of what is stated?
- What is the truth of what is claimed?
- How can we verify the conclusions reached?
- How do we conceptualise the problem and the solution?
- How do we know?
- How far is the reality knowable?

We seek certain knowledge about the nature of things but we live, as Hume said, in a world of opinions, beliefs, conjectures and intuitions (what Aristotle called ‘things said by the many’). We are often mistaken in our beliefs or lack understanding of words and the world. As St. Augustine said to be human is to make mistakes. ‘Si falso sum’ (If I err I exist). In the face of the possibility of error postmodern philosophers go further by arguing that ‘what is needed above all is an absolute scepticism towards all inherited concepts’ (Nietzsche The Will to Power #409). Human intelligence is fallible. Claims to knowledge should always be open to question. However, justified grounds for belief and solutions to life’s problems can be found through applying philosophical intelligence.

In summary, philosophical intelligence is exercised when we:

- Question ideas about the world
- Create, extend and develop ideas and theoretical concepts
- Define clearly the meanings of words and concepts we use
- Reason and argue with logic and consistency
- Judge beliefs on the strength of reasons and evidence

These aspects of philosophical intelligence are not located in specific parts of the brain but are distributed across the brain as a whole brain function (Klein 2003). How should we seek to develop this intelligence in our students? Gardner (1999) argues that ‘students should probe with sufficient depth a manageable set of examples so that they come to see how one thinks and acts in the manner of a scientist, a geometer, an artist, an historian.’ In terms of philosophical intelligence this means showing students what it is to think and act like a philosopher. Research suggests that an ideal pedagogy for developing philosophical intelligence is through the form of dialogic teaching called ‘community of enquiry’ (Fisher 2003, Trickey & Topping 2004).

**Community of Enquiry**

_In communicative action participants pursue their plans cooperatively on a basis of a shared definition of a situation._

- Habermas (1990)

How is Philosophical Intelligence developed? One answer is that teaching consists in handing on knowledge, skills and values to students. But education must be more than handing on what is known, no matter how valuable that knowledge or those values may be. They need PI to help them face the conceptual problems, doubts and conflicts that they
will inevitably face in an uncertain world. One eight year old expressed the problems we all face: ‘The trouble is people are telling you different things, and sometimes your mind tells you to do different things too!’

Through engaging in a community of enquiry children learn how to:

- Ask their own questions and raise issues of concern
- Explore and develop their own ideas, views and theories
- Explain and argue their point of view with others
- Listen to and consider the views and ideas of others
- Build on ideas, develop their understanding and sometimes change their minds
- Engage in discussion, recognising and respecting differences of opinion

A community of enquiry can initiate students into public discussion about issues of personal concern such as love, friendship, death, bullying and fairness, as well as more existential questions about personal identity, change, truth and time. Such discussions seek to create what Habermas (1990) calls ‘an ideal speech situation’, a way of thinking and acting together that cultivates not only philosophical intelligence but virtues of conduct such as respect for others, sincerity and open-mindedness. In a community of enquiry children are encouraged to find their own path to meaning via discussion with others. During the growth of a community of philosophical enquiry signs of change occur. Students learn how to object to unsupported claims and weak reasoning, how to build on and develop the ideas of others, and how to generate alternative world-views that challenge and extend their thinking. Because it is a philosophical enquiry there is a focus on the underlying concepts of daily experience such as time, space, truth, beauty, knowledge and value. As children probe these concepts they learn how to ask relevant questions, detect assumptions, recognise faulty reasoning and gain confidence in their ability to make sense of and to articulate their values. For Socrates the unconsidered acceptance of received knowledge cannot be true wisdom – ‘the unexamined life’ he said is ‘is not worth living’.

In a community of enquiry students and their teacher sit in a circle and share a stimulus such as story, poem or picture. The students take some thinking time to devise their own questions and to discuss them. If the group meets regularly the questions over time should get more philosophical, the pupils’ discussions more discipline and focused, and more imaginative. In a philosophical enquiry there will be a focus on the underlying concepts of daily experience such as time, space, truth and beauty. Evidence of the development of Philosophical Intelligence include when students not only ask more philosophical questions, but develop concepts, detect assumptions, recognise faulty reasoning and gain competence in their ability to make sense of the world.

The following summarises the elements of a community of enquiry in the classroom (Fisher 2003):

- Community setting: sit so all can see and hear each other, teacher as part of the group
- Agreed rules: for example ‘Only one speaks at a time’, ‘Everyone listens to the speaker’
- Shared stimulus: for example a chosen text, experience or problem
- Thinking time: time is given to think about the shared stimulus or problem
- Questioning: a forum is provided for raising questions, problems and ideas
- Discussing: each with a right and opportunity to express their own views and feelings
- Extending thinking: through further activity that apply and extend leading ideas

As children begin to internalise the procedures of enquiry with the help of a good model they may begin to take over responsibility for running and evaluating the sessions. The teacher’s role can then becomes that of coach and participant rather than leader. In developing rules for running the session and in evaluating their own contributions students may develop capacities for self-correction, self understanding and self management. A community of enquiry may therefore provide a living model of philosophical intelligence and of a moral community and in action (though it has to be said that it may not always do so). For John, aged 10, the community of enquiry not only gives him time to think in a serious, structured and sustained way, but also: ‘It helps you ask questions. It shows you there can be many answers to one question (and) it makes you think that everything must have a reason.’

**Stimulating Philosophical Thinking**

*Where does time go when it ends?*  
- question posed by five year old.

What a philosophical enquiry needs is a stimulus for thinking. Here the theory of MI can inform pedagogy by reminding us that a range of stimuli is needed, including drawing, writing, acting and responding to music, to cater for the full range of ‘intelligence’ or ways of knowing (Golding 2004). The following are examples of stimuli for discussion related to Gardner’s list of intelligences:
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- Linguistic: stories, poems, news items, comments, quotations, questions etc.
- Logico-mathematical: logical arguments, reasons, statistics or surveys of opinion
- Visual-spatial: pictures, art works, photos, cartoons, video, film or TV
- Musical: music, songs, sounds
- Bodily-kinaesthetic: drama, dance, physical games or sports
- Naturalistic: natural objects, scientific or environmental issues
- Interpersonal: social problems and issues, conflicts and dilemmas
- Intrapersonal: students own feelings, experiences, problems and questions
- Existential: philosophical questions such as What is a person? What is good?

If they are challenged with a range of objects of complex intellectual enquiry (for example a story), then even young children can respond to questions in ways that can be called philosophical. This may mean helping them to move from the concrete and literal aspects of the story to the conceptual and the abstract, moving from discussing what happened in the story to why. Discussion can be moved to philosophical levels through a Socratic use of questions as in this excerpt of discussion of the story *The Monkey and Her Baby* (Fisher 1999a) with 6/7 year olds:

Teacher: Why did the mother think that her baby was best?
Child: Because it was beautiful. She thought it was beautiful.
Child: She thought it was beautiful because she was the mother.
Teacher: What does it mean to be beautiful?
Child: It means someone thinks you are lovely.
Child: You are perfect...
Child: Good to look at.
Teacher: Can you be beautiful even if no-one thinks you are lovely?
Child: No. You can’t be beautiful if no-one thinks you are beautiful.
Child: You can be beautiful inside, you can feel beautiful...

Often young children will choose to call philosophical discussion by its proper name – ‘Philosophy’, if they are introduced to the term. Such a lesson may have different names, such as Stories for Thinking or Thinking Circle. Whatever it is called children often see the value of having time set aside to think through a stimulus such as a specially chosen ‘story for thinking’ (Fisher 1996, 1999a) or ‘poem for thinking’ (Fisher 1997, 2000). Kirandeep, aged eight, says philosophy discussions are important because ‘thinking is what we are here for.’ Karen, aged eight, says she likes her *Stories for Thinking* lessons because they makes stories ‘a kind of puzzle’.

What philosophical enquiry offers is a tried and tested strategy for helping children to apply reasoning to texts. Paul, a reluctant reader, aged 8, suddenly sees the point of it all during a philosophical discussion of a story: ‘Oh I get it. We’re not supposed to just read the story. We’re supposed to think about it.’ For him it is a revelation. Although still struggling with the mechanics of reading he finds he is able to make a personal response, to question, to discuss inferences and meanings using challenging texts during the shared reading session. During the plenary review of the discussion he says, ‘I think philosophy makes you think more because it gives you time to think.’

**Extending Thinking**

*Sometimes you’re afraid to say things, but in philosophy lessons you can say what you really think and sometimes you change your mind.*

- Michelle, aged 10

Getting students to exercise their philosophical intelligence is not an easy task, but is a complex teaching skill that depends on three key factors:

- The objects of enquiry given to students must be worth serious thought
- The thinking and reasoning of students about their writing must be valued
Time must be given for extended thinking, discussion and for building on ideas.

One way to extend philosophical thinking is to ask children philosophical questions. In doing so the aim is to model the questions we want children to ask themselves in their own thinking. Philosophical questions are those which are strange, interesting or puzzling because the answer is not ‘given’ within a text, there is not usually one right answer or the question might not even ever have an answer, we cannot find answer in the empirical world and the question is open to investigation and interpretation. A class of ten year olds have spent time discussing a challenging question: ‘What is thinking?’ The question is one they have raised themselves and chosen to discuss after shared reading of a ‘story for thinking’.

Philosophical discussion can be extended through pupils writing their thoughts in special ‘Think Books’, or writing journals (Fisher 2004). Journals can be used to enhance knowledge of content, process and self. Not that the exercise of philosophical intelligence will necessarily provide us with answers, it may provoke further puzzling questions. As Anna aged 10, after a philosophical discussion writes in her thinking book:

Thinking is a state of mind. It is divided into two regions, Choice and Pleasure. Choice covers everyday choices, such as what to do at wet play, to serious choices, like whether to go to college. Pleasure covers all other kinds of thinking. Guessing is not thinking. Thinking is life. We could not live without thinking. Dreaming is the only exception. The two regions of Choice and Pleasure do not cover it. Dreams are very strange because your body and mind do not control them. They are almost not thinking. What is a dream?

Aristotle argued that excellence in thinking was not so much a quality as a habit. Nothing develops the habits of intelligent behaviour more effectively than open-ended dialogue about ideas and questions in which young people are interested, assisted by a philosophically aware teacher. But does research evidence support these claims?

**Evaluating Progress**

*Philosophy helps me to ask my own questions, and ask other people questions ... which are sometimes hard to answer.*

- Josh, aged 7

A good community of enquiry has a number of pedagogical characteristics which include:

- A high proportion of open or Socratic questions,
- Lengthy pupil responses, encouraged by the teacher,
- Reference by the teacher to the ‘big’ ideas or concepts under discussion,
- Connecting the ideas discussed to other areas of learning and everyday life

However an effective pedagogy is not enough. Philosophical Intelligence is about exercising judgement. Just as there is a need to discuss the outcomes of a single discussion, so there is a need to assess outcomes over time. Research evidence from a wide range of small-scale studies across the world indicate that philosophy for children programmes, when implemented over time, can enhance various aspects of a child’s academic performance (McGuinness 1999, Fisher 2003). Collaborative philosophical enquiry with children has been shown to produce gains along a range of educational measures, including verbal reasoning (Trickey & Topping 2004). Findings from my Philosophy in Primary Schools research project echo worldwide research into Philosophy for Children programmes, showing that the *Stories for Thinking* programme has a positive effect on:

- Teachers’ professional confidence and self esteem
- Students’ achievements in academic tests
- Students’ self esteem and self concept as thinkers and learners
- The fluency and quality of students’ questioning
- The quality of their creative thinking and verbal reasoning
- Their ability to think for themselves and engage effectively in discussion with others

Project evaluations confirm that students enjoy a ‘Stories for Thinking’ approach to philosophic discussion and find discussion in a community of enquiry motivating (Fisher 2005a). Teachers claim that philosophical discussion adds a new dimension to their teaching and the way their pupils think. Evidence from discussions show that students become more ready to ask questions, to challenge each other and to explain what they mean when they have participated in regular sessions of philosophical discussion. As Kim, aged 9, put it: ’The important thing is not to agree or disagree but to say why.’

There is no better preparation for being an active, responsible and creative citizen than for a child to participate with others in a community of enquiry founded on reasoning, freedom of expression and mutual respect (Fisher 2003). The effects of philosophical discussion extend across the curricu-
lum. Thinking together in serious, sustained and systematic ways helps children to internalise the habits of intelligent behaviour, enquiry and discussion (Mercer 2000). As Jemma, aged 10 said: 'Philosophy can help in all your lessons, no matter what you're learning.'

Summary

If Gardner (1983) is right that the human mind contains many forms of intelligence then philosophical intelligence is one of the most important of these. The argument for PI does not rely on locational evidence - it is a whole brain capacity. Its activity is grounded in existential questioning but also involves responding to conceptual problems through creative thinking, reasoning and the exercise of judgement. It appears across cultures, in a long well-documented, historic tradition. It has a well-researched pedagogy – the ‘community of enquiry’ through which philosophical intelligence can be developed. Research shows that PI can be developed by Philosophy for Children programs. If PI can be developed in these ways through all the years of education then we should surely do so. As Megan, aged 9 put it: ‘Philosophy helps me to think, and I need to think well if I want to learn’.

