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Thinking in Stories: Thirteen Reasons Why

by Peter Shea

Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher
(Penguin: New York, 2007)

Gareth Matthews, the previous columnist for Thinking in Stories, introduced me to several resources for provoking children’s thinking. He pointed out that simple children’s books provoke the multi-directional inquiry that Matthew Lipman tried to initiate with his novels. In particular, Gary made me aware of Arnold Lobel’s work, which I used in college and community demonstrations of P4C teaching strategies. These simple stories raise questions cleanly and then get out of the reader’s way. As I remember discussions using Lobel’s “Dragons and Giants” (from Frog and Toad Are Friends), I am reminded of Yeats’ phrase: “the ceremonies of innocence;” surely, this is a great story for people starting out: about friendship, taking risks, measuring oneself against the standards of the adult world.

I will close out this column with a disturbing book, one that would surely have made Gary uneasy: Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher. I am not sure whether I can recommend this book, though I use it in my college classes whenever possible. In this book’s world, Yeats’ prophecy in The Second Coming is fulfilled, “the ceremonies of innocence are drowned.” Friends betray friends. Adults are irrelevant to the lives of children. Schools harbor violence and cruelty. The mind of the heroine darkens, page by page, until she kills herself.

Thirteen Reasons Why is a story told by Clay, a high school over-achiever. Shortly after his friend Hannah kills herself, he receives audio tapes from her in the mail. Hannah has prepared these to explain her decision to end her life to the thirteen people who somehow contributed to that decision – by small acts of betrayal, by acts of violence, by inattention and distractedness. As Clay listens to the tapes, reconstructing the last years of Hannah’s life, he is given a tour of the ways that human beings hold each other’s lives in their hands, day by day, though they mostly never notice. We matter to each other, and we can never tell how much we matter at any given moment. Asher has done a breathtaking survey of the dimensions of moral responsibility, without ever going beyond daily life in a public high school.

Many people are involved in Hannah’s descent into despair: a friend tells lies about her sexual exploits, the class clown nominates her for “best ass in the freshman class,” a snoopy reporter invades her privacy, a sexual predator feels her up. None of this is unprecedented or fatal. But the things that happen to Hannah cumulate in her mind. Asher’s story shows how injuries add up, gradually weakening Hannah’s mind and heart.

Each contributor to Hannah’s decline might have acted differently, had he or she known Hannah’s mind – but, alas, they only find out about that mind after her life ends. Their principal fault: they showed little curiosity about her state of mind, while she was with them.

Clay, the boy through whom we experience this story, is the most problematic contributor to Hannah’s demise: a boy who loved her, who was fearful about expressing his love, who wished her well throughout her life. His part in the story is complex: he accepted just a little too much the rumors about her loose way of life, responded just a little too slowly to her attempts to reach out to him, gave up just a little too easily when confronting her muddled feelings about relationship. So Clay is by no means a villain, but he misses being a hero by just a few small failures.

When I first read this book, I thought, “I must change my life. I must be more careful with people, especially people at the margins of my daily activities. I am more responsible than I generally notice.” That seemed to me to be the essential ethical awakening, the core of what ethical thinking requires, and this book seemed to me then, quite simply, the best introduction to ethics I had ever read. When I used it in classes, several of my students reported just the same shock of recognition. Since then, I have had second thoughts. One cannot get around the fact that Asher portrays plausibly, with plausible examples, the descent of a fragile person into disappointment, disillusionment, apathy, and...
despair. He describes clearly the process by which someone gives up on life. I cannot be sure that reading this book is safe for someone who has already started down that path. On the other hand, as I ask my students about their lives, I get stories that mix sexual abuse, alcohol, betrayal of friendship, and adult negligence in a cocktail even more lethal than the one Asher blends, and I come around to thinking that college is a dangerous place, and that there is a point to acknowledging its dangers and asking all concerned to take responsibility for helping each other through. I have not yet decided whether I would use this book at lower levels; I think that depends on the constitution of the class and the hazards of the school environment in which one is teaching.

This will be the last printed “Thinking in Stories” column. The column continues as a blog at this address: thinkinginstories.blogspot.com. I invite interested readers to subscribe. I will continue to write reviews.

35 Years of Thinking

With this issue we close the first professional journal dedicated to Philosophy for Children. *Thinking* began in 1979 when the IAPC was only five years old and was still operating from a red and white trailer parked on the campus of Montclair State College. The first issue announced the journal as “a clearinghouse of information, an arena for controversy, and a forum for philosophical and educational articles dealing with philosophy for children and related subjects” (3). These ambitions were more than realized over the next 35 years as *Thinking* became the major outlet for research and reporting in the nascent field of pre-college philosophy practice. The journal has been a major factor in the growth of that field, to the extent that its original purposes have been not only fulfilled, but distributed and diversified among scholars and practitioners in what is now a global educational movement. For these reasons, the IAPC Executive Board has decided to bring the journal to a close and dedicate our resources to continued scholarship, curriculum development and professional development services.

*Thinking* was ground-breaking in a number of ways, including its dedication to multi-disciplinary dialogue. In virtually every issue it brought together insights from philosophy, psychology, education, the arts, and social and physical sciences. Second, it intentionally blended components associated with academic journals—including theoretical and empirical research and book reviews—with components associated with professional journals and magazines—including interviews, curriculum pieces, institutional reports, classroom transcripts and school observations. Third, it utilized the “sampling” practice of 19th-century periodicals to present short texts relevant to Philosophy for Children from ancient and modern authors. Finally, it was designed to be an outlet for peer-reviewed academic writing as well as for essays and reflections by graduate students and teachers working in the field.

*Thinking* was edited by Matthew Lipman from 1979 to 1998; by David Kennedy from 1998 to 2006, by Tom Lardner and Félix García Moriyón from 2006 to 2008, and since then by Félix alone. Ann Margaret Sharp was the associate editor from 1979 to 2001. The column “Thinking in Stories,” which highlights philosophical themes in children’s literature, appeared in the first issue. The column was created by Gareth Matthews who continued it until 2006, when it was taken up by Peter Shea, who will continue the column on the IAPC website. Dozens of other university faculty members, graduate students and professional staff from numerous countries have served in editorial and production capacities over *Thinking*’s 35-year run (see the *Thinking* website). We extend our gratitude for these countless hours of service.

*Thinking*’s first issue declared its intention to avoid favoring IAPC perspectives and it regularly published articles critical of that perspective. Today there are a number of other academic and professional journals dedicated to the diverse field of pre-college philosophy and numerous others that regularly publish research, reviews and reports from it. We are proud of the contribution *Thinking* has made to this field in the past four decades, and that in doing so it also realized perhaps its greatest ambition, declared in that first issue: to “make a contribution to the emergence of a more reflective community” (3).
An interview with Walter Kohan

Chiara Chiapperini

Translated by Jason Wozniak

We had the opportunity to personally encounter and appreciate the work of Professor Walter Omar Kohan, Philosophy of Education Professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, during the Conference “Philosophy with Children and Youth”. This event took place between March 31st – April 3rd of 2005 in Villa Montesca, Italy. It was sponsored by the Italian Philosophy Society, Perugia’s Section (Area Amica Sofia) and included the participation of various institutions, amongst them, the Centro Studi Villa Montesca, Comune di Citta di Castello, Regione del Umbria.

The Amica Sofia Association, of which I am a founder along with Doctor Alberta Federico and Professor Livio Rossetti, has for some years collected and documented “Philosophy with Children” experiences and promoted critical reflection and debate on this theme. We have worked with firm conviction so that schools can cultivate the maximum philosophical potential of future generations.

Walter Omar Kohan is Full Professor of Philosophy of Education at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. He studied in Universities in Argentina (Buenos Aires), Mexico (Iberoamericana) and France (Paris VIII). Researcher of the National Council of Scientific and Technologic Development (CNPQ, Brazil). and the Foundation of Support of Research of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ). President (1999-2001) and member of the Advisory Board of the International Council for Philosophical Inquiry with Children (ICPIC, since 2002). Co-editor of Childhood & Philosophy (www.periodicos. proped.pro.br). Books: Childhood & Philosophy: Critical Perspectives and Affirmative Practices (Palgrave, 2014) and Childhood, education and philosophy: new ideas for an old relationship (Routledge, 2014). Email: wokohan@gmail.com

Chiara Chiapperini, President of AMICA SOFIA (a national association devoted to philosophy with children and teenagers) and director of the homonymous magazine since the foundation, is a teacher of philosophy in the secundary schools and has specialized in Socratic dialogue according to the Nelson model. She is also an active member of PHRONESIS (association devoted to philosophical consulting services) and philosophical consultant. Her writings deal with these themes, plus History and Music. She serves also as a journalist.

The “Seminars of Montesca” allowed for the acquaintance and appreciation of the variety of philosophical experiences realized in elementary and high schools of various Italian institutions. They had the value of stimulating, with rich and fertile debate that accompanied all of the conferences, a reflective critical process in relation to questions of philosophy, education, and formation. The seminars offered few exact responses, but brought to the surface many significant concerns.

We hope that the discussion over the value of philosophical practice within school systems can continue on other occasions and in further studies. As Professor Kohan stated during the closing session of the “Journeys of Montesca”, the journeys of study allowed for diverse experiences “to philosophize”, and they demonstrated that it is possible to surpass the dependence of predetermined rigid models of thinking and not confuse a method of philosophizing as the only method to practice philosophy.

Professor Kohan, how did you encounter “Philosophy with Children”? In the course of your experience have you modified your understanding of it?

I was working as an Assistant Professor of Greek Philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires when I saw, posted on a wall, a small announcement signed by Gloria Arbonés that read: “We invite everyone that is interested to a meeting about philosophy with children.” She had come into contact with the program “Philosophy with Children” during a conference in Barcelona and after an experience with the program within a school she had wanted to construct a group to consolidate this activity in Argentina. During this period (1992) I had realized that my activity as a University Professor, one that had gratified and pleased me, had become a bit endogamous, closed in this seductive world, but closed to the world, as is prone to happen within Faculties of Philosophy.

On one hand, the initial concerns that had brought me to philosophy were beginning to become distant, and my academic activity, despite being very interesting and full of meaning, was limited to a circle too cut off from people. On the other hand, the prospect to work with children represented, in my view, a primary dimension of philosophical activity. Beyond this, I always loved children, and because of this I felt terribly drawn to the proposal.
Gloria worked with Matthew Lipman’s program. Between us we participated in a program of intense studies and experiences of the proposal. I began to conduct some philosophical experiences in a school in Buenos Aires in which I had worked a little, and afterwards I met Matthew Lipman and his colleague Ann Sharp. They “educated me” intensely on “Philosophy and Children”. I participated in the translation of a large part of the program, we organized various researches and training in Argentina and afterwards I completed my Doctorate with Lipman as my coordinator. After the initial fascination, on a more profound level I began to become familiar with the context and fundamentals of the program, like the various distinct initiatives in various parts of the world, and I began to take a more critical stance towards Lipman’s program. I think that we should make a clear distinction between two questions: one is the brilliant idea to bring philosophy to children, and in this Lipman was a pioneer; the other, and much different, is the mode with which Lipman thought of this reunion, the curriculum that he wrote, the institutions that he created, the theoretical foundations that he offered, the space that it gives to childhood. I always felt very close to the genius of Lipman’s idea but more and more distant from the specific way that he conceived his theory, his practice and methodology.

What are your principal concerns in regards to the practice of “Philosophy with Children”? 

In the attempt to think of “Philosophy with Children”, three aspects are particularly important, three motives or related risks: most importantly what does it “mean” to do philosophy with children, secondly how do we relate philosophy to infancy, and finally why do we find it important to dedicate so much energy and so much commitment to this work? These three aspects seem to me to be the most significant and concerning in our context, but there are evidently others. For example, there are those who worry that philosophy could become banal and others who worry that we might turn children into adults. Certainly these and other questions are relevant, and I don’t claim to exhaust the theme. I simply bring into consideration that which touches me most dearly or that which most threatens my tranquility.

The first risk present in “Philosophy with Children” is “idealism” or “romanticism”; the romantic alternative consists of naturalizing infancy and/or philosophy and making them nearly equivalent, as if they were almost the same thing. This risk is not new. It is very present in our culture and takes form in phrases like: “Children are natural philosophers” or “Philosophers, like children, question everything.” With these claims we create an abstract vision of philosophy and infancy, that the universal “child” and universal “philosophy” are naturally related and naturally come together.

The second risk, more serious because it is more concrete, is the risk of the commercialization of “Philosophy with Children”. This risk is particularly relevant in a context in which, due to the intense development of capitalism, it seems that the market can and does prevail over everything. And all is contaminated, because all is bought and sold, everything has a price. “Philosophy with Children” is by no means immune to the risk of entering this commercial logic, to being transformed into an object that is offered and sought after, that is submitted to the logic of consumerism, that is used as a marketing strategy, and that is sold as a product that can differentiate one institution from another. Particularly, in the cases of schools, “Philosophy with Children” could be placed side by side with other offered activities, like technology education, English as a second language, or Yoga, as a resource to increase the ability to attract the attention of potential clients.

The third risk, that to me seems no less concerning and dangerous, is the fundamentalism or foundationalism, or if you prefer, the dogmatism or moralization of “Philosophy with Children”. The danger lies in the use of philosophy as an instrument for passing down values. An institution, for example, could try to disseminate a determined value and think that philosophy is a valid resource for achieving this goal. This could be done in the name of reactionary or conservative values, likewise in the name of progressive values, using the most beautiful and vile words, those that are most seductive and those that are most scandalous. “Philosophy with Children” could be used dogmatically in the name of freedom, of autonomy, of democracy, of solidarity or in the name of tradition, of patriotism, of family, of property, of race, of nation, of whatever one wants. Changing the words, but not changing the scheme very much; one could do the same thing, affirm the idea of philosophy
as a space of dissemination for a determined group of values that are presupposed and anticipated and that are not open to discussion. In our era there is a strong inclination towards this. Many talk of a crisis in values, the loss of identity, and the speed of information, the Internet, television, of generalized violence. It is claimed that philosophy can restore a bit of order.

**How can one confront these risks?**

The first risk—that of idealism and romanticism—is particularly insidious because philosophy is properly characterized by the attitude to put into question that which appears to be obvious. To question what appears to be obvious, evident, or natural seems like a distinctive feature of philosophy and one of its principal functions. Consequently, this naturalized idea of philosophy and of infancy runs the risk of impeding thinking and more particularly the possibility of reconciling philosophy and infancy.

How can we confront this risk? I believe that we are confronting a crucial problem of our time, a time when, with the development of psychology as a science towards the end of the 19th century, constitutes a grand scale of knowledge of children and of infancy that makes it seem as if you could anticipate everything, leaving very little space for surprise encounters.

A very beautiful fragment of Heraclitus, the 18th, says that: “If you do not expect the unexpected, you will not find it; for it is hard to be sought out and difficult.” At first glance, it appears as if this is a contradictory phrase: what does it mean to expect the unexpected? But it is exactly in the contradiction, in this expecting the unexpected, that everything that deserves to be encountered can emerge: novelty, and not constancy, the possibility of something that cannot be anticipated and of which you had no prior idea. We think of the logic of seeking and encountering as a logic of consequences and confirmation: we intend to find what we are looking for, and if we don’t find it, it is because we didn’t look, and if we don’t look as we should, we also won’t find it. However, this phrase of Heraclitus suggests the contrary: that which we find is not necessarily that which we were searching for, since that which will be encountered is that which cannot be anticipated or planned in the search; it is a mode in which we search without being conscious of that which we will find, uninformed of what might happen.

In this way, one can suggest an interesting attitude in reference to infancy. In face of the risk of naturalization, it is worthwhile to believe in a relation that presupposes that we don’t know what to say or think of a child. Who dares anticipate what we should think of a child? Who dares to predict the strength of the thought of a child? Who dares say that, because of age, a child thinks this or that? Who could assure is what it is possible or not possible to think for a child?

Concerning this matter, it seems to me that to avoid naturalisms and idealisms, maybe it’s the case that we should “un-learn” what we know, and look to open a search for that which we don’t know, for what we can learn, for what another could teach, no matter what might be our age. To stop thinking of teaching and learning as two actions linked by a casual nexus, as if someone learns that which someone else teaches and as if it were possible to anticipate what the other is going to learn.

**And the other two risks?**

The second risk—that of commercialization—is much more difficult to confront because it calls into question things besides thinking, philosophy, and education. Even so I would like to say a few words in favor of the public space of philosophy and, more generally, of the public space of thinking. The space of thinking has an open character: anyone can enter this space, thinking together with others who are thinking, anyone can also enter the open space of thinking for oneself. In a sense, this is an aspect of the old question between the Sophists and Socrates. They conceive of two distinct and opposite modes of thinking in regards to the relationship of teaching and learning. While one says that learning depends on pre-conditional materials, economics and politics, the other negates and resists these types of pedagogical conditions. Unfortunately, at the moment there is an absolute lack of attention to the public sphere and the privatization of educational institutions, at least in Latin America. Philosophy could be a strategy to combat this tendency, at least in the area of thinking.

In regards to the third risk—of dogmatism—I’m not sure up to what point this can be prevented. It is complex and difficult. But I’m going to tackle this subject considering that thinking, as Jacques Ranciere has shown us, is a political act. What I’d like to say is that to think is of great value, it is compelling when it makes visible something that wasn’t, when it permits us to realize the existence of something that before remained hidden. All of this supposes a complex theoretical discussion about what it means to think and of what we do when we think. We are habituated to think more in terms of the methodological aspects of how we think and thinking capabilities, techniques, strategies, thinking competency, without putting into question whether or not thinking is a technique or something of another order. We don’t even question if, when we think we exercise abilities or if we are doing something else, such as experimenting or encountering.

The effect of this is that a majority of discourse treats thinking as something technical or instrumental. It supposes what G. Deleuze denominated as the dogmatic image or morale of thinking. This presupposition is not discussed in itself, it is the presupposition of a good will, anything pledged to the moral, with the truth, and is not thought of, but
operates as a beginning of thinking. All of this is particularly dramatic in philosophy, because philosophy declares itself to be thinking about thinking, metacognitive thinking and so on. Curiously, philosophy establishes a point of departure that remains unexamined, a beginning that is not put into discussion, but that is reproduced dogmatically. In short, I think that the challenge is to think of that which we don’t think of, to take the risk of thinking of that which changes our thought, of that which we are not disposed to, or that we dare not to think. This is the political force of philosophy.

What are the skills that you believe a professor of philosophy with children should have? What should be expressed to the professors who try this path? Do you think that the experience of “Philosophy with Children” could be a proposal for any social or cultural context?

The word “skills” is certainly very important in Lipman’s program, but it is not exactly one of my favorites. It can hide or favor a technical conception of thinking. Beyond this, it doesn’t appear as an adequate way of conceptualizing thinking, professor, or child. I prefer the word that you used in the second part of your question: experience, thinking as experience. I believe that one of the principal forces associated with the contributions of philosophy in schools consists of its power to open up thinking to that which hasn’t been thought before, that which was unthinkable. Experience is a type of a thinking journey without a route previously mapped out. As you can see, this is logic very different from the logic associated with the word “skills”. Of course an experience of thinking is made up of a series of “dimensions” or forces that philosophy affirms, connotations that give it a tone, sketches that imprint a rhythm: an experience of listening attentively to different thought, a constant dissatisfaction with what you know, a dynamic opening of us to what we have yet not thought. Experience is not something that one can anticipate, but we can think about the principles that make it possible.

I would like to relate a story. Since 1997 I have lived and worked in Brasil; from 1997-2002 in Brasilia, and since 2002 I have been in Rio de Janeiro. In Brasilia our project of philosophy in schools was configured as a bridge between the university and some local public schools. It offered various kinds of teacher education in schools and in the university as well. Meetings were held in which teachers related their experiences and planned and discussed activities with the children, and in which we thought about what was taking place between us and in us. Because we had decided to not have a method, a program, tests or other types of rigid predetermined material, every year we had to re-examine what we were going to do. This was a “problem” because it slowed the rhythm of our work, but at the same time it was a stimulus to reflect over what we had been doing, a difficulty, but also a resource for us to maintain the logic of the project: the logic of experience, and not of something determined “to apply”, a type of open door to the philosophical space in which in each case we tried to think as if we were thinking for the first time. When I say that we were thinking for the first time, I don’t want to say that we were starting to think from nothing, as if we had never thought before, but rather to think as an inaugural gesture and inaugurating thinking with no unthinkable principles. This resulted in a certain dissatisfaction, uneasiness, and tiredness, especially in the teacher who was accustomed to ask in an affirmative way: “Tell me, once and for all, how do you do philosophy!”

Clearly we perceived that, as time passed and as the teachers participated in the project more intensely, this “programmatic indefiniteness” tended to transform the initial discomfort into a challenge. For us it was fundamental that we didn’t respond to the above demand—that we didn’t act in the mode of teacher. We wanted the teacher participants to elaborate a response to the question of what they were to do. We could offer contributions, but it was essential that the teachers themselves were placed within the philosophical experience, that they question their ways of thinking and acting and search for new ways to confront their problems. This was, on one hand, because to philosophize and to prepare to philosophize are philosophical acts, not didactic ones. On the other, no one can sketch someone else’s path.

In one of our project meetings, in which we were evaluating the project and discussing how we would continue, we had managed to “irritate” Luisa, one of the teachers, who said something like: “Fine, the truth is that I don’t know where to begin, because we sit here discussing and questioning values, our ideas, what is good and what is evil, what is correct and what is incorrect and in the end the only thing that remains is...” Here Luisa stopped speaking, and there was a silence like when you are in the cinema or in the theater and there is a scene that generates great expectations and everyone waits to see how things are going to turn out. At that moment Luisa sighed profoundly and, with a kind of relief, suddenly affirmed in a big breath, “The only thing that remains is the impossibility to continue being that which I am.” This was something that impacted all of us, and we all thought of very much, because it suggested the antisacriligious strength and antidogmatism of the philosophical thinking experience, the tremendously affirmative and expansive force of philosophy—a force that serves as an opening path to that which is, that which isn’t, and that which could be. When you can do this with someone else in a project, in a public space with persons involved in the same game, you acquire the feeling and the relevance of the work. In these spaces the distinction between that which is and what is the other becomes less important. It is to be more plural. In the case of a group of teachers, it is the possibility to become a different type of teacher than one is, to teach in another manner, to relate to knowledge, students,
and yourself in another way. In this way, I believe that the encounter of teachers with philosophy is an open door and transformation in which we notice the impossibility of continuing to be what we are, to which Luisa was referring. As a non-dogmatic experience, I think philosophy is thus justifiably the possibility to experiment and to think of who we are and to be open to consider other ways of being.

In regards to the last part of your question: “Do you think that the experience of “Philosophy with Children” could be a proposal for any social or cultural context?” I believe that the experiences are singular and, in a certain way, cannot be repeated because they are associated with the specific context and the subjects that intervene each time. Thus, I don’t believe that it would be interesting or even possible to transfer an experience to another context.

In philosophy I don’t believe that we ought to distinguish good practices and bad practices, or more or less orthodox practices. I also don’t believe that it would be interesting to erect moral guardians or political establishments to judge what others are doing. On the contrary, I believe that it is worthwhile to distinguish the interesting and inspiring practices that provoke the sensation of joy that Spinoza spoke of, that give force to transformation.

One frequently hears that it is necessary to develop the creativity of children as a way to react against the commercialization of consumer society. How do you think that “Philosophy with Children” can develop creativity?

In philosophy otherness is something that is indispensable in various dimensions. It deals with thinking in another manner, to think of a different world, to think in another way, to live another life...philosophy is a constant incentive to transform ways of thinking. It is as if it were a trampoline for the creativity of thought.

I believe the question of creativity is a delicate one. Creativity has become a banal word used for publicity and in service of market logic or a certain technical didactic. I’m not really sure I can say what creativity is. How do we know that something is creative? In the same ways we differentiate the old from the new? Who determines the creative characteristics of a work or thought? What do you do if you are creative? How can you help someone be creative? I don’t know! These are very difficult philosophical questions. In fact, creativity is not something I stress too much, because of all the reasons already stated, for the way in which today, very suspect places insist on creativity and its importance.

What difficulties might a teacher encounter in their efforts to practice philosophical experiences with children in schools? Is it possible to create occasions to philosophize with children in school? Or should we imagine ways to philosophize with children in contexts outside of school?

I’m interested in beginning with the second part of the question, because really, I don’t believe that there is a well defined way or possibility to philosophize in schools, with all of the limits and conditions inherent in contemporary school institutions. I want to say that philosophy, not as a technique or program, but as a free and open exercise of thinking, could encounter relevant difficulties within the school system; difficulties that suggest doubts about the possibility that within school, philosophy as an experience, and not just as a transmission of philosophical knowledge, could find space.

For example, schools always have to work within time limits to satisfy curriculum demands. Within the public schools of Latin America there is the issue of overcrowded schools, school buildings aren’t particularly favorable, and teacher salaries are simply undignified. In this respect schools and universities are in similar situations. I work at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. At the beginning of 2006 an enormous piece of concrete that weighed about a ton fell on the 12th floor of the Maracana Campus. Miraculously no one was hurt because students were on break and no one was in the building. What was the response of the State government? A few days later they cut funding by 25%! It is an embarrassment, everything is upside down. In public schools, except on rare occasions, the same process occurs and still many place responsibility on the teacher for the crises in public education. In this context it is always worthwhile to question whether or not it is possible to effectively practice philosophy in school.

Outside of school it could be much easier to practice philosophy because the only thing that philosophy as experience requires is a group of people who take seriously the proposition to question themselves and reality. The examples of experiences outside of schools have shown exactly what some of the advantages of working outside the conditions inherent in school institutions are. But also, all of these adverse and unattended challenges within the school context could be a source of strength for philosophical experiences. Who knows? Things are always more complex than they seem.

Would you consider the basis of “Philosophy with Children” to be a new conception of philosophy?

I believe so. It depends on what we mean by “new”. Above all, what is worth noting is that philosophy with children is a radically different approach to philosophy than that which is practiced in universities. In a way your question carries a political dimension broadly understood. In effect, all philosophy affirms political thought and there are many ways to think of this political dimension. On my behalf, I defend a revolutionary, transformative, problamaziting politics of thought. In universities for various reasons in general, and with rare exceptions, a conservative
political form of thinking is defended. There exists a cult of reverence towards the philosophers of the past. I don’t have any problems with philosophy that practices dialogue with philosophers of the past.