References

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Note

Quotations from teachers and children in this paper are taken from the author’s ‘Philosophy in Primary Schools (PIPS) research project.
The Moral Responsibility of Children and Animals

Abstract

The term “childhood animality” has been used to refer to those associations between children and animals that are based on their affinities toward one another, their seeming psychological similarities, and also on the “cultural stories” of likeness between children and animals that find their way into our philosophical, psychological, and political history. Here I examine how the concept of childhood animality underlies some philosophical accounts of moral responsibility. In order to capture what we ought to say about the morally relevant differences between children and animals I argue that we should accept an account of “diminished” moral responsibility—a kind of responsibility ascription that has the consequence that some children are responsible for particular actions but not others, and animals are not morally responsible for any actions.

Children show no trace of the arrogance which urges modern adult civilized men to draw a hard-and-fast line between their own nature and that of all other animals. Children have no scruples over allowing animals to rank as their full equals. Uninhibited as they are in the avowal of their bodily needs, they no doubt feel themselves more akin to animals than to their elders, who may well be a puzzle to them.¹

The term “childhood animality” has been used to refer to those associations between children and animals that are based on their affinities toward one another, their seeming psychological similarities, and also on the “cultural stories” of likeness between children and animals that find their way into our philosophical, psychological, and political history.² Here I examine how the concept of childhood animality underlies philosophical accounts of moral responsibility. I describe first a puzzle about moral responsibility that is created by trying to apply Strawson’s theory of the reactive attitudes to children and animals. Children and animals fall somewhere in-between what Strawson calls the participant reactive attitudes and the objective attitude. When we turn to other Strawsonian-type theories of responsibility to resolve this puzzle, we find it is not easy to accommodate these kinds of subjects. Perhaps it is because, historically, children and animals have been linked so closely that some theories of moral responsibility have tended to treat these as like cases.³ Either the bar for moral accountability is set fairly low, making both animals and children morally responsible for what they do. Or, it is set rather high in which case neither children nor animals qualify as moral agents and as proper subjects for moral praise or blame.⁴ An example of the first kind of “intentionality condition” for being responsible is Aristotle’s requirement for voluntary action. This interpretation of Aristotle and the conclusion that children and animals are morally responsible is defended by Richard Sorabji and Martha Nussbaum.⁵ The latter sort of requirement for responsibility I call the “rationality condition.” Here I take Jay Wallace’s account of “reflective self-control” as representative of a cluster of views that require a significant degree of rationality of the agent in order to be morally responsible, thereby exempting both children and animals from responsibility.⁶ It seems to me that neither of these positions gets things exactly right in explaining the moral culpability of children and animals. I argue that in order to capture what we ought to say about the morally relevant differences between children and animals we should accept an account of “diminished” moral responsibility—a kind of responsibility ascription whose conditions of satisfaction fall somewhere in-between the intentionality condition and the rationality condition. Accepting a version of diminished responsibility has the consequence that some children are responsible for particular actions but not others, and animals are not morally responsible for any actions.

Childhood Animality

A remarkable photograph taken in the 1880’s depicts a dog and a child sitting on a formal dining chair, both gazing directly at the viewer. The dog is a Boxer-type, looking very serious. The child is, perhaps, a year old and has the same stern expression. The caption reads, “A tough-looking little boy posed with an equally tough-looking dog.” Many other photographs and paintings from this period pair children and animals in family settings. These are mostly portrait scenes that illustrate the emotional intimacy of a typical child and the family pet. These historical images represent what I believe is a very compelling collection of attitudes about children and
animals that persist even today—that children and animals are similar in their reasoning and emotional capabilities, that they are individuals that occupy a dependent but privileged place in the family, and that both have the potential to be “civilized” by education and training.8

While this cultural and historical background is fascinating in itself, focusing on the idea of childhood animality has a philosophical point as well. The close conceptual overlap between children and animals might lead us to predict that children and animals will be characterized as occupying one and the same moral space as well. This is especially so for any account of moral responsibility that takes the reactive attitudes, such as gratitude and resentment, as fundamental human practices that constitute holding someone morally responsible. When animals are likened to dependent children, or regarded as individuals who are the emotional equals of children and believed to be intimate friends and loyal guardians, then where should animals and children be located in a theory of responsibility that takes as primary our practices and attitudes towards different kinds of subjects? Specifically, we might ask, what would P.F. Strawson’s theory of the reactive attitudes imply about the moral culpability of animals and children?

A Puzzle about the Reactive Attitudes

The puzzle that I describe in this section is really just a question about where to locate children and animals in the moral and conceptual space described by Strawson in his influential article, “Freedom and Resentment.”9 Strawson directs our attention to emotional states such as gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, shame, love, guilt, indignation, and hurt feelings. These represent the core of our moral engagements with other human beings. They are “commonplaces” that signal “what it is actually like to be involved in ordinary interpersonal relationships, ranging from the most intimate to the most casual.”10 Strawson identifies two primary conditions that typically reflect when it is “natural,” “reasonable,” or “appropriate” to adopt these reactive attitudes toward another human being. If we do feel resentment in response to some insult or injury we may modify our attitude because of a certain kind of excuse offered—“It was an accident,” “She didn’t mean to,” “She didn’t know.” These pleas make the attitude of resentment inappropriate because of extenuating circumstances even while acknowledging the injury that may have resulted from the action. Importantly, these excuses and the reactive attitudes that we adopt toward the agent entail that the agent is fully responsible for her actions and counts as someone to whom it is appropriate to have the reactive attitudes of resentment and forgiveness.

The second cluster of attitudes Strawson identifies as part of our commonplace practice characterizes the kind of person with whom we are dealing. This is not the temporary suspension of indignation or resentment because of extenuating circumstances that we believe are legitimately excusing at a time. It is a wholesale resistance to regarding this person as one to whom we have moral relations in the first place. We adopt the “objective attitude” toward a person as a response to excuses like, “She’s only a child,” or “He’s a diagnosed schizophrenic,” or “That’s purely compulsive behavior on his part.” In other words, we are invited to view the agent herself as “psychologically abnormal,” or “morally undeveloped,” and by virtue of this as a person who is not morally responsible for her actions in general. As Strawson puts it,

To adopt the objective attitude to another human being is to see him, perhaps, as an object of social policy: as a subject for what, in a wide range of sense, might be called treatment; as something certainly to be taken account, perhaps precautionary account, of; to be managed or handled or cured or trained; perhaps simply to be avoided . . .11

Strawson maintains that the practice of our reactive attitudes is a deep and natural feature of our ordinary interpersonal relations—as he says, “a part of the general framework of human life.”12 When Strawson characterizes the reactive attitudes in this way he is making a point about the primacy of our practice of interpersonal relations and, additionally, that these attitudes are constitutive of moral responsibility ascriptions. These reactive attitudes just are what it means to hold a person morally responsible for what she does.

If we accept that the reactive attitudes are constitutive of moral responsibility ascriptions, then the fact that we unhesitatingly apply such attitudes toward animals in a variety of settings suggests that animals are morally responsible for what they do, and may be morally blameworthy for harms or injuries they inflict (providing that no temporary excusing conditions apply). Some might maintain that the depth and range of attitudes that we feel about particular animals or kinds of animals are indicative of these very participant reactive attitudes, those that are essential reactions to moral beings. To be sure Strawson takes human, adult relationships as the paradigm case of the participant reactive attitudes. Would Strawson say that our attitudes of indignation, resentment, hatred, or love directed toward some animals are simply mistaken in their target? We will have to look closer to discern why Strawson believes that the participant attitudes single out moral relations between human adults.

Alternatively, some might be persuaded that Strawson’s characterization of the objective attitude captures our occasional regard of both domestic and wild animals as the sorts of beings that must be “managed or handled or cured or trained.” Certainly some people regard animals, especially wild animals, as “objects of social policy,” in the same way as a game manager of a forest preserve might ensure that populations of certain species are maintained at viable numbers. But even so it is difficult to explain the deep and abiding regard that most people have toward their pets by reference to the objective attitude alone. The problem about where to locate animals
in Strawson’s theory is created by our various practices and attitudes toward animals. There appear to be no unified set of attitudes toward animals that can be neatly characterized as either participant human reactive attitudes—that those that signal our moral relations to one another—or the objective attitude—the attitude we adopt toward “objects of social policy.”

We may be equally puzzled about where to locate children in Strawson’s schema since children are beings who fall somewhere short of being full-fledged members of the moral community. Strawson says,

Thus parents and others concerned with the care and upbringing of young children cannot have to their charges either kind of attitude in a pure or unqualified form. They are dealing with creatures who are potentially and increasingly capable both of holding, and being objects of, the full range of human and moral attitudes, but are not yet truly capable of either. The treatment of such creatures must therefore represent a kind of compromise, constantly shifting in one direction, between objectivity of attitude and developed human attitudes... The punishment of a child is both like and unlike the punishment of an adult.\(^\text{13}\)

Strawson admits here that while parents and guardians of children cannot adopt either the objective attitude or developed human attitudes in a “pure or unqualified form,” the compromise position is to move back and forth between these attitudes.

Does Strawson’s suggestion actually capture our practical regard for children? It seems quite likely that on some occasions a child may be genuinely deserving of moral praise or blame, but she may not yet be capable of the fully developed human attitudes that characterize our moral relations with mature adults. Similarly, even if she is not deserving of moral praise or blame on a particular occasion, we will not usually resort to the objective attitude in dealing with her—we will not regard her as the kind of thing that must be “managed,” “treated,” “cured,” or “trained.” Perhaps Strawson is only reminding us that we should make accommodations for her gradual transition to a full-fledged member of the moral community. But it is still unclear how, when, or even whether or not we should hold children morally accountable. Clearly we need more guidance on this issue than Strawson explicitly provides.

If neither children nor animals fit neatly into Strawson’s schema of the reactive attitudes based on our various and sometimes conflicting practices and regard for these subjects, then we might wonder how we are ever to answer the question about whether children and animals are morally responsible, at least according to Strawson’s theory. Susan Dwyer describes this kind of difficulty about Strawson’s approach in the following way:

But something is amiss in thinking that an individual is morally responsible just in case others react to him in this way rather than that. Surely, there is something about him that makes him morally responsible or not. Moreover, taking the reactive attitudes to be constitutive of moral responsibility appears to allow no room for error: we feel indignant at A, and that is all there is to it. But aren’t our feelings of indignation and resentment sometimes misplaced?

The concerns can be addressed by articulating what it is to be a proper target of the reactive attitudes.\(^\text{14}\)

Jay Wallace’s careful exposition of what counts as a proper target of the reactive attitudes is worth close examination.\(^\text{15}\) On Wallace’s view both children and animals are exempt from moral responsibility because they fail to satisfy the conditions that he believes are necessary for being morally culpable.

The Rationality Condition—Reflective Self-Control

Like Strawson, Wallace believes that the practice of holding a person morally responsible is one that takes place from the point of view of a “moral judge” rather than the agent of the act, where this practice is closely aligned with the moral sentiments of resentment, indignation, and guilt (a subset of the broader class of reactive attitudes that Strawson discusses). But Wallace adds to this that conditions of fairness demand that there be something about a person to whom we direct these attitudes that justifies our holding these attitudes toward him or her. It is this part of Wallace’s project that I wish to appropriate, if only in an abbreviated way.

Certain agents may be exempt from moral responsibility because they lack capacities and abilities that make it appropriate, in general, to hold the agent responsible. Exemptions are different from excuses in this respect—“excuses block responsibility for particular acts an agent has performed, exemptions make it inappropriate to hold the agent accountable more generally.”\(^\text{16}\) According to Wallace, exempting conditions apply to young children, those who suffer from certain kinds of insanity or mental illness, and psychopaths by virtue of their failure to have “reflective self-control.” More precisely, it is only fair to hold a person morally responsible and blameworthy if the agent possesses:

(1) The power to grasp and apply moral reasons; and

(2) The power to control or regulate his behavior by light of such reasons.\(^\text{17}\)

Wallace explains that grasping and applying a moral principle and the moral reasons behind it is a relatively complex task. What is required is a “participant understanding” of
the contexts in which a principle applies. For example, understanding the principle that one should not deliberately harm other people (in the ordinary pursuit of one’s own ends) requires knowing what counts as harmful in a variety of situations, and understanding the different kinds of harms it is possible to inflict, such as emotional harm, physical harm, damage to a person’s reputation, and so on. It might be expected that participant understanding and grasping moral reasons admit of degrees. Although Wallace concede that it is difficult to say exactly what level or degree of cognitive and volitional capacity is necessary for reflective self-control, he maintains that there is some level of reflective self-control that is required for moral responsibility. By Wallace’s own account, animals most certainly qualify for exemption from moral responsibility because they do not have the relevant degree of reflective self-control. Because animals lack the “general competence” to entertain moral reasons in support of obligations and to be motivated to act by these moral reasons, it would be unfair or unreasonable to hold an animal morally responsible for its actions. We may still sanction an animal’s behavior that fails to meet our expectations of how the animal should behave but this does not amount to moral blame.

What is less clear is how Wallace’s exempting conditions apply to children. Because children are learning how to apply moral principles and how to use moral concepts like fairness or harm, Wallace says they do not “completely lack the powers of reflective self-control.” This is what we would expect if possessing these cognitive and volitional powers comes in degrees of normative competence. The difficult part here is what we should say about the moral responsibility of children relative to their degree of possession of these powers. Wallace recommends that we treat children as if they are accountable agents because they have some degree of reflective self-control, and because it is practically efficacious to treat them this way so as to bring about their development into full-fledged moral agents. The underlying assumption here is that by treating children “as if” they are responsible it is presumed that they are not. We may get a child’s behavior to conform to our moral expectations but the behavior alone is not always indicative that she has grasped the relevant moral reasons or principles and has acted with this motivation. She may, Wallace notes, be acting from fear of punishment or the desire for her parent’s approval. So, acting intentionally in a way that complies with moral obligations we accept is not always indicative of reflective self-control.

It seems then that both children and animals are exempt from moral responsibility, according to Wallace, because they fall short of having reflective self-control. But since Wallace himself describes children’s’ acquisition of reflective self-control as a gradual process, and fairly ascribing moral responsibility to anyone depends on a certain threshold level of this normative competence, it is reasonable to want more precision about where to locate children in the development of this normative competence. After all, we may want to know if a child deserves the commendation of moral praise or the sanctions that accompany moral blame. In other words, treating a child as if she is morally accountable may be practical but not philosophically warranted in a particular instance. In the next section I suggest some reasons for thinking that children may deserve moral praise and blame even if they fail to have reflective self-control.

The Moral Appraisability of Children

Whether or not children are morally appraisable depends, in large part, on our practical regard for children—how we respond to them in particular circumstances. In an article titled, “Knowing Better,” Ann Diller explores what we mean by our assertions to young children when we say, “You know better than that!” or “You ought to know better.”12 Our use of these expressions suggests first a distinction between kinds of situations that in practice we commonly differentiate between - situations where a child does sometimes know better and situations where she sometimes does not. Consider, for example, the case of a young mother who [mistakenly] believes that her crying infant is trying to be disagreeable or selfish. Here we are just mistaken to say that the baby should know better than to cry all the time. But in other cases we are correct to say that a child knows better. For example, the following anecdote illustrates what teachers and parents of preschoolers have observed about children’s interest and concern with fairness.

Two four-year-olds were engaged in an increasingly acrimonious dispute over the possession of a large...
Consider also the following anecdote from Gareth Matthews’ wonderful discussion of children and philosophy in his book, Philosophy and the Young Child. 24

Ian (six years) found to his chagrin that the three children of his parents’ friends monopolized the television; they kept him from watching his favorite program. “Mother,” he asked in frustration, “why is it better for three people to be selfish than for one?” 25

Matthews later wrote a short story to read and discuss with children that posed a similar challenge to utilitarian thinking, in this case, that because three people were made happy and only one was disgruntled, the action of appropriating the T.V. programming was morally right. But as Matthews notes about the children who discussed the story, “they found utilitarianism unattractive, and they were not inclined to search for any similarly high-level principle or theory to replace utilitarianism.” 26 Instead the children debated selfishness, hurt feelings, the ages of the children in the story, whether or not it was the last show televised in the series, the protocol of being nice to visitors, and so on. It is clear in this case that these children have grasped the morally relevant features of the situation, but it is not so easy to say that they have a moral principle in mind that they are attempting to apply, or that they understand how to justify the moral considerations that they bring to bear in this particular case. In these examples we have what I think are genuine cases of children engaging in moral reasoning. Do they display what Wallace might say is the minimal degree of reflective self-control required for moral accountability?

When Wallace introduces the idea of reflective self-control he explains what he means by having “the power to grasp and apply moral reasons.” Consider, for example, Wallace’s rather specific description of what it means to have a participant understanding of the principle of nonmaleficence:

One will only be able to apply this principle to a wide array of situations if one has a sophisticated understanding of the concept of harm, knowing what kinds of treatment would count as harmful to another person (inflicting physical pain, causing psychic anguish or distress, damaging a person’s reputation or interests, and on). Furthermore, one must have some appreciation for the considerations that make it wrong to harm other people in these ways. These considerations need not take the form of a further justification for the principle of nonmaleficence itself—for present purposes, I should like to leave it open whether this principle requires or admits of a further justification. But if there are such further justifications available, one should have at least the ability to grasp the reasons that those justifications cite (perhaps as a result of the kind of reflection prompted by “hard cases”). And if there are no such justifications, so that the principle of nonmaleficence is itself basic, that too should be the sort of point one is able to understand. Otherwise one’s deployment of the principle of nonmaleficence will have a wooden quality, rendering it ill-suited to guide one through the complexities of the moral life. Beyond this basic ability to appreciate the concepts and values involved in moral justifications, one will also need ancillary abilities of attention, concentration, and judgment, to bring moral principles accurately to bear on particular situations of action, and to focus effectively on the conclusions they support in deliberating about what to do. 27

Ann Diller warns us that we must not make the idea of “having moral reasons” so complicated that it will turn out that children cannot have them at all. Because being hurt and hurting another person is in the domain of a child’s experience, we can demand of a child, “Don’t do that, because it hurts!” In such a case, “It hurts” is a moral reason that children can grasp and use as an explanation prohibiting some kinds of actions. 28 But this example of a moral reason is not very close to what Wallace describes as a moral principle that agents apply in a thoughtful and circumscribed way as a result of deliberating about different kinds of harms, and the reasons for or against the moral principle of nonmaleficence. Still, we may wonder what kind of theory of moral development allows that four-year-olds are moral reasoners.

Matthews supplies us with the following description of moral development, one that he contrasts with the cognitive-developmental stage theories of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. 29

A young child is able to latch onto the moral kind, bravery, or lying, by grasping central paradigms of that kind, paradigms that even the most mature and sophisticated moral agents still count as paradigmatic. Moral development is then something much more complicated than simple concept displacement. It is: enlarging the stock of paradigms for each moral kind; developing
better and better definitions of whatever it is these paradigms exemplify; appreciating better the relation between straightforward instances of the kind and close relatives; and learning to adjudicate competing claims from different moral kinds (classically the sometimes competing claims of justice and compassion, but many other conflicts are possible). \(^{30}\)

So, imagine a young child who has only a few paradigms of the moral concept of fairness, such as distributing an equal number of cookies to his classmates. Compared to an adult’s conception of distributive justice, this participant understanding is minimal. But there is no denying that if this child has such a paradigm in mind when he hands out favors to the class, then he is acting from a moral reason \textit{even if} he fails to understand anything more general about principles of distributive justice that would justify his action. What should we conclude about the moral agency of children, and their moral accountability in particular situations? Michael Pritchard puts it this way,

On this view [Matthews’ paradigm model of moral development] children as well as adults can be acknowledged to share some ground level understanding of morality. Although adults may typically have the upper hand in regard to breadth of experience and understanding, there is no warrant for entirely excluding children from the adult world of morality. \(^{31}\)

What Wallace requires as a condition for \textit{fairly} ascribing moral responsibility to anyone is that she be capable of reflective self-control. Using this “rationality condition” has the consequence that both children and animals are exempt from moral responsibility. But this may not be the right conclusion to draw. I suggest here that some children may not have the minimal degree of reflective self-control to count as a proper target of the reactive attitudes, but it still makes sense to morally appraise their actions. In other words, our practice of responding to children’s behavior by saying with justification, “You should know better,” implies that in some particular contexts children are legitimately deserving of moral praise or blame even though they may not employ moral principles, moral justifications, or a careful consideration of alternative actions, among other indicators that Wallace cites.

If it does make sense to morally appraise children (or animals) that do not have reflective self-control then we need a way of saying this in whatever account of moral responsibility we endorse. This is, at least, sufficient motivation for exploring the idea that that there is a kind of responsibility that is appropriate to capturing our moral appraisals of beings who are not full-fledged moral agents. One candidate for such an account is Aristotle’s condition for voluntary action.

The Intentionality Condition—Voluntary Action

Aristotle recognizes that there is a kind of explanation that is common to the movements of animals and humans. These are intentional descriptions that refer to the desires of the animal and its selectivity of perception and attention that explains the animal’s object-directed behavior and the reaching out for something in the world. \(^{32}\) In the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} Aristotle calls the common account of human and animal movement ‘voluntary action’. Although children and animals are classified as beings that act voluntarily, Aristotle is unambiguously committed to denying reason to animals. He also believes that while children will develop their natural capacity for deliberate choice as they mature, children only act voluntarily and do not engage in deliberation and choice, which involves the recognition that human flourishing is the ultimate and proper end, and the capacity to deliberate about the most effective means for attaining this end. \(^{33}\)

But what is it that children and animals share by virtue of their capability to act voluntarily? In the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} Aristotle describes two conditions. First, the origin of the action must be internal to the agent. If, for example, a ship is blown off course by a strong wind, then we will say that the captain of the ship acted involuntarily (or did not act at all) because the origin of the ship’s movement was the wind and not anything internal to the captain. Second, the agent of the action must have knowledge of the particular facts surrounding the action. If, for example, a soldier shoots his brother in war because he mistakes him for the enemy, then the soldier was ignorant in the relevant sense about the circumstances surrounding the action. \(^{34}\) Consequently, the soldier’s action is involuntary and he is not responsible. Ignorance of general moral principles is not excusable, according to Aristotle, and does not make the action involuntary. Richard Sorabji also adds that when voluntary action is discussed in \textit{EE 2.9} Aristotle qualifies the “internal origin” requirement so that, additionally, voluntary actions are those that are “up to the agent,” where there is a genuine possibility of things turning out either way depending on the agent herself. \(^{35}\)

The capacity for voluntary action is central to our interest in the moral responsibility of children and animals because Aristotle goes on to explicitly connect voluntary action with moral praise and blame. He says,

Since virtue is concerned with passions and actions, and on voluntary passions and actions praise and blame are bestowed . . . to distinguish the voluntary and involuntary is presumably necessary for those who are studying the nature of virtue, and useful also for legislators with a view to the assigning of both honors and punishments. \(^{36}\)

These remarks seem to suggest the following condition for being morally responsible. Call this the “intentionality condition” or (I).
Richard Sorabji attempts such an argument, unsuccessfully in too should be held morally responsible for their actions. Additional argument that makes plausible the idea that animals of things that are morally responsible. What is needed is an allowing them the capacity to act voluntarily, but it is not so intentional descriptions to characterize the behavior of animals, deliberate. This does not mean that we are wrong to use conclusions about animals and children that it implies.37 Consider Nussbaum’s rationale for endorsing (I). She argues that applying moral praise and blame to beings that act voluntarily but who cannot deliberate and choose allows us to use such evaluations to aid in their moral development. By doing so we revise and modify the appropriate objects of a child’s or an animal’s desire as they reach out and aim for things in the world. In this way we can explain the transition from the pre-deliberative stages of a child’s life, to the point at which the child becomes a full-fledged moral agent who has values and strives for the ultimate good.

Praise and blame are from the beginning not just pushes, but appropriate modes of communication to an intelligent creature who acts in accordance with its own view of the good.38

But Nussbaum’s reasons for defending (I) are more convincing in the case of children than animals since typically children will develop into full-fledged moral agents who deliberate. This does not mean that we are wrong to use intentional descriptions to characterize the behavior of animals, allowing them the capacity to act voluntarily, but it is not so readily apparent that we should include animals in that class of things that are morally responsible. What is needed is an additional argument that makes plausible the idea that animals too should be held morally responsible for their actions. Richard Sorabji attempts such an argument, unsuccessfully in my opinion.

Sorabji also endorses Aristotle’s principle (I) as a plausible condition for moral responsibility, and because he also endorses Aristotle’s view that children and animals act voluntarily, he concludes that some animals are the proper subjects of moral responsibility ascriptions. Sorabji says that “he sees nothing wrong” with the consequence that “non-rational animals can sometimes be held [morally] responsible.”39 A trained dog, Sorabji says, may be morally responsible for biting if it had the appearance that biting is wrong.40 In support of this claim Sorabji refers to the work of Vicki Hearne, an animal trainer, who asserts about a particular dog that it had enough “moral sense to restrain the over-aggressive police handler for whom it was working.”41 Does a trained animal deserve our moral praise and blame by virtue of what it knows? An affirmative answer is strongly suggested by Hearne herself, although she nowhere asserts that children and animals should be classified together as sharing these morally relevant capacities.

I will argue that it is mistake to extend the language of moral responsibility even to trained animals. The striking feature of Vicki Hearne’s books is the moral language she uses to describe the developing relationship between a trainer and an animal. Animals and their handlers become ‘responsible’ and “mutually trustworthy” in the process of training.

The question I want to try to answer is whether or not the language of moral responsibility and moral blame applied to trained animals is warranted. The reason we might believe so is that trained animals do seem to know enough about the actions they perform in order for us to hold them to a standard of behavior. Hearne is exactly right to bring to our attention the intentional language used by those who work with animals to describe their actions. If we did not refer to the wants, desires, fears, or goals of a horse or a dog, we could not train them nor would we understand very much about them. Nevertheless, I will argue that is mistake to extend the language of moral responsibility to trained animals.

When Salty, a passionate but undisciplined young birddog, enters Vicki Hearne’s life, she (the dog) is oblivious to the expectations that humans sometimes have for dogs. For example, she does not understand that it is inappropriate to jump through glass windows after birds, and so on. As Salty’s training advances to retrieving, she comes to understand the seriousness of the command ‘Fetch’ by repetition and by being corrected on the ear when she lies on the dumbbell, or when she retrieves a stick or a cat instead. Her transformation into a dog that joyously retrieves on command is significant for both trainer and animal. What does Salty know when she learns how to retrieve in this way, and how has she acquired this knowledge?