On the contrary, I believe that the relations between philosophy and its history are complex and difficult. Without doubt, one who approaches philosophy in dialogue with philosophers and its tradition has the opportunity to give a distinct singular force to their thought. It would be foolish to deny that, but it is not certain that to be “familiar” with a lot of the history of philosophy guarantees anything if you have with this knowledge a relationship of ownership and assimilation, and not an open and living dialogue. In a way it all depends on the relation you establish with tradition. This is the fundamental question, not the opposition between the absence and the presence of the history of philosophy.

In many cases, as G. Deleuze clearly stated, in the name of philosophy one commits the greatest crime of thinking, and this is to impede the thinking of others. For example, it is often said in the philosophical institutions: “How are you going to study Socrates if you haven’t studied the pre-Socratics?” or “How are you going to read Hegel before you have studied Kant?” or still yet, “How is that you are going to concentrate on all of Plato’s works instead of dealing with line X of paragraph Y of section Z of dialogue V?” “How are you going to think with the philosophers before you are familiar with “A to Z” of all of their work?” (and after that be familiar with the commentaries on the work), and after that, the commentaries on the commentaries, in a way that it is infinitely postponed?

Thus, I believe that the question that is worth asking is not are we practicing a serious philosophy, whether tedious, fun, rigorous, or informal; the question that is worth considering is what do we want to do in a serious and enjoyable way with philosophy? Children are accustomed to take very seriously what they are doing when they are interested in what they are doing, more so when they play. University professors should pay more attention to what children do. With this in mind, I have said that it would be interesting if we could worry a bit less about the education of infancy and a bit more about an infancy of education. In the same way, it would be good if we could encounter an infancy of philosophy in place of worrying so much about the philosophy of infancy. One could then speak of an initiative, a new beginning, in sum, of a new philosophy.

“How much of child mentality is still present in adult mentality? How much of that interior life survives inside of us? How could we retrieve those “moments” of childhood that seem to be lost forever? What meaning might this have for adulthood?”

I’m not sure. This seems to be more a task for psychology or psychoanalysis than for philosophy. In a certain way, all experience survives and at the same time that it is recorded, it is re-invented. Your question made me remember something very beautiful that Plato says in the Symposium (207d-e): although we think that to be human is only to be a person from birth to death, “a new person is always being generated”. It’s interesting that what I translated as a “new person” is a word in Greek that means “child”, neos. Look how compelling this is: here there is a concept that human life is renewed moment to moment and Plato used a word to explain this novelty that also is used to refer to infancy! And as he said infancy is always born, we are not born only once, but we are constantly re-born. You might say that your question gave birth to many thoughts.

Is it truly possible to renounce what it means to be an adult in relation to children? Might it be that we project on the child the contents of our culture and unconscious, without guilt or remorse and we understand infancy with relation to that which we lack as adults?

I don’t believe that it is about renouncing anything. Nor could we do so. We are who we are. The problem is the excess projections we place on children. The last part of your question is intriguing because it reveals this anthropology of absence or terrible lacking in our culture, perhaps because of the influence of psychoanalysis. One of the questions that most interests me is how to think of infancy – and to be a whole human – beginning with the logic of presence and not absence. To put it in a few words, infancy is not only or, stated more clearly, is not above all, the absence of adulthood nor is it anything else: infancy is many other affirmations...
beyond the negation of adulthood; for this reason, I would like it if we could look at infancy itself. Certainly, I don’t think you could say much more, in general or abstract, about this question because in reality what there are infancies, affirmations, singularities, plurals and not “infancy”.

Your “return to infancy” position is close to that of Foucault’s and his disciples who try to “decolonize the child” and subtract the repressive apparatus that surrounds and compels one to obey the functional injunctions and orders of Power? Is this correct?

For various reasons I am not very certain about affirming a “return to infancy”. First, this is because it is returning to that which was, and infancy and infants were always present, occupying in their way available places. Second, I am not happy because it could give a place to a neo-romanticism that I don’t want to affirm. I don’t think of infancy as an ideal, perfect type of absolute kingdom, a purely subjective, uncontaminated essence. It is nothing of the sort. Infancy is present, plural and something of this world. There are many “infancies” of diverse forms, and what interests me is to allow these infancies to affirm their positive potential in the most open and free manner possible. Philosophy can help do this work in the fields of thought. On this position I want to clarify that I consider Foucault one of the most inspirational philosophers of our time for the constant, assertive way that he affirmed thinking as a way to confront the diverse repressive forces that one encounters in discourse and within institutions, something similar to an infant in philosophy. In this way, the idea of decolonizing the infant is very inspiring to me. Did you know that many colonizers of the Americas described the habitants of the “new” continents as infants? America itself was described as an infant along with its inhabitants. I give this example only to note the manner in our tradition that the colonizer’s vision of infancy and a vision of turning the other into an infant have deep roots. They are two versions of the same operation of thought that Foucault and, modestly I, have tried to fight against.

In your words: “Starting from a point of view in respect to the meaning of what it means to philosophize, is it possible for a child to practice philosophy in school?” You affirm that the image of the Zapatistas and a new politics could be a metaphor of a new education. You also suggest that it would be interesting if we could become a bit Zapatista. Present in many of your articles are references to Zapatista life and thought. Could you clarify for our readers what the Zapatistas represent to you and what they could represent to a Western reader?

In what is considered the “progressive” educational discourse of our time there is an important tension: on one side we have the classic affirmation of the political dimension of education or the “political task” of the educator; on the other side, there is a type of exhaustion of the current way of conceiving politics. What does it mean to say that education is a political act or that the educator is a political actor? We don’t know. The old idea of “transformer of society” or “maker of revolution” went through an irreversible crisis together with the idea of representative democracy. On one side, in a context of exclusion and extreme injustice, we aren’t willing to renounce politics. In this context, the Zapatistas present an innovative way to think of politics that is reproduced in other fields as well. The Zapatista movement affirms a militant figure different from the traditional who doesn’t speak for the “other”, who doesn’t demand obedience, is familiar with the value of not knowing, who expresses a constant sensitivity to listen to others. From another point of view, the Zapatista movement is a voice for those that don’t have a voice, those who have been submitted to economic, political, and cultural exclusion for centuries. And in this way the Zapatista movement is a voice of those without voice and is willing to listen to the words of others. I believe that, in both meanings, the Zapatista movement is a source of inspiration when you think of the education of infancy, or better, infancy for the education of the educators.

Is “Philosophy with Children” a new discipline or a new way of learning all of the disciplines? Perhaps we should inaugurate a “philosophization” of school and particularly of teaching?

Since we already cited Foucault, it would be inelegant to affirm for philosophy a space and above all a power to discipline. I’d like to take the opportunity of this last question to express my gratitude for the lucidity of all of the questions that have made me think. Of course I don’t deny that all of the schools we have in our time are disciplinary schools, and that they don’t confine philosophy to a disciplinary space. Perhaps philosophy doesn’t have an opportunity to be present in these schools. I believe that it is worth it to think of some conceptual distinctions, and to me what you said in the second part of your question is very suggestive. Philosophy is, beyond a discipline, a possibility of thinking, a form in which we connect with our thoughts. In this way philosophy is “transversal”, because it goes through what we think. One of the principal reasons to bring philosophy to schools is that it could open thinking to that which has not been thought, to that which appears to be unthinkable. Thus, I think that one of the principal challenges for “Philosophy with Children” is to obtain a “philosophization” of school, or through philosophy as experience perhaps we can begin to think of a school that hasn’t been thought of. As you can see, we will once again take a look at infancy, this time the infancy of the school. Who knows, it might not be bad to think in this way about the presence of philosophy in schools, helping them to find an infancy not thought of and unthinkable. Why not?

Perugia-Paris, December 2005
Students’ Meaning of Power
A challenge to Philosophy for Children as a Practice of Democratic Education

Mor Yorshansky

Abstract
A classroom Community of Inquiry depends on the deliberation skills of its members and their willingness to share ideas, time and power, despite conflicting interests, in the process of social inquiry. This vision of sharing power is not without challenges to both P4C and other theoretical movements within the discourse of democratic education. The kind of theorizing that is missing should explore students’ perceptions, judgment, decision making, agency and the like, through meaning making in particular contexts of democratic education. To explore such challenges, I designed a qualitative study to unfold the meanings of power that middle school students constructed within a learning environment, which was influenced by democratic education principles. In explaining their meanings of power in democratic education, the participants explicitly challenged the pre-set notion of power equality between teachers and students, and between the members of a CI, and also the foundational concept of power that is based on redistribution of time and ideas. Arendt’s view of power mirrors the students’ perspectives. This notion of power in education explains why the students supported the teachers’ ‘power’, and why students used their power to different degrees. It is the way Arendt “stylized the image of the Greek polis to the essence of politics as such” (Habermas, 1986, p.82; Arendt, 1986, p.62) that explains how power should support democratic education according to the youths’ view.

Philosophy for Children (P4C) has been identified with normative educational aspirations ranging from fostering children’s critical thinking skills to civic and moral education. However, it is generally identified with the discourse of democratic education, due to its emphasis on nurturing students’ communicative and deliberative capabilities in a Community of Inquiry (CI) (Burgh, 2010). Much of what has been written about P4C tends to emphasize the virtues of employing CI in the classroom, and “has been treated by many of its proponents as being invaluable for achieving desirable social and political ends through educating for democracy” (Burgh & Yorshansky, 20011, p.1).

Matthew Lipman, the founder of P4C, argued that philosophical inquiry could improve the relationship between deliberative judgments and democratic decision-making. Lipman was heavily influenced by pragmatist theory (Pardales & Girod, 2006), in particular by John Dewey, who characterized the purpose of schooling as that of a miniature democratic community in the radical sense of associated living, and placed ongoing inquiry, dialogue, self correction, communication, caring relationships and fallibility among the core values of communal democratic and associated living (Gregory, 2004a; Gregory, 2004b). These values advocated by Lipman, if practiced appropriately, could generate qualitatively different and more equal power relations among the members of a classroom community and influence the participants’ understandings and habits of sharing their common world with others in their communities inside and outside school (Gregory, 2004a).

This equation of the Community of Inquiry with a political process directs this discussion to the implication of power and its distribution among members of a classroom CI. A classroom Community of Inquiry depends on the deliberation skills of its members and their willingness to share ideas, time and power, despite conflicting interests, in the process of social inquiry. As Gregory sums it aptly: The ability to think critically and creatively about disputes involving one’s interests; the disposition to be curious about views different from one’s own, and to investigate them with the expectation that they may be useful in correcting or evolving one’s own views; the willingness to avoid coercion to advance one’s commitments – these are the collective habits that democratic communities take to be normative because they are the most likely means of turning conflict into growth. And education is the best means available for their cultivation (Gregory, 2004a).

This vision of sharing power is not without challenges, as I have written extensively elsewhere (Yorshansky, 2007). Furthermore, coupled with a democratic visualization of social change it also connects P4C to other theoretical movements within the discourse of democratic education.

A substantial body of theoretical and empirical literature discusses the effects of power in education...
(e.g., Anyon, 1981; Apple, 1993; Cummins, 2001, 2009; Fine, 1991; Giroux, 1992; Grinberg and Saavedra, 2000; Gutierrez, Rymes & Larson, 1995; Hayward, 2000; Hooks, 1994; Jencks et al., 1972; Ochoa and Pineda, 2008; Weis McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2006). This literature generally advocates for changing educational policy and practice in order to empower and liberate students, and to reconstruct the political configuration of classrooms, schools and democratic societies (e.g., Apple and Beane, 1995; Cummins, 2001, 2009; Fine, 2000, 2005; Giroux, 1992; Hooks, 1994; Meier, 1995, 2005; Shur, 1992). In this respect, abundant transformative practices have been recommended, among them those which like P4C are concerned with appreciating and fostering students’ contributions to social reconstruction through democratic education (Burgh, 2010; Burgh & Yorshansky, 2011). According to such various models of democratic education, participatory and inquiry-based practices can transform power relationships in education because through them students’ interests and agency can be expressed, provided for and met (e.g., Apple, 1993; Burgh, 2010; Ellsworth, 1999; Giroux, 1992; Hill, 2009; McFeat, 2005).

The Challenges of Power Perceptions to Democratic Education Practices

However, the treatment of the terms power and empowerment and their realization through transformative practices, such as those recommended by P4C, create some difficulties. First, studies and evidence show that empowering practices that were designed to distribute power more equally do not always equally empower students, and do not always lessen the conflicts that cause students’ power-related behaviors. (Delpit, 1988; Ellsworth, 1999; 1992; Gore, 1992; Lather, 1992; Lewis, 1992; Ochoa and Pineda, 2008; Orner, 1992; Powell, 1997; Reda, 2007; Sharp, 1993; Yorshansky, 2007). For example, the problem of equalizing power among students in a CI was articulated in Sharp’s (1993) description of a well functioning as opposed to blocked inquiry (pp. 338-340). In a well functioning CI participants move away from considering themselves and their accomplishments as all important, much like in Gregory’s description above. However, absence of care and trust often result in a blocked inquiry in which some members are emotionally overpowered. These emotions impede students from sharing their ideas with the community. In Sharp’s view this is a sign that something is very wrong (Sharp, 1993, pp. 339-340). Like other scholars, Sharp suggests that power is not a resource that can be casually redistributed, and that understanding power requires explaining its relationship to properties such as emotional states.

Second, democratic pedagogies may not be wholly democratic and may contribute to indoctrination (Freedman, 2007; Taylor & Robinson, 2009). Foundational, pre-set truth values that are attributed to sharing power equally between teachers and students, and which participants are expected to demonstrate while participating in a CI, may appear more democratic, participatory, or progressive, but may in fact be more effective forms of disciplinary power” (Anderson and Grinberg, 1998, p. 340). As sincere as reformers’ intentions are, they cannot escape the influence of their situated knowledge and position of power. Similarly, P4C may offer alternative discourses, but these will remain and further circulate discursive practices which some agents may choose to adopt and others resist.

I argue that these two problems are not isolated, and in fact relate to the way power is generally conceptualized in the discourse of democratic education. Particularly because conceptions of power in democratic education were underpinned by sociological or philosophical theory they overlook individual students’ contributions and meanings of using power in their local classroom communities. Despite their acknowledgments of students’ contributions to the political construction of classrooms through deliberation, domination, and related phenomena, P4C proponents, and scholars of democratic education alike, do not discuss students’ ability to use power as individual creative agents, and do not differentiate between students’ choices as they are rooted in individuals’ perceptions and contextual relationships.

This means that the treatment of the term power by democratic education and P4C is insufficient and requires further theorizing. The kind of theorizing that is missing and needed should explore students’ perceptions, judgment, agency and the like, through meaning making in particular contexts of democratic education. If students’ contributions and empowerment are what P4C practitioners seek to cultivate, these should not be pre-conceived through theoretical or pedagogical notions of students’ thinking but explored empirically with students and in their own voices.

A Qualitative Exploration of Students’ Meaning of Power in Democratic Education

To explore these challenges, I designed a study utilizing an interpretive and constructivist approach to qualitative research (Erickson, 1986; Merriam, 2009; Porter, 2007). By using this approach I tried to unfold the meanings of power that middle school, eight grade, students constructed within a learning environment, the Brown house (pseudonym), which was influenced by democratic education principles in a middle sized city in Northern New Jersey. In concentrating on meaning-making and on the interpretations of the participants (emic), and through the employment of appropriate methods and ethics, I focused on the students’ everyday world in school by asking them to examine their taken-for-granted experiences of power
problems that I identified above. They explicitly challenged
the pre-set notion of power equality between teachers
and students, and between the members of a CI, and
also the foundational concept of power that is based on
redistribution of time and ideas, as it is represented by
scholars of democratic education. The nine participants
explained how their view of power is instead contextualized
by their teachers’ professionalism and ethics, and by their
own personal interests. These perceptions carry important
implications for the theory of power in democratic education
practices such as P4C.

**Teachers’ Power – Not an Equal Member
but a Legitimate Authority Figure**

According to the participants, when power distribution
between teachers and students is considered, the ideal is
that more power should be concentrated in the hands of
the teachers. Following an institutional logic, as well as a
deeper political perception of governmentality, the students
described how adults should rule the classroom, have more
power, and students should listen to and learn from them.
However, the nine youth also related this ideal with practice,
namely in their perception, it is a conditional ideal; it could
only materialize when certain conditions hold.

The students’ use of various justifications suggests that
teachers’ ideal power depended on essences that are external
to its existence, on its legitimacy\(^1\) (Habermas, 1986; Lenski,
1986; Lukes, 1986). Teachers’ power seemed legitimate to
the students if it was used to allow governmentality, if the
teachers followed the organizational logic and fulfilled the
functions that schools were designed to fulfill. When these
indeed theoretical-philosophical conditions were met, and
only if that was the case, most of the students found little
or no problem in allowing teachers more authority, power
or governance\(^2\) in the classroom. But this legitimacy was
also dialectical; it was explored simultaneously with the
conditions that negated its materialization. All the students
in this study described how before giving power to them,
teachers must fulfill certain conditions that determine if
and how they are doing their job. Ideal teachers’ power
was conditional by many different ideas, and the students
were the ones assessing whether these conditions hold and
therefore, whether teachers could be granted their power in
each classroom anew.

Each participant according to their world views in
the classroom pointed to the salient circumstances which
conditioned the manifestation of teachers’ ideal power.
Based on their interests, different students argued for
different conditions. The conditions that the students
articulated represented a variety of world views. This
disparity means that the conditions for teachers’ power
could not have been generated in agreement between all the
students in the house. The students’ interests were based on

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**Table 1: Participants’ Pseudonyms, Gender, and Racial Social Identities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karyn</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lysandra</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delicia</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitara</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiden</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Bi-racial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Bi-racial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilary</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Students’ Meaning of Power in Democratic Education**

In explaining their meanings of power in democratic
education, the participants in this study addressed the

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**Yorhansky, Students’ Meaning of Power**
a multiplicity of ethical values and pedagogical preferences, which could not easily co-exist. These arguments and debates influenced the class atmosphere, its agenda, and interpersonal relationships in it as well. Since deliberation and participation are central values to democratic education and CI, I will demonstrate how the students’ interests, and derivative conditions for teachers’ legitimacy, varied in relation to these values.

Irene and Aiden strongly preferred a pedagogy in which students took a significant part by questioning and participating. Irene said: “I think class should be more group discussions and hearing what other people have to say” (Irene, Second interview, 05.01.2007, p.13). “I want to learn stuff but not be like a complete robot and just learn exactly what they tell me word for word, so that I learn how to think” (Irene, Second interview, 05.01.2007, p.17), and Aiden said: “Well some students don’t mind the ‘this is X and this is Y’, whereas students like myself and some of my friends ask ‘well how does this relate to everything else?’” (Aiden, First interview, 05.05.2007, p.3). These students generalized their participatory preferences into universally standing morals and from these generalizations drew conditions for teachers’ ethics, practice and power in the classroom.

However, Henry’s views were opposite both in relation to the issue of students’ participation and in regards to teachers’ professionalism. In Henry’s opinion, students should learn facts, get ready for tests while being led by the teachers’ knowledge, and not spend valuable time wondering about ‘one thing or another’. Participation and deliberation were not Henry’s interest but passing state tests was. “… It doesn’t get us closer to realizing the main point of the study …if we are trying to pass a test, chances are if the bone breaks does the marrow leak wouldn’t be on something” (Henry, First interview, 03.03.2007, p.9).

Throughout the interviews Henry expressed a strong identification with the teachers’ behaviors, and knowledge. “I couldn’t think of a single change I would like to make that wouldn’t have a bad consequence” (Henry, Second interview, 04.20.2007, p.31). Henry didn’t blame the teachers’ ethical inadequacy; Henry blamed the students for not being able to restrain themselves, for thinking that they know better than the teachers how to run a class well. “Although some teachers … aren’t very good at that, but that doesn’t mean that kids can do any better” (Henry, Second interview, 04.20.2007, p.13).

Between these two opposite preferences of participation there were other less extreme levels of identification. Max, for example, preferred a mixture of facts and questioning, teachers’ knowledge and students’ contributions. “…If you just learned from the teachers then you don’t have different influences like you don’t get influences from other peoples’ ideas. But if you just learn …from the kids then you don’t learn the actual facts as well” (Max, Second interview, 04.24.2007, p.2). In some cases Max thought students’ opinions must be sought, because it was necessary for the overall good; in other cases he thought he had overdone it and expressed self blame and remorse.

**Equal Distribution of Power – Not a Necessity Due to Students’ Diverse Interests**

Just as they challenged the democratic ideal of sharing teachers’ power, the participants also challenged the idea of equal participation or redistribution of time and ideas. In assessing the agenda in the classroom and the teachers’ conduct, students defended their own interests and sometimes, consequently, chose to enact what they called their power to different degrees. At the root of these behaviors lay students’ varied beliefs that they better, should, must deserve, or would rather not, argue and act on their interests. Each student, according to the depth of his or her commitment to particular world views, and based on evaluations of teachers’ conduct and classroom situations, interpreted the students’ role in setting the teachers’ power as it should be and in enacting students’ alternative power differently. Four students’ individual perceptions of agency and power emerged. Some students thought teachers should not be interrupted; others thought teachers should hardly be set straight. Some students thought they should take greater parts in the classroom decision making with teachers or even take over decision-making from the teachers.

**Being (almost) as one with the teachers.** While Henry identified with the teachers’ views about teaching and learning, he also thought that sometimes there were moments, short episodes, in which students’ intervention was needed. “I would think that the teacher has moments of incompetence where it would help if some students would explain something” (Henry, Second interview, 04.20.2007, p.14). However, Henry also articulated doubt in the students’ capacity to enact their power as they are supposed to, as the teachers expect them to, or as commonsense commands. Henry’s discourse was closer to the teachers’ than to the students’ and, due to this identification, Henry hardly found it necessary for students to enact power.

**Don’t cross the limits.** Delicia, Karyn, Lysandra and Nitara, thought that students’ use of their own power was necessary, but to a limited extent; one that will not clash with the teachers’ discourse, in their terms: the ‘limits’ of propriety, ‘to a point’. “Lysandra: I think that children should get decisions too, but only to like a certain limit. Like they shouldn’t go over the limit” (Lysandra, Second interview, 04.30.2007, p.6). Unlike Henry, who hardly found problems in the teachers’ conduct, these four students did. However they also had faith in the teachers’ ethical and proper use of their power. This view of students’ power was founded on a strong conviction that in the Brown house teachers’ ethics were trustworthy. These students believed
that if the students complained the teachers would willingly correct whatever needed to be corrected. “I think that if the teacher is wrong then students should go and tell them okay but you’re wrong” (Nitara, Second interview, 05.25.2007, p.11). Students’ power in this view was used to correct the teachers’ conduct slightly, when mistakes were made, during and after class.

Co-manage and refocus the limits. Max, Irene and Hilary had stronger interpretations of students’ role in decision making in the classroom and less trust in teachers’ ability to make ethical and pedagogical decisions by themselves. Their underlying conviction was that school should intrinsically reflect the students’ interests because “It’s not all about the teachers. I mean, school is set up for us, set up for the students so it is about the kids” (Max, Second interview, 04.24.2007, p.8). According to these participants, the importance of students within the school had crucial bearings on adults’ power. Unlike the previous group, these three students believed that adults were not supposed to set the limits for children by themselves, because children, at least sometimes, knew what is needed or justified better than teachers, as Irene’s words show:

…It’s difficult sometimes…because teachers sometimes think that they are the only, their opinion is the only one that matters….it’s important to show them that …they’re not always right (Irene, Second interview, 05.01.2007, p. 12).

Yeah I mean, it’s good for teachers to be influenced by students because it gives the teachers the students’ perspective …. Students influence how teachers teach by showing them that this is a good teaching style, this is not as effective (Max, Second interview, 04.24.2007, p.10).

Hilary, Max and Irene thought that when the teachers made wrong or unjustified decisions it was the students’ right, or responsibility, to argue for their interests and to enforce justice for students. Students deserved power in this perception of students’ power.

… If the teachers say something and the students doesn’t approve of it…. So like it’s basically just the students who … are in like control of the class. … Because it’s for students to learn, so if the student is like trying to like control the class, then I believed that that’s good (Hillary, Second interview, 05.21.2007, p.16).

Hilary, Irene and Max thought that students were supposed to rule together with teachers, have power together and run the class together.

A zero sum game: Challenge the limits, challenge the teacher. In Aiden’s view, the conditions for teachers’ ideal power could have (almost) never materialized. He was the only participant who did not even articulate the idea of teachers’ ideal power. The teachers’ discourse and Aiden’s did not coincided. In Aiden’s perspective students’ discourse, surpassed the teachers’ in importance. When the teachers’ discourse did not allow Aiden to question, participate and act as he thought was right, he fought the teachers actively. He showed them how he thought they should act at all costs. “It just kinda happens, that you know, I take a bad teacher and ... show them that they are a bad teacher” (Aiden, First interview, 05.05.2007, p.1).

All nine participants thought that they should use their power to some level based on their assessments of necessity and in relation to their interests. The farther apart the students’ and the teachers’ discourses, or world views, were, the greater the students may have thought action was required. The less the students believed teachers would be willing to correct their decisions and their ethics if they were asked, the greater the students may have thought action was required. On the other hand, if teachers’ work reflected the students’ interests and the conditions that they established to support their interests, then the conditions for ideal teachers’ power materialized; thus students’ action, agency or use of power became unnecessary. Consequently, students enacted or used their power differently and to different degrees in various classrooms according to how they identified or rejected each teacher’s legitimacy. They did not articulate the desire to enact their power equally.

A New Theory of Power

According to the students, the Brown house was a balanced and democratic educational community in which they could have used their power resources. Power in the research site was exchanged between students and teachers and between students themselves in various ways and to various degrees. These in turn were manifestations of chosen preferences and related to different world views about teaching and learning. Different preferences were held by individuals and groups whose behaviors and voices were used to support their conflicting interests against both teachers and students. Teachers and students struggled together in various ways in the political space of the Brown house.

As in Hobbs’ Leviathan, the student body, like citizens of a small state, willingly gave power to the sovereigns, but constantly examined whether the teacher’s sovereign rule justifies giving up their power and their freedom. When teachers respected the students’ interests and world views, meaning that they followed the underlying conditions of goodness that the students held, then it seemed legitimate for students to give up their power to a pedagogically acceptable sovereign. When however the teachers did not respect the students’ underlying convictions the students could not justify their teachers’ pedagogical sovereignty and as a result enacted their own power to different degrees and personal preferences. The difficulty was that at any given moment different students assessed the teachers’ legitimacy.
from different points of view and therefore made various and even opposite judgments about their legitimacy.