While Salty may need a form of “convincing” along the way to learning the command ‘Fetch’, she herself does not need articulated reasons and explanations to obey. In fact, the training might just as well proceed with whistles, clicks, or hand signals, as it often does with dogs who work in the field hunting and pointing. This is not to minimize what has happened between trainer and dog, but it does reveal that Hearne’s use of moral vocabulary to describe training is for our sake as readers, and not for the sake of the animal. Salty knows

The Moral Appraisability of Trained Animals

People who deliberately lead each other astray are considered culpable because it is assumed that they are capable of behaving well. (Chimps are not assumed to be capable of behaving well.) And dogs and horses, like doctors, teachers, and judges, don’t necessarily get out of it when carelessness or some other lapse in concern is to blame rather than mischievousness or malice.42

The question I want to try to answer is whether or not the language of moral responsibility and moral blame applied to trained animals is warranted. The reason we might believe so is that trained animals do seem to know enough about the actions they perform in order for us to hold them to a standard of behavior. Hearne is exactly right to bring to our attention the intentional language used by those who work with animals to describe their actions. If we did not refer to the wants, desires, fears, or goals of a horse or a dog, we could not train them nor would we understand very much about them. Nevertheless, I will argue that it is mistake to extend the language of moral responsibility even to trained animals.

When Salty, a passionate but undisciplined young birddog, enters Vicki Hearne’s life, she (the dog) is oblivious to the expectations that humans sometimes have for dogs. For example, she does not understand that it is inappropriate to jump through glass windows after birds, and so on. As Salty’s training advances to retrieving, she comes to understand the seriousness of the command ‘Fetch’ by repetition and by being corrected on the ear when she lies on the dumbbell, or when she retrieves a stick or a cat instead. Her transformation into a dog that joyously retrieves on command is significant for both trainer and animal. What does Salty know when she learns how to retrieve in this way, and how has she acquired this knowledge?

While Salty may need a form of “convincing” along the way to learning the command ‘Fetch’, she herself does not need articulated reasons and explanations to obey. In fact, the training might just as well proceed with whistles, clicks, or hand signals, as it often does with dogs who work in the field hunting and pointing. This is not to minimize what has happened between trainer and dog, but it does reveal that Hearne’s use of moral vocabulary to describe training is for our sake as readers, and not for the sake of the animal. Salty knows

A trained dog, Sorabji says, may be morally responsible for biting if it had the appearance that biting is wrong.40 In support of this claim Sorabji refers to the work of Vicki Hearne, an animal trainer, who asserts about a particular dog that it had enough “moral sense to restrain the over-aggressive police handler for whom it was working.”41 Does a trained animal deserve our moral praise and blame by virtue of what it knows? An affirmative answer is strongly suggested by Hearne herself, although she nowhere asserts that children and animals should be classified together as sharing these morally relevant capacities.
nothing about the moral context of the work she does but this makes no difference in how she learns to retrieve. When Salty is commanded to “Fetch” and she bounds forward to grab the dumbbell even in the presence of other playful dogs and birds flitting overhead, she knows enough about what she is doing for her trainer to hold her to a standard of behavior. The trainer does have an expectation that she retrieve in the presence of any or all of these distractions. And if Salty does not perform the retrieve correctly, her trainer is likely to be resentful or even indignant for violating her expectations. But what Salty is not cognizant of are the morally relevant reasons for obeying the command ‘Fetch’, if there are any. Nor does she have any similar experiences to draw on to help her understand the moral consequences of acting one way rather than another. Whatever resentments and indignations the trainer might legitimately feel if Salty fails to retrieve to the best of her ability, these are not reactive moral emotions that are connected to moral responsibility and blameworthiness, though they may indeed reflect the trainer’s expectations of another sort.

It is here that we can draw a rather important distinction between training animals and educating children. Consider the following description by Nancy Sherman about how children cultivate appropriate feeling as part of the development of moral character. Sherman is providing an account which she says is consistent with Aristotle’s brief remarks on the habituation of character, including the emotions, and the moral guidance that we, as parents, attempt to provide in order to bring this about.

We should begin by asking how the perceptions constitutive of the emotions, and ultimately of moral responses, become refined. The parent, like the orator, is in the position of persuading. He or she makes prescriptions to the child and the child listens out of a complex set of desires (love of parents, the desire to imitate, fear of punishment, hope of reward, etc.). But the parent aims not simply to affect specific actions or desires; e.g. to thwart greed, to encourage compassion, to temper anger. Rather, part of what the parent tries to do is to bring the child to see the particular circumstances that here and now make certain emotions appropriate. The parent helps the child to compose the scene in the right way. This will involve persuading the child that the situation at hand is to be construed in this way rather than that, that what the child took to be a deliberate assault and cause for anger was really only an accident, that the laughter and smiles which annoy were intended as signs of delight rather than of teasing, that a particular distribution, though painful to endure, is in fact fair—that if one looked at the situation from the point of view of the others involved, one would come to that conclusion.

In some sense both the training of animals and the education of children aim to develop the “critical capacities” of each. But the moral education of children and the developing degree of moral culpability that accompanies this proceeds by asking the child to attend to the morally salient features of a situation—to “compose the scene in the right way.” The child is directed to grasp moral concepts like fairness or kindness, and is guided to feel in ways that are appropriate to particular situations. Even young children have cognitive and affective capacities that make this kind of moral education possible. And because this is so, they can sometimes be the subjects of moral praise and blame. But since trained animals fail to have these capacities, even to a minimal degree, they are not morally responsible for their actions. Indeed, as Wallace argues it would be unreasonable to hold them accountable in this way if they fail to grasp any of the morally relevant features of a situation, including those simple paradigms of fairness, selfishness, or kindness that even young children use as models for moral behavior.

Now we can see what is wrong with Sorabji’s defense of (I), Aristotle’s condition for being morally responsible. (I) is too weak to capture what we ought to say about moral responsibility since it fails to distinguish the morally relevant differences in the cognitive and affective capabilities of children and animals. Consequently (I) allows both children and trained animals to “meet the bar” for being morally responsible. A trained police dog probably is sufficiently cognizant of “human
social skills” to refrain from biting the children it visits in the hospital, but most certainly the dog does not possess any understanding of even very simple moral reasons that prohibit such action. A trained dog acts voluntarily, but since the conditions for voluntary action do not explicitly require knowledge of moral reasons for acting, the dog is not morally responsible for her actions nor is she morally blameworthy if she violates our expectation and bites. Acting voluntarily does require that the agent knows the particular facts surrounding the action she performs. But this “knowledge” requirement does not distinguish between, for example, knowing not to bite and knowing the moral reasons for not biting. The kind of knowledge that is relevant to moral responsibility ascriptions is moral knowledge, and insofar as children do grasp even in a limited way the concept of harm and injury, can understand even a simple moral paradigm for not harming another, and additionally can regulate their behavior to some extent, then they do engage in moral thinking and action and can be held morally accountable.

What this suggests is that having diminished moral responsibility requires something more than merely being capable of voluntary action and something less than having reflective self-control as Wallace describes these powers. At the minimum, one needs to understand something about morality—about the concepts of harm or fairness, for example—even if these apply to only a few very simple paradigms such as distributing an equal number of cookies to all the children in class. We might successfully train a dog to perform such an equal distribution, but we will not instruct the dog to divide up the cookies this way because it is fair to do so. Children do have diminished moral responsibility, and animals do not, even those that are trained.

**Conclusion**

“Childhood animality” is a term I have borrowed to stand for the close associations between children and animals. The history of pet-keeping reveals, in particular, how children and animals were regarded as individual members of the family, as possessing the same sort of affective and cognitive capabilities, as well as the similar capability to be “raised up” by education and training. To some extent these attitudes persist in the way that we regard children and in our intimate emotional relationships to pets. The philosophical point I have pursued is how this close association between children and animals is mirrored in those theories of moral responsibility reviewed here.

Strawson’s theory of the reactive attitudes has no precise location for either children or animals. Because our practices and relationships involving animals is so varied there is no unified set of attitudes toward animals that we, in fact, adopt that can be characterized by either the participant attitude or the objective attitude. Children are likewise in-between these attitudes but because they are on the way to becoming full-fledged members of the moral community. While Wallace’s account of what it means to be a proper target of the reactive attitudes gives us more precision about whether or not it is fair to hold children and animals morally accountable, by my understanding of reflective self-control neither children nor animals have the minimal degree of these powers to be held morally responsible. Both are exempt according to this “rationality condition” for moral accountability. If children are believed to be like animals in their emotional capacities, or their inability to justify or grasp moral principles, or their lack of volitional control, then we will not be surprised by their mutual exclusion as proper subjects of moral responsibility. Accepting such a popular “story” may result in our failing to identify genuine moral thinking and particular instances of normative competency in young children.

Alternatively, the weaker “intentionality condition” for moral responsibility, such as Aristotle’s voluntary action, allows that both children and trained animals are morally responsible. This condition, I believe, obscures important differences in the capacities between these kinds of subjects. We can see this by closely attending to the differences between training animals and educating children. Children are morally appraisable, not because there are merely pragmatic reasons for treating them as if they are responsible, but because our practical regard for children reveals that there are contexts where it is appropriate to extend to them moral praise and blame. The prerequisites for doing so, at the very least, are that children understand the morally salient features of a particular situation. Since even trained animals fail to grasp moral concepts, they are exempt from even this sort of minimal responsibility ascription. In order to explain the moral culpability of children who are on their way to becoming full-fledged members of the moral community we should employ what I have called diminished responsibility—a kind of responsibility ascription whose conditions of satisfaction fall somewhere in-between voluntary action and reflective self-control. By examining the assumptions that underlie the idea of childhood animality we are in a better position to evaluate any theory of responsible agency by these “test cases,” allowing us to be more precise about how children do partake in the domain of the moral, as well as why animals do not.

**Endnotes**


2 Gene Meyers coins the term “childhood animality” to refer to three contrasting cultural stories about children and animals that ring familiar to most of us. First, that children are like animals in that both are closer to nature, where nature is understood to stand for wildness and what is untamed. One value judgment about this comparison is, of course, that the animal-like natural state is, as Hobbes would say, “Solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” It must be overridden, controlled, and civilized. A second story linking children and animals casts these beings as natural but innocent and good. In the romantic tradition of

3 See, for example, Harry Frankfurt’s characterization of “wanton” agents who have first-order desires but no second-order volitions. Included in this category are nonhuman animals and all very young children. Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” in Agency and Responsibility, ed. Laura Waddell Ekstrom (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 82.

4 Joel Feinberg makes a similar point about Aristotle’s conditions required for “voluntary action” and those required for “deliberate choice.” The standards for acting voluntarily, Feinberg says, diverge from “common sense,” in that they fail to distinguish between “infants, mentally ill persons, mentally retarded persons, even animals.” On the other hand, the concept of deliberate choice is “so elevated a test of voluntariness that relatively few acts could satisfy it.” This paper aims to explain why, in the case of children and animals, we should seek a middle road between these two kinds of conditions for responsibility. See Joel Feinberg, Harm to Self, 4 vols., vol. 3, The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 114-16.


The argumentative point of my paper does not depend on classifying these theories as “rationalistic.” We can certainly inquire about any account of responsible agency whether or not it accommodates the alleged normative competence of children and animals as kinds of subjects, as I do here in an illustrative way by looking at the details of Wallace’s theory.


8 In her fascinating book Katherine Grier documents and discusses these points of similarity between children and animals. Ibid.


10 Ibid., p. 50.
11 Ibid., p. 52.
12 Ibid., p. 55.
13 Ibid., pp. 60-61.
15 Wallace, Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments.
16 Ibid., p. 154.
17 Ibid., p. 157.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., p. 160.
20 Ibid., p. 162.
21 Ibid., p. 167.
23 Ibid., p. 709.
25 Ibid., p. 28.
27 Wallace, Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments, 158.
32 See De Anima III.9 in Aristotle, ed., The Complete Works of


Aristotle, NE III.1 in Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics.


NE 1109b30-35.

Aristotle’s apparent endorsement of (I) is controversial since in the NE Aristotle complicates his earlier account by restricting the class of morally responsible beings to only those who are capable of deliberation and choice. To be more precise, (D) is morally responsible for doing x if and only if (a) does x voluntarily, and (b) is capable of deliberating about x. Terrence Irwin argues that the more plausible account of moral responsibility Aristotle offers is really (D) rather than (I). The presence of both accounts is explained by saying that Aristotle makes several attempts to formulate one criterion for the ascription of responsibility, and (D) is the preferred criterion. On Irwin’s interpretation, Aristotle is mistaken to initially extend moral praise and blame to children and animals since moral responsibility more appropriately attaches to beings that are capable of deliberating and choosing how to act, as these reflect virtues and vices of moral character. I do not try to adjudicate between these different interpretations of Aristotle. About this issue see Terence Irwin, “Reason and Responsibility in Aristotle,” in Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). and Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy, 282-86.

Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy, 286.

Sorabji, Animal Minds and Human Morals, 112. A very similar view is suggested by David DeGrazia. DeGrazia distinguishes between “full-fledged moral agency,” requiring that the agent deliberate about moral reasons and justifications, and a lesser degree of moral agency, assuming as he does that there are degrees of agency that fall along a continuum. DeGrazia makes two claims directly relevant to our study: (1) Moral responsibility applies to animals that understand “rules of conduct,” and (2) holding animals morally responsible is like holding children morally responsible. See David DeGrazia, Taking Animals Seriously: Mental Life and Moral Status (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 203-04.