In this space, between different degrees of enacting power and lending it to authority figures lay the democratic process that the students consistently sustained. Here also, lies the bulk of my debate with democratic education scholars. Not distributive injustice of time and ideas occupied the students’ attention. As the students’ explained, and against what democratic practices prescribe, power was generated between the students, and with adults, on issues that constituted the group’s project’s boundaries. In this respect the Brown house’s democratic education sphere was also anti-foundational. Adults did not dictate values of equality, or social and political goals. The students, acting and speaking in their educational public realm, determined what the group’s mutual pursuit entails, including what constitutes justice and the quality of their education.

**Communicative Everyday Power in the Brown House –Group’s Power, Teachers’ Authority**

Arendt’s view of power mirrors the students’ perspectives. This notion of power in education explains why the students supported the teachers’ ‘power’, and why students used their power to different degrees. It is the way Arendt, as Habermas critiqued her work, heavily “stylized the image of the Greek polis to the essence of politics as such” (Habermas, 1986, p.82; Arendt, 1986, p.62) that explains how power should support democratic education according to the youths’ view. Arendt’s view of power was conceived, in part, as a response to the dominant political science theoretical confusion of terms, as Arendt explains:

> It is, I think, a rather sad reflection on the present state of political science that our terminology does not distinguish among such words as ‘power’, ‘strength’, ‘force’, ‘authority’ and finally ‘violence’ – all of which refer to distinct, different phenomena and would hardly exist unless they did…it is fair to presume that they refer to different properties, and their meaning should therefore be carefully assessed and examined (Arendt, 1986, p.63).

The students’ meanings of power must be examined according to this same logic, as should the ways in which democratic education scholars use power-related terms, which is what my conversation with this discourse compels. Accordingly, in the students’ definitions of power above, it is unlikely that a single term could be used to describe multiple properties. It is unlikely that teachers enjoy ideal power and at the same time students can enact their power against the ideal power. These seemingly contradicting descriptions of everyday power, must describe different phenomena as Arendt claimed.

Arendt’s action-based view suggests that the students’ descriptions correctly captured the essence of power when they described the teachers’ ideal position as being ‘in control’. In other words, the participants correctly interpreted the teachers’ legitimate and unquestioned authority as the result of their being empowered by students. However, in some of their descriptions, the students also had the terms confused, meaning that they used the term power, instead of separating their descriptions into the appropriate related terms. According to Arendt’s theory of power, the students, not the teachers, were the owners of power; their group generated it when they spoke and acted with the teachers in the public space of the class. It was the students’ support that was lent to the teachers to carry on with the group’s mutual overarching goal: A pedagogically good and justice based education. Students being the generators of power explain why, as long as the teachers fulfilled the conditions that the students expected, they enjoyed legitimacy, and conversely why, if the teachers did not act in such accord, legitimacy was withheld. The students were able to influence and change the way the teachers taught. Such changes reflected the group’s power and accordingly the house’s democratically ruling teachers mostly followed the students group’s wishes.

Since there was no real distance and no institutionalized procedures between the students and the teachers, the latter alternated between participating in the public sphere with the students as equal members, speaking and acting with the students, and being in authority, which then required the students’ unquestioned obedience. Power was generated between the students and with the teacher through speech, voice and action. But once the group reached some temporary choice or agreement, they consistently entrusted the students’ power with the teachers who could have used this legitimacy to sustain learning. It was the teachers’ position in relation to power that transitioned back and forth between generating it and ruling with it, not power in itself.

**A Democratic Sphere of Education**

As I have argued, the realization of students’ world views in collective power depended on the students and the teachers, on the whole group. Communication in the house was established around the Brown house’s agenda: The boundaries that symbolized the edges of the groups’ mutual goal to receive quality and justice-based education. Interests, claims or ideas that supported good teaching and learning were admitted onto the agenda, as Karyn explained, “As long as it relates to what we’re talking about…”(Karyn, Second interview, 05.02.2007, p. 17), and attempts to change or dominate the agenda were rejected. These boundaries were the moving force of the house agenda, and the students as a group accepted and rejected ideas while maintaining similar limits towards teachers’ and students’ interests alike.

In following the boundaries, or the limits, the students were the guardians of the collective well being, as they saw it. Through communication the students established
new realities in the classroom and struggled to correct what their deep beliefs signified went wrong. The agenda’s limits, which could be conceptualized also as a broadly pluralistic dominant discourse, protected the group’s power against decay into force, domination and violence. Thus, the agenda, as it manifested in power that was generated between the students, and then in the teachers’ authority, enjoyed the students’ legitimacy as long as it functioned properly and in accord with the students’ wishes as a whole.

In this respect, the last open problem that I addressed, namely, why students used power to different degrees, is also answered by Arendt’s approach. Students who understood the relationship between voice and power, who represented their world views, and were willing to face their peers and expose their natality in the public, were those who used their power more, as Max put it: “Kids that are active in the class, and constantly are always in class discussions may be more powerful in the class” (Max, Third interview, 05.13.2007, pp. 10-11). It was the demonstration and disclosure of “human natality: the birth of every individual [which] means the possibility….to seize the initiative and to be unexpected” (Habermas, 1986, p.78) that filled the life-world of the class with praxis, with the web of human relationships (p.79), and which generated group power. Not all the students in the Brown house understood this importance of voice and similarly they were not all willing to risk being exposed. The students who ‘just had to be heard’, or dominated the agenda in Gregory’s terminology, were exactly the students who knew how speech and action contribute to justice and communal existence; they were the ones who understood power.

That was the cycle of everyday power in the Brown house. It was ever-changing, spontaneous, based on its members’ world views and interests, communicative and hence more radically democratic. This communicative and deliberative nature together with its pluralistic praxis justifies calling the Brown house a democracy. It got the Brown house closer to the Greek form of public deliberation as Habermas (1986) claimed is how Arendt stylized the essence of politics, and evolved from the students’ own voices and educational discourses. The Brown house was a vibrant deliberative sphere of youth and adults struggling together. It was not a perfect democratic sphere, but it was full of good intentions and for that the Brown house teachers enjoyed the legitimacy of the students, despite their reservations and conditions.

Based on this philosophically applied study, similar studies within P4C and other democratic educational contexts could be conducted. If students’ meanings of power in this study are iterated, I suggest that democratic pedagogies such as P4C should emphasize everyday power, because, as I showed, the students’ discourses that were chosen in freedom, first and foremost, derive from the condition of natality (Burgh & Yorshansky, 2011). Arendt’s conception of power suggests that individual differences between students’ ability to understand and enact power matter. Students’ own perceptions of good education, which they conceive as free agents and represent in their own voices, should be considered within democratic education practices, if we do not wish to fall into the trap of theorizing power by simplistic notions of distribution regardless of our best intentions. If we consider power as it manifested in democratic praxis in the Brown house, students could more easily argue for pluralism and justice based on their ways of knowing. However, due to their condition of natality, those who understand power will use their voice whether we welcome it or not.

Endnotes

1 Ideal power is thus legitimate power and I will use these two terms synonymously.
2 Different concepts that are related to power are used as synonyms, according to the students’ perceptions. The participants did not define the differences between, for example, power, authority, control, governmentality and others.
3 I made some generalizations in grouping the students’ views of power based on the similarities in the students’ perspectives
4 As a foundation while the students agreed that power is available to students in the house they also agreed that the teachers in fact were the most powerful in the classroom. Seven students made this explicit claim. Teachers’ having the most power was not a problem according the participants but a choice.

References

Using Rorty to Consider the Future of P4C

Darren Garside

The Problem with Rorty, Philosophy for Children and Instrumentalism

Richard Rorty has been at best a marginal figure in the considerations of philosophy for children yet in this last edition of ‘Thinking’ I would like to argue for a reading of Rorty that offers hope for the future of P4C. I argue that Rorty’s distinctions between public/private, types of common sense, and forms of education can be used to create a framework for understanding where P4C might direct its energies. In doing so I also provide a partial rebuttal of Biesta’s concern about instrumentalism and P4C. I conclude with a brief examination of how Rorty relates to new currents of thought in pragmatism, specifically Koopman’s transitionalism, and indicate how P4C should in certain contexts be embraced as a meliorist educational activity.

Early engagements with Rorty tended to be cautious (Turgeon, 1998) or hostile (Schleifer, 1995). He is often characterized as a relativist or anti-universalist but this is a criticism for which Rorty rarely had time and is not a central concern of this paper. Relativism as a charge must be seen as a move within epistemology that attempts to counter either subjectivism, that is knowledge as relative to the individual subject, or linguistic relativity, knowledge as relative to language use. The influential position found in Blake et al. (1998), that sets out to reclaim useful theorizing as a legitimate enterprise of philosophy of education, describe such positions as ‘naive relativism’ in that they presuppose the sovereign subject to be the foundational source of meaning. Yet given the post-structuralist stance of Rorty, later commentators and this paper, the inverse relation obtains and intersubjectivity is regarded as prior to subjectivity. Rorty regards truth as deriving from practices of justification. In western philosophy the subject has become isolated from the intersubjective milieu that gives rise to its expression and hence is over-regarded as the foundation of meaning. Thus we can say that epistemological relativism is for Rorty merely an emergent property deriving from subjectivist thinking.

Central to my position in this paper is a premise that P4C needs to acknowledge its own intersubjective roots in Dewey’s historicism. It follows from this that we must be careful about the abstraction of the community of inquiry as a method from the linguistic contexts within which such enquiries take place. One reason then for advocating a Rortyean perspective on P4C is because Rorty sees truths as expressible only in language-games. But language-games do not shift entirely as a result of the truths said within them but through social practices partially constituted by them.

Rorty’s significance as a philosopher derives from offering a deconstruction of analytic philosophy and constructing ways for philosophy to be historicist and naturalist without becoming irrelevant. Rorty accepted the analysts’ most devastating charge of relativism, side-stepped it and showed us how, in Wittgenstein’s sense, we might go on with philosophy, education and politics as edifying activities. In P4C this makes possible arguments such as Weber’s, who relates Rorty to the purposive cultivation of human rights in communities of inquiry (Weber, 2008). Drawing on Rorty’s anti-essentialism, Weber emphasizes the power we have to create rather than merely know ourselves. Hence Rorty’s distinction between systematic and edifying philosophy, as the difference between professional scholastic philosophy and philosophy as a therapeutic, useful endeavor in building one’s life-project, justifies our understanding of communities of enquiry being sites for the creation of meaning and asking of new questions. They are spaces where emotional and creative methods of thinking are valued in addition to the purely rationalist concerns of systematic philosophy.
Adopting a Rortyean perspective to consider how to characterize P4C and its future directions entails grappling with the problem of instrumentality. Vansieleghem (2005) and Biesta (2011) raise questions about instrumentalist mentalities when P4C is considered purely as a means to the end of certain forms of subjectivity. Drawing on Arendt’s concept of natality, Biesta (2006) is concerned about post-humanist modes of education that do not foreclose on the possibilities of self-disclosure. As a species humans have found culture to be a somewhat useful way of passing on adaptations to the world, in the form of understandings. One function of education is this passing on of cultural understanding from generation to generation. For those concerned with instrumentalism the danger derives from passing on an understanding that is no longer useful and which constrains possibilities rather than affords new ones. This is the criticism leveled against education as socialization. The appeal of Dewey and P4C partly derives from challenging educational instrumentalism in the form of transmission of received wisdom by rejecting what Dewey termed the spectator theory of knowledge. Yet purposefully pursuing forms of education whose subject is the critical, caring, creative and collaborative enquirer might also be regarded as instrumentalist. Choosing and promoting certain ways of inquiring always entails excluding others by those acts of discrimination.

What follows is my attempt to use some of Rorty’s categories to differentiate between instrumentalist and purposive education. I treat Rorty’s anti-essentialism as a strength that makes us consider distinctions between public and private spheres. When we distinguish between public/private then what we may hope for through enquiry starts to vary and this maps onto the distinction between forms of common-sense (metaphysical, Socratic and ironist) identified by Rorty. When this is related to forms of schooling we have a system of relations that can encompass purposiveness without necessarily tending to instrumentalism.

**Rorty’s relevance for P4C**

My reading of Rorty for this paper derives from Contingency, Irony, Solidarity (CIS) and some later papers about the future for philosophy (Rorty, 1989, 2007a,c). I identify three concepts used by Rorty with the intention of showing in the next section how these might be used to provide a conceptual framework for understanding and differentiating between purposes that might be espoused or aspired to by those engaging in P4C.

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**Modes of inquiry**

In chapter 4 of CIS Rorty (pp.73-4) contrasts common sense with irony. An ironist is both historicist and nominalist in their thinking. By this Rorty is emphasizing how nothing can be seen to have an intrinsic nature or an essence. How things are perceived depends entirely on how reference is made in language-games or as he terms them ‘final vocabularies’. Final vocabularies are systems of language that are circular in justification in that inquiring deeply enough into a vocabulary leads to a position where further doubts cannot be met by ‘noncircular argumentative recourse’ but only by passivity or force. Rorty defines ironist and common sense in terms of these final vocabularies. Commonsensical attitudes take for granted the statements made according to the terms of their final vocabulary and use these terms to understand and judge the actions and beliefs of others. On the other hand an ironist

- has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses;
- realizes that argument within a final vocabulary cannot underwrite or dissolve doubt;
- does not believe her final vocabulary is closer to reality than others.

An intermediate step between these two positions is to become a ‘metaphysician’. This is where conversation ‘goes Socratic’ trying to go beyond instances of language use to generalize and offer definitions of the essence of x. However there is a limit to this process since for the ironist “there is nothing beyond vocabularies which serves as a criterion of choice between them” (p.80). This is where the pragmatism of Rorty is most apparent since our vocabularies cannot be adjudicated against some ‘reality’ that ultimately decides the truth of our representations. Instead vocabularies are sustained by justification, as ways of seeing the world that are helpful and useful. For Rorty justification is made by reference to cruelty and its reduction in the world but he also holds this norm contingently so that while useful to him now, as late-modern liberal, there is no way he can be confident that the reduction of cruelty will always justify ways of understanding and acting in every time and space.

If we accept Rorty’s pragmatism then there are some implications for i) how we ‘see’ P4C and ii) what we might hope for in the future. First we would come to realize that questions of the form “What ‘is’ P4C?” are not necessarily helpful and philosophically interesting from a pragmatist perspective. They presuppose a metaphysical understanding of something that should not be understood metaphorically but metaphorically. Rorty explicitly states in CIS that shifts between vocabularies do not occur because of claims to truth but because of new vocabularies, new metaphors become available to use and these metaphors are adopted not because of their ‘truth’ but because of their usefulness to us. Therefore what we might hope for in the future for P4C depends on the stories and metaphors we can tell about P4C and how it helps us understand what we might do differently in educational contexts. This is the radical implication of
Rorty’s work: that P4C, despite the attractions of working Socratically, is not an end in itself but another tool not only available to us for furthering education ends but also the tool that is more appropriate than most for furthering and questioning educational ends.

I pause here to note that Rorty’s categories of unironic commonsense, Socratic metaphysics, and liberal irony offer an interesting progression by which to locate aspirations for P4C. It would seem contentious to claim that P4C, in any of its guises, wishes to move away from unironic commonsense to Socratic metaphysics. Yet we may ask what value may be obtained from an awareness of liberal irony and wonder whether such a position is open to the community of inquiry such that we may be forced to accept that there are limits to which a CoI may aspire. It is clear that Rorty believes in an ideal liberal society where nonintellectuals would be commonsensically nominalist and historicist; as contingent through and through (p.87). This does not mean that everyone should be like intellectuals, who are by definition ironists, since Rorty cannot see a way of claiming an ironist public rhetoric. This is why Rorty goes on to make a distinction between private irony and public hope. This is a radical position since by rejecting the Kantian position of the possibility of *a priori* foundations that grounds our knowledge of the world, Rorty arrives at a position with two tenets: that constraints only come from our fellow human beings and that it is a mistake to try to synthesize public justice and private interests.

**Public/Private**

Irony’s power derives from an “awareness of the power of redescription but most people do not want to be redescribed. They want to be taken on their own terms” (Rorty, 1989, p.89). In this quote Rorty recognizes the potential cruelty made possible by ironist claims. This is not an abstract dilemma since parents can face a moral quandary when introducing, or not, their child to the world of tooth-fairies and Santa Claus on one level and the parents’ religious beliefs at another. It is no simple matter, and often a contingent one when one explores with a child what, when and how to believe and how and what role irony may play in this process. Rorty deals with this by distinguishing ‘between redescription for private and for public purposes’ (p.91). The ironist’s final vocabulary is private and is at hand to understand not just themselves but the ‘actual and possible humiliation of the people who use [...] alternative final vocabularies.’ (p.92). In contrast to liberal metaphysics, the attempt to get at the truth behind appearances, the liberal ironist recognizes the potential power for rich description of theology, science and philosophy when treated as forms of literary genre. They cannot compel us with grand narratives to a form of social solidarity where we are bound together by a common form of understanding. Instead solidarity, which is Rorty’s preferred mode of association and action in the public realm, ‘has to be constructed out of little pieces, rather than found already waiting’ (p.94). Hence for Rorty philosophy in an ironist culture is increasingly a private act and is of decreasing use for public purposes.

**Forms of education**

Rorty’s position on the functions of education were expressed in *Education: Socialization and Individuation* (Rorty, 1989/1999) and reaffirmed in Rorty (1990). He is clear that lower education concerns itself with socialization whilst higher education offers the possibility of individuation. To be clearer still, what Rorty means by socialization is enculturation, knowledge-based education, in other words education for ‘truth’. By individuation is meant education for freedom and this can only come after socialization (Rorty, 1989/1999, p.118). I suggest that what is of great interest to those interested in the Deweyan roots of philosophy for children is how Rorty’s cleavage of the
boundary between lower and higher education is rooted in a reading of Dewey’s pragmatist philosophy of truth in relation to democracy. Rorty reads Dewey in order to forgive him of his lack of prescience in the direction that schooling in America has taken. He mentions the diminishment of teachers’ status in society, the relationship between parents’ real estate and the ability to purchase qualitatively different educations, and the rise of fantasies peddled by the mass-media that are consumed by children consequently distorting their moral compass. Rorty tries to reclaim the Dewey that saw democratic sovereignty inhering to the individual and whose educational socialization recognized and celebrated children being ‘heirs to a tradition of increasing liberty and rising hope’ (p.121).

Gregory (2011, p.215n42) contests the two forms by noting the claims of Biesta (2010) in that for any form of schooling there are three functions simultaneously at work rather than Rorty’s two. Socialization and individualization are two of the functions and are not particularly different from Rorty’s use of the terms but there is a third function that Biesta refers to as ‘qualification’. Loosely we might map socialization to the idea of liberal education and the induction into worthwhile conversations in an Oakeshottian sense. Qualification refers to the function of education that recognizes forms of summative assessment in the form of examination results and forms of know-how understanding. It is arguable that Rorty is being overly reductive by correlating lower and higher education as forms of schooling solely to one or other of these educative functions. However this is understandable when we realize that he is concerned to promote the Deweyan point that “growth is indeed the only end that democratic higher education can serve and also to remind oneself that the direction of growth is unpredictable” (p.125). Thus Rorty wants to get away from a sterile conflict between left and right, contested in the institutions of education, and return to a more purposive and explicitly liberal agenda more concerned with ‘new forms of human freedom, taking liberties never taken before’ (p.126).

Ways forward for P4C

Reviewing instrumentalism

Before using Rorty’s categories in order to think about P4C I wish to dwell on recent and serious charges against P4C. Earlier I outlined the charge of subtle instrumentalism, smuggling in conceptions of personhood that limit natality, and this brings into relief one of the central questions facing P4C from a Rortyean perspective: how can we re-describe what P4C is good for? In order to offer this description I find it necessary to draw on Stable’s reading of the essentially contested concept of child at the heart of philosophical discourse. Stables (2008) takes an approach that cross-references common-language conceptions of ‘child’ with historical conceptions of child. Thus a new historical conception of child is now available to us, that of the post-modern child. The post-modern child is marked by an ambivalence and uncertainty in late modernity of the boundaries between adult and children. If we are no longer certain of adult identities then this also renders uncertain our ascription of children’s identities. This is why late capitalism is able to commodify and sexualize children’s life worlds by selling them Playboy pencil cases and pole-dancing kits yet also over-protect and over-regulate this world so that more and more leisure time and the activities within institutional spaces are increasingly regulated. Bauman (2000) helps us understand this when he writes of liquid modernity where vertical references to bodies of knowledge and/or institutions reflecting the values embedded in these discourses are dissolved (all that is solid melts into air). Instead our comparisons are horizontal; our standards of reference are horizontal and we worship celebrity rather than desire initiation into what Oakeshott termed the great conversations of humankind. The category of the post-modern child recognizes the biological aspect of child 1 but child 2 and 3 are no longer distinct. The extension of rights to children means that child 2 is no longer a distinguishing marker, nor does child 3 offer a distinctive way of marking difference let alone the ambivalence about conceptions of adulthood.

I take from Stables the insight that the meaning of ‘children’ or ‘this child’ is radically open and unresolved. This poses a question for philosophy for and with children. In addition I take from Biesta’s work an identification of functions of schooling, the desirability of non-instrumentalist approaches to education and a commitment to a post-humanism that favorably modifies Rorty’s over-simplified position on education forms. Rejecting Rorty’s simple dichotomy, from a non-instrumentalist stance we can also see a reinforcement of Rorty’s commitment to reducing cruelty in liberal life as lived. Thus I argue that Biesta’s post-humanism is in sympathy with Rorty’s rejection of metaphysical and theological accounts of human subjectivity. From Stables, I have read ‘child’ as a concept whose meaning is eternally deferred and whose meaning is derived from its afforded positions in a configured series of relationships.

The meaning of child is bound up in how we have used child and what uses we might have for the idea of child when working with those we regard as children as now. Stables’ conclusion is that our understanding of child has moved away from social reproduction to social renewal but this challenges Rorty’s simple equation of lower education to socialization/knowledge (social reproduction) and higher education as educating the child for individuation/freedom (social renewal). Most interesting of course is
that the notion of child, particularly as novice, has now invaded the adult life-world so that ‘children’ are now colonizing higher education institutions but we can also attribute ‘adult’ capabilities to child spaces. I use Biesta and Stables to qualify Rorty rather than seeing them as directly undermining. Like Rorty, neither author is particularly exercised by relativism, like Rorty both authors are concerned with offering redescriptions, in Biesta’s case to emphasize anew the possibilities of natality inhering in the adult child relationship and in Stables the desire to move away from suffocating essentialism, from the Aristotelian ideas that have denied possibilities to children for the last two millennia.

**Transitionalism**

The final influence I wish to draw upon comes in the form of a brief sketch of a new line of thinking in pragmatism, one that claims to draw on the latent theme of transition, in order to show how Rorty’s work can be seen as part of a broader picture of pragmatist philosophy as a process of melioration; a form of social hope. Koopman (2009, pp.1-7) argues that pragmatist philosophy inevitably ‘takes time and is involved in history’. Focusing on temporality and historicity leads to what he calls a defining feature of a new, third wave of pragmatism, called transitionalism. Charting the growth and decline of pragmatism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he argues that the revival of pragmatism took two distinct lines. One line traces its lineage to James, Dewey and Peirce whilst the other owes its roots to Rorty, Putnam and Brandom and neither line has had constructive dialogue but instead waged territory wars about whether Rorty, for example, is or is not an heir to Dewey. These traditions have had different foci, one on experience and the other on language but for Koopman (p.5) there are common themes.

One such theme is the idea of philosophy as meliorist cultural criticism. By this Koopman means pragmatism regarding as its purpose ‘improving this situation in which we find ourselves.’ in does so by ‘cultivating the meliorating potential of transition’. Where transitionalism emphasizes (pp.6-7) ‘passing from one situation to the next’ and meliorism is ‘rendering these transitions into reconstructions, or processes of improvement, progress and growth’, so pragmatism becomes ‘reconstructing the cultural presents in which we find ourselves.’ I offer this exegesis of Koopman in order to illustrate how an emphasis on the process of philosophizing with the express purpose of meliorism need not be instrumentalist. The historicist and temporal condition of transition means that a philosophical community of inquiry that is minded to perceive itself in these terms will always be holding its own ends in contingent relation to the perception of situation holding here and now. I read Rorty’s emphasis on social hope to be a meliorist expression but note that the public/private distinction might be held to apply not solely to private individuals and public space but to private intersubjective communities of inquiry and public spaces.

**Conclusion**

I have come now to a point where I attempt to synthesize Rorty’s categories, as qualified by Biesta, in an attempt to re-describe the transitionalist purposes that we may hope for from P4C. What follows is a plurality of P4Cs, somewhat reflecting contemporary developments and anticipating some others.

Outside of P4C the teaching of systematic philosophy will of course continue. Whitehead’s canon of dead white philosophers offering a series of footnotes to Plato is to be understood, particularly in its analytic form, as being located in the public sphere, in higher education, aspiring to Socratic metaphysics and quite possibly taught or accessed through non-Socratic pedagogies. Occasional attempts may be made to bring the canon into lower education such as through the International Baccalaureate for example but this mode of teaching is not the concern of P4C.

However it may be that Socratic pedagogies are employed and that students are invited to dwell upon philosophical matters in communities of inquiry. Here we may start to value philosophy with children as a Socratic metaphysics which begins in public, lower educational spaces. We might hope that Socratic thinking becomes internalized through participating in communities of inquiry and becomes part of a private repertoire of fashioning a way in the world. This way of philosophizing may also start to enter into higher education. In an earlier reference Weber mentions her work with adults and on an anecdotal basis it is possible for this author to attest to an awareness of growing practice in higher education institutions. It should be noted that a variety of P4C movements belong to this space. Communities of inquiry mediate thinking in a Vygotskian sense between public and private philosophizing. Some communities of inquiry may be more committed to truth rather than explicit meliorism (e.g. Socratic Dialogue, CoPI) and some may be more committed to pragmatically derived understanding (e.g. IAPC P4C).

The role of the facilitator in such communities is an interesting one. I question whether a facilitator can be ‘good’ without being a Rortyean liberal ironist. The original purposes of a facilitator in beginning a community of inquiry are undoubtedly important yet this may also provide an unconscious limit to the growth of a community. The liberal ironist has at hand for private therapeutic purposes a range of possibilities of becoming qua individual life-course. I am not so sure that such ranges of possibilities, notwithstanding Kennedy’s contributions (op. cit) are equally at hand for facilitation. However, Koopman’s work on transitionalism
offers a new space of justifications for considering the middle ground between philosophy as private therapy and action in public spaces. In terms of this paper the central most important lacuna that emerges from this analysis are accounts of P4C that go beyond inhabiting the spaces afforded to elenchic enquiry in modern education systems. Given the critique of managerialism (Ball, 1990; Green, 2011) and globalized homogeneity of education (Robertson, 2012) on educational systems and practices, P4C as a range of practices need to engage with political questions about purposes of education. Individual communities need a language of political engagement for their specific purposes, practices of P4C should help provide this and Koopman’s transitionalism as part of a third wave of pragmatism may yet provide the tools.

So how might this impact on the future of P4C? Firstly it removes any need to make metaphysical inquiries into what P4C is. As long as we retain a commitment to pragmatism then we can see P4C as one of many justificatory practices, one with a long history but one not necessarily bound to its past since conditions have changed. Recognizing the place that we are in means that P4C need not remain a reactive movement but can be purposive without being instrumentalist. It can hold open radical possibilities of being different not only at a private individual level but in public spaces. In doing so the Rortyean aspiration to a nominalist and historicist common-sense with all but in public spaces. In terms of this paper the central middle ground between philosophy as private therapy and action in public spaces. In doing so the Rortyean aspiration to a nominalist and historicist common-sense with all but in public spaces. In terms of this paper the central

Endnotes

1 See Biesta (1994) for a useful discussion of the priority of the intersubjective over the subjective in the context of Dewey’s philosophy.

2 The conversation between Brandom and Rorty develops this point (Brandom and Rorty, 2010). Brandom summarizes Rorty’s position in Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, as “Normative relations are exclusively intravocabulary. Extravocabulary relations are exclusively causal. Representation purports to be both normative and relations between representings in a vocabulary and representeds outside of that vocabulary.” (p.160). The idea that Rorty is a linguistic idealist is easily dismissed with reference to a paper from 1981 likening nineteenth century idealism to twentieth century ‘textualism’. Brandom is unambiguous in understanding Rorty when he states that Rorty never questions the “existence of a world of causally interacting things that existed before there were vocabularies, that was not in any sense constituted by our vocabulary—mongering and that goes its way in large part independently of our discursive activity [. . .].”(p.162).

At this point Brandom makes clear his divergence from Rorty’s argument. Drawing on an act-object distinction operating on the word ‘claim’, he advocates we distinguish between the act of claiming and what is claimed. This has the implication that we ought not say that true claimables cannot be spoken of outside of vocabularies that constitute claims. This is justified by an argument manipulating the sentential operators and the term ‘true’. However Rorty rebuts this argument in his ‘Reply’. Using pragmatic grounds he argues that Brandom’s commitment to rescuing true claimables must imply a serious use or need for them. However the only use for notions such as these is the belief that such notions as these facilitates ‘cutting reality at joints which are not relative to vocabularies which are Nature’s Own, owing nothing to the human needs and interests which led us to dream up [this] talk. Without this cutting-at-joints imagery, nobody would ever have suggested that true beliefs were accurate representations of reality” (p.185).

3 Elaboration upon the possibilities afforded by considering P4C as concerned with more than systematic philosophy is most notably found in Kennedy (1998, 1999, 2006).

4 Another recent example is Murris (2012) who drew upon Rorty’s anti-essentialism and historicism in her recent reflections on pedagogy.

5 Here I speak in only general terms about ‘understanding’ rather than explore a critical theory perspective of whose understandings and how are interests vested in such understandings and structures of recognition.

6 As a way of thinking about desirable ends of P4C, Bramall (2011) has attempted to draw on the neo-Aristotelian philosophy of Alastair MacIntyre to distinguish between internal and external goods of a practice. P4C is often ‘sold’ on the basis of external goods such as cognitive score improvement but is valued by its practitioners on the basis of its internal goods such as questioning and responding dialogically.

7 As a reviewer of this paper kindly noted: “All this doesn’t take away the relevance of asking what p4c is, it just shows a different way of answering the question”.

8 He notes three contemporary usages of child: child one as a child of parents; child two is a comparative notion of both less-than-adult but also more-than-adult with both senses often accompanied by ‘baggage’; and a less-intuitive idea of child three as a novice at the beginning of a practice. These categories are not mutually exhaustive since varying combinations and emphases can be discerned in the five historical outlooks. Aristotelian notions of child positively identify with child one, child two, are ambivalent about child three and have positive conceptions of adult as not child. We can apply similar analyses to the puritan child, enlightenment child and romantic child.

9 An example from my own experience but in the public domain (and readers no doubt will have their own examples) comes from an observational visit to Gallions Reach School in East London. P4C as practiced in the classroom had spread beyond the school boundaries to include regular work with parents that was having a transformative impact (Garside, 2013, pp.223-225).

10 McCall (2009, Ch.6) has offered one of the more incisive analyses discriminating between forms of P4C on ontological and epistemological grounds.
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Is There Any Future for P4C in Australia?

Dr Janette Poulton

Abstract

The future of Philosophy for Children depends upon at least two factors: shared values with the educational policies of the society in question, and valid and user-friendly tools for monitoring growth in this area. As teachers internalise the requirements of the Victorian Education system policy statements, the use of the pedagogy of the Community of Inquiry, P4C is being recognised as a particularly powerful tool for delivering the outcomes. In addition, appropriate tools for curriculum development, and for the assessment and monitoring of student progress (as critical, creative and caring thinkers) are being developed and circulated within the Department of Education. Thus we proceed with optimism and confidence!

The future of the Philosophy for Children program is dependent on certain cultural and social conditions. The claim I make herein is that the educational ethos in the state of Victoria, Austria provides a suitable context for the growth of such classroom pedagogies and practices.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the discipline of philosophy was beginning to flourish in the Australian public school education system. This followed an international trend of heightened interest in philosophy and what it offered young people who were growing up in a complex, bewildering and ever changing global society. It was a commonplace that accelerated change brings with it early obsolescence of solutions, and increasing opportunity for creative problem solving. This growth of interest in critical and creative thinking was evidenced by the numbers of international conferences, workshops, journals and publications organised by philosophy associations and educational sectors in Australasia, Canada, USA, UK, South America and Europe.

The first study of teaching philosophy throughout the world was conducted by UNESCO and published in 1953. The study emphasized “the role of philosophy in becoming aware of the fundamental problems of science and culture and in the emergence of well-argued reflection on the future of the human condition.” The Executive Board of UNESCO adopted UNESCO’s Intersectoral Strategy on Philosophy in April 2005, and in 2007 published a report on the state of the teaching of philosophy in the world titled ‘Philosophy: a school of freedom’. (UNESCO, 2007, p.ix)

Within this global context, the educational systems in Australia, and in particular the state of Victoria, could be seen to be taking a leading role in teacher education through organised conferences, professional development programs and networks focussing on philosophical curricula and pedagogies, delivered both within and outside the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DE&T).

Many teachers, given the opportunity, were finding teaching philosophy in the classroom to be an exciting and rewarding experience. This could be seen in numerous informal reports and articles published by teaching associations, such as the Victorian Association for Philosophy in Schools (VAPS), Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA) and International Council for Philosophical Inquiry with Children (ICPIC). These publications reflected the ways teachers had learned from and about children’s worldviews and their strategies for making sense of their lives through engaging in philosophical dialogue with their peers.

However teaching philosophy involved more than creating opportunities for such valued experiences as the expression of opinion and the sharing and debating of ideas. Stimulating experiences may create an interest in a subject area, however they do not necessarily promote intellectual growth. And, it was intellectual growth that was assumed to be a significant objective of an educational process such as practised by philosophers. The question of whether philosophical growth in particular was achievable through interventions could only be properly researched once clear indicators of philosophical growth were articulated and agreed upon. Thus the question of how to clearly identify...
and articulate philosophical growth became paramount.

This claim rekindled age-old reservations about the relevance and value of philosophy for children, particularly from some university philosophy departments. Responses included notions that philosophy was too intellectually complex, too emotionally unsettling, too politically disruptive, or too luxurious or trivial (in the light of perceived essential learning) for school children. These doubts were actively countered with rebuttals based in the idea that the teaching of philosophy supported current educational department commitments to the development of young Australians as autonomous thinkers and responsible citizens, as prescribed in documents such as the Victorian Essential Learnings (VELS, 2005), the Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT, 2006) (See Appendix 1.1) and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008). (See Appendix 1.2)

Hence there was a clear need to distinguish anecdotal and inspired claims about children’s philosophical achievements from observable and valid indicators of philosophical development. Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning in the standard curriculum, but where philosophy in the classroom is concerned, there was much confusion about models and procedures of assessment. Due to the dialogical and heuristic nature of philosophic inquiry, there were many doubts about the possibility of identifying valid indicators and developmental pathways. Although many indicators of philosophical behaviour had been proposed and defended from time to time, there had been no substantial research to identify possible pathways in philosophical development.

One practising teacher, Moriyon, responded to this lack of confidence in successful assessment of philosophical development thus:

We know that evaluation is not easy work, but in education we have to evaluate. What you cannot evaluate is meaningless from an educational point of view. If we take the position that what we are doing in the classroom is not measurable, there is a risk of mental laziness and self-overprotection against any criticism from people more sceptical than us about the wonderful contribution of philosophy for children’s personal development. (Personal correspondence, November 2003)

How could we increase public confidence that students’ progress in philosophy could be monitored and assessed—given sufficient time and resources?

In response to this the Assessment research Centre at the University of Melbourne established a doctoral research project to develop monitoring instruments designed to be useful for teachers as they are teaching, to enable them to identify students’ progress in the midst of community activities, and to report their findings in a form that was understandable to the community at large.

The assumption was that an understanding of developmental assessment is vital to successful educational practice and that the implementation of a developmentally sound curriculum would enhance student learning in the domain of philosophy. Successful teachers would be able to identify points or periods of readiness to learn in their students, in order to target those moments as opportunities for teaching. Teaching that failed to address these opportunities would miss the richness and potential that the philosophy program offers to both students and teachers.

A research project study took place in the state of Victoria and focussed on the Middle Years of schooling. The reasons for this were historical and strategic.

Philosophy programs began developing in Victorian
primary school classrooms following the introduction of Matthew Lipman’s “Philosophy for Children” (P4C) program in 1983. As a flow-on, there had been efforts to introduce philosophy into Middle Years classrooms. Although there had been a number of studies set in Victorian schools (Yule & Glasser 1994, Parfitt, 1999, Leckey, 2000, Cherednichenko, 2000, Wilks, 1992 & 2001), there was little published data describing the overall picture. However, the Victorian Association for Philosophy in Schools (VAPS) records indicate that there were at least 200 Victorian providers by February 2004.

Seventeen years after its advent, in 2000, Philosophy was introduced as Year 11 and 12 elective subjects, as part of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). It was also formally included as one of the subject areas in the Key Learning Areas (KLAs) called Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE) in the Victorian Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF, 2004), which was delivered during the period of compulsory schooling (Preparatory to year Ten). With the introduction of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS, 2005) by the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DE&T), developing ‘reasoning, processing and inquiring’, and ‘reflection, evaluation and meta cognition’ were nominated as essential learning outcomes in the public education system (DE&T, 2005. p.7). These goals were in keeping with the aspirations of philosophical inquiry.

Whilst the VCE philosophy subjects were presented with clear learning outcomes and criteria for assessment, there were few guidelines provided for teaching or assessing philosophy during the compulsory years, and there were few substantial frameworks for a school-based philosophy curriculum to refer to as guidelines.

In summary, the developments in Victoria that were of particular interest to this study included: -

• The implementation of the “Philosophy for Children” program in a number of Victorian primary and secondary schools after 1983.
• The introduction of ‘Philosophy’ as an elective VCE subject in 2000.
• A commitment by the Victorian DE&T to the development of programs that provide for high levels of critical thinking, in the Middle Years of schooling, for example, the Middle Years Reform and Development project (MYRAD).
• The implementation of VELS in 2005, which promoted the development of thinking and meta-cognitive skills.

It is argued that instruments that enhanced a teacher’s ability to identify student’s readiness to learn supports the development of appropriate intervention strategies by the teacher, and encourages a targeted teaching and learning program to be implemented. The above conditions provide good reason to focus the study on the Middle Years in Victoria.

Furthermore, there was also internal pressure on the Middle Year’s curriculum planners to provide opportunity for Middle Years students to develop their thinking skills. At that stage, DE&T had not published an interest in advancing a formal sequential curriculum framework in the domain of philosophy, let alone establishing K to 12 progressions. There was much theorising from specialists in the field about the benefits of doing philosophy, however, the fact was that the Middle Years’ philosophy curriculum was in fledgling stages of development and there was scarce data demonstrating such benefits did pertain.

Another reason why studies such as referred to here are so important to the survival of P4C was that most published research was concerned with evaluating the success of the P4C pedagogy within the terms of its specified goals, rather than in assessing its success as a means of advancing student progress in relation to standardised and formally accepted outcomes for adolescent learning. This was problematic as there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that learning outcomes sought by P4C practitioners were coherent with either those sought by experts in the field of adolescent development, or with those mandated by the Victorian (or any) Department of Education.

The Principles of Learning and Teaching observe that students learn best when:

• The learning environment is supportive and productive.
• The learning environment promotes independence, interdependence and self-motivation.
• Students’ needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests are reflected in the learning program.
• Students are challenged and supported to develop deep levels of thinking and application.
• Assessment practices are an integral part of teaching and learning
• Learning connects strongly with communities and practice beyond the classroom.

Thus as teachers internalise the requirements of the Victorian Educations system policy statements, the use of the pedagogy of the Community of Inquiry, and the inclusion of philosophical inquiry at the heart of the dialogue within this context, will arguably be recognised as a particularly powerful tool in realising these goals and objectives. This is because appropriate tools for the assessment and monitoring of student progress as critical, creative and caring thinkers are being developed and circulated and made good use of. The future of Philosophy for Children depends upon these two factors: shared values with the educational policies of the society in question, and valid and user-friendly tools for monitoring growth in this area.
Towards a Kinder Philosophy

Roger Sutcliffe

Abstract

This paper supports Dewey’s call for the ‘recovery’ of philosophy as a practice addressing the ordinary problems of humans. It suggests that Lipman’s development of communities of philosophical inquiry, and particularly his emphasis on caring thinking, have helped considerably towards this recovery – rendering philosophy ‘kinder’ or more compassionate in its tone. But it argues that there has to be an equal emphasis on collaborative, or dialogical, thinking. Without that drive towards mutual understanding and the common good, philosophy as a practice can easily become too narrowly critical, or too broadly sentimental. We must think together, or we shall die apart.

Change – what change?

Near the beginning of this century the Head of a College of Technology in London is reported to have said, “Today’s child is not the child of 10 years ago.”

When introducing people to P4C, I sometimes invite them to compare that claim with similar ones, such as: “Today’s culture is not the culture of 10 years ago”, or “Today’s curriculum is not the curriculum of 10 years ago.”

Each statement is interesting, and contestable, in itself, but consideration of the inter-relationships between all three renders them all the more interesting - and complex.

Teachers in England, who have been at the receiving end of endless government interventions in the past 10 – 20 years, might be inclined to the view that changes in respect of ‘the curriculum’ have been more intense and disruptive than any changes that might have appeared between the different cohorts of children during that period.

Some might argue, besides, that ‘children are children’, whose nature does not change much from generation to generation (though, of course, others might retort that the notion of ‘the nature of the child’, or indeed of ‘Today’s Child’, is an essentialist misconception).

Meanwhile, of course, much material and other evidence, e.g. on Facebook, might be put forward indicating that ‘culture’ has changed enormously in just the last 10 years - let alone in the 40 years or so since personal computers and mobile phones came into being.

Much though I would enjoy exploring these inter-related issues more now, I should resist, since the main point of introducing them was to highlight that it is, indeed, 40 years or so since Matthew Lipman conceived of Philosophy for Children. And though that concept has been considerably developed, both in theory and practice, during that time – not least by Ann Margaret Sharp – this is a good moment to question whether that development has kept pace with changes in human beings/doings and their societies, and especially in their philosophies and systems of education.

My contention is that Lipman and Sharp, along with many associates in the P4C community, did make a radical contribution to the development of both education and philosophy across the world, but that there is an ongoing battle to consolidate and continue that development.

The change that Lipman brought – reversing a decline of centuries

So, what was the radical turn that Lipman gave to education? The answer ‘that he restored philosophy to school curricula’ is both overstated and understated.

The former, because ‘philosophy’ is still prescribed patchily, and with differing purposes, in curricula across the world. (And, anyway, is this achievement so radical if it is merely a restoration?) But the latter, because school curricula in most countries in the late 20th century were desperately in need of a restoration of philosophy – in particular as a practice of caring and collaborative thinking.

Whilst it may, of course, be open to doubt as to whether what most children were introduced to in the private schools of post-Socratic Athens is what modern educators would call philosophy, there can be less doubt that the
grammar, rhetoric and logic that were part of the Medieval European school curriculum (along with language studies and mathematics – oh, and music and astronomy!) were in the classical tradition, rooted in the curricula of Plato, Isocrates and Aristotle.

Over the next few centuries, with increasing pace in the 19th and 20th, this tradition - especially that part known as ‘Natural Philosophy’ – gradually ceded ground (intellectually, and then literally) in European Universities to various ‘Science’ departments.

The accompanying diminution of respect for philosophy as a pursuit for pre-University humans was even more striking and baleful than its diminution as a pursuit within Universities – to the end that by the time Lipman was a professor, himself, of philosophy in the second half of the last century, philosophy had, to all intents and purposes, been eradicated from the school curriculum in almost all Western and Western-influenced countries. Where it did keep its foothold – which was always more within secondary schools than elementary ones – it increasingly followed an academic, lecture-based model in the Platonic tradition than an active, dialogical one in the Socratic tradition. This trend was, I suggest, strengthened by the increased emphasis on ‘written’ examinations within mass education systems - of which, more later.

To attempt to restore philosophy as a natural practice of self-examination and examination of the human world – let alone human relations with the natural world - to school curricula was, then, not such a small task. It required fundamental changes in educational – not to say, intellectual - thinking before any significant changes would emerge in educational systems and in society at large.

**A national case study of transformation ‘at the chalk face’**

I do believe that Lipman’s humane and expansive vision of the needs and capacities of children, and his equally expansive vision of the role of philosophy in education, have made a considerable impact on thinking about and in education, at least in the UK.

Twenty years ago, even the mention of ‘philosophy’ in most of our primary schools would have raised eyebrows: the only positive use of the word would probably have been in their published ‘mission statements’, as a way of wrapping up their various worthy but conventional aims. Nowadays, however, thousands of primary school teachers across the country regard learning to think, talk – and, one might say, act - philosophically as a worthy aim in itself. This is, of itself, a transformation in school and educational thinking and practice.

There has, moreover, been considerable evidence, in the UK as elsewhere, that the education of children who experience this way of learning is also significantly transformed. Their cognitive attainment grows more rapidly than those without such experience, whilst their social and emotional development, although less easy to measure, is celebrated with sufficient frequency by teachers to appear, again, exceptional.

All this said, I believe that systems of education across the world have been, and will continue to be, slow to realize Lipman’s vision. It is not just that Philosophy for Children remains on the periphery of the curriculum in most countries – unappreciated or at least unpromoted by most ministries of education. It is that the very systems of education are geared, by politicians and other power-brokers, towards narrow goals (notably, literacy, numeracy and science test results); and that these goals are most often pursued, by teachers as well as students, in a competitive and acquisitive spirit, with insufficient consideration of better means to those ends, let alone wider, better goals in themselves.

The reasons for this common blight of educational systems are manifold – partly political, partly institutional, partly familial, etc. But overall they reflect a general historical, or one might say intellectual, myopia.

**Classical (martial) origins of European education**

To get a sense of this lack of historical perspective, let us first revisit the broad development of thinking about education since the Ancient Greeks and Romans established the notion of the Liberal Arts.

These arts, or fields of learning, were, of course, the ones deemed appropriate for free citizens (‘liberal’ having the same root as ‘liberty’) - not, indeed, ‘for the masses’, i.e. the slaves and labourers of classical times. They provided a rationale, if not a template, for much, later education of a formal but non-vocational nature.

Alongside any education of the intellect or mind in the Greek states, considerable attention was also paid to the education of the body and character or ‘spirit’, primarily for martial purposes. In Plato’s dialogue, Laches, for example, Socrates discusses how to educate young men in the virtue of courage: “Suppose that we first set about determining the nature of courage, and in the second place proceed to enquire how the young men may attain this quality by the help of studies and pursuits.”

This emphasis on courage, particularly of the physical sort, is very understandable in societies which survived by their feats on the battlefield. It is not, by interesting contrast, much to be seen in most modern education systems, either explicitly or implicitly.

**The shift of emphasis to religious (clerical) education**

The emphasis that gradually superseded that on the martial virtues was more towards Christian ones, especially...
as the Roman Empire morphed into the Holy Roman Empire. Charlemagne maintained the Liberal Arts curriculum within his palace school, but relied upon the Church, and particularly monasteries, to provide education (free) for selected boys – sadly, not girls – whom he would have expected to fulfil clerical roles, both sacred and secular, within his Empire.

From this time, through the Middle Ages and Europe, formal education was dominated by a religious, specifically Christian, perspective. (I do not speak of non-European education, whose history did not include a ‘Middle Ages’ in the sense above, and in any case should properly be spoken for by others more familiar with its long – and, of course, largely non-Christian – sweep.)

But, for all the emphasis on religion, philosophy and ethics continued to be given a central role in the process in medieval times. Not only were the greatest thinkers and teachers of that period trained in ‘scholastic’ argument, but study of the Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle, was the norm for students.

We are still talking, of course, about a small minority of young people, and not, typically, children of elementary school age. It was not until the late 16th century in Europe, and the Reformation, that the idea of opening education to all children began to take root. (Again, I emphasize, I do not speak of other traditions, say Chinese or Jewish, which have surely valued education – and moral education in particular – for all children more highly.)

The first European country formally to espouse mass education was Scotland, when it passed its School Establishment Act in 1616, inspired by the Protestant reformer, John Knox. Its demand, that ‘everyone, especially the youth, be educated in civility, godliness, knowledge and learning’, was not translated into practice until a following Act in 1633, but the principles were clearly established.

A similar attempt to balance education of the (moral) character – the soul, even – with the education of the mind or intellect found expression in the projects of Comenius, especially his proposals for reforming the educational systems of Sweden (1638) and England (1641).

A remarkable voice for philosophical (humanistic) education

One other philosopher of the late 16th century deserves special mention in the European educational journey. In his essay, ‘On the Education of Children’, published in 1580, Montaigne questions the limitation of philosophy to older students: ‘Since it is philosophy that teaches us to live, and since there is a lesson in it for childhood as well as for the other ages, why is it not imparted to children? They teach us to live, when life is past. A hundred students have caught the syphilis before they came to Aristotle’s lesson on temperance .... Philosophy has lessons for the birth of men as well as for their decrepitude.’

This articulation of the case for introducing philosophy to young children (albeit, again of his time, children only of noble birth) is interesting on several counts. Firstly, it emphasizes that even in Reformation times (Montaigne was a Catholic, but a conciliator with Protestants) philosophy was seen as a partner with religion in the moral formation of young humans. And so it would remain for perhaps 200 years until the French Enlightenment ‘philosophes’ began driving a wedge between ‘philosophie’ and religion – an anti-theistic trend in ‘philosophy’ that reached something of an acme in Europe in the first half of the 20th century. This intellectual trend partly accounts, surely, for the undervaluing and under-representation of philosophical approaches to moral education in countries whose mass education systems, mostly started in the 19th century, were heavily reliant upon Church support, construction and implementation.

And for humanistic (ethical) philosophy

Secondly, it shows that, for Montaigne at least (but no doubt also for Spinoza and Kant, to name two later moral philosophers — not to mention Rousseau, a later educational philosopher) consideration of ethics, of how humans are to live, was integral to philosophy, if not its prime concern. In this, of course, he was simply giving more modern expression to the concept of philosophy espoused by Socrates (whose declared purpose was to improve a/the human ‘psyche’) and enhanced by Aristotle (in his writing dedicated to Nicomachus, ‘The Ethics’).

This expression is significant, however, because there was a later trend, represented most forcefully but foolishly by supporters of the Vienna Circle, to divorce ethics altogether from philosophy. Most of these supporters were to be found in philosophy ‘departments’ in Universities, and they added to the sense, already widely shared by the 20th century, that ‘philosophy’ was an elitist pursuit, not for ordinary humans. It did not seem to deal with their daily concerns, and no longer offered even pause for thought in forming their moral, let alone practical, judgments.

This sense of philosophy is about as far from

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Montaigne’s as one could get. As the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy puts it:

Montaigne conceived of philosophy as morals. In the chapter “On the education of children”, education is identified with philosophy, this being understood as the formation of judgment and manners in everyday life: “for philosophy, which, as the molder of judgment and conduct, will be his principal lesson, has the privilege of being everywhere at home”. Philosophy, which exerts itself essentially by the use of judgment, is significant to the very ordinary, varied and ‘undulating’ process of life.4

Two later voices for the recovery of philosophy and education

Happily, this view of philosophy never entirely disappeared, as can be seen from the following assertion by John Dewey (1917): “Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men (sic).”5

This quote, whilst echoing Montaigne, is significant in accepting that ‘philosophers’ had, by the 20th century, so far removed their practice from the problems of ordinary people that ‘philosophy’ itself was in need of being recovered or restored. Dewey did a good deal himself towards restoring it, both by personal example and by professional exhortation. But my belief is that, if Lipman’s vision can be further realised, he will be seen to have contributed as much, if not more, to the recovery of philosophy as Dewey himself.

The systemic challenges we now face

I should end my general survey of the history of European education by noting, briefly, the advance of mass education in the 19th century.

The motives that state governments had for setting up public schools in this period were, no doubt, a complex admixture of idealistic and materialistic ones, but I would make the brief and bold claim that, especially with the introduction, and then expansion, of public examinations, there was another sea change in the virtues that were cultivated, deliberately or by default.

Socio-politically Europe was moving into the era of capitalism and commercialism, and the virtue set that better suited this was one of competitiveness and acquisitiveness – each of which was more likely to be cultivated to excess than either courage or godliness.

This shift, which is intellectual as much as it is political - representing as it does a changing view of human life and purpose - provides a considerable block to the implementation of the humanistic vision of Montaigne, let alone the humane vision of Lipman.

Politicians nowadays, who themselves exhibit competitiveness to an extreme (for understandable, but unworthy reasons), are increasingly concerned about how well their country is doing in this or that international league table, and are increasingly turning to grading systems as a tool with which to push, if not punish, schools, teachers and indeed children. Enlightened educators need to speak and work ever more strongly against such a narrow concept of what counts as success in education and in human lives.