Sorabji refers to Aristotle’s use of phantasia to make this point. Though the exact interpretation of this term is complex and controversial, Nussbaum offers this, Phantasia, then, is the animal’s awareness of some object of desire. It can serve both to present the object of desire initially, and later, to specify the object at hand as what is desired Aristotle identifies two types of phantasia, the deliberative and the perceptual (433b28). Nonhuman animals, because they lack the ability to compare phantasia and to deliberate about which to choose, have phantasia related only to perception. Martha Nussbaum, Aristotle’s De Motu Animalium (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 261-263.


It may make more sense to speak of the moral reasons for not biting, rather than retrieving.

Sherman, The Fabric of Character, 171.

Susan Dwyer surveys the empirical research about children’s cognitive and affective development and concludes that there are psychological precursors to the reactive attitudes that can be discerned in even very young children. These are, for example, the capacity for empathy; the capacity to attribute emotions to others; the capacity to discriminate between intentional and unintentional harm, and to assign blame accordingly; and the capacity to distinguish between conventional rules and moral rules. See Dwyer, “Moral Development and Moral Responsibility,” and Richard A. Shweder, Elliot Turiel, and Nancy C. Much, “The Moral Intuitions of the Child,” in Social Cognitive Development, ed. John H. Flavell, and Lee Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

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Abstract

In 2004 the Norwegian government undertook a project with philosophy in primary and lower secondary schools. The aim was to find out whether and in what form this is possible and desirable. The project started in autumn 2005 and will conclude in summer 2007. Results so far have been promising.

Introduction

In June 2004, the Norwegian Parliament adopted the principles and main guidelines for a comprehensive reform of primary and secondary education in Norway. This was done by adopting the Government’s report to the Parliament, White Paper no. 30. Surprisingly, this included a brief paragraph on philosophy.

The Ministry wishes to ensure that children and young people receive a basic introduction to - and experience with - the questions and methodical approach involved in the subject of philosophy. This could improve students’ ability to work with the subject in school, while providing good preparation for their future in society and in employment. Philosophy would also give students a perspective on the foundations of other subjects, both by showing how problems have developed historically and how problems may be discussed systematically.

The Ministry will assess how this can be strengthened with regard to the curriculum. The Ministry also seeks to encourage further projects with philosophy as a subject and the use of philosophy in other subjects in the curriculum. The results of the projects will form a basis for assessing whether philosophy should be established as a school subject.

We do not know why this paragraph was included at that time. Philosophy with children was neither well known nor widespread in Norway, but philosophy had been introduced on a more systematic basis in connection with Religious Education (RE) (In Norway the subject is called KRL. The letters stands for Christianity, Religion and Life views) in 1997. KRL was then introduced as a new and obligatory subject in the curriculum. It is also the case that philosophy enjoys a high status in Norway. Neither is interest in philosophy limited to an academic elite.

In Norway what is usually called P4C or philosophy for children, is called philosophy with children (filosofi med barn). We also stress that philosophy in schools is about doing philosophy, not learning about it. At the same time we want the children to do more than practise thinking skills. We usually say that the children shall work with “philosophical things in a philosophical way”. Their work shall be systematic and regular and have a long term perspective. The aim is to be “a better thinker” and to find something true, good, and beautiful.
Systematic work and high-level activity

In the context of setting up KRL as a subject, we at Oslo University College began to look more closely at how the students could work with philosophy. Until then we had very little experience with this kind of work in schools. A book about philosophy in schools was published and seminars and meetings were held for philosophers, teachers and other interested parties. In 2000, the City of Oslo started a project in which teachers at 6 schools had philosophy with their students. Oslo University College was central in these activities. At the same time, a person at Tromso University was working on the same topic, without receiving the same support from institutions outside the university. Oslo University College received public support in developing a study of philosophy and children, linked to the education of teachers. This began in Autumn 2001.

The work on philosophy in schools aroused interest among individuals in the Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Education (which is the Ministry’s executive organ), and in school administrations, as well as among philosophers and people involved in the education of teachers. We found interest among various circles; many people attended our seminars and there was often press coverage of the work being done in schools and other places. We worked systematically in developing theory, plans, studies and teaching materials. This was done together with teachers so that we could try out ideas and materials in practice. The work on philosophy with children in Norway is still marked by this closeness to the practical field. An unfortunate disadvantage, however, is that no research is being done in this area among either educationalists or philosophers. That represents a serious deficiency in the work in this country. Thus far it has proved impossible to obtain funding for research as against practical projects. This is something we are particularly focusing on at present. The Ministry of Education has set up a group to carry out a review about philosophy as a subject in school, with the aim of discovering where efforts should be concentrated in future. This is a hopeful sign, since the Government is concerned about research-based knowledge on activities in schools.

Another of our activities which has increased public awareness has been to contact more experienced people abroad. First we went to Denmark and Sweden and took a closer look at the work they were doing with philosophy in schools. We invited them to present their findings to us. One of the central figures in this area in Sweden, Bo Malmhester, has been working in Oslo since 2000. In 2001 we contacted people in Britain. We held seminars in Norway with them. We went to courses and seminars there. And for three years running we sent a group of 10-15 teachers on study tours to the N-RAIS project in the north of England, headed by James Nottingham. Since 2003 we have also been collaborating with the French philosopher Oscar Brenifier. He has held workshops in several places in Norway and has come on school visits; some of his books have been published in Norwegian. His work is highly significant for many of those working on philosophy with children in Norway.

We have also made philosophy with children visible through a collaboration with the Norwegian UNESCO Committee involving the celebration of World Philosophy Day in November 2005. As part of the preparation for the celebration we published an educational piece on the commission’s website. Teachers were encouraged to choose
a philosophy lesson with their students, sending the students’ questions and assertions to the Commission. These were published on the website together with our responses and comments. We then prepared a new presentation based on some of the material which came in. This was used in an open meeting in which people could observe children in philosophical inquiry.

From White Paper to project

It was the Government which took the initiative for more formal work on philosophy in schools through the White Paper no. 30 “Culture for Learning” (*Kultur for læring*). A White Paper is a presentation to the Parliament of what the Government wishes to do in the years to come. For the work to commence, it must first be approved by the Parliament. In the case of White Paper no. 30, this occurred in June 2004. Thereafter it was up to the Government to decide how the tasks shall be put into action.

The Ministry of Education sent a letter to the Directorate for Education in September 2004 asking them to start preparatory work for a project involving philosophy in primary and secondary schools. The work started with a seminar in the Ministry with Oscar Brenifier from Paris and Bo Malmhester from Stockholm. It was attended by people from both the Ministry and the Directorate. The seminar was very successful and was the inspiration for further initiatives. In December, the Directorate for Education sent a letter to all county governors asking them to collect information about experiences with philosophy in schools in their counties. At the same time the University College was asked to review all the curricula in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools with regard to elements of philosophy.

On 1 February 2005, both reports were ready – one on philosophy in the curricula and one on experiences of philosophy in Norwegian schools, based on the 50 or so schools which had responded to the enquiries from the county governors. Thereafter the Directorate began preparations for starting a project. It began on 1 September 2005. A group comprising two persons each from the University College and the Directorate for Education was set up to assume responsibility for the project. The project manager was bought in from the University College. A reference group was also set up with one person from the Ministry of Education, one from one of the county governors’ offices, one from a local school administration and two professors from the University of Oslo - one a professor of educational science the other of philosophy.

Autumn 2005 was used to find participating schools, prepare plans and develop materials. Teacher training and work with the individual schools began in January 2006. And thus we were off!

The project – that is to say the work in the schools – will be concluded in June 2007. The final report will be delivered to the Ministry of Education in October 2007. The report will include a description of what has been done, positive and negative experiences, recommendations on what should be done next and suggestions for possible curricula for philosophy as a subject. After this, what happens next is up to the ministry and the politicians.

The form and content of the project

The aim of the project is to find out whether philosophy in schools is possible. The task is linked to two White Papers:

**White Paper No. 30** (2004-05) “Culture for Learning” (*Kultur for læring*). This report is, as mentioned, the political basis for the new reform of primary and secondary education, the so called “The Knowledge Promotion” (*Kunnskapsløftet*). “Culture for Learning” proposes that a project of philosophy should be started and that the results of the project should be used as the basis for assessing whether philosophy should be established in primary and lower secondary schools as a separate subject.

that the philosophy project should also present findings on how students with different religious and cultural backgrounds react to the subject and what questions engage a group of students with a diversity of cultures and values.

15 schools and 43 teachers from 9 counties across the country are taking part in the project. These are schools in cities, smaller towns and rural areas. Students from class 1 to class 10 are taking part. The participating schools were selected so that we would have some with previous experience of philosophy and some without. A certain number of schools also have students who speak minority languages.

The main points of the project are as follows:

• Participants in the project are regularly trained in seminars on a regional basis twice per term. In addition there was a seminar for all participants in January 2005, and there will be a joint study tour to England in May 2007.
• All teachers are visited by the project management in their schools every term.
• All the teachers conduct a certain number of philosophy lessons, minimum 10 periods per term.
• Develop teaching materials and working methods. In the first term all teachers used material created by project management. After this, the teachers may develop their own materials. These must be approved by the management.
• All the teachers must provide a monthly report on what they have done and how things have gone.
• The project management writes a report each term, as well as a final report at the project’s conclusion.
• Assess teaching materials, training and guiding of teachers.
• The project has its own internet site containing materials, literature, practical information. etc. Communication is also maintained between participants in the form of mail, chat and forum discussions on this site.

The reason for philosophy in schools

The ministry’s reason for proposing philosophy in schools in 2004 was that the subject can give students fundamental attitudes and working methods which can be used in all school subjects as well as later in life. Working with philosophy can give students experience of a systematic debate of issues central to most subjects and to most areas of society and employment. Acquiring a systematic and "scientific" way of working, such as we find in philosophy, can help students cope with higher education regardless of social background and encouragement from home.

When it comes to the rest of the school curriculum, philosophy can help students in developing critical capabilities. This is something which is central to both the general curriculum and the individual subjects. In more concrete terms, philosophy can help to develop one of the five basic skills in the curriculum – namely the ability to express oneself verbally. Philosophy is also, as mentioned, part of RE in Norway.

In general terms, working with philosophy can give participants practice in participating in dialogue in various contexts. They get practice in listening, keeping to the point, evaluating assertions and giving reasons for their own views. Because there are no given answers in philosophy, students also have practice in having to assess several possible answers. This is particularly important in a highly diverse society.

In more concrete terms, one also acquires experience and attitudes which are important in a democracy. A student learns to listen and to tolerate different points of view. One also develops an attitude which treats all answers as tentatively good until disproved, assuming the responsibility of showing that a point of view isn’t valid. The student understands that it is what is being said which is important, rather than who is saying it. One also learns from experience that what one says – or neglects to say – can have a bearing on the task in hand. A comprehensive survey which was carried out in Stockholm in the 1990s
shows that students who have taken philosophy are better listeners than those who have not. They also display greater abilities in solving social problems on their own account (Malmhester/Ohlsson: Filosofi med barn [Philosophy with children]. Stckh. 1999).

**Conclusion**

Our experience so far has shown that it is difficult to engage in philosophy in schools unless it has a clear place in the timetable and curriculum. Even for very enthusiastic teachers, it is difficult to find room for philosophy in a hectic school day. We see that teachers derive great benefit from training and from materials which support their work with the students. At the seminars during the projects, emphasis was placed on the teachers’ own philosophical development. You must engage in philosophy yourself, using the same materials that you will later use with your students. We have seen that those teachers who do not manage to engage themselves in the seminars do not manage to get philosophy across to their students either.

We have also seen that students who speak minority languages derive particular benefit from philosophy lessons. One reason for this is the emphasis on everyone understanding. These students discover that everyone can have problems understanding and that it is OK to ask. They see that questions are not for dummies, but rather are for those who want to find out more and want to understand. One teacher reports that a couple of his students with minority languages have taken this attitude on board and applied it to other subjects with great success. Another teacher emphasised that since philosophy is often about existential questions, students with minority languages get more practice in using different words and concepts and in using their own personal experience than in other school subjects.

One interesting experience has come from some teachers who connected philosophy with the school rules. Many students feel that these have been imposed upon them from outside, even though it is apparently the students themselves who decide which rules should apply in school. One group of students took the initiative to investigate what rules are, who decides them and how one can take part in the decisions. They learned about the responsibility and difficulties involved in the relationship between formulating rules and their actual implementation, something which is central to democracy.

The most fundamental experience of the nine years we have been working on philosophy with children at Oslo University College has been that it is thorough and systematic work with a long-term theoretical and practical perspective, one that includes collaboration with teachers, with authorities at all levels and with philosophers and educators in the academic system, that enables progress.
Coming In From The Margins:
Teaching Philosophy in Australian Schools

Stephan Millett

Abstract

This paper provides a critical examination of philosophy teaching at all levels in Australian schools. It looks at the points of difference and congruence between the States and Territories and argues that teaching philosophy through the philosophical community of inquiry should be a core element of school curricula. In spite of a growing interest in philosophy in schools, its documented benefits and the high degree of “fit” with a revised curriculum in at least two states, the implementation of philosophy by education departments has been relatively slow and piecemeal. There are discrete courses available in upper secondary school, but approaches differ between the various education jurisdictions. The work of the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations, and the branches at State level, provide training and networking for interested educators but this has not translated into policy. An education policy that gives a central role to good, clear philosophical thinking will give children the tools they need to succeed in the rapidly changing cultural, technological, social and cultural environment of the 21st Century.