The same sort of thing might be said about the virtue of acquisitiveness. A modicum of such virtue behoves all human beings, especially those, such as parents, who are properly obliged to look after the security and health of others. But to train the young of our species from as early as we do into pursuing as many material ‘goods’ as possible, not least (in schools) stickers, sweets, certificates, etc., and (beyond schools) diplomas, degrees, doctorates, etc. – is to risk turning the first third of their lives into a treadmill from which they may never free themselves.

The promotion of ‘caring’ thinking

Philosophy offers – or at least should offer - a different vision of human life in the round, and of education in the younger years (if not later ones). Lipman’s vision, in particular, might be seen as precisely contrary to over-competitiveness and over-acquisitiveness, and indeed to excesses of other sorts. His promotion of caring thinking, partly to balance an excess of criticality in thinking (which, sadly, some philosophy educators exhibit), is not his least contribution to a reconceptualization of education as well as thinking.

But it should be emphasized that his concept of ‘caring thinking’ is not simply that of ‘thinking of others’. This may well be at its heart, but a broader interpretation is ‘care and thought for things that are of value in the world’, which could include all sorts of material things – the whole environment, indeed – as well as abstract causes or ideals, such as ‘justice’, ‘peace’, and ‘beauty’, and practical virtues such as ‘determination’, ‘self-control’, and ‘precision’.

There is, then, the potential for conflict – and uncaring conflict at that – built into the very notion of ‘caring thinking’. For what one person cares about, another might not. And, indeed, one does not have to be very old or observant in life to notice that humans conflict more often with each other in regard to things they care about than things they do not care about.

Collaborative’ thinking and a ‘kinder’ philosophy

It is important, then, to consider another human value, particularly at this worrisome time of global political and economic tensions.
This value is the 4th C of P4C, namely ‘collaborative, or dialogical, thinking’ – a sort of thinking (to be distinguished, incidentally, from a sort of feeling or acting) that is implicit in the very notion and practice of dialogical communities of inquiry. Perhaps it is so implicit that it is taken for granted and not appreciated as much as it should be. And yet it is vital, not only for communities of inquiry to operate well, but also for communities in general to operate well.

I might go further and say that such thinking is characteristic of humankind – at least in so far as symbolic language itself is characteristic – because, again, collaboration is implicit in communication (though, again, perhaps too implicit to be much appreciated).

Of course, not all communication proceeds in a willingly collaborative way. Conflicting needs or wants obscure the simple fact that communicating requires a minimum commitment by both parties to use a common language.

But humans are a special kind of creature, who share, through communication, a common aim: (as Aristotle put it) ‘eudaimonia’, or flourishing, if not happiness. Granted, we all conceive this aim in slightly different ways, but few of us imagine that it is more likely to be achieved by fighting against each other than by working with each other.

It is this spirit of collaboration – or, more precisely, collaborative thinking - that needs to be foregrounded in P4C, alongside caring thinking and compassion.

This may not be quite a new direction for P4C, but it is a new emphasis, and to mark that emphasis I coin the phrase ‘kinder philosophy’. This use of the word ‘kinder’ does, of course, resonate with the modern German sense of ‘children’, but its root goes back to the Proto-Germanic noun ‘kunjam’, meaning ‘family’, from which the Old English adjective, ‘gecynde’, is derived. This originally meant ‘natural’ (as applied to one’s feelings, especially of relatives for each other), hence ‘kind’ (in the sense of ‘friendly, deliberately doing good to others’ – source: www.etymonline.com).

My suggestion is that the vision of P4C should be enlarged further to that of an approach to philosophy that is unashamed – indeed, proud – to promote the common good of humankind, by promoting certain kinds of thinking, not least the collaborative.

I would go further, again, in suggesting that the concepts of education, and indeed of philosophy itself (by which I mean philosophy as a practice, more than philosophy as a ‘subject’ of study), should be enlarged in this way – to be pointed towards the common good, and to be conducted in a more collaborative spirit, with more care and respect for the diversity of human values, rather than being habituated to competitiveness, acquisitiveness and that small range of other values that is exaggerated by capitalism, materialism and that modern form of ‘professionalism’ that is more about preserving status than promoting service.

I will not, now, rehearse the argument that (most) education and (some) philosophy are imbued with such values. I simply invite others to look around and draw their own conclusions.

**Familial blocks to kinder education**

What is to be said of the other blocks to the realisation of Lipman’s vision? I used the expression ‘familial’ earlier to cover a range of attitudes and behaviours in ‘the home’ – an environment that is so often thought of as complementary to that of the school, but may sometimes work against the best (or the worst) of what schools offer children. This range can include excessive parental pressure, e.g. to pass tests, or insufficient parental support, e.g. to participate positively in school activities. (These phenomena, incidentally, are symptoms of how ‘natural’, ‘family’ and ‘common good’ values are distorted by the values, or at least the outcomes, of our politico-economic system.)

I think we should not underestimate the effect of such things on whether children get the best out of schools, and in particular on whether schools, responding to perceived parental attitudes, really do get the best out of and for children – for example, by providing the sort of balanced, humane curriculum that would include and encourage children’s participation in Lipman-style ‘communities of philosophical enquiry’.

Advocates of such communities (henceforward lumped together, for brevity’s sake, as advocates of P4C) need to articulate ever more clearly and convincingly the case for them in what is felt to be a ‘crowded’ curriculum.

However, the major blocks to P4C are not from parents, but from within the educational system. I have characterised them as ‘political’ and ‘institutional’ – though the latter might equally have been characterised as ‘professional’.

**Blocks within the education system itself**

I will focus, for the larger part, on the political, but the other blocks are very significant, especially at secondary or high school level, where teachers (more often than not) ‘profess’ a ‘subject’ – and where philosophy is hardly ever one of the ‘subjects’ that they profess. Put bluntly, most teachers have a vested interest in promoting the sort of teaching (and learning) they have been (by natural and/or social selection, if not by definition as teachers) good at. But very few of them have done, let alone been good at, ‘philosophy’ (for the intellectual/institutional reasons I traced earlier), and even fewer see or seize the opportunity to promote philosophy within their schools and curricula.

The best way out of this situation, which is virtually of a ‘Catch 22’ nature, is not, in my view, to present philosophy as a ‘subject’, to compete with all the other ‘subjects’ vying for space in the curriculum/timetable. It is to re-present
philosophy in its original form as a practice – a way of thinking and learning, even of being and acting – that should inform and influence all teaching, and indeed all that goes on in schools. Accordingly, the formation of teachers at all levels, and of all subjects or disciplines, should include an introduction to the idea and practice of philosophical teaching and learning.

**Philosophical teaching and learning**

It is in another paper that I should elaborate on this proposal, but for now I shall just explicate it in terms of (a) meta-thinking about the purpose and processes of teaching – considering, for example, not only why one’s ‘subject’ in general should be taught and learnt, but also about what particular elements of one’s subject should be taught and learnt, and, of course, how; and (b) better thinking about the role of thinking in teaching, learning and living, including particularly the value of questioning and reasoning, as practised in the best philosophy down the ages.

(Incidentally, I should just note that from time to time one hears teachers - in my experience especially scientists and historians - referring to their ‘method’, as if it were a very special and rather new way of thinking. This is, in my view, a misappropriation of what is more accurately conceived of as Socratic, or good philosophic, Method – the specifying of a proposition or hypothesis, and its subject to systematic questioning and testing against standards of reason and evidence.)

**A philosophical proposal / prospectus**

Before looking at perhaps the biggest block to the implementation of the humanistic vision of Montaigne and the humane vision of Lipman, viz. the socio-political, I would also note that I have made a more detailed proposal of what might/should be included in a ‘curriculum’ (though I call it, more appropriately, a ‘prospectus’) that would align school practice better with those visions, and with my own vision of philosophical teaching and learning.

That proposal goes by the name of PSEP (or Personal, Social and Environmental Philosophy) and is specifically designed to fit within the English curriculum, in a timetable slot currently labelled PSHE (or Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education).

The government has recently reviewed this label and slot, and sadly but not surprisingly has stuck with its limited vision – one that I sometimes scathingly summarise as education in Sex, Drugs, Fastfood and Bankrolls. Not that those things are insignificant in the lives of young people, but the development of oneself as a person, including one’s relationship with others/Society and one’s concept of the world/Environment, touches on many more matters of importance and, arguably, on matters of more importance to young people’s present and future lives.

The PSEP proposal can be found on my website, www.dialogueworks.co.uk. It is based on Kant’s 4 central questions of philosophy (What can I know? What is man (sic)? What can I hope? and What should I do?) and identifies central concepts related to these questions – concepts which form a sort of ‘menu’ for teachers/pupils to explore when and as they see fit.

In conceiving of this prospectus, I eschewed a narrative structure, even though I agree with Lipman that narratives stimulate personal interests and purposes and provide routes of progression for communal enquiry. My view is that philosophical curricula have more than enough to draw on from the narratives of young people’s own lives, but that in any case those lives are subject to ever more narratives foisted from outside.

Any of these narratives (which include, of course, popular TV series, songs and adverts, but could also include special publications, such as ‘philosophical’ stories that young people might not think about unless teachers drew attention to them) could be stimuli for enquiry. The challenges for the teacher would be (a) to facilitate a good choice of concepts for enquiry, i.e. ones with rich philosophical dimensions, and (b) to facilitate good enquiries, i.e. ones that pushed for depth, whilst remaining open for breadth, of thinking.

But now, to the biggest block – the political.

**Political blocks to kinder education**

From the perspective of an educator in the UK – and more specifically, in England – it feels as if we are currently engaged in yet another skirmish, perhaps even a battle, in a long-running civil war.

(I use this metaphor with due circumspection, being very aware that the reality of civil war, currently being experienced in Syria and too many other countries, is harshly different from what is conventionally called a ‘battle of ideas’. Yet real battles and wars are often outcomes of stark differences of ideas – the 2nd World War and the Cold War stand as tragic examples from the last century - and part of my thesis is that many modern tragedies, or at least large-scale traumas, arise from lack of good philosophical/political thinking: i.e. thinking that is both careful/passionate and collaborative/productive. But that part of the thesis comes near the end.)

What is this educational/political battle? In its crudest terms (whose use I do not necessarily subscribe to), it is a battle between ‘conservatives’ and ‘progressives’, or between a ‘core knowledge curriculum’ and a ‘thinking skills curriculum’. The current Minister of Education in England even suggest that it is a battle between people of ‘common sense’ and ‘Marxists’. At any rate, he is busy promoting the ideas of American writers such as E.D. Hirsch and Daniel Willingham, both of whom, on the face of it, are arguing that in the USA (as, our minister thinks, in England...
and Wales), teachers are not teaching enough ‘facts’ or ‘core knowledge’ to equip each country’s young people to survive and thrive in the modern world. And he is effecting a change in the ‘National Curriculum’ to require more teaching and testing of ‘core facts’, with a corresponding downgrading of any emphasis that the previous curriculum had on teaching ‘skills’, let alone ‘attitudes’.

Not surprisingly, this policy is stirring up considerable concern – indeed, conflict – within educational circles. Several members of an Expert Panel, whom the minister himself appointed, have resigned since their recommendations were neglected; and the director of the Cambridge Primary Review, Professor Robin Alexander, widely known for his work in comparing education systems across the world, has now circulated his critical response to the minister’s proposals, of which this is an extract:

“Overall, we find the proposals in many respects educationally unsound and evidently questionable. They are based on a flawed critique of existing arrangements and an overly selective response to international data... They perpetuate some of the most damaging aspects of current and past arrangements, notably a curriculum which is divided not only in time but also as to quality and seriousness of purpose, especially where the arts and humanities are concerned. The proposals rightly prioritize knowledge but wrongly reduce it to unchallengeable proposition. They disregard both research evidence and expert opinion on matters such as spoken language and the teaching of reading, history and citizenship. They belittle or ignore aspects of cultural life and human development - such as drama, dance and the exploration of faith and belief - which ought to feature in any national curriculum. While claiming modernity they fail adequately to reflect the profound social and educational implications of the digital revolution.”8

I do not have the time to go further into the subtleties and intricacies of the English system of education, and anyway the battlefield is wider than my own little country. A similar war of words, if not ideas, is taking place in comparing education systems across the world, and the minister himself appointed, have resigned since their recommendations were neglected; and the director of the Cambridge Primary Review, Professor Robin Alexander, widely known for his work in comparing education systems across the world, has now circulated his critical response to the minister’s proposals, of which this is an extract:

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I do not have the time to go further into the subtleties and intricacies of the English system of education, and anyway the battlefield is wider than my own little country. A similar war of words, if not ideas, is taking place in the USA, and, I dare say, in many countries across the world, as they grapple with the challenges facing them and their citizens in this fast-changing, ‘globalized’ economy and social environment. Governments feel themselves under pressure as a result of international test comparisons, such as PISA and TIMMS – though perhaps they put the pressure on themselves, treating the comparisons, as I hinted before, more like competitions.

Faced with such challenges, politicians naturally look for clear-cut, if not simplistic, solutions and slogans. And in such circumstances, subtleties such as the complex ways in which more/better thinking and more/better knowledge and understanding rely upon each other are underplayed. So are the complex roles that teachers have to play (sometimes providers of information, but sometimes deliberate withholders of information, so that pupils learn to think things through for themselves; or sometimes providing models of firm reasoning and sound judgment, but at other times modelling openness to different perspectives and judgments).

In this sense, the battle is not one between different ideologies, but between the desires of most people for more certainty, if not simplicity, in their lives and the difficult recognition that certainty is often elusive; that solutions are often complex and yet not comprehensive; and that very often the power to effect change for the better is not in our own hands alone, but dependent upon the collaboration of others.

Anyway, how is this battle affecting, or affected by, P4C? This probably varies very much from country to country, but the general history of P4C is that it has been seen as more ‘progressive’ than ‘conservative’, and therefore more vulnerable in a climate of ‘back to basics’. If P4C is presented, moreover, as an encouragement for children to question, and even query, received wisdom, then it could be actively discriminated against.

This is not the least reason to emphasize that P4C is better presented as straddling the unfortunate divide between ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ views of education. As Susan Gardner articulated in her article, Inquiry is no mere conversation (Critical and Creative Thinking Vol 3.2), it is ‘neither teacher-centred and controlled nor student-centred and controlled’. Phil Cam, in 20 Thinking Tools,9 made the case that it was more in a tradition of reflective education than progressive, as understood in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Or another way of putting this is to rehearse Lipman’s own view that P4C aims to help children become ‘more thoughtful, more reflective, more considerate and more reasonable individuals’ – ready, that is, to make more reasonable judgments. Such judgments require the best possible questioning and reasoning, but such questioning and reasoning should obviously be based on the best available knowledge. P4C, and philosophy in general, is thus not inimical to the acquisition of knowledge – rather the contrary. It merely reminds everyone of the importance of teaching children to think well, and of the value of philosophical dialogue in such a process.

So, properly understood and practised, P4C has a role – even a vital role – in the education of young people for the changing and challenging world in which they will be making decisions for themselves and for their societies.

Citizens, particularly teachers, can recover education

The practical, urgent questions, however, remain: How can/should societies best educate their future adult citizens?
What knowledge – or, better still, what understanding – can they reasonably be expected to have of the world around them, and especially of human beings and human systems? What can they reasonably hope and strive for, both materially and spiritually, in their lifespan? How can they be enabled to make better, if not the best, judgments about what to do, both for a living and for living day-to-day, side by side?

Governments, of course, have a duty to ask these (Kantian!) questions, to facilitate public dialogue about them, and to make their best effort to draw from that dialogue the best answers available. Clearly there is some doubt as to whether that process has been followed properly by the English Minister. But he will soon have had his day, as do most politicians. And therein lies some hope. On a day-to-day basis, and over the coming years, it will, after all, be the teachers themselves who largely decide the direction of education, in England as elsewhere.

And my observation is that across the world, the language of education (and, incidentally, the language of psychology – at least, what is known as ‘positive psychology’) is moving inexorably towards a recovery of concepts such as virtues/qualities (of character) or habits/dispositions (of mind), as well as a recognition of the importance of dialogue or ‘spoken language’, especially reasoned dialogue, in the learner’s journey from hearing ‘information’ to having ‘knowledge’ and honing ‘understanding’. And where the language leads, the systems of thought and then of behavior tend eventually to follow.

Reconstituting philosophy as a practice of freedom, fun and flourishing

My hope and expectation is that among the concepts that are part of this recovery (but also, to be more accurate, this reconstitution) will be philosophy itself, so that it is understood again as a practice – indeed, as a practical pursuit, aimed at personal and social goods.

This concept of philosophy that I am recommending is not only humane, but also very personal. It is the concept that Lipman was expressing, I think, in his autobiography:

“The approach that I have created in Philosophy for Children is not about prescribing any one philosophy to children, but about encouraging them to develop their own philosophy, their own way of thinking about the world. It is about giving the youngest of minds the opportunity to express ideas with confidence and in an environment where they feel safe to do so.”

And it would seem very close to the humanistic concept of philosophy that Montaigne had in mind in his Essays. As the Stanford Encyclopedia, again, put it, Montaigne “lamented that ‘philosophy, even with people of understanding, should be an empty and fantastic name, a thing of no use and no value’ (and) asserted that philosophy should be the most cheerful activity. He moved from a conception of philosophy conceived of as theoretical science, to a philosophy conceived of as the practice of free judgment.”

This last is an important observation, if not injunction. From the moment that Lipman’s project began to be taken seriously, especially by some who professed themselves to be ‘philosophers’, there has been a danger that Philosophy for Children be turned into a ‘subject’ with essential theory and knowledge that must be taught (typically, of course, that theory and body of knowledge which the individual happened to have become an ‘expert’ in).

If, as UNESCO proposes, philosophy is to be a ‘school of freedom,’ it must practise freedom as much as it preaches it: which is to say, it must support the freedom of people, and not least children, to learn different things and in different ways.

In Montainge’s own words, “I do not want the boy to be made a prisoner: I do not want him to be given up to the surly humors of a choleric schoolmaster. I do not want to spoil the mind by keeping him in torture and at hard labor, as others do, fourteen or fifteen hours a day, like a porter …. It is very wrong to portray (philosophy) as inaccessible to children, with a surly, frowning, and terrifying face. Who has masked her with this false face, pale and hideous? There is nothing more gay, more lusty, more sprightly, and I might almost say more frolicsome. She preaches nothing but merry-making and a good time. A sad and dejected look shows that she does not dwell there.”

I do believe, of course, that the concept of philosophy is not so vacuous or loose that anyone can attach it to anything they like. There is, indeed, a history of what is conventionally called ‘philosophy’, and there are many people who promote philosophy as a practice with (and of) integrity.

But, again, Montaigne provides us with a salutary reminder that a human’s knowledge is small and, largely, acquired at random. “Montaigne wants to escape the stifling of thought by knowledge, a wide-spread phenomenon which he called ‘pedantism’. We have to moderate our thirst for knowledge, just as we do our appetite for pleasure…. The priority given to the formation of judgment and character strongly opposes the craving for a powerful memory during his time. He reserves for himself the freedom to pick up bits of knowledge here and there, displaying “nonchalance” intellectually…”

This message would clearly not go down very well with those whose concept of ‘core knowledge’ is largely driven by the arrogant notion that what they themselves know is what everyone should know. But it is one that all educators, particularly P4C educators, should keep well in mind. Knowledge is important to humans, of course, but mainly for its practical value; and determining its value is a matter of judgment. And it is this that education should prioritize.
As Einstein asserted: “The development of the general ability for independent thinking and judgement should always be placed foremost ... not the acquisition of special knowledge.”

I have always taken this as a salutary warning by a great scientist to other scientists – not to forget their moral responsibilities. But it could equally serve as a warning to philosophers who think that the most important knowledge in the world is the knowledge they have of their own subject – dismissing, or just not being interested in, the growing knowledge that psychologists and other scientists have of humans and their world.

It is rather the knowing how to gain, appreciate and apply knowledge that matters, not any particular branch or body of knowledge – and that is what philosophy and education should concentrate on.

Reconstituting society - a bigger challenge still

To conclude, I have moved my arguments backwards and forwards between education and philosophy, ending with this hope that philosophy, as a pursuit of good character and good judgment, be re-integrated with educational theory and practice.

I did hint, however, that the ambition is even greater – to infuse politics, if not society itself, with a more philosophical spirit. The way I put this before was to say that “many modern tragedies, or at least large-scale traumas, arise from lack of good political thinking: i.e. thinking that is both careful/passionate and collaborative/productive.”

I was using ‘political thinking’, of course, in its general sense: of thinking about public concerns, or about how humans should manage their social or common affairs. These affairs include the usual ones that politicians make their daily concern, notably the spending of public funds on defence, health and education. But it is easy for people living in comparatively comfortable countries, or in comfortable personal circumstances, to regard related issues, such as the rate of inflation or taxes, or the (re)privatization of public services, as the key political ones.

The reality is that the key political issues of our day are much more global and much more life-or-death.

As I hinted earlier, when decrying the exclusion of girls from the medieval European education systems, perhaps the most important moral issue for humankind remains the treatment of women and girls. In Half The Sky,16 Pulitzer Prize winners Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn argue that more girls have been murdered in the last 50 years simply because of their gender than all the people slaughtered in all the genocides. UNICEF has reported that as many as 80% of the rapes in wars around the world are of children younger than 16. The recent film, ‘Girl Rising’, shows how unequal are the educational opportunities for girls around the world.

It is to the credit of William Hague, UK Foreign Secretary, and Angelina Jolie that they recently raised the issue of war rape by pledging the UK to spend £10million on tackling violence and harm to women in war zones. But this may be just a drop in a wider ocean of violence towards women, and in any case does not address the shame that some 53 million children – by far more girls than boys – still do not have the chance even of basic schooling (https://secure.aworldatschool.org/page/s/stand-with-malala).

It behoves P4C advocates to try to do more to support the cause of such children, whilst also trying to promote P4C within established educational systems.

It is also, to take another important issue, to the credit of Oxford University’s Future of Humanity Institute that it recently assembled an international team of scientists, mathematicians and philosophers, to write a paper, Existential Risk as a Global Priority, addressing the dangers facing humankind. (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-22002530. Accessed 18 April 2013.)

The presence of philosophers in this team is particularly welcome. As indicated earlier, there was a time not so long ago when philosophers themselves were eschewing ethics and putting up conceptual barriers between themselves and scientists. But times have indeed changed, with philosophers playing an active part in ethical committees in many practical fields - scientific, medical, commercial, political, etc. – and offering more insights into the use of concepts in other fields of study or human activity.

There is an important further step, however, in the reconstitution of philosophy and society. It is not sufficient that philosophers should engage more actively in the discussion and resolution of ethical, political and practical questions. What is needed is for all human activity to become more philosophical. As a species we need more philosophical scientists, managers, workers and players, as well as teachers and learners. We need people who think more carefully and collaboratively about what they are doing – why they are doing it, and how it might be done better. The received wisdom is that this sort of thinking is scientific, not philosophical. But it is wiser to suppose that it can be – indeed, should be – both. Experimentation cannot be done without reflection; and reflection is to no avail unless it leads to further experimentation.

I end with a final, pointed example of how philosophers have provided a service to humankind. Thanks to philosophers such as Peter Singer, more humans have now reflected upon, and reconceptualized, animal welfare and wellbeing. Perhaps, before long, most human philosophies will be kinder to animals as well as to other humans …
Coda: Answering Kohan’s challenge – changing hearts as well as minds

Even as I wrote this paper, I became more conscious of not having done enough, myself, as a human - let alone as an educator - to address the major shames of human activity/inactivity that I listed, as well as others that I did not list, such as the desecration of the planet for financial profit, and the obscene and growing differences of wealth between rich and poor people(s).

In his stirring paper published in Thinking Vol 12.2 (1995) Walter Kohan posed this question of Lipman’s novels: ‘If they are proposed as models of philosophical discussion and their characters as models of inquirers and critical thinkers, why don’t they question the foundations of the systematic and constant discrimination and oppression that cause suffering to a good part of the people that inhabit the same world?’

More generally, he asserted that: ‘If education is not committed to the questioning of (that) unjust order … then education legitimizes that unjust order.’

And his conclusion – or perhaps it is the premise of his life as a philosophical educator – recalled Montaigne’s own equation of philosophy with education, only perhaps more eloquently:

“Education is the best tool to accomplish this critical task that essentially constitutes philosophy, and at the same time philosophy is the instrument by which education can accomplish its liberating function, so that philosophy and education are mutually instrumental to the realization of one another’s tasks; or that they give sense to one another.”

I hereby align myself to this project of philosophical education, begun, I believe, by Socrates, redirected by many a philosopher or educator up to the 20th century, recovered by Dewey near the start of that century, and refreshed by Lipman, Sharp, Kohan and many others in the P4C movement at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st.

Now, as the 21st century unfolds, it will be up to others to take it forward. I have no doubt that this will be done with increasing energy and urgency, as the need for it, in an unreflective world, grows. And I have no doubt that people will find many ways of meeting this need in many different social contexts.

As Kohan said, when Lipman and Sharp pointed out that teachers should protect themselves professionally – and children personally – from being dismissed as ‘social activists’:

‘We are not proposing to push children to take social and political action, but we are proposing to help them to be conscious of the social and political values that their societies presumably carry. The way and the language in which we formulate these questions can be different according to the age of the children. Which way they will take once they are conscious of these values is a question that each of them will answer as an active member of a community of inquiry, but we need to abandon the illusion of an impartial teacher; the teacher who is not committed in her community of inquiry to a profound revision of the values carried by her society is nothing less than the best ally of the status quo. The commitment of the teacher is not related to any specific course of action, but with the stimulation of inquiry into alternative courses of action.’

My only hope and call is for whoever commits to this task as a teacher to do so with kindness in their heart and, as far as humanly possible, in their actions.

Endnotes
7 Kant, I. (1800) Logic.
8 Alexander, R. – circulated but unpublished Alexander, R. – circulated but unpublished
11 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Einstein (1950) Out of my later years. New York: The Philosophical Library


**Communication Discourse and Cyberspace**

Challenges to Philosophy for Children

Dr. Arie Kizel

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**Abstract**

Teachers and students involved in Philosophy for Children are exposed today to two opposing forms of discourse—communication discourse and education discourse. This article pointed out the central differences between these two discourses and addresses the principal challenges the P4C faces in light of the multi-channel communication environment that threatens to undermine the philosophical enterprise as a whole and P4C in particular. The article seeks to answer questions like what status does P4C hold as promoting a community of inquiry in an era in which school finds itself in growing competition with a communication discourse and should P4C educators espouse the communication discourse or create a counter-discourse?