Introduction

Philosophy in Australian schools is in the process of coming in from the margins. It is emerging despite the limitations imposed on it by authorities uncomfortable with what may be perceived as its potentially subversive nature and such unsettling aspects of the discipline as the undecidability of concepts, or at least their negotiability. It is entering the mainstream through a primary articulation in junior schools that is itself promoted by loose associations of interested people operating outside the major curriculum-defining structures of the state education departments and national curriculum corporations. It is being articulated in varying terms, but it is entering mainstream curricula as the creators of these curricula recognise a central need to teach clear thinking while also recognising that they do not have even an agreed language for describing thinking or a widely-accepted and rigorous pedagogy of thinking.

We need, though, to differentiate between philosophy as it is might be commonly understood (or misunderstood) and the approach to philosophy for children based on Lipman’s model of community of inquiry (Lipman, 1980; Splitter and Sharp, 1985). The Lipman model promotes a pedagogy with a heritage in John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky and presumes both that humans are firstly social beings and that it is possible to build democratic principles into classroom practices. The Lipman model does teach Philosophy, but the method and the content combine to produce rich benefits for children. In Australia this model has been adapted for local conditions predominantly in primary schools, but in two states the model has strongly infiltrated upper secondary courses.

Despite the consistent positive impact of philosophy for children “on a wide range of outcome measures” (Trickey and Topping, 2004), in Australia, philosophy in schools has emerged almost despite the academy and state departments of education. Some academic philosophers, suggest that what is known in Australia as Philosophy in Schools is not, in fact, philosophy at all (SBS Insight, 2002). But if they were to look at Lipman’s teacher support materials and the dialogues in primary school philosophy classes, such as those that Pritchard (1985) recorded, there would be less doubt. With some exceptions, in the English-speaking world academic philosophers have tended to keep philosophy within the walls of universities. They have encrypted certain modes of thinking and kept them cloistered within the academy and in the process have both limited the ability of education to use philosophical modes of speech and consolidated the academy as the only site from which these modes of speech are enunciated. This has tended to marginalise anyone who try to enter the philosophical discourse, but it is particularly true for teachers. Much of the informal and anecdotal evidence for the efficacy of philosophy in the classroom comes from teachers themselves, a group that has been disempowered in the presentation of education research findings and in the main unable to present to curriculum
planners the argument that philosophy in the classroom benefits students, schools and the community, not least by generating thinking, caring and articulate citizens. We cannot afford for this to continue. As Matthew del Nevo (2002) argues:

There is a lot of negotiating going on, as to the place of philosophy in the curriculum. My worry is that philosophy doesn’t just become another subject alongside the others and on a par with them…. Philosophy - in the broad sense of good ideas and values, texts and traditions - needs to infiltrate the governing system. It is no good having philosophy domesticated by educational norms that are sub-philosophical. Philosophy needs to enter education, not just schools, not just curricula. Philosophy has been sidelined or academicised in our time. If philosophy wants to make a push for itself, it is in the broad direction of education as a whole, at its conception and inception, that [is where] I think it should head; not toward some educational niche where the whole point of it is lost. Philosophers may specialise, but philosophy is not a specialisation; this is what we’ve got to keep in mind.

But while philosophy has a long tradition as a school subject in France and Germany, and the teaching of it has been supported publicly by such luminaries as Derrida, there are distinct pedagogical differences between philosophy in these Continental classrooms and the pedagogy of philosophy that del Nevo is referring to: the philosophical community of inquiry.

In Australia the existence of the discipline of philosophy has not been well known in schools and use of the term “philosophy” tends to scare off teachers and schools because of the way in which the academy has defined it, cloistered it and mythologised it as something suitable only for an elite. Generations of school leavers entering university have largely stumbled upon it or found out about it as they work in areas such as cultural studies, literature or even communication studies that have adopted, renamed and refashioned philosophy into something else. In Foucault’s terms, different discursive formations can be said to have colonised philosophical concepts and diluted them so that in Australia in the early 21st Century what we might understand as “philosophy” has only been permitted to emerge, to be specified in schools, under the aegis of something called “thinking”. But as philosophy comes in from the margins, even as “thinking”, there is now a change occurring. Each of the states in the federation that makes up Australia has embraced in some form the idea of including philosophy into the final years of secondary school, but the models vary, implementation is incomplete and the pedagogical underpinnings of the various courses lack a common thread. However, philosophical communities of inquiry have established over the past two decades a toehold in primary education through the good work of converts who operate primarily from outside the education system, most often in state-based professional associations. That toehold is still tenuous, but as state departments reflect on and change the foundations of their core curricula there is a growing realisation that philosophy has something to offer.

In talking about the need to foster autonomy, which is a key outcome of well-conducted philosophy courses, Paul Jewell puts it this way:

...in practice modern democratic societies are multicultural, so methods are needed for navigation through differing traditions and competing concepts of the good. Citizens need navigation equipment and a modern democracy needs citizens who are so equipped. Educators, then, have an obligation to provide the equipment. Mere knowledge of the cultural landscape is insufficient. The navigation of it requires the skills and dispositions to make decisions…” (Jewell, 2005)

In Australian schooling, despite the well-recognised importance of primary education, there tends to be a de facto hierarchy in which upper secondary teachers are (self-) marked as superior to middle and primary educators, possibly because to teach upper secondary subjects teachers generally need to have tertiary qualifications in the subject area. From my observations, changes in pedagogy have been most innovative in primary education and some of these changes flow on to secondary teaching. Now that philosophy is being taken up in the final secondary years, it will be interesting to observe over the next few years whether attitudes to philosophy change among school administrators and in universities, which for the first time will have both a ready-made feeder group for university philosophy courses, but also – as demand for philosophy classes in schools grows – a ready-made alternative career path for philosophy graduates. Philosophy departments have been very slow to grasp the opportunity presented as philosophy comes in from the margins and asserts a strong claim to be at the centre of good teaching.

Pizza and Pedagogy

Although philosophy is finding its way into upper secondary classrooms, there is a wide disparity in the underlying pedagogy of these new philosophy courses and a big variation in their intended target market. For example, some are highly content-based and aimed at an elite student cohort, while others are outcomes-based and available to all learning abilities. This latter approach is the most desirable because the ability of philosophy to transform a society is greatest when the tools, skills and dispositions of philosophy are placed into the hands of all students, not just an intellectual elite. This is because philosophy is like pizza. It can be plain and simple or have a wide choice of toppings. We can buy our pizza off
the menu, have half this and half that, or make our own, but everyone can eat it.

To continue the simile, philosophy is a base on which we can build an astonishing intellectual menu, but a menu everyone can try. To provide our children with skills necessary to flourish in the Information Age, we need to be making philosophy pizzas in our schools, not just waiting to preach to the converted in universities.

Philosophy is about wonder. It is about awe. It is about imagination. It is about making sense of what there is. It is about knowing what, knowing how and deciding what best to do. It keeps questioning ever open, while providing closure. It is about finding simplicity in complexity and pointing out the complexity of simplicity. It cannot and should not be reduced to mere critical thinking, as important as that may be.

Philosophy is something that we DO, it’s an activity. It is a necessarily shared activity: we do it with others, or carry on an internal dialogue with ourselves, as other.

To do philosophy is to analyse, clarify, define and evaluate. To be philosophical is to have a disposition to undertake these activities as a practice. For a flourishing, reflective, democratic, caring society, these should become part of our character and the basis of a society’s character.

I have spent much of the past eight years teaching philosophy in schools to children aged five to 17. But is it really philosophy? Let us think about these questions from a group of 9-year-olds [Year 4 (term 2, 2004)]

- How do we know we are really here? Our mind could be creating an illusion.
- How do you know what you are seeing is not an illusion but what you are actually doing?
- Could our minds be creating something to see? Because our minds might be very powerful
- What is the mind?
- How do we know the earth is spinning around the sun, because we can’t see it?
- How do we know God is actually there?
- He could not have created himself, so how did he get created?
- What if heaven is actually earth?
- When you are asleep, how do you know your dreams are not your real life?
- How do you know?

These questions would certainly fit the bill as philosophical for Aristotle. But these are just questions: what about discussion, about pursuit of truth?

What follows is a summary of a discussion between a group of 6 and 7 year olds [Year 2, 2003]

- What happened before the Big Bang? The Big Singularity. What happened before the Big Singularity? A Big Bang.
- Unless it goes on for ever, something must have started it.
- God started it.
- Who created God?
- God.
- Can anything start itself?

This was a small-group discussion involving six children. The interchange involved three of the six, with the others listening intently. Implicit in this discussion by small children is an understanding of infinite regress, an understanding of causation and clear evidence of engagement with philosophical questioning. These children were clearly doing philosophy, and interchanges like this are not rare in philosophy classrooms involving small children. The teachers know it, but they are busy teaching and are mostly unable to record such gems.

Those who do philosophy for a living are an elite, but clearly, Philosophy is something most people can do. Philosophy is not the preserve of an elite; in fact the elite may have a duty to take philosophy to the people. And this is where we come back to pizza.

Philosophy is a base for clear thinking. Like a pizza, philosophy is a base on which we can place a range of toppings. But to teach thinking without philosophy is to make a pie without a base. Without a base it may taste OK, but it will probably fall apart and you may not be able to take it away.

Uptake

In Australia it is has been difficult to sell the idea of philosophy in schools to education decision-makers. The benefits of teaching philosophy are diverse and more difficult to quantify than some other pedagogical innovations and while some of the strongest advocates are classroom teachers, their voices do not get heard. Australian educational research has long had a preference for producing quantifiable evidence. While some of the benefits of philosophy can be quantified in terms of improved literacy and improved numeracy (Hinton, 2003b), the most important may be in areas most amenable to qualitative research. As this research bears fruit, philosophy may be able more successfully to argue for inclusion in mainstream curricula.

However, the argument for inclusion of philosophy has come from outside the mainstream of education research. Laurance Splitter began the early promotion of Philosophy for Children in Australia in 1984, first from his position as a philosophy lecturer at the University of Wollongong and later as a research fellow at the Australian Council for Education Research. He had been to Montclair, where he was strongly influenced by the work of philosopher-turned educator Matthew Lipman and Ann Sharp. After returning from working with Lipman, he ran a professional development workshop in Wollongong in New South Wales in 1985 and subsequent workshop in Lorne, Victoria in 1989. The Wollongong workshop brought Deakin University academic Clive Lindop
into the field. Lindop, who was based at the Warrnambool regional campus went on to become the first editor or the Australian Philosophy for Children journal *Critical and Creative Thinking* until his retirement in 2005. But it was the participants at the Lorne workshops who made the most marked impact on the emergence of Philosophy for Children in Australia. The participants in that workshop went on to found state associations and write classroom materials (Haynes, 2006) and Lorne became a seminal event in the history of philosophy in Australian schools. Splitter’s location at the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) and support from the then head of the Council might have ensured viability for philosophy in Australian schools, but Philosophy did not seem to sit comfortably with the empirical basis of most of the research undertaken at ACER and there was resistance. ACER did, however, put Philosophy for Children books into its catalogue and became the first major source of these books. Splitter was speaking for philosophy, but it could not really be said that ACER itself was also speaking for it. In effect, one of the earliest sites where Philosophy for Children emerged in Australia also contributed, through omission, to limiting its effective spread.

Other voices arose. Many of these were also present at Splitter’s Lorne workshop. From the School of Philosophy at the University of New South Wales Philip Cam published short texts for easy classroom use. From an independent school in Tasmania Tim Sprod published a book that allowed teachers to use existing library texts. And also from UNSW School of Philosophy came books by DeHaan, MacColl and McCutcheon that used existing library books and combined philosophical communities of inquiry with innovative and fun classroom activities.

State-based associations were formed, again from the seed planted at Lorne, and a loose grouping of these became the Federation of Australasian Philosophy for Children Associations, later the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations. With the exception of Queensland, where the Buranda primary school has made a strong individual contribution and worked with the State department of Education (Hinton and Vaseo, 2003) these state-based organisations have continued to be the primary vehicle for disseminating professional development in Philosophical Inquiry for teachers, certainly for nearly all primary teachers. Each of these state organisation has been carried by the efforts of key individuals and the fortunes of the organisations have fluctuated with the energy levels of people, usually with other full-time jobs, trying to keep alive an idea that they almost universally believe can transform education and the lives of children and which, if allowed, can transform society by creating a critically-aware and open-minded populace accustomed to reasoned, open and democratic discussion.

In this overly brief summary many people have been left out. The main point I wish to make is not to show an accurate history, but to indicate that there is a clear genealogy in the rise of Philosophy in Schools. Dedicated individuals operating outside mainstream education spoke for philosophy and a way to teach it to children and in the process established a tenuous foothold in a few schools. The same is true today, but there are more voices and education departments have slowly begun to listen. Philosophy is coming in from the margins, but the movement is slow, relying on the efforts of individuals. If it were to be taken up as a system-wide initiative there would be remarkable benefits for children and their societies.