**Introduction**

This article addresses the principal challenges the philosophy for children (P4C) educator/practitioner faces today, particularly in light of the multi-channel communication environment that threatens to undermine the philosophical enterprise as a whole and P4C in particular. It seeks to answer the following questions: a) What status does P4C hold as promoting a community of inquiry in an era in which the school discourse finds itself in growing competition with a communication discourse driven by traditional media tools? b) What philosophical challenges face P4C educators and children in consequence of the new “subject” created by cyberspace? c) Can proper and beneficial use be made of the media in constructing a sense of relevancy and actuality within the classroom? d) Should P4C educators espouse the communication discourse or create a counter-discourse?

**P4C between the school and communication discourse**

Over the past years, the school educational discourse within which P4C customarily operates has been increasingly challenged by the communication discourse—also known as “traditional media” (essentially of the multi-channel television type)—which is characterized by mass communication. The essential differences between these two discourses in the way they regard themselves, the way they are viewed by others, and the way they perceive one another have brought them into virtually inescapable conflict with one another. The primary discrepancy between them lies in the contrasting definitions of their goals/function—together with the historical developments in the educational role and the transformation of the media.

The national school education system - governed by the State - views itself as dedicated to creating a subject, granting legitimacy to foundational myths, and transmitting a meta-narrative, memory, and history that champions and promotes effective collective action. The various elements of the mass media, on the other hand, regard their task as reporting, surveying, criticizing, exposing, interpreting, inspiring, entertaining, and determining the public agenda.

I would like to suggest twelve elements that divide these two central forms of socialization and place them in ineluctable conflict.

1. **Hegemony vs. anti-hegemony**

   The mass media is instrumental in form, regarding itself as anti-hegemonic and seeking to oppose the obvious and self-evident even while being in control of its generation and daily reproduction. By definition anti-Establishment, it attempts to exaggerate reality by employing sensationalist means to draw the communication-consuming public’s attention, titillate it, and arouse it to action.

   In contrast, the educational system is essentially hegemonic, dedicated to creating a consensual hermeneutic institutional space. Schools view themselves as emancipatory, even though—and particularly within the normative educational framework—they frequently act as oppressors and wielders of symbolic violence.

2. **Immediate/task-oriented vs. processive**

   Perceiving itself to be task-oriented, the media is dedicated to producing “here and now” reports that are brief, vocal, and dramatic in nature. The media usually has “no time for” (in both sense of the phrase) in-depth analysis of processes, the superficial range of knowledge it transmits
being of a stereotypical form that reinforces its commitment to immediacy.

The education system, in distinction, is devoted to processes, highlighting complexity and profundity over the simplistic—it’s broad and multifaceted hierarchic structure causing its response-time to be long and slow. This cumbersomeness impairs its image as presented in and by the media.

3. Negativity vs. positivity

The media customarily reports bad news while substantially exaggerating the events. The negative factors in the “journalistic story”—which, according to its own claims, depicts “life”—constitute the oxygen of the communication world. While it exhibits postmodern features in celebrating narratival multiplicity, it actually promotes a single narrative—the “truth,” as it were. In this sense, it is a modern phenomenon.

The education system, on the other hand, focuses on the positive rather than the negative. Schools thus view themselves, for example, as representing the ideals of human progress, enlightenment, and liberation from the shackles of religion, representing themselves as the bastion of non-violence, good interpersonal communication, and optimism with regard to the development of the human race. Many schools even endeavor to keep negative ideas out of their realm, attempting to delegitimize them.

4. Individual vs. public

The media is generally controlled by influential individuals operating within a free and competitive market, its private nature making it subject to global capitalist market trends rather than public interest and ethics. The journalistic-facts industry and entertainment material serve as a commercial tool, functioning as currency for the trader.

The education system, in contrast, is largely still public and State-run—particularly where elementary schools are concerned. Despite being increasingly permeated by market-economy interests, they are designed to be impervious to the competitive spirit.

5. Ratings vs. anti-rating

The media revolves around circulation numbers and rating levels. It is not only nourished by ratings but also promotes these via funding—as well as goods, values, and money possessed of a life-preserving mechanism and socio-cultural generative force. It likewise seeks to persuade communication consumers—teachers, parents, and students—to believe that the ratings culture is the right and proper culture. Under the guise of “If you didn’t want to watch, you wouldn’t,” it presents itself in terms of free choice.

The education system, on the other, is by very definition opposed to the ratings culture, regarding itself as bearing a leadership and emancipatory role—in the modern sense—and seeking multicultural goals. Misinterpreting the clash between the media and the education system, parents frequently appeal to political and local-education-authority sources to introduce the ratings culture into schools on the grounds of cultivating competitiveness and transparency.

6. Salesperson vs. educator

The media is engaged in the vending of knowledge, products, and entertainment, the economic goal it espouses being that of the commercial market rather than—and in opposition to—national or ideological purposes. It is, in fact, threatened by national goals—most of all by value-oriented ones, to which it exhibits no commitment whatsoever. The media’s central commercial tenet is to sell—the more the better, at high economic prices and low value-related ones.

The education system, on the other hand, perceives itself as serving an intrinsically ideological vision—a worthy telos that can enhance the individual, “worthy person,” or the “general good.” Schools thus seek to bequeath education by transmitting it from generation to generation and making it as up-to-date as possible.

7. Free vs. restricted

The media operates in a virtually unrestricted environment. Although it is subject to laws and regulations, it possesses relative liberty of choice with respect to its content and the determination of the public agenda and trends.

In contrast, the educational system is confined to a severely-restricted context subject to national laws infused with political overtones and conservative ideology. Schools also suffer from numerous constraints because they deal with children and adolescents—i.e., from regulations intended to protect youth from harm. Parental involvement of parents and school intervention further limits their freedom.

8. Exposure vs. discreteness

The media’s role is to expose flaws and criticize the authorities—including the education system. It performs this function on the basis of its public commitment, media exposure frequently being accompanied by an invasion of privacy under the principle of “the public right to know,” the “journalistic duty to report,” or the right of freedom of expression.

The education system, in distinction, is obligated to discretion and protecting minors—including student rights and privacy. Schools are therefore governed first and foremost by concern for the students—many of whom come from difficult homes and have special needs.
factors frequently prevent schools from collaborating with the media.

9. General vs. particular

The media attempts to be as general and broad as possible, addressing public issues and representing the general populace. Its business lies in creating communication ideals—one of its most significant values and tools for the strengthening of the communication “item” and its placement on the public agenda—even at the price of exaggeration or sensationalism—being inclusion.

The education system, in contrast, is devoted to individuals and the task of addressing particular and private issues in detail. Attention to the education and advancement of the individual student—according to specific values—demands the avoidance of the use of generalizations and stereotypes by students and teachers alike.

10. Aggression vs. protection

The media plays a conspicuous role in the democratic game, serving as a restraining and balancing factor amongst the various governmental authorities and creating a public agenda based on considerations. This function frequently makes the media appear aggressive and out to curtail excessive governmental power.

In contrast, the education system espouses protection and quiet activity removed from political power games, thus enabling schools to devote themselves to the educational process.

11. Dynamism vs. conservatism

The media is portrayed as a dynamic system driven by the values of change, renewal, and flexibility whose aim is to create and stimulate interest. Communication products—primarily in the electronic media—are packaged to appeal to the youth and resonate with market messages that seek to attract the public.

The education system, on the other hand, is naturally conservative, large, complex, and traditional. Frequently, schools represent the values of preservation and national and disciplinarian continuity—values exemplified in the key fields of knowledge, the architectonic structure of the school, and class scheduling.

12. Circular vs. pyramidal knowledge

The media creates and markets circular knowledge which the listener or viewer requires no necessary prior knowledge to understand or enjoy. No exams are given and the listening/viewing frequently also produces a personal experience and an enhancement of knowledge.

The education system, in contrast, disseminate, generate, and reproduce pyramidal knowledge that is constructed in stages and calls for protracted intellectual and social effort to turn it into something meaningful. Education does not always allow choice and is based on exams, school processes often being linked to sanctions within a stringent framework that turns the learning process into a coercive rather than an enjoyable experience.

P4C in the cyberspace era: A new subject?

Students and teachers find themselves caught between these two forms of discourse -communication and education. While the “traditional media” discourse - embodied primarily in television - presents challenges to youth and adults alike, cyberspace, dubbed the “new media,” poses new challenges to P4C educators/practitioners in that it freely transmits digital information electronically without emotional, existential, or political preconditions specific to any culture and promotes decentered knowledge (Landow, 1992).

As with adults, cyberspace is often presented to children as the place where truth or falsehood is irrelevant. It produces the illusion of a new narrative in which multiple bodies of knowledge - contingent, fluid, and hybrid - coexist and openness to diverse assumptions, perspectives, and criteria regarding knowledge, as well as divergent narratives and bodies of knowledge, is cultivated. As Balsamo (2011) indicates, at the same time as facilitating non-ethnocentrist dialogue amongst different opinions it also encourages multi-perspective reception of the diverse dialogues themselves. It thus poses a significant educational challenges in offering new possibilities for the articulation, representation, and acceptance of excluded voices in society in general and in schools in particular.

This new kind of intersubjectivity – what Langdon Winner (1997) calls “cyberlibertarianism” – reflects the web’s chaotic, non-hierarchical interchange of information, values, identities, and interests that are always partial, temporal, and local rather than linear. While allowing everyone access, it thus has no universalistic pretensions nor makes any claims regarding the absoluteness its truths or the objective eternal validity of its foundations, criteria, agreed conclusions, or goals. In this sense, it constitutes the direct antithesis of the educational system discourse and narrative.

The challenges and issues this “new media” - or, more accurately, “new life” - raises relate to such concerns as: “How do we define ‘human’ in the present technological age?”; “Am I really in the world when I’m on Facebook?”; “Is there life after this life – on the internet – and if so, what kind will it be?” These questions are already being addressed in teacher-student discussions in P4C meetings.

Unfettered by claims of universal validity, cyberspace is free to let the Other express her views and opinions as not necessarily belonging to the “we,” the “just” or the “truth.” As Mark Poster (1995) argues, in such a non-
transcendental, decentralized communication system, “originality,” “authenticity,” and “truth” become irrelevant. At the same time, and despite both public and academic enthusiasm for the internet and the array of opportunities and options it presents, it also creates the philosophical illusion of a dialogic space that offers multiple and competing possibilities within the research community represented by P4C (Lipman, 1997; Sharp, 2007; Matthews, 1984).

The philosophy in which the coming generation of P4C educators/practitioners engage must therefore face the challenges of the internet and cyberspace—and do so out of the willingness to confront the allure of an expanse that allows its users to “float free of biological and socio-cultural determinants” (Dery, 1994: 7). It also needs to create a form of solidarity via virtual communities and virtual democracy as offers by the net and cope with the fact that numbers of educators are forsaking critical thinking in favor of a rhetoric that promises the immediate – online - realization of a positive utopianism.

The communication/technology challenge and the philosophical challenge

Contemporary educators and practitioners – particularly those engaged in P4C – cannot afford to dismiss or reject the technological advances at their fingertips and those of their students but must find ways to incorporate them into the educational world and make real use of them. At the same time, they are faced with the question of whether to accept the communication discourse or endeavor to create what I offer as a “counter-narrative”.

In the face of the media discourse that, while democratic and open, is also vociferous and shallow, academics, teachers and practitioners must collaborate with students to construct a community of enquiry that will promote an open discourse that distances itself from unnecessary and inaccurate generalizations, avoids stereotypes, encourages openness, and legitimates questions. In many cases, the catalyst is the stimulating—but also uncomfortable—factor of uncertainty. The discourse created in this community of inquiry must therefore be based upon a dialogue of parity that contains five components according to William Isaacs (1999):

1. Respect: Assume that you are among equals who are legitimate and important to the learning process—irrespective of whether or not you agree with them.
2. Listen: Listen for understanding and learning—not correctness. Be aware of your own listening to others by paying attention to “mental models” and obstacles that get in the way of what is being said and heard. Do not listen in order to respond or advocate: listen to understand.
3. Suspend judgment: Be aware of assumptions and uncertainties and learn to hold them apart or to the side without feeling compelled to act upon them.
5. Communicate your reasoning process: Talk about your assumptions and how you arrived at what you believe. Seek out the data on which assumptions are based, both your own and others.

In the words of Peter Senge,

“Dialogue is not merely a set of techniques for improving organizations, enhancing communications, building consensus, or solving problems. It is based on the principle that conception and implementation are intimately linked, with a core of common meaning. During the dialogue process, people learn how to think together—not just in the sense of analyzing a shared problem or creating new pieces of shared knowledge, but in the sense of occupying a collective sensibility, in which the thoughts, emotions, and resulting actions belong not to one individual, but all of them together” (1994: 358).

As Slotte asserts:

“Dialogue becomes a mere ‘buzz word’ in the service of the very unwanted forces that real dialogue challenges. This can happen when, for example, the goal of a dialogue is settled in advance. When pressure to reach the goal becomes high, real dialogue, creativity, surprise and joint investigation disappears. If dialogue and dialogue methods merely are incorporated in organizations, conflict situations and the classroom without questioning the dominating views on communication, learning, thinking together and interaction dialogue will only become a means to enhance the current practices that we wish to change. This is a core reason why a philosophy of dialogue is needed” (2004: 43).

Many adults, teachers, and educators being apprehensive of discussing controversial issues with children, however, and thus endeavoring to avoid dialogue, the P4C counter-narrative demands that they act courageously and overcome their fears (Haynes & Murris, 2011). It must likewise call upon them to resist any unnecessary appeal to emotional susceptibility and exploitation, making space for the decipherment of sensitivities and sensibilities in order to raise the emotional bar of the viewing public - youngsters and adults alike - and allow for serious and in-depth discussion of significant subjects. Philosophical educators must therefore engage in the following tasks:
1. Draw attention to the features I have identified here as characteristic of the communication discourse.
2. Demonstrate the importance of the communication discourse, especially as part of democracy.
3. Adduce the limitations from which the communication discourse suffers, particularly with respect to issues relating to emotions and their exploitation in promoting the ratings culture. Evincing the price the public pays as a result of the cynical use of emotions and their heightening - via reality shows, for example - in order to create a “virtual reality” they must, if possible, rename this an “overly-emotional reality.”
4. Highlight the role of profound philosophic discourse, validate the demands of seriousness and responsibility it makes on those who engage in it, and present it as a counter-narrative to the communication discourse.

Running the risk that they may expose themselves to conflict with their students—many of whom do not possess media literacy skills—educators and practitioners must ensure that they themselves are media literate in order to help their students develop critical and creative abilities to deal with the media. At the same time, media education is not to be confused with either educational media or educational technology.

Conclusion

Teachers and students involved in Philosophy for Children are exposed more than ever today to two opposing forms of discourse - communication discourse and education discourse. In this paper, I have pointed out the central differences between these two discourses. Philosophy for Children educators must take steps today to familiarize their students with the factors at the heart of communication discourse, particularly those to which the students are most exposed. At the same time, teachers must not allow themselves to come out directly against communication or the open and democratic discourse that it fuels. Nor must they oppose the communication innovations that are the outcome of technological advances and the abilities these bestow. This requires that they acquire knowledge concerning media literacy in order to enhance their ability to create a counter-narrative that will equip students with the tools necessary for understanding the communication discourse—especially in relation to emotions and emotional responses. These tools will help students understand how the philosophical discourse differs and promote their ability to view the emotional world encouraged by the communication discourse with a critical eye. The intention is not to induce them to oppose this world or to alienate themselves from it but to approach it critically and engage it in dialogue.

Caught between the two antithetical discourses of “traditional media” and the “new media,” P4C must strengthen itself and enhance the community of inquiry. The latter must represent and create both a philosophic space of activity and process, combined with intellectual depth, and a place for meeting face to face whose intimacy allows for the expression of the subject. Its counter-narrative must confront the daily challenges posed by the speed, immediacy, imminence, multidimensionality, task-oriented nature, and new form of public nature of the communication space and its accessibilization and democratization of knowledge. It must either synthesize the two discourses or enable an open discussion of the narratives each embodies and promotes. A narrative that bridges the two worlds/worldviews can generate mutual trust between them on the one hand and illuminate the differences between them on the other.

References

Introduction

In this article we report on interim results and progress of a research project by the Research Centre for Integrated Pedagogies at INHolland University of Applied Sciences. The research focuses on the use of philosophy in the classroom for promoting democratic citizenship. Here we report on the exploratory phase of the research. In the meantime, the in-depth investigation phase of the research has begun.

The concept of philosophy with children mainly builds on the work of the American philosopher Matthew Lipman. He sees philosophy with children as a contribution to critical and creative thinking and in this way to democratic society, conceptualized in the Dewey tradition. Philosophy helps people to live together and to compare and communicate ideas and values with one another in order to promote democratic awareness and mutual growth. Democracy presupposes recognition of reciprocal interests of individuals and groups. For this reason democracy cannot be seen as permanent or as a situation which we, the adults of today, can offer to children, the adults of tomorrow. Democracy is something we continuously have to work at, through intensive interaction between individuals and groups in society. A democratic society must put effort into educating children to become rational and reasonable individuals with developed thinking capacities and the ability to coordinate and cooperate. The most important aim of philosophy with children is to help them develop responsive and creative ways of thinking by converting the classroom into a community of dialogue and inquiry.

In the research project ‘Philosophy for Democracy’ we analysed 25 classes in several schools, specifically with regard to learning processes and results of a Philosophy with Children programme, Democracy in Dialogue, developed by the Dutch Centre of Philosophy for Children. This programme offers a structured, thematic approach, in order to help primary schools to give philosophy with children a fixed place in the school curriculum, as a contribution to active citizenship education.

The main research themes are:

- What clarification can be given to the concept of ‘philosophy with children’ in relation to the development of active democratic citizenship?
- What are the assumptions with regard to conceptions of democracy and dialogue as well as to pedagogical and educational practices and objectives?
- What learning processes occur and how can results from this lesson be defined and measured in terms of growth of democratic values, insights and sensibilities?

The complete research route is planned from 2006 to 2011. In this article we focus on the first exploratory phase, which took place in the two years between summer 2006 and summer 2008.

Context of the research project

In the research two themes come together. One is the recent history of the Centre for Philosophy with Children. The other is the growing importance of citizenship education.

In 2004 the Centre for Philosophy with Children in the Netherlands changed its policy. No longer would the main effort be directed to the broad dissemination of Philosophy with Children, but the focus would shift to supporting those teachers and schools already beginning to practice Philosophy with Children. They should be better equipped with methodological instruments and arguments to sustain and develop Philosophy with Children in their classes and schools.
This change in policy resulted in a research project ‘Teachers philosophize’. In this research, which started in winter 2005, eight young teachers who were enthusiastic about implementing Philosophy with Children in their classes, were closely followed during their efforts to do so by four experienced school counsellors. What we wanted to know was what motivated them to keep going, which experiences and instruments they found helpful, what obstacles they found in their way, and how they dealt with them. Over more than six months, the counsellors visited them in their classes about once every two weeks for observation and collaborative reflection. The attitude of the counsellors was not to show the teachers the way, but to follow and support them on their own way.

Both teachers and counsellors found the structure of this action research very fruitful. It gave the opportunity to learn a lot about the thinking, motivation, and aims of teachers. The research resulted in a book ‘Kinderen leren filosoferen’ (Children learn to philosophize) (Bartels, 2007). Based on an analysis of the practices of these eight teachers, a new initiative was developed to better support and equip teachers to philosophize with children. Because all the tools described in the book have proved successful in practice, the Centre for Philosophy with Children expects the book to be a useful guide for teachers in their efforts to implement and develop philosophy in their classes. A challenge for all teachers is how to obtain enough space and time in the already overloaded primary school curriculum. The hours philosophizing may be successful, but how can they be accounted for within the framework of established goals and the prescribed curriculum?

In the autumn of 2006 new legislation was introduced in the Netherlands, making the advancement of active citizenship a main task of schools. From its theoretical starting points, as developed by Matthew Lipman, philosophy with children has always been seen as a contribution to democratic society. Such a society should put all efforts into educating its citizens to reasonability, says Lipman (Lipman, 1991).

The Centre for Philosophy with Children in the Netherlands saw the introduction of this legislation as a chance to implement philosophy with children within the framework of the advancement of democratic citizenship. The Centre has developed a programme, based on the approach as set out in ‘Kinderen leren filosoferen’, which better enables teachers to philosophize with their children within this framework. Pilots were run between March 2007 and June 2008.

The task of the Research Centre for Integrated Pedagogies at INHolland Professional University is to initiate and support research on integrated pedagogical practices in education. Educating for active citizenship is one of the main points of interest. The Centre supported the research project ‘Teachers philosophize’ and has made the follow-up theme of philosophy and democracy in the classroom, ‘Philosophy for Democracy’, a part of its research programme.

### Clarification of concepts

The exploratory research focused on the question: can philosophizing with children be called a democratic practice? This research question was formulated on the assumption that democratic practices in education can contribute to the development of democratic citizenship competencies of children.

In this paragraph we will examine the conceptual relation between philosophy with children and (the development of) democratic citizenship. The clarification of the concepts is provisional, it will be further developed in the next stages of the research.

The democratic constitutional state can be seen as a system in which contrasts and conflicts of all sorts are acknowledged. Democracy gives freedom and the opportunity for difference. This is the democratic paradox: a democracy emphasizes recognition of differences, conflicts and contrasts, but at the same time supports and maintains a common identity connected to the unity of a political community. The specific characteristic of democracy is the recognition and legitimacy of conflict with, simultaneously, a refusal to repress conflicts in an authoritarian way. A democracy has to acknowledge a diversity of values (Schuyl, 2006/2).

The democratic constitutional state has legislation, institutions and procedures to secure the principles of the system; the main democratic values are laid down in constitutional rights.

Through the recognition of a diversity of values, democracy may appear neutral. However, a democracy is always normative as it defends the individual’s freedom to choose his or her own way of life. Each one of its members has the right to think differently and to be different, within the restriction of not harming others and with prohibition of discrimination. ‘The main values of the democratic way of life can be formulated, conditional on the minimal but crucial requirement of a good and peaceful debate about who we are and want to be. It is not consensus on values, but more the lack of it, and the wish to stay in communication about these differences, which expresses the commitment of democratic citizens to each other’ (Pels, 2007).

Democracy, therefore, is also a way of living, as stated beautifully by Dewey: ‘Democracy is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience’. Democracy is not a fact, a situation which we adults can offer ready-made to our children. ‘Democracy is more like a road on which we permanently have to work through intensive interaction between as many individuals and
groups in society as possible’ (Berding, 1999).

We see the recognition of differences as one of the main values of democracy: the individual has a right to be who he wishes to be. The other values are derived from the minimal conditions required for living together peacefully. The democratic constitutional state in itself is no guarantee for a developed and sustainable democracy. Democracy cannot exist without the will and the capability of its citizens to live together in a democratic way: that is democratic citizenship.

One very important issue in democratic citizenship is diversity. Diversity is unexpected or challenging difficulty in communication between ourselves and others. To deal with differences, a citizen in a democratic society has to be able to cope with these autonomously and judiciously.

Judiciousness, which is also a responsibility of the democratic citizen, can only be developed through participating in democratic (action) practices.

In order to achieve this, we believe one important attribute of the democratic citizen is willingness and capacity for dialogue. The democratic way of life has not only to cope with differences, but also implies the wish and capability to communicate about these differences. This communication should be dialogical. Communication in a democratic society should not only be an exchange of ideas and viewpoints in order to persuade others, or to bring them to recognition of our interests; it should also be dialogical. In a dialogue we try to understand others, we try to get insight into their thinking and goals and we try to reach some common understanding. That is the starting point we can build on and which is needed for democracy to last.

We have been very restrained in this conceptualization of democratic citizenship. We did not want our concept to be one involving the whole person, nor should it imply the realization of all kinds of social ideals, apart from those essential to democracy. Our concept is derived from the main values of democracy, the items necessary to develop and sustain democracy. No more, but certainly no less! The concept may contain ideals, which are important in education and in bringing up children. Ideals are motivating for educators.

A democratic citizen has the wish and the capability to live with others in a democratic way. Educating for democratic citizenship should contribute to developing skills and attitudes for this. There is without doubt also a knowledge component. This has for example been worked out by the Dutch Foundation for Curriculum development (Bron, 2006). Apart from teaching children some of the main facts and institutions of democratic society, the acquisition of knowledge is not seen as a goal in itself, but as a contribution to the recognition of democratic values, i.e. ‘when you know what sacrifices people made in the past to achieve democracy, you better understand the value of it’ (de Winter 2004/1).

There is another good reason to be restrained. A concept which expects the world from education, while at the same time, adults so obviously fail to get on with one another, is utopian. We also realise that children and young people have experiences in daily life, including at school, that have great impact on their attitude towards democracy (Biesta 2007). However, that offers no reason to ignore the formation of democratic skills and attitudes within school. Education in general and philosophy with children in particular could contribute to these, which are:

- The recognition of difference: the recognition of everyone’s right to be who he/she wishes to be, in the knowledge that no one is superior to others (recognition of equality), nor can have any claim to superiority on the basis of values and viewpoints.
- Ability and willingness to communicate about differences, in debate and discussion, but also in dialogue and in the attempt to understand the thinking and actions of others.
- Coping with social conflicts without the use of authoritarian or violent means; reasonability in this framework is a value as well as a skill. We have to learn to use all sorts of democratic communication, such as deliberation, meeting, etc., and mediation, as well as forms of democratic decision-making, such as elections and different decision-procedures.
- Judiciousness: a responsibility of the citizen, and so a necessary skill. Therefore we need to learn to think critically and analytically, to learn to form our own opinion, and to reason.
- Autonomy: democratic citizenship can only be practised by autonomous people.

How do children and young people acquire these attitudes and skills? One very effective way seems to be to let them participate in democratic practices. We do not learn these skills and attitudes through rules and facts, from books and worksheets. We can only learn them by doing, ‘by acting in citizen-practices or situations that are similar’ (van Gunsteren, 1992).

Although school is in itself not necessarily a democratic environment, in school we can create safe learning environments in which children and young people can experiment with ways to communicate and deal with others; they can make mistakes without having to bear the full consequences. These practices are democratic and help learning to live together in a democratic way. By participating in democratic practices, children and young people learn how to act, in the first place through their own experiences, but also through the observation of actions of others, they can imitate and/or reflect on this. So they build up a repertoire of examples, insights and actions. This
repertoire helps them obtain insights into new and unknown situations.

Examples of democratic situations are the school- or class-meeting, in which the children jointly discuss and decide on the rules at school, take responsibility for the social climate at school, the forming of committees that are responsible for the playground, or for a celebration, etc.

Other good examples of democratic practice could be school projects in the area around the school, when there are political, social or environmental issues at stake. Children can participate in discussions, and can try to influence decision-making.

Our hypothesis is that philosophy with children can be a democratic practice in education, and a potentially powerful one. Many aspects of the democratic way of life could reveal themselves in philosophy with children, could in this way contribute to the development of democratic citizenship. Specifically:

• the development of thinking abilities and judiciousness, especially with regard to critical thinking and reasoning skills,
• the development of autonomous thinking, which also contributes to self-identity,
• children learn to cope with differences of opinion,
• the development of dialogue,
• a setting where all participants are considered equal.

Results of the first phase of research

Aims and responsibilities

In March 2007 the programme and research project ‘Philosophy for Democracy’ started in 25 classes in several primary schools. Both the programme and the first exploratory phase of research ran until summer 2008.

The programme ‘Philosophy for Democracy’ covers the whole primary education period (age 4 to 12) and consists of four parts, each containing fifteen elaborated themes:

• ‘A child can ask more than why’ for group 1/2 (age group 4 – 6 years), in which asking questions is the central focus.
• ‘All votes count’ for group 3/4 (age group 6 – 8 years). The main focus is the advancement of dialogue.
• ‘Just because isn’t a reason’ for group 5/6 (age group 8 – 10 years), in which the development of thinking skills is the central issue.
• ‘The big issue’ for group 7/8 (age group 10 – 12 years), in which some democracy-related themes, such as freedom of speech, tolerance, etc. are elaborated.

The programme ‘Philosophy for Democracy’ is an ‘ordinary’ programme for philosophy with children. Apart from certain themes in group 7 and 8 there is no explicit emphasis on the development of democratic values or skills. That is why this programme is potentially a good test for the hypothesis that philosophy with children as such is a democratic practice.

In the programme special attention is paid to:

• philosophical orientations for the teacher;
• a large variety of scenarios to open up philosophical enquiries;
• the structure of the enquiry, which should focus on enabling elaboration and deep insight;
• closing activities.

The programme mainly sets itself apart in the way instructive hand-outs are given to the teachers in order to structure the research. Furthermore, the programme should stimulate and enable teachers to philosophize at least once every two weeks with their children. The assumption is that when it is done less often, it is no longer effective.

In the first phase of research, the central question is whether, and to what extent, philosophizing with children can truly be called a democratic process: how all participants in a philosophical enquiry are equal and have an equal opportunity to influence the process; how an enquiry develops opinion, freedom of speech, and exchange; how philosophical enquiry shapes dialogue.

In this phase of research we especially wanted to know how children participate in philosophical enquiries as democratic practice. To that end, we focused on five aspects of practice which should indicate that philosophy with children is a democratic practice:

1. equality
2. dialogue
3. autonomy
4. judiciousness
5. difference of opinion

We converted these aspects into practical question lists. In this exploratory first phase we used three instruments:

• two consecutive questionnaires for the teachers, each consisting of three parts. The questionnaires were similar in purpose but were worded somewhat differently to broaden the scope. Each first part focused on information about the participating teachers: the class or age group they teach, the experience they have in philosophy with children and their motivation for joining the programme.

The second parts focused on the teachers’ observations during the philosophy sessions. The question lists were partly taken from the examples in ‘Kinderen leren filosoferen’ (Bartels, 2007), which in turn were adapted from the well-known ‘Barry Curtis list’ (Curtis 1989). Examples of questions used were: Do the children give arguments supporting their opinion – does the discussion leader have to
ask for them, or do the children spontaneously give reasons for their opinions? Do the children answer for themselves – do they take over another’s answers, or come up with their own? (the first Teachers’ research question list is attached in Appendix 1, the second Teachers’ research question list in Appendix 3).

The third parts of both questionnaires reviewed the teachers’ assessment of the programme. 24 teachers completed the first questionnaire in June 2007, 16 completed the second in February 2008.

- two short consecutive questionnaires for children from group 3 to 8 (age group 6 – 12). Again, the purpose of both questionnaires was similar but different wording was used to broaden the scope. On these forms we asked the children about their behaviour during the philosophy sessions. Questions like: Do you voice your own opinion? Can and do you speak freely and independently? 393 children completed the first questionnaire in June 2007, and 363 the second questionnaire in February 2008. (the first Children’s research question list is attached in Appendix 2, the second Children’s research question list in Appendix 4))

- Class observations and interviews with eight teachers and their classes in order to clarify the statistical data from the questionnaire research. During classroom observation the same topics as on the questionnaire were used as a guideline.

The question lists for both teachers and children were pretested on small groups. We were mainly interested in how well children understood the wording in the question list. Apparently, they had no problem.

The participants

25 teachers and all children in their classes participated in the programme in May 2007. Three complete school teams participated, the others were individual teachers, personally interested in participating. The research group represents a fair amount of diversity, with regard to type of school (public, catholic, independent neutral), and to school population (inner city, multicultural, middle class).

The representation of different school years (from group 1/2 to group 7/8) is biased for teachers, as well as for children. Teachers with a group 5/6 or group 7/8 are unfortunately severely underrepresented among respondents. With regard to the children, they range from group 3/4 to group 7/8 (there is no sense in giving the youngest group a written questionnaire), with overrepresentation of group 3/4. Several comparisons between the three schools were made. It was interesting to see that the practice of philosophizing, in the perception of teachers and children on the researched topics, did not vary much.

Results

The teachers were very enthusiastic about the programme. The average assessment by teachers was 4.06 on a five point scale. ‘This brings me so much structure’; ‘It just works’; the manuals make sure ‘that the enquiry doesn’t stay at the surface, it forces you to go deeper’. ‘You have to work regularly with the programme’, teachers said, ’then you will see the benefits’. Most of the teachers philosophized with their class at least once every two weeks. The ones who did it more frequently reported more progress. These teachers were probably the most enthusiastic ones. The programme recommends that teachers and children philosophize once every two weeks. The enthusiasm of the teachers is not only explained by the quality of the programme. The sole fact that it exists, was already seen as a great stimulus.

Which behaviours do we observe during philosophizing with children?

Philosophizing starts with children asking the questions! That is at least what is assumed in the programme guidelines. Starting questions focus the topic and direction of the dialogue, so the initial questioner has an important influence on the process in a philosophical enquiry. During the sessions a lot of questions will be put forward, both by children and the teacher. The teachers ask questions, with which they also influence direction and the development of the enquiry.

During the enquiry children ask one another questions: Why do you think so? Can you prove that? Does that mean …? Do you also think that …? Children are already able to do this when they are five years old. These are the questions that make dialogue out of a conversation. In this way the children’s questions shape the enquiry.

This is a remarkable break with the mainstream of daily school practice, where there is barely room for children to ask and discuss questions. Countless research studies show how many questions teachers ask and the astonishing speed at which they do so (Dillon, 1982; Rowe, 1996; see References). The research results show that, notwithstanding the assumption of the programme, it is hard for most teachers to drop this pattern while philosophizing with children. Perhaps even the programme manual contributes to this: in the manual teachers are shown a direction for the enquiry by means of questions which they have thought of in advance. This doesn’t necessarily stimulate children to ask their own questions. The multiple asking of questions by the teachers can make the teacher, rather than the children, the central figure in a philosophical enquiry. Still, in philosophy sessions there is relatively much more space for children to participate and formulate their own questions.

Of course, there are differences between children too. Every group has its ‘big mouths’ and ‘silent types’. The
results show that teachers as well as children recognized this phenomenon. And all seemed to be a little unhappy with it. ‘At the beginning a lot of children speak. But then the enquiry is often taken over by the usual faces’, one teacher wrote. One of the children said: ‘a theme is interesting when everyone can talk about it, especially when everyone thinks differently about it.’ Letting everyone join in is a hard task in groups of over twenty children: ‘when I want to say something, then the others are still talking, they talk very fast one after another and then I don’t know what to say anymore’, sighed a girl. The teacher who gave turns, or went around the circle and let everyone join in, was appreciated as most democratic, but ‘not philosophical. The topic changes in between and you can’t react anymore’, said a boy who probably was one of the ‘big mouths’. Still, most children thought that everyone had an equal opportunity to participate. In practice this was mainly realized by the use of duos and smaller groups during the enquiry.

The involvement of the children in philosophy was highly rated by the teachers, apart from the ones who teach group 1 or 2 (the youngest children). In written explanations and also in observations and interviews with the teachers it became clear that teachers find it difficult to involve four-year-old children in philosophical enquiry.

Interestingly, teachers also reported less involvement in group 7/8. What this means is not entirely clear. When we look at the children, there is a lower degree to which they say that philosophy is about things they find interesting (see table 1). However, when we interpret involvement as the degree to which children think about the questions that are discussed in philosophy we see high scores. (see table 2). There is also a small change observable in comparison to group 5/6, but this is not statistically significant.

For our purposes, the answers on the topic ‘I always listen carefully to what other people say’ were very interesting. This topic had the highest average scores in the children’s research, and the spread of answers was not very broad. The score remained high in all groups. Thinking about what is being said and listening to what others say showed high scores across the board. The teachers also found that children listened well to one another. ‘They do it so they can react to each other’, wrote one teacher of group 7/8. ‘If you don’t listen, you can’t join in’, was a child’s reaction from another 7/8 group. Joining is what most children keenly want to do.

Just as high, and for our purpose very interesting, were the scores with regard to autonomy: children formulated their own answers, their contribution to the enquiry was authentic and they contributed independently from others. The response of the teachers showed high average scores and the low standard deviations showed that the picture was consistent. Only with the youngest (group 1/2) was this score a little lower in the perception of the teachers. Children also reckoned that they gave their own opinion (see table 3). ‘Children don’t sit there copying each other. In group 5 they still did, it’s really annoying. But in this class it doesn’t happen anymore’ said a boy in group 7/8. His classmate had an explanation: ‘That’s because we’re a bit older now.’

Children give reasons for their opinions, and they do so more and more spontaneously as they get older, is the conclusion. ‘They develop as they get older’, wrote one of the teachers of group 3/4. This is confirmed when we see...
the results of the children’s research. That younger children (group 1/2) found it hard to give reasons (mainly the four year olds, according to the teachers) is not surprising. From another question we conclude that most children find it hard to think of new reasons, when a point of view has to be defended.

Appreciating differences seems to be a strong result of philosophy with children. Many differences of opinion emerge during philosophizing, according to the teachers. ‘The children often have different opinions’, wrote a teacher of group 1/2, ‘which you mainly see among the older infants’. Another teacher of group 3/4 noted: ‘During a discussion we don’t often get consensus on a subject. There’s always many angles put forward’.

These differences were valued by children with an average score for that item of 4.11. In an interview the children recounted how they especially enjoyed the discussion when there were lots of different opinions. Still, it could be difficult. As a group 7/8 boy described: ‘G. and I talk an awful lot. You know that. I often disagree with him. In his own way, he’s right, but it’s weird. It’s always like that with G., he’s always got an unusual opinion’. ‘He always comes up with something good. But you don’t always get it’, added a classmate. Don’t you ever ask him why? ‘All the time. It is funny, but sometimes it gets on your nerves too.’

Can children deal reasonably with objections and differences of opinion? In all foregoing topics we saw that teachers and children did not rate the practice of philosophy very differently. The trend in their answers was always the same. Not on this particular item, however. The teachers may have too rosy a picture of how children feel about objections and differences of opinion. They seemed to agree on this: yes, children react rationally to objections. But the children themselves said, ‘No, it is annoying when others don’t agree with you’. As children got older this diminished. Maybe this is a growing process. Of course, we may have too many angles put forward. In a way this makes it even more interesting from the perspective of democratic citizenship development: although children do not like to, they still act rationally when differences of opinion arise.

**Is Philosophy with children a democratic practice?**

We have examined communication, during philosophy sessions, about certain aspects that can be considered to indicate the democratic quality of these sessions. The results forming the first phase of the research seem to confirm our main hypothesis: Philosophy with children is – in most of the examined aspects - a democratic practice!

On the subject of equality, we see that the teacher is the dominant source of questions within the philosophical enquiry, and because of this, decisive in its direction and development. Still, we also observe considerable influence from the children. This is chiefly observable in the questions they put to one another, and in the way they react to each other.

Everyone has equal opportunities to participate. The enquiry within the full circle of an entire class of children is mostly dominated by some ‘big mouths’, but by using smaller circles and groups everyone still gets their turn. The involvement of children in the enquiries is high.

The dialogical form and the development of dialogue are prominent in several aspects of philosophizing. At a young age, children already have dialogical attitudes and skills, such as asking one another questions, listening to one another, and these attitudes and skills develop more and more as they get older.

Children mainly express their own opinions, their contribution to the enquiry is authentic and they contribute independently from one another. The four- and five-year-olds sometimes watch each other first, but from group 3 (age 6) upwards they are admirably involved. This even develops further.

Children give reasons for their opinions, and they do so more and more spontaneously as they get older. Even if they find it hard to think of new reasons, when they have to defend their point of view.

Differences of opinion are present during philosophizing and they are valued. Now and then, it can be annoying when someone else disagrees with you. Obviously that does not feel comfortable, but in their reactions that discomfort as children get older – is less and less observable.

Is philosophizing democratic? ‘Sometimes it is, sometimes it isn’t’, said one of the children. ‘When we’re talking, some children think they’re totally right and that others should agree with them. I’ve sometimes done that, I get annoyed with myself, because it’s just wrong, everyone should have their own opinion.’ His classmate is also even-handed: ‘Yes and no, because one time you see it one way and you don’t see it other people’s way. Then you’re so busy thinking about your own opinion, you can’t be wrong. But another time you can be, because together, you always sort it out’.

**Next Steps**

In the foregoing piece we reported on the first exploratory phase of the research project Philosophy for Democracy. Since then, we have started the process of indepth investigation, with a planned trajectory through to 2011. What contribution does philosophizing with children make to the development of democratic skills and attitudes?
On that subject, the main precepts of philosophizing with children make great claims. But in between those main precepts and the learning processes which may or may not occur within children, stand the particular school’s teaching materials and curriculum, and the teachers who interpret and deliver those in their own way. In five schools, our continuing research project aims to discover this: whether and how the previously mentioned curriculum for philosophizing with children leads to learning processes which can be identified as contributing to democratic development.

**After the next steps**

In this article we have reported on the results of the exploratory phase of a research project on philosophy and democracy in classroom. Since it was some years ago that we wrote this, the in-depth phase of the research project is already finished. This research has been completed in a PhD-thesis ‘Philosophy for democracy; thinking, dialogue and diversity in primary education’.

Philosophy with children seeks i.a. to develop children’s critical thinking, their ability to judge and also aims to enhance their dialogical skills and attitudes and to contribute to their dealing with differences. These are important competencies for a citizen in a democratic society. In *Philosophy for democracy* we explore these aims in four primary schools: which contribution does Philosophy with Children make to the development of democratic skills and attitudes? We have used Goodlad’s curriculum model which was further developed by Van den Akker (Goodlad, 1979; Van den Akker, 2003). In this model, a curriculum is divided into six levels: the underlying view or rationale; manuals and other resources; the interpretation by the teacher; the operationalisation of teachers and children in their classes; the experiences of the children and the results of the curriculum. At each of these levels we have examined Philosophy with Children in relation to democratic education.

The main conclusions of the research are that Philosophy with Children in these schools makes an important contribution to the development of to the dialogical skills and attitudes of children, as well as their appreciation of differences, and their ability to deal with those in a positive way. With regard to the contribution that it makes to the development of children’s thinking and judiciousness the results in this study are less convincing. Children in the research schools learn to articulate their thoughts, they make a start with providing arguments for their points of view. The philosophical examination of presuppositions in this thinking, the quality of the arguments used and the meaning of concepts occurs less often.

A summary of the PhD-thesi can be obtained by the first author on request (rob.bartels@inholland.nl).

**References**


**Appendix 1**

**Teacher research question list 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do the children ask questions?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Many questions asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few questions asked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How many children participate in the discussion?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Most children get a chance to speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few children speak a lot and at length</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Involvement in the discussion?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The children are very interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children are quickly distracted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What answers are given by children?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Children give their own answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children copy each others’ answers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do the children give reasons for their opinions?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The children spontaneously come up with reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult for the children to give reasons for their opinions, even when the leader asks for them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do children focus on each other or on the discussion leader?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The children focus on each other and look at each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children focus on the discussion leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Can the children accept criticism from each other?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The children respond rationally to criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children respond emotionally to criticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Can the children defend a point of view?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The children try to think of new arguments on behalf of their point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children don’t react to another point of view with arguments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix 2**

**Children’s research question list 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When we’re philosophizing in the group...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never ask questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I never ask questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never join in and talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I always join in and talk a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some children get much more chance to talk than others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Everyone gets the same chance to talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always think about something else</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I always think hard about what people are saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always say what someone else said</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I always say what I think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never explain why I think something</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I always explain why I think something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never listen to what other people say</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I always listen carefully to what other people say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s annoying when other children don’t agree with me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It’s fun when other children don’t agree with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s about things I’m not interested in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It’s about things I’m interested in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 3
**Teacher research question list 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do the children listen to each other?</td>
<td>They hardly listen to each other at all.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does the class listen to all children equally?</td>
<td>The class listens much better to one or two children than to the rest.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How much do the children value each others' opinion?</td>
<td>The class values the opinions of one or a few children much more than the rest.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do the children try to understand each other?</td>
<td>The children don’t try to understand each other.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do the children ask each other questions?</td>
<td>The children never ask each other questions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do the children focus on each other or on the discussion leader?</td>
<td>The children focus on the discussion leader.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do children react to what other children have to say?</td>
<td>The children hardly react to each other at all.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Are there many different opinions?</td>
<td>There are few different opinions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Can the children accept disagreement from one another?</td>
<td>The children react to disagreement by stopping talking or getting irritated.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix 4
**Children’s research question list 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When we’re philosophizing in the group...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always listen carefully to what other people say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I listen to everyone just the same</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think everyone’s opinion is just as important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always want to know how other children think about something</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always try to understand what other people mean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often ask other children questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it’s fun when there are lots of different opinions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t mind when other children don’t agree with me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s about things I’m not interested in</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Death in Children’s Construction of the World
A German-Japanese Comparison with Gender Analysis

Eva Marsal and Takara Dobashi

Our presentation compares the concepts of Japanese and German primary school children relating to the topic of death, in the context of values education and the ethics of care. This is a project of the German-Japanese Research Initiative on Philosophizing with Children (DJFPK) in the year 2006-2013, which aims to facilitate individual autonomy by enhancing philosophical-ethical judgment. It encourages the application and appropriate transfer of values based on philosophical-ethical knowledge and acquired through independent reflection to the situations of daily life.

Children encounter death as a primary experience in their personal environment and as a secondary experience in the media. Starting from the hypothesis that globalization promotes the exchange of information between differing cultures, our research project, a cultural comparison that also considers gender, investigates how and to what extent the concepts of Japanese and German children differ with regard to:

1. a metaphysical life after death,
2. a genetic life after death, and
3. a social life after death.¹

To ensure that the children’s concepts cover the entire philosophical spectrum, the recorded lessons have been reconstructed as a philosophical dialogue, following the five-finger method of Ekkehard Martens.² That is to say, classroom materials (photographs and stories) provide the necessary prompts to encourage phenomenological, hermeneutical, analytical, dialectical and speculative thinking, in both the critical and creative senses. These two modes of thinking are accompanied throughout by “caring thinking.” With this technique of providing prompts we take up the chain questions of the philosophical riddle game, in which fundamental life questions are derived from one another. According to Huizinga, this primal play was the foundation of culture. We understand philosophizing with children as primal play³ and primal knowledge,⁴ since in this process the children reconstruct images of themselves and their world within a given culture, and then construct them anew.⁵ The lessons were recorded and transcribed so that we could carry out a content-analytical appraisal of the children’s views and their arguments.⁶

1. A background sketch of traditional ideas about death in Japanese culture

In Japan, ideas about death are influenced by an amalgamation of Shintoism, a nature religion, with Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Buddhism presumes that humans are reborn into new, finite lives in accordance with their karma, until they finally succeed in fulfilling the “sacred truths,” living according to the “eightfold path,” and thus reaching Nirvana, the entrance into “a realm that differs radically from the world.”⁷ Shintoists, by contrast, believe that the soul migrates into its world of origin or another world,⁸ or else, alternatively, it remains in a dark border region of this world. Because the latter is always located in visible places such as in the mountains, at the seaside, on the banks of a river, or at the market, there are points of contact with the everyday world. Thus the first ancestor’s soul, which slowly evolves into an anonymous god of being, or even into an Ujigami (guardian of the lineage), can be brought along to the Buddhist death celebration, the Bon festival. Another possibility is that souls are reborn into their descendents.⁹
Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children, Volume 20, Number 3-4

2. A psychological survey of Japanese children’s ideas about death

The most recent study on this topic was carried out by Yoshinobu Hattori in 2001. Hattori surveyed 372 subjects in two primary schools. We cite several of the items here:

Question 5: Do you think that a person who dies will be born again?
Yes ...................... N = 126 (33.9%)
No ...................... N = 126 (33.9%)
Not sure ................ N = 117 (31.5%)

Question 7: Where are people after they die?
Most of the children answered: “They go to heaven or to hell.”
The relevant percentages are not given. Also, it is not clear from the reported results whether the Christian heaven is being referred to here, or a Japanese idea of the hereafter: Ne no Kuni (realm of origin), Yomi no Kuni (realm of night), or the Buddhist ideas of heaven (Meido-Jôdo-Higan, Gokuraku) or hell (Jigoku).

Question 9: Do you think the soul and the world of souls can be found in this world?
Yes ...................... N = 164 (44.1%)
No ...................... N = 122 (32.8%)
Not sure ............... N = 21 (5.6%)

Contrary to the researchers’ expectations, about one-third of the children believed in reincarnation, approximately half affirmed the presence of the soul in their world, and almost all felt that the soul goes to heaven or hell, at least for a time. The study’s authors attributed the connection between the idea of reincarnation and the Buddhist migration of souls not so much to the knowledge and adaptation of Japanese tradition as to the correlation with virtual reality, encountered by the children in computer games and media. It is unclear whether the 126 children who did not subscribe to the idea of reincarnation were guided by the idea that the soul keeps watch over the family as a protective divinity. Children who had already experienced death, in the loss of a pet, for example, developed two aspects of the concept life: the first is the individual life extending from birth to death, and the second is life associated with the immortal soul. Before Ôse develops this aspect further, he brings up the continuation of earthly life through the linking of individual lives in the sequence of generations; and together with the children he works through the life cycle of the praying mantis, which lays its eggs and then dies. He then asks the children whether this means the end of the mantis’s life. The children now grasp the connection: they indicate that life goes on in the offspring, and they transfer this thought to humans.


Two factors guided Toshiaki Ôse in his lesson “Death-Education / Caring-Education”: one was a social situation that was distinguished by escalating death statistics, and the other was his personal situation as a cancer patient who wished to prepare his students for his approaching death. And so, in 2002 he investigated with the fifth-grade children the question: “Is life (Inochi) finite and irreversibly finished when one dies, or does it continue in another form?” The lesson was intended to give the children hope that not everything comes to an end when an individual dies. To illustrate, a short excerpt from the conversation follows:

Ôse: What is Inochi?
Shôji (B): It means that one is alive.
Ôse: That one is alive, and what comes at the end of life, do you think?
Eri (G): Dying.
Ôse: Yes, death, right? Inochi, my Inochi, for example, your Inochi … From what point do we have Inochi?
Kiyokazu (B): I’ve had my Inochi since I was born.
Ichirô (G): My Inochi will last until I die.
Ôse: So your Inochi lasts from birth to death?
Akihiko (B): Between (birth and death)
Ôse: So should one call the “between” Inochi, then? “One is alive” – that is an aspect of Inochi. But is that all Inochi means, only the present life? (…) And I also want to ask you: Does Inochi end when I die, is Inochi finished than? I would like to ask you this. Shôji (B): After one dies the soul (Tamashii) separates from the body.
Ôse: Then is this soul still alive?
Ichirô (B): This soul still lives.
Ôse: Yes. So, when I have died, my soul is still alive.
Shigehiko (B): And your body?
Ôse: The body is dead, has died. Now one more time: “soul” (Tamashii) also means Inochi, that is the other aspect. Do you think so too?

In working on Inochi, the children develop two aspects of the concept life: the first is the individual life extending from birth to death, and the second is life associated with the immortal soul. Before Ôse develops this aspect further, he brings up the continuation of earthly life through the linking of individual lives in the sequence of generations; and together with the children he works through the life cycle of the praying mantis, which lays its eggs and then dies. He then asks the children whether this means the end of the mantis’s life. The children now grasp the connection: they indicate that life goes on in the offspring, and they transfer this thought to humans.
Yoshiko (G): The grasshopper lays eggs and then new ones are born again, and they get bigger again. Taichi (B): The grasshopper produces young ones. Takuro (B): If I would die, my descendents will remain. Kōichi (B): Because the egg was left, the process repeats itself, life comes again and in this way it goes on. Ōsē: So it repeats itself, right? This is what we call Inochi, isn’t it? (the children speak softly) Shihehiko (B): I agree with this way of saying it. You could call it that. Tomokazu (B): It’s the same way with people, too. They have children and the children also reproduce. Ōsē: Inochi is connected with the sequence, like with the grasshoppers. Yuko (G): The descendents are connected with each other, and so, when people continue to reproduce over time Inochi continues. Yoshiko (G): Inochi means both things. Ōsē: Then could we call Inochi a relay race? Kōichi (B): Yes, we could call it that. The second aspect addresses the idea that an individual’s life is not extinguished, because it is passed on within the family.

As a third aspect, Ōsē refers to life continuing through society, and reads his students the picture book “Badger’s Parting Gifts.” As Badger feels death approaching, he bids farewell to each animal with a gift. Mole, who then misses him very much, goes “for a walk on a warm spring day to the hill where he first saw Badger. He wanted to thank his friend for the parting gift. ‘Thank you, Badger’ he said softly, and felt that Badger would hear him. And Badger did indeed.”

Inspired by this story, the children philosophize about how Inochi connects people who are not blood relatives. Kōichi (B) thinks that one “remains in the hearts of friends forever.” Other children say “It is the Inochi that lives on in remembering,” “It is the helping-each-other Inochi” and “it is the eternal Inochi.” Hideki (B) adds, “Through the everlasting Inochi a person could stay attached after death to the people who remain behind.

The children evaluated the lesson very positively. From the many responses we have chosen two:

Maho Wada (G): If I hadn’t learned about Inochi in this lesson, I’d not have thought that we are connected with others in a succession through Inochi.

Misato Ōyama (G): Eternal Inochi is a treasure for a person more important than one’s own body. When the body of the teacher-director has disappeared it will live on in our souls, I think.