In Australia, uptake of philosophy has been sporadic. However each of the states has pockets of philosophy in primary school and each is now actively working toward philosophy in the senior years of high school, but there is no consistent approach for the middle years. There is no unified national curriculum (whether this is desirable is another
results have been dramatic. Eight years on, Buranda students
Outstanding National Improvement by a School in 2005. The
school of the year in 2003 and received an award for
years ago, that it was awarded the Queensland showcase
outcomes since introducing the teaching of philosophy eight
School in inner-city Brisbane has experienced such striking
voice, with the exception of Queensland where Buranda State
has begun to be listened to, but it is yet to find a very strong
all the same.

Middle schooling as an approach
to education is not served merely by creating a middle school,
by creating a new structure for the age groups concerned.
Middle schooling is much more than an institutional structure,
and when implemented well is a very fertile place in which a
philosophical community of inquiry can grow. Because of a
lack of definitional clarity on middle schooling I will stick to
the traditional three-sector approach in describing the current
status of philosophy in Australian schools.

Primary

Despite Lipman’s influence, despite Splitter’s influence
and clear evidence as to its effectiveness (Trickey and Topping,
2004) there has been in Australia little uptake of philosophical
communities of inquiry beyond primary school (Collins and
Knight, 2005) and in the primary school sector uptake is sporadic
at best. Some school districts have taken it on but it has mostly
been introduced by individual schools or, more commonly, by
individual teachers within a school. Philosophy clearly has
the most impact on behaviour, on literacy, on numeracy, on
engagement when it is introduced in a whole school (Hinton,
2003a) but these schools are relatively few. There are programs
that focus on philosophy for talented and gifted kids which are
highly effective, but philosophical communities of inquiry can
bring significant benefits to all children.

Each of the states has relatively new frameworks
within which their curricula have been modified. And while a
philosophical community of inquiry provides a cheap, reliable
and effective vehicle with which to deliver key outcomes
in each state-based framework, there has been institutional
resistance. While this resistance may not be conscious, it exists
all the same.

Implementation of philosophical communities within the
primary sector began as a marginal activity and through the
efforts of state associations and key individuals, the message
has begun to be listened to, but it is yet to find a very strong
voice, with the exception of Queensland where Buranda State
School in inner-city Brisbane has experienced such striking
outcomes since introducing the teaching of philosophy eight
years ago, that it was awarded the Queensland showcase
school of the year in 2003 and received an award for
Outstanding National Improvement by a School in 2005. The
results have been dramatic. Eight years on, Buranda students
achieve exceptional academic and social outcomes. They are
considered to be excellent problem solvers, and there is little
or no bullying at the school. Enrolments have quadrupled.
(Hinton, 2003b; 2005) The program’s success has attracted a
great deal of interest and there have been many requests for
visits to the school from Australian and international educators,
as well as requests for Buranda staff to speak at conferences
and provide training to other teachers. The school and Education
Queensland also offer an online training course.

In Victoria, an increasing number of schools are introducing philosophy, ranging from primary to secondary to
senior colleges. The Victorian Association for Philosophy in
Schools won a grant to employ a coordinator and runs regular
workshops for teachers. The Association runs an active website
and encourages schools to share their philosophy offerings, but
again, the major impetus for philosophy is from outside the
major structures of the education system.

There are a number of schools in Sydney which are
incorporating the philosophical community of inquiry
methodology into their curriculum, and at least two of Sydney’s
education regions are investigating implementing philosophy.
In one case the impetus has come from work by Philip Cam,
one of the participants in the Lorne meeting and a significant
national figure in philosophy for children. But even from his
position, his influence in his own state has been and it is his
collaboration with Buranda school in Queensland that has
figured most prominently.

When Tasmania established its new Essential Learnings
framework it put “Thinking” at the centre. It then became
apparent that there was no agreed, consistent pedagogy for
thinking. This led to a significant increase in demand for
training in philosophy, provided by the state philosophy in
schools association, headed by Lorne participant Tim Sprod.

The success of Buranda sparked interest from two Western
Australian schools (Blackmore primary school and Pemberton
district high school). Buranda principal Lynne Hinton referred
them to me (Stephan Millett) as I had established a program
of Philosophy at Wesley College and had attended training
workshops with her. Using these schools’ interest in training
as a starter, the then dormant state association for philosophy
in schools was re-invigorated. The association had been
established in 1990 by Lorne participant Felicity Haynes,
but key participants in the association had since left the state.
Interest from these schools and their demand for training
encouraged the association out of dormancy to a point where
it now offers professional development intensive courses three
or four times a year, runs a website, a monthly philosophy café,
has trained approaching 200 teachers and had a major influence
on the framing of the new secondary course of study.

Philosophy in primary schools is spreading slowly, but
it will take deliberate action by state education departments to
make a distinct difference.
Secondary

Philosophy is being introduced into the senior years of secondary school in all states. With the exception, perhaps, of Western Australia which has a policy of inclusivity so that vocational education students must have access to all courses, the programs are geared toward high academic achievers aiming to enter university. The programs, again with the exception of Western Australia and South Australia, are predominantly content-based and offer curricula that differ little in structure from a great many tertiary programs and which provide little guidance in terms of pedagogy. Western Australia’s course makes participation in a philosophical community of inquiry a required outcome, while South Australia’s course prescribes a philosophical community of inquiry in its pedagogy. Queensland’s course asks teachers to provide a “vocally interactive classroom” in which students are free to express opinions. The legacy of the Lorne workshop can be seen in both the Western Australian course and the South Australian course, with Felicity Haynes and Sue Knight, both of whom were at Lorne, strongly contributing, respectively to the Western Australian and South Australian courses.

The most well-established secondary program operates in Victoria. The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) course consists of four units: Introduction to philosophical inquiry; Philosophical issues in practice; The good life; Mind and knowledge. The first two units are school-assessed and the second two externally assessed. Although each unit has two outcomes, these vary between the units and the syllabus is traditional and content-based. Some secondary schools offer philosophy in years 8, 9, 10 as well as at VCE level. The Victorian Distance Education Centre also offers the subject. As elsewhere in Australia, some schools offer the International Baccalaureate course in Philosophy as well as the core IB Theory of Knowledge course. The VCE program in Philosophy began in 2001 and is now undergoing a review. Key individuals on the review group support the introduction of philosophical communities of inquiry as the core pedagogy in philosophy classrooms and have heard reports on the structure and strategies of the Western Australian model.

The Western Australian course in Philosophy and Ethics began in 2008. As noted earlier, this course of study is available as a choice for all upper secondary students, whether they are heading for university, the workplace or further technical education. It fits within a restructured state-wide curriculum framework that itself is based on the principles of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and which is mandated for all schools. Introduction of outcomes-based education in primary and lower secondary classrooms has been achieved, but there is vocal resistance to its implementation in the final years – although the scale of the resistance is hard to determine because the local press has mounted an ill-informed campaign against OBE in which a very small opposition group is frequently cited. The arguments against have not been well-articulated and often rely on an “argument from nostalgia”: that there was a golden age of education and that we should return to it. The Western Australian course has four outcomes as well as required content. The outcomes are: Philosophical Inquiry, Philosophical and ethical perspectives, Philosophy and ethics in human affairs and Applying and relating philosophical and ethical understandings. It is the first outcome that is most notable here. Key players in the Western Australian Philosophy in Schools movement were part of the reference group writing the new course and were able to build in an outcome the requirement that students demonstrate that they can engage in philosophical communities of inquiry. This will have a marked effect on the way the subject is taught as teachers will have to use a philosophical community of inquiry in their classrooms. It also serves as a significant common element that will link junior and middle school philosophy to that taught in senior school. In this way it will provide a more coherent and cohesive experience of philosophy and limit the disjunctions between upper secondary courses and those that precede them. The Western Australian Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council of Western Australia) uses an eight-stage scale of achievement. Having consistent pedagogical elements between the primary and secondary courses allows students to demonstrate achievement at any of the eight levels.

South Australia introduced Philosophy into its upper secondary Society and Environment strand in 2003. The first stage of the course requires students to become familiar with Community of Inquiry methodology to “allow for students to familiarize themselves with key philosophical ideas and to appraise the application” of philosophy to specific issues. (SSABSA support materials 2005) In stage two, illustrative programs provided by the state Senior Secondary Assessment Board build a community of inquiry into the pedagogy. The role of Sue Knight, from University of South Australia, has been significant in the development of the South Australian courses: the Lorne heritage emerges again.

Since 1994 in New South Wales a Distinction Course for exceptionally gifted and talented students has been offered at Higher Schools Certificate (HSC - university entry) level. These are nominally 2-unit courses requiring a minimum of 120 hours study time, but they are well above the usual HSC standard and equate with a first year university course. The course is delivered by the University of New England in Armidale and covers metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and political philosophy. In addition to the Distinction Course, some schools offer the IB curriculum and some private schools teach philosophy as a separate subject, usually as part of a gifted and talented program.

The Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), offers Philosophy and Reason as a strand of the Mathematics syllabus (QSA, 2004). The three main areas of study are: Critical Reasoning, Deductive Logic and Philosophy. The emphasis is on the development of rational thought and the skills of analysis, argument presentation and rational justification. In the Philosophy unit students study three options from a range including philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion, Moral
philosophy, social philosophy, philosophy of human nature, philosophy of education, history of Western philosophy and Eastern philosophy. Although the syllabus seeks to “provide a vocally interactive classroom” (QSA, 2004. p. 26) this could be achieved in ways other than a community of inquiry. The most common is what I call “philosophy as blood sport” where the object is not increased shared understanding but the domination of argument until one party submits.

The Tasmanian Certificate of Education offers a course called ‘Religion and Philosophy’. This course has five themes: Introduction to traditions; Comparative studies in religion; Contemporary issues in religion and philosophy; Christian perspectives on religious issues; and Ways of knowing. The course has adopted a version of outcomes-based assessment called criterion-based assessment, but except for one criterion that requires students to demonstrate that they can work constructively with others, there need be no philosophical community of inquiry. But more than this, there is no necessity for students to take any philosophy within this course. The course is offered in three sections: Religious traditions, Issues (one topic in which is ethics) and Philosophy. Students must choose a minimum of four topics from a minimum of two of the above sections. So, it is possible that schools could offer only the religion components and still allow students to meet the requirements for passing the course. The philosophy section of the Tasmanian course has five topics: What is a human being? What can we know and how can we know it? How should we be governed? What is art? Where do I belong? Lorne participant Tim Sprod was on the panel establishing the course, but the religion lobby proved to be very strong.

The relationship between religion and philosophy is both complementary and competitive. In Western Australia there was a strong effort by religious groups to have only Religion offered, based on the presumption that a course in religion would deal adequately with philosophical positions. But the Association for Philosophy in Schools (WA) representative argued against this and the Western Australian Curriculum Council agreed that religion and philosophy should be offered as separate courses. Again, decisions were influenced by individuals operating outside the mainstream of education, and again from structures put in place as a result of the Lorne meeting in 1985.

The push for the inclusion of religion came from religious institutions, but there is no natural constituency arguing for the inclusion of philosophy, in part because university Philosophy departments have until recently not focused on the issue. In the case of Tasmania voices arguing for Philosophy were marginalised by the strength of representation from religious institutions. In Western Australia the same forces were aligned against Philosophy, but the decision went in Philosophy’s favour.

**Tertiary**

Although things are beginning to change, it has proven difficult to introduce philosophy for children into the curriculum of pre-service teachers.

The most integrated relationship is that between Latrobe University and the Victorian Certificate in Education course in philosophy. Latrobe’s Philosophy department offers a support program, including a four-day intensive short course focusing on both academic philosophy and pedagogy. In Western Australia there is one unit available in the postgraduate program at the University of Notre Dame while at the University of Western Australia, a Graduate Diploma in the Teaching of Critical Thinking is offered, but an examination of its content shows it has very little to do with philosophy in schools. One unit of this course has been taken up by a lone academic and provides some instruction in the philosophical community of inquiry, but this work is done against a departmental background predominantly hostile to philosophy in schools. The University of Queensland’s School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics offered for the first time in 2005 a standalone professional development course in philosophical inquiry in the classroom. It is planned to build on this to create a more extensive postgraduate program. It is worth noting that this is offered outside of the Education faculty. Also in Queensland is an online course offered by the Queensland education department. This was created by Lynn Hinton from Buranda school (with help from Philip Cam from the University of NSW and other school staff). The course is moderated by classroom teachers from Buranda and although aimed predominantly at primary classes, can be taken by secondary teachers.

In South Australia, Flinders University now offers a distance education Graduate Certificate in Education focusing on teaching philosophy. Flinders has also provided professional development support for the International Baccalaureate program in Theory of Knowledge and two academics in particular have championed the introduction of philosophy units into the upper secondary Society and Environment course.

Philosophy departments have begun to take up the challenge of supporting philosophy in the senior school curriculum, but there has been little in the way of obvious support for teaching a philosophical community of inquiry in the middle and junior years. With the exception of a few notable individuals operating almost in spite of the faculties they work within, little is being done within education faculties to teach pre-service teachers the pedagogic strategies that make a philosophical community of inquiry such a powerful classroom tool with far-reaching benefits for children and schools.