Because Ōsē became a Christian and was baptized shortly before he died, he did not bring up the reincarnation idea.

4. Metaphysical, genetic, and social life after death: German children philosophize, based on a replication and continuation of Ōsē’s Inochi-concept

Introduction to the topic was phenomenological: the primary school children were allowed to choose a favorite picture from a multicultural array of cemetery scenes, ranging from cheerful to somber. This was to illustrate the fact that each culture has formed its own unique metaphysical beliefs about death, which appear in different religious symbols such as, for example, an angel watching over a grave or a prayer carved into gravestones. A story, in which children sitting by their grandmother’s grave ask her whether she can hear them, encouraged thinking about whether death is the end of everything. Along with reflective verbalizations, the children made a sensory-aesthetic record of their ideas in drawings, which they then explained to the others.

We made the “relay race of Inochi” (passing life on within the family) concrete by using the question of heredity. Here we presented the story of a girl who had inherited her artistic talents from her grandfather. The children explored the idea of life continuing genetically through inherited physical traits, capabilities, and qualities.

The theme of a social continuation of life was introduced on the personal level by the story of a group of children celebrating the birthday of a friend who had died, and then on the cultural level through the Japanese ritual of the Bon-Festival, where the souls of the ancestors are welcomed for three days and celebrate with their descendents.

Most of the children in the two fourth grade classes of the Peter Hebel School were convinced that individual life goes on in some form even after death; only 5% believed that death represented an ultimate end, as for example in the case of Michelle (G2_10): “When you’re dead, you’re dead. Then nothing else happens,” Or Tim (B1_334): “Well, maybe death is like an empty room in the dark. Without anything, no sound, not a soul there any more, just everything dark.”

(Girl, 10 years old): G2_10 Michelle “Just 3 gravestones, because when you’re dead, you’re dead. Then nothing else happens”
The statement of Sophia (GG 8), in contrast, is a good example of the prevailing opinion: “A person...I mean life, it goes on and on and never stops; when you die, you still live on.” Like the Japanese primary school children, the German children assume that there is a dual system. They suppose that humans are a union of body and soul that is prone to come apart after death, a thought expressed by Elvira (GG 33): “With people, here’s how it is: after they are buried they turn to dust and their spirit goes upward.” On the basis of this duality the children develop different forms of life after death, both immaterial and material gestalt types. In addition, they also distinguish between the individual fate of a given soul (which might live on as a soul, with God or elsewhere, or else be reborn or resurrected) and the continued social life of the complete body-soul union in the memory of the living, as well as the inter-individual transmission of genes to descendants.

In the following, we present the children’s ideas using category systems and conversation protocols. Each argument was quantified; that is, the sum of the units “N” indicates the number of times each argument was used.

### 4.1 The individual’s metaphysical afterlife: Is the soul immortal?

First we present the outlook of the German children with regard to a continued life of the soul. At the study’s outset, 3% of participating children stated that they could not comment on this because it was epistemically impossible to do so. For example, Norbert (K1_290) stated: “Jonas said that if you read the Bible you’ll know it, but the people who wrote the Bible weren’t even dead yet.” Or Larissa (M1_27) wishes: “I would really like to know what happens when you are dead, whether you go to heaven or are born again or are just dead and nothing else happens…. I’d like to know that, because the stupid thing is, when you’re dead and you know it, you can’t tell anyone about it any more.” But this epistemic impossibility of determining the truth does not prevent the children from developing and testing their own subjective theories within the classroom community of inquiry.

#### Category System: Metaphysical Afterlife

**Raw Data and Percentages**

**German Primary School Children:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GB</th>
<th>GB (%)</th>
<th>GG</th>
<th>GG (%)</th>
<th>Totals (Items)</th>
<th>Totals (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life goes on in heaven</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reincarnation as human / animal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life goes on as (part of the ) earth</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot know</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death as final end</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most striking is the number in the 2nd category, reincarnation. One-third of the children presume that the soul will be reborn. This unusually high number for Germany results from the fact that 25% of the girls think there may be a transmigration of souls.
Although one-third of the Japanese children also share this value, the responses of the German children reflect not so much a familiarity with Buddhist religion as wishful thinking. Lea (GG 277), for example, tells this story: “Back when I was younger, I kept on thinking that maybe my great grandfather was an animal or something, so then I always said ‘Hello’ to animals.” Or Sophia (GG 280) says: “I got cats, and (...) then I used to always think that it was my great grandfather, my cat, and then I always said his name.”

Nina (G2_20) offers another form of the reincarnation idea: “Well, I think about it some, when a person dies, that (...) my soul goes on to the next child. I mean, ... at the exact moment when I die, that maybe somewhere, like in a hospital or in someone’s home, a new child is born and it gets my soul.” According to Norbert (B1_344), rebirth can also take place in heaven and be repeated there indefinitely.

The boys have the same response profile as the girls. That is, the boys are very interested in the question of the soul’s fate after its separation from the body, because they expect to face the consequences of their actions at that time. They assume, in other words, that the moral conduct of their lives will have an effect on the continued existence of their souls. In this sense Oskar (GB 2) states: “I think that you...that the people who did good in their lives will get into paradise, and those who did bad things will go to hell.” Especially important to the boys is the idea that they can no longer make ethical mistakes in heaven. Thus Oskar (GB 118) says: “You don’t think about bad things and so on any more.” Dennis (GB 119) expresses the hope: “Maybe it’s as if life started again from the beginning in heaven.” Jan (GB 120) summarizes: “In heaven you are immortal, so to speak. You get older and older there, and at some point you are 200 and you still haven’t died.”

The dialogue then brings up the question of whether there is enough room for everyone in heaven:

B1_296 Balduin: But if all dead people go to heaven, there wouldn’t be enough room, would there?
B1_298 Jonas: Heaven is actually infinite, isn’t it?
G1_302 Viktoria: But if there’s enough room for all
the people on earth, why shouldn’t there be enough
room in heaven?
G1_304 Iva: But on earth people die, and then they
go away again, and then there is room for everyone.
If people didn’t die, then there wouldn’t be enough
room.
G1_308 Rashida: When I was at a cemetery,
someone told me that only the most important part
goes upward, because you might not necessarily
need your legs and so on, only the most important
things go with.
F1_309: Mh, mh. What is the most important?
G1_310 Rashida: … for example, the soul, the
heart, things like that.

As a tentative solution, Rashida suggests that the soul
is not physical and thus does not take up space. But it
apparently the conception of a being without a physical body
is quite difficult for the children to grasp, since the same
space problem arose in their discussion of the proposition
that souls remain on earth or else return to it as ghosts or
guardian angels:

G2_114 Viktoria: Well, what Anna said, that maybe
the ghosts then just keep living on earth…but the
ghosts, it could be that they can feel each other’s
presence; but then at some point the whole earth,
and the ghosts, would be crowded together.
B2_120 Moritz: Then people couldn’t run any
more, because they wouldn’t have any more room.
Because you can’t go through ghosts, because
somehow they also take up space, otherwise.....
G2_134 Viktoria: It could be that if several people
die, then there would be just too many guardian
angels.

Another question that greatly preoccupied the German
children was the actionistic one, asking what the souls
do for such a long time in heaven. A condition that never
changes for all eternity does not seem to them worth having,
and so they talk about various metamorphoses, such as the
transformation into a star or an angel.

G2_30 Rashida: I was thinking that when you’ve
been in heaven for a long time, you turn into a star.
B2_48 Norbert: Maybe the souls get trained there
and then they come down again as angel assistants.
B2_50 Moritz: Um, who gives them the training?
B2_52 Patrick: God.
G2_56 Michelle: Probably an angel who’s in
heaven.
After the community of inquiry had thus cleared up the fate of the soul in what the members found to be a satisfactory process of argumentation, it moved on to the second component of its dual theory. There is soon agreement about the material development of the body. The children agree on a biological nature concept. As an example we cite here Sophia (GG 28): “When they die they live in the earth, that is, then they turn into earth....” and also Johannes (GB 30): “and then they live on as earth.”

4.2 Linking individual lives within the generational sequence: genetic continuation of life.

The philosophical conversation about genetic continuation of life was introduced by Lea through the idea of family lineage (GG 44) “I just wanted to say [...] if a father’s daughter, say, has children, then [...] the family line also is carried on, and then they die again and then they have children again.” In dialogue, the children arrive at the idea that genes are passed along through the generations. They approach this phenomenon by noting resemblances to earlier generations, similarities in appearance, temperament, traits of character, and capabilities.

### Category System – Genetic Life after Death – Raw Data and Percentages – German Primary School Children: GB = German Boys / GG = German Girls (N=153)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living on in Descendants</th>
<th>GB (Items)</th>
<th>GB (%)</th>
<th>GG (Items)</th>
<th>GG (%)</th>
<th>Total (Items)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical body</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capabilities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character traits</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diagram of the arguments in percentages, German primary school children (N= 153)

Diagram of the arguments of boys vs. girls in percentages, German primary school children (N= 153)
The category “physical body” scores highest. This ranking derives from the beauty-conscious girls who primarily presumed that their physical characteristics were inherited. Boys, for example Balduin (B2_202), mainly defined their place in the generational relay in terms of their competencies: “My Papa said once that his Papa was an engineer and calculated sluices and things, and he said I got it from him that I’m so good in math, I got that from him.”

During their discussion the children encounter two problems:

1. Isn’t it true that there really is an end, for example if someone has no children? Their solution is the theory of genetic distribution: “And if both of them don’t get married, then, um, the grandpa has probably... then mostly there are also relatives, you know, that you’ve never even met.” (Miro GB 56)

2. What is the significance of unique traits, qualities, or capabilities? Do they interrupt the family bond, the relay race of Inochi? In this sense Miro (GB 78) asks: “But then what happens if I have, say, something that no one else in our family has?” Sophia (GG 80) responds by pointing out, “Sometimes it can happen, like with twins, [...] that in some way, like in their hair, they don’t look alike.” In other words, in spite of the genetic correspondences there can be differences; individual singularity does not mean that the link with the ancestors has been broken.

### 4.3 The perpetuation of the individual’s life in memory: social life after death

For the children, good memories are very meaningful. Balduin sums up their meaning for a social life after death in the words of his mother (J2_265): “My Mama once said that people who are dead live as long as we keep thinking of them.” The children talk about what they miss most, as when Jennifer (GG 192) says: “Um, well, my great-grandma died, and before that it was still so nice, because she always baked such good things.”

**Category System – Inochi – Living on through the others**

**Raw Data and Percentages: German Primary School Children:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>GB (Items)</th>
<th>GB (%)</th>
<th>GG (Items)</th>
<th>GG (%)</th>
<th>Total (Items)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rites of remembrance (Place/Time)</strong></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal recollection</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Official aids to remembrance in the form of rites and customs are in first place (70%). Anna (G3_168) sees a relationship between place and time: “Many people go somewhere at special times, to the Rhine, for example, or to a place where they celebrated a birthday or something else that made it an especially nice day.”

Personal recollection is also an emotional bridge, as for example with Anne (G3_82): “My uncle who died two years ago, he gave me a radio, and he was a very special person for me. Whenever I turn on the radio, it makes me sad.” Like Toshiaki Ôse, the children feel that life itself connects them with those who went before.

GG 258: Sophia: For my grandma, I’m her treasure. A part of her. The life part.
GG 261: Lea: The family part.
GG 263: Tschiau: Maybe that’s....deep in grandma’s heart.

Many draw the same conclusion from this as Elvira (GG 278): “People don’t need to be sad any more. They can also think about the good times they had with the person who died.”

### 5. Evaluation of the approach through the children’s self-assessments

At the conclusion of our research process, we wanted to know how the children assessed reflecting about death through group conversation in the classroom. After all, talking about death is a taboo not only in Japan, but also in Germany. This makes it especially burdensome for children to come to terms with this difficult existential topic.

While Nina reports positive feelings about remembering her grandfather again during the discussion of the death
theme (“it was also nice...because talking about this made me remember my Grandpa again”), Somäa and Rashida exemplify ambivalent attitudes. On the one hand, they find thinking about the topic “death” quite difficult and become anxious. Somäa (G3_174) emphasizes: “It could also happen that some children talking about a topic like this might be afraid that now maybe they will die too.” On the other hand, they find the treatment of the topic liberating, as Rashida (G3_172) points out: “It’s like this: it’s true that this is hard for children to learn about, but when they know it, in the end, then they feel freer, for sure.”

This feeling can be attributed first of all to the fact that, for most of the children, death was affirmed to be “not final” and was associated with hopes for various forms of living on after death. The information about the Bon Festival was also important to the children, because here a customary practice prevented the dead from being forgotten. They found the cheerful character of this festival very appealing.

Second, the children felt liberated by their long conversation about the process of dying itself, and they were consoled to learn that not every death involves pain or represents a release from pain. It was also liberating for them to exchange their fantasies and anxiously guarded speculations, which had been rejected by adults: for example, their belief that grandparents lived on in family pets and were thus still present for them. Because their assertions were neither ridiculed nor treated with scorn in the classroom community of inquiry, but were instead received with interest and developed further in a respectful discussion, they experienced the conversation about this tabooed topic as a relief. This is evident as the “dam bursts” at the end of the inquiry process. An above-average number of children gave detailed reports at this point about their own experiences with death or their fears related to it, as in the case of Sapri (B3_184): “I almost died, too. I fell from the 5th floor. That was last year.” The children’s feedback surveys, derived from American self-evaluation questionnaires, also revealed that they assessed this inquiry process with all its problematic aspects as positive.

**Analysis of Feedback Questionnaires**

**Sorted by Gender, Assessments in Percentages**

**G = Girl, B = Boy**

**Statement 1: “I did my best.”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-assessment in %</th>
<th>10 – 49%</th>
<th>50 – 79%</th>
<th>80 – 100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Statement 2: “I treated others with respect.”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-assessment in %</th>
<th>10 – 49%</th>
<th>50 – 79%</th>
<th>80 – 100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the girls are found in the top range (80–100 %) on all three self-evaluations: “I did my best”; “I treated the others with respect”; and “I paid attention to the arguments of others.” Most of the boys were in the middle field (50–79%). This self-perception generally accords with the outside observations and transcripts.

**6. The intercultural perspective**

The intercultural perspective of this lesson enabled the children to develop comprehensive concepts related to the themes death, the finite nature of life, and the various forms of living on after death. Although the German children’s statements also showed the influence of their culture and the media, they still had a much greater opportunity than did the Japanese children to develop their own ideas in group exploration supported by the classroom community of inquiry. Öse was not so much interested in using his prompts to culturally enrich the children as he was in using them to console the children by sharing his concept of Inochi. Quantitative research in the schools, on the other hand, inquires only about conditions as they are, with no possibility for offering enhancements to knowledge or understanding. In our study we were able to show that the community of inquiry promotes not only the transfer of culture but also the development of autonomous, reflective, and age-appropriate pictures of the world.

**Endnotes**


7 Küng / Bechert (1998) p. 35
8 Satô, Masahide, Nippon ni okeru Shi no Kannen (The View of Death in Japan), in: Sei to Shi (Life and Death) Tokio: Tokyo-daigakusyuppankai, 1992, p. 48.


11 Satô, p. 48.

Building on Lipman’s Legacy
The Creation of a Portuguese P4C Curriculum

Maria Figueiroa-Rego

Abstract
To what extent can Lipman’s P4C materials be universally applied? The Portuguese Curriculum on Philosophy with Children and Youth is designed as an answer to this question. A number of difficulties arise in translating these IAPC materials. In linguistic terms – and generally speaking – it is may be an easy, simple task to translate from one language to another, but how is it possible to translate cultural contexts? Ordinary practices within a given culture may be seen as odd or even absurd to another. In such cases, the text remains distant to the reader hindering his/her empathy with the characters in the story.

Introduction
Today, a range of materials are being produced under the label of Philosophy for Children. Yet, it is not always clear or easy to grasp what notion of P4C they convey. What can be considered acceptable as Philosophy for Children? More than 30 years after Matthew Lipman founded the movement, it would be important to define what exactly is the nature of ‘doing philosophy for children’. Once a clearly defined concept is established, it may prove easier to innovate with the quality that this program requires.

P4C is often associated with critical thinking. It is important to establish a distinction between the whole and its parts, since critical thinking is but a part of what this program is or can be. In creating a Portuguese P4C Curriculum, an attempt was made to embrace an anthropological view of human rationality, which implies more than a set of reasoning skills. Unlike Lipman, we believe that the quality of literary texts matters. Contents also matter. Without neglecting a concern for the formal structure of reasoning, its improvement it is not our exclusive goal. We have assumed that this was Lipman’s intention as well. Our purpose it is not to create future sophists or politicians, but rather to help form responsible as well as sensible or reasonable citizens.

Like Dewey (1966), we believe this is a task for the present time, not just for the future. The school should become a society in itself, not merely a stage of ‘rehearsal’ for societal life in the future.

Furthermore, the implementation of this program worldwide will necessarily face cultural challenges. Changes will undoubtedly have to be made so that Lipman’s stories can make sense in different cultural contexts, and in different traditions. Working on a clear definition of P4C could possibly serve as a guideline to establish just how far one can go in this work of adaptation without betraying the essence of a philosophical and pedagogical practice, such as ‘doing philosophy with children and youth’.

American cultural bias in Lipman’s novels
One of the many advantages of Lipman’s Philosophy for Children is the fact that it was created based on a certain view of rationality, that is to say, on a certain anthropological perspective. Indeed, P4C is not merely one more critical thinking program. It is not just another set of skills to be sharpened in order to improve one’s reasoning ability.

Many of the materials used in Lipman’s program are philosophical stories (novels) for children as well as guiding books for teachers (manuals), the latter serving to support the work developed in the former. The novels set the themes to be discussed, present in the texts read by students. Reading becomes the essential condition for the ensuing discussions. The manuals follow the contents of the novels, fostering and strengthening related and/or implied skills. Each novel tends to have a characteristic theme. In ‘Elfie’, for example, making distinctions is a major concern in terms of skills to be developed as well as a key theme in the story. The major concern in ‘Kio & Gus’ is with our knowledge and perception of nature, and the use of our senses. ‘Harry’s’ is all about Aristotelian logic. In ‘Lisa’, ethics is the main theme, whereas in ‘Suki’, aesthetic inquiry takes the central role. ‘Mark’ on the other hand, focuses on political issues. ‘Pixie’ was left out of this list on purpose due to its eclectic nature – to highlight a single theme or skill is very difficult, since there are so many important aspects covered in this novel. If we ask the question: in which of these programs do we find the anthropological richness that has been our concern thus far, the answer could be in none of them as well as in all of them. As a theme per se, it is not to be

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found in any of Lipman’s stories in his P4C curricula, since they are all devoted to a special specific theme. These themes are too narrow to embrace such a broad field as anthropology, exception made for ‘Pixie’. It is a fact that Lipman never intended his stories to be considered as works of art, master pieces or literary treasures. They were written to fulfill a specific purpose: promoting children’s wondering about something. In this respect, they are but tools for inquiry. One may argue that the characters in these novels are expected to be regarded as role models. They are to be taken as examples, as inquiry developers, through their actions, interactions or performances. In this respect, they may perform an anthropological function. However, it is in the P4C methodology that we can truly find an anthropological dimension, in its practice articulated with the goals embodied in its theoretical grounds.

Creating a Portuguese Curriculum for Doing Philosophy with Children and Youth

To what extent is P4C dependent on its cultural environment? What difficulties may emerge from its practice in different cultural settings? It is not the aim of this paper to provide a general universal answer to such a question, but rather to provide an example of a specific case. For a variety of reasons, translations of Lipman’s novels are not easily found in Portugal, whether by students, teachers, schools, or the general public. As a result, the IAPC version of ‘Philosophy for Children’ had little ground to prosper. The idea of creating new curricula to apply the P4C methodology clearly became a necessity. The first aspect to take into account was the results of many years of doing philosophy with children using Lipman’s materials (novels and teachers’ guides). How did children and teachers related to them? In terms of the novels, children seemed to accept them very well; yet they sometimes felt the need to come to know the story as a whole, which would usually take two or three years to accomplish.

One of the main criticisms from teachers of this program was the extent of the novels, given their concern with the full understanding of the story, with the lack of closure to the narrative. Furthermore, when trying to translate Lipman’s novels into Portuguese, there were at times cultural obstacles. For instance, in the translation of ‘Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery’, it was hard to translate the expression ‘liqueur store’ in cultural terms, since wine is for sale along with spirits generally in any regular supermarket. To pledge allegiance to the national flag within a classroom context is simply not done in Portugal.

But the dilemma here is an extremely rich one: which values should prevail in our daily life: political or religious? Family values or state values? It is almost like transferring Antigone’s dilemma to our days! Unfortunately, it is too hard, not to say virtually impossible, to translate this fully into our national cultural/political reality. Some European countries have chosen to solve this problem by adapting the narratives to the situation, such as standing up while the national anthem is being played. It is hardly the same, since it leaves out the religious dimension altogether, not to mention the abstract thinking involved here: to worship, to venerate ideals over objects.

There is a very interesting dilemma within the creation of these types of materials – to choose to reflect on your own culture with its particularities, or to aim at universal questions that anyone, anywhere could relate to. The only reason for this to be an either/or question has to do with its international application. We tried to avoid contents that our expected ‘public’ could not relate to or fully grasp due to their alien nature in cultural terms. This is not to say that these materials can only work in our national context. Those judgments can only be made following their international application.

Taking all these aspects into consideration, it seemed wiser to create a new P4C curriculum, in which texts from Portuguese literature should be introduced. These texts were not, however, written specifically to fit the purpose, as in the case of Lipman’s. We assumed a basic guiding principle that good readings help foster good writing. The texts had to be selected according to certain criteria. Taking into account the teachers’ views on the length of the P4C novels, short stories were considered. In terms of contents, stories should be ‘open’, i.e., free from moral judgments, and be intriguing as well as captivating. In order to avoid getting lost in the midst of Portuguese literature that has so much to offer, a conceptual framework was drawn up so that texts could be selected according to whether they provided solid elements to structure this curriculum. This also proved an opportunity to highlight the anthropological character of this program, starting from the materials themselves, together with its theoretical grounds and practical methodology.

The conceptual framework encompasses three major categories: I- Personal identity (under the question of ‘Who am I?’); II- Others (‘Who are those I relate to/do not relate to?’); and, III – Interaction (‘Where do I interact with? Where do I belong? What do I belong to?’). In ‘I- Personal identity’, issues are addressed such as the question of one’s name, tastes and preferences, actions, thoughts and speeches. Having the human person as an absolute starting point results in promoting self-discovery of one’s reality (at the personal as well as the social levels, yet under an individual and existential perspective). II- Others, emphasizes the fact that we are not alone; there are others – some like us, some different from us. This covers aspects from family and friends to different associations/organizations one might belong to, including one’s school. Finally, in III- Interaction, there are issues to be considered
such as citizenship, one’s duties as well as one’s rights that are directly related to the quality of our acting together in a community. All these questions were taken into account in selecting the texts (short stories or poems) to be addressed in P4C sessions – and the age factor as well, i.e., to choose wisely according to the potential readers. These P4C curricula are divided into four different levels. ‘Level I’ goes from the final year of kindergarten to the 2nd grade of basic education. Portuguese children start kindergarten at the age of 3; by their final year, they are 5 years old. Therefore, this level is meant for children aged 5 to 7 years. Children start going to school ‘for real’ at the age of 6, but as a rule, their reading and writing skills have yet to be developed, a situation which should be reflected in the suggestions presented in the ‘Teachers’ Guides’, where painting and writing exercises and activities take turns.

‘Level II’ is aimed at children who already master their reading and writing abilities, i.e., children aged 8 and 9 years. The stories do not focus so intensively on emotional references, such as toys and pets; they gradually become more serious and less baby-like.

‘Level III’ is devoted to work with preadolescents, aged 10 to 12, while ‘Level IV’ is meant for the final years of basic education, i.e., 12-15 year-olds. There is no level meant for secondary school since the Portuguese official curricula already encompasses the teaching of a philosophy program, although the approach is completely different. This was a choice made in order to avoid overlapping two programs on the same subject matter.

In terms of producing manuals or teachers’ guides, Lipman’s format was followed, i.e., they include ‘Discussion Plans’ and ‘Exercises’, along with two new items: ‘Activities’ and ‘Games’.

‘Activities’ are exercises that imply some sort of mobility, physical exercise, or action. In general terms, ‘Games’ start from a virtual, hypothetical scenario in which actions and choices have to be made and/or justified. As a rule, they are entertaining as well as logical. The participants have to think really hard while playing these games, but they are such a joy that they are barely aware of the effort involved.

To sum up, the Portuguese National P4C Curriculum consists of 4 sub-programs according to different age levels, to be introduced in schools, covering all school years from the end of kindergarten to high-school. It is currently being tested in a small number of schools engaged in conducting a pilot-experience using these materials and Lipman’s methodology. The results are to be reported to the Ministry of Education in order to help promote its gradual application throughout the country. The development of the Portuguese P4C Curriculum was undertaken as part of post-doctoral research funded by FCT (The Foundation for Science and Technology), and it took place at the University of Porto. It involved six years of work and the constitution of a research team to coordinate this experiment. Introducing it in the Portuguese educational system is the natural outcome of such an educational research project.

An example taken from the Portuguese Curriculum on Philosophy for Children and Youth - the Snail and the Sea (story and teachers’ guide)

The Snail and The Sea is a story written by António Torrado, one of the most well-known authors of Portuguese children’s literature. The story was selected, and the corresponding teachers’ guide prepared, for work in Philosophy for Children and Youth within an age range of 5 to 7 years.

We would like to conclude this paper by presenting a sample of an adaptation of the P4C curriculum format (based on Lipman’s theoretical principles and methodology) with the introduction of texts (short stories or poems) from Portuguese Literature.

The Sea and the Snail
By António Torrado
Translated by Joaquina Caeiro

There was once a snail who, along with his shell, carried an ambition with him, the dream of a young snail: to see the sea. To fulfill his dream, he was prepared to face anything. Slowly, patiently, he followed a trail. Where it ended, he did not know. Along the way, he asked: “Miss Ant, could you please tell me if I’m on the right trail to the sea?”

“I wouldn’t know. I don’t know what you are talking about. I only know the anthill where I live, and it gives me more than enough work!”

The snail didn’t want to delay the busy, exasperated ant… Farther ahead, he came across a lizard. He asked him the same question, to which the lizard, between two yawns, replied: “Forget adventures, my friend. It feels so good to enjoy the hot sun while taking a good nap!”

After saying this, he fell asleep. The snail, embarrassed, didn’t wake him up again. He continued onwards. He