**A Polemical Conclusion**

The arguments and research evidence are clear (e.g. Lipman, Trickey and Topping, 2004; Knight and Collins, 2005; Millett, 2000): there are significant and undeniable affective, cognitive, social and moral benefits from the introduction of philosophical communities of inquiry.
However, there have been considerable forces arrayed against the introduction of philosophy into schools and these need to be countered. If philosophical communities are to take root in normal classroom practices, and they should, there needs to be a concerted effort that integrates teacher-training, training in philosophical disciplines, curriculum change and continuing professional development. This concerted, integrated effort needs to include all levels of education and to value each of them. Tertiary training in philosophy must address the needs of primary teachers as well as secondary specialist courses. Researchers must listen to the voices of ordinary teachers and value their views: a teacher with 10, 15 or 20 years experience in the classroom knows when something is making a difference to their students. It is time we listened more carefully.

Finally, governments must ensure that their education policies actively encourage open philosophical discussion – involving defining, clarifying and evaluating concepts and critically evaluating decisions of all sorts – and ensure that this is available to all students. The benefits are potentially enormous. The costs of missing this opportunity are huge.

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*Insight* - May 09, 2002 SBS


Teaching Philosophy Using Music Videos

Charlene Tan

Abstract

The use of music videos as a pedagogical tool continues to be a new idea in schools and institutions of higher learning. Although there has been substantial literature and empirical studies on teaching using music and films, there is no known in-depth study to date on using music videos in teaching. This paper explores the possibility of teaching philosophy using music videos by highlighting the benefits of teaching using films and music. By focusing on two areas of philosophy - critical reasoning, and epistemology - the paper explores the possibility of using two popular music videos for the teaching of deductive and inductive arguments, and the concept of knowledge.

The Benefits of using Music Videos

A music video is a video with visual images and music. Music videos can be classified into three main types (Tan, 2007). The first type features a videotaped rendition of a musician performing the song. This could either be a pre-recorded performance in a studio (e.g. Whitney Houston’s “How Would I Know”) or some outdoor venue (e.g. Westlife’s “If I Let You Go”). It could also be a taped recording of a live performance of the musician during a concert (e.g. Madonna’s “Blond Ambition Tour”). The second type shows the musician performing the song, but includes static or visual images interpreting the lyrics (e.g. Def Leppard’s “Photograph”). The third type is essentially a mini film featuring either the musician or actors acting out a story which illuminates the song (e.g. Pink Floyd’s “Another Brick in the Wall”). With modern technology, the launch of the MTV video channel in 1981, and the trend of pop stars using music videos to market their songs, music videos have become increasingly sophisticated and appealing, with captivating images, special effects, and storylines.

By combining film and music, music videos can enhance the students’ learning in various ways. A number of writers have pointed out the salubrious effects of music on learning. Music is primarily used in first and second language vocabulary acquisition. Empirical studies show that music helps in promoting understanding and memorization in students, especially children (e.g. Botarri & Evans, 1982; Calvert, 1991; Chong & Gan, 1997; Gfeller, 1983; Kilgour, Jakobson & Cuddy, 2000). Music has also been found to be effective in enhancing pre-reading and writing skills (e.g. Register, 2001; Standley & Hughes, 1997). By activating the learner’s prior knowledge, music also aids the learner in acquiring and digesting new information on that subject (Harris, 2005). Music also creates a conducive learning environment, reducing stress, increasing interest, and setting the state for listening and learning (Woodall & Ziembroski, 2005).

But music videos do not just rely on music to attract the viewers; the music is juxtaposed with visual images. The images usually consist of the musicians performing the song, or a story interpreting the song. The latter, popularised by Michael Jackson in his 1984 music video Thriller, is similar to a film in which a plot and specific ideas (explicit or implied) are conveyed to the viewers. The use of films in teaching has become increasingly popular, although it is used predominantly in language teaching (e.g. Braddock, 1996; Garçon, 2001; Hasselbach & Dickel, 2003; Karpinski, 2003; Mejia, Xiao & Kenney, 1994; Sherman 2003; Stempleski, 2000; Stempleski, Tomalin & Maley, 2001). By presenting various communicative situations, films can generate interest and motivation and lead to successful learning (Guest, 1997; Longergan, 1994). The realism in films also offers rich contextualised and cross-cultural information to the viewers (King, 2002; Summerfield, 1993; Summerfield & Lee, 2001).

Interest is growing among philosophers in the use of films as a conduit for conveying philosophical ideas. Given that movies are prevalent in today’s culture, Porter (2004) argues that an exposition of the film will easily bring out the philosophical meanings to the audience. Others like Falzon (2002), Liitch (2002), and Tan and Crawford (2006) have also relied on films to expound such broad philosophical themes as epistemology and ethics to readers. Philosophical books devoted to a particular film or television show such as The Simpsons and Philosophy (Irvin, Conrad & Skoble, 2001), The Matrix and Philosophy (Irvin, 2002), Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy (South, 2003), The Lord of
the Rings and Philosophy (Bassham & Bronson, 2003) and Harry Potter and Philosophy (Baggett & Klein, 2004) have also proliferated. There are, however, no known materials or research on teaching philosophy using music videos. Music videos have a lot of potential as a teaching tool since they share the benefits of teaching using music and films, and are accessible and popular with the masses, especially young people. Unlike full-length films, they have the added advantage of being concise and short, averaging about five to ten minutes. Of course, the disadvantage is that they may lack the depth and nuances of full-length films. Music videos therefore should be seen as a complementary tool to longer films, and not a replacement of them. This paper explores the possibility of using two music videos to teach philosophy in two areas: deductive and inductive arguments, and the concept of knowledge.

Teaching Critical Reasoning (Deductive and Inductive Arguments) using Michael Jackson’s Heal the World

Michael Jackson’s music video Heal the World is a well-produced short film suitable to promote critical thinking in students. The music video flashes pictures of innocent children playing and fierce-looking soldiers in tanks and holding guns. Such juxtaposition of images climaxes in a child giving a flower to a soldier, and the soldiers discarding their weapons. The video concludes with hundreds of children holding lighted candles and dreaming of a better place. This music video could be used to teach deductive and inductive arguments. Teachers may begin by introducing basic philosophical concepts such as the definitions of “argument”, “premise”, “conclusion”, “deductive arguments”, “inductive arguments”, “validity”, “soundness” and “cogency”. The teacher could then play the music video, and ask the students the following three questions:

(1) What is/are the premise(s) and conclusion? Identify them.

(2) Is this a deductive or inductive argument? Explain.

(3) Is this a good argument? Explain.

(1) What is/are the premise(s) and conclusion? Identify them.

The song has Michael Jackson repeating the chorus: “If you care enough for the living, make a better place for you and for me.” Teachers can lead the students to construct the following deductive argument:

Premise 1: If you care enough for the living, make a better place for you and for me.

Premise 2: You care enough for the living.

Conclusion: Make a better place for you and for me.

(2) Is this a deductive or inductive argument? Explain.

It is a deductive argument. A deductive argument is an argument in which it is claimed that the reasons (premises) necessarily lead to the claim (conclusion). In this case, given that the premises are true (If you care enough for the living, make a better place for you and for me, and you care enough for the living), then the claim is that the conclusion must be true, not only probably true (Make a better place for you and for me).

(3) Is this a good argument? Explain.

Applying the criteria of a good deductive argument, the teacher can discuss with the students whether the premises are true, and whether the conclusion must follow from the premises. Students should be able to tell that the conclusion necessarily follows from the premises. Premise 2 makes a debatable point where it states “You care enough for the living”. The truth of this premise of course depends on who you are referring to. Teachers may wish to get the students to reflect on themselves and judge whether they think they care enough for the living. Or the teacher may cite examples of people who care for the living (for example Mother Teresa who devoted her life to care for the poor in India) and those who do not (for example Hitler who killed 6 million Jews). This could be a moral education lesson on how we should do our part to make this world a better place because we care for the living. For older students such as those in high schools, the teacher could introduce the concept of a complex argument where the conclusion of one argument forms the basis of another argument. After exhorting the listener/viewer to make a better world for everyone, Michael Jackson goes on to sing: “And the dream we were conceived in will reveal a joyful face, and the world we once believed in will shine again in grace. …We could fly so high… We could really get there.” We could summarize all these outcomes as “We could achieve our dream.” So the structure for the two arguments would be as follows:

Premise 1: If you care enough for the living, make a better place for you and for me.

Premise 2: You care enough for the living.

Conclusion: Make a better place for you and for me.
Premise 3: If you make a better place for you and for me, we will achieve our dream.
Premise 4: You make a better place for you and for me.

Conclusion: We will achieve our dreams.

For older students or high-ability students, the teacher may also wish to discuss how the music video attempts to use a variety of ways to persuade the viewer to “heal the world”. Examples are the use of heart-rending images, soft music and emotive words. The discerning listener can also uncover assumptions in the song which support the arguments. For example, the song assumes that everyone has love deep inside one’s heart, as evidenced in the opening lyrics: “There’s a place in your heart and I know that it is love.” Students could discuss how Michael Jackson knows that there is love in the viewer’s hearts, and explore the epistemological foundations of love and their manifestations in different societies.

Teaching Epistemology (the Concept of Knowledge) using Avril Lavigne’s My Happy Ending

The music video My Happy Ending by Avril Lavigne is another excellent multimedia tool for helping students understand the nature of knowledge. The song is about a girl (portrayed by Avril) who breaks up with her boyfriend. The song starts with Avril recalling the good times she had with her boyfriend, before they quarreled and broke up. The song expresses Avril’s negative feelings towards her ex-boyfriend, telling him that he was mistaken about his impression of her. The word “know” and “knew” are mentioned eight times in the song.

This music video could be used to teach the concept of knowledge. Teachers may begin by introducing basic philosophical concepts such as the different types of knowledge (competence, acquaintance and information) and the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge (justified true belief). The teacher could then play the music video, and ask the students the following three questions:

(1) What are the different types of knowledge portrayed in the music video?
(2) What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge?

Two types of knowledge are referred to in the song:

(1) I know what they say. They tell you I’m difficult.
(2) But they don’t know me.

The first type of knowledge is information. Here “they” refers to the ex-boyfriend’s friends. Apparently, these friends told her ex-boyfriend that she is difficult. So the statement can be rewritten as: “I know that they say I am difficult.” In the second case, the knowledge is acquaintance. Avril is refuting the claim by her ex-boyfriend’s friends that she is difficult. By asking whether these friends really know her, she is effectively saying that they do not know her well. The music video ends with Avril playing the guitar in a band. This is the third type of knowledge – the competence to play the guitar.

(2) What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge?

The teacher could also apply what the students have learnt about knowledge as justified true belief to the song. Avril told her ex-boyfriend in the song:

“You were all the things I thought I knew.”

What does “I thought I knew” mean? Avril is saying that all that she believed about her boyfriend turned out to be false. So it was not a case of “I know” but “I thought I knew”. We can identify a few characteristics about knowledge from here. The first point is that there is a kind of knowledge which involves belief. To know that x is to believe that x. The teacher can point out that a person S cannot be said to know p, even if p is true, if he or she does not personally believe it. Lehrer (1990) argues that the belief or acceptance
in knowledge refers to accepting something for the purpose of attaining truth (or epistemic purpose) and avoiding error with respect to the very thing one accepts. He points out that sometimes we believe things that we do not accept for the sake of felicity rather than a regard for truth. For example, a mother may believe that a loved one is safe for the pleasure of so believing, although there is no evidence to justify accepting this out of regard for truth. Secondly, there is a difference between knowledge and belief with respect to truth. One can believe that something is true when it is actually false, yet this is not knowledge. From the music video, we see that Avril had initially believed that boyfriend was a good person (probably with attributes such as being honest, kind and faithful). But her assertion that “I thought I knew” shows that this belief is false; therefore this cannot constitute knowledge.

Thirdly, knowledge involves evidence to justify one’s claim. The teacher can explain that a belief that is true just because of luck does not qualify as knowledge. Beliefs that are lacking justification are false more often than not. However, on occasion, such beliefs happen to be true. The reason why knowledge is not the same as true belief is that knowledge requires evidence. To be justified is to have good evidence for believing in something. Avril had initially thought that her boyfriend was honest, good and caring. From the song, we see that Avril gives evidence of what her ex-boyfriend is really like, in her view: “All the things you hide from me, all the s*** that you do. …thanks for acting like you cared”.

**Recommendations and Conclusion**

To guide teachers who wish to include music videos in their teaching of philosophy, here are some recommendations:

- Select music videos which have a clear plot with a beginning, middle and end. Also choose those which are well-produced, visually powerful, meaningful and even controversial. Examples are music videos by Michael Jackson (e.g. Thriller, Bad and Remember the Time), In the Shadows by The Rasmus, A Brick in the Wall by Pink Floyd, Numb by Linkin Park, and (There’s Gotta be) More to Life by Stacie Orrico.

- Follow-up could be done in the form of showing another music video which features the same philosophical concept. For example, Whitney Houston’s music video, How Would I Know, and Alicia Keys’s music video, You Don’t Know My Name complement Avril’s music video on the nature of knowledge. Alternatively, the teacher could show a full-length film on the same philosophical concepts. For example, critical reasoning skills could be reinforced with films such as Twelve Angry Men, and epistemological issues can be further explored through films such as The Matrix.

This paper suggests that music videos, when appropriately chosen and well-incorporated into the curriculum, could be an innovative and effective means to promote philosophical thinking in students. The author has used music videos to teach philosophy to groups of teachers and students and informal interviews with them show that they found music videos helpful in concretising the philosophical concepts learnt. This preliminary study can be the start of more empirical research on the potential, benefits and challenges of using music videos as a teaching tool.
References


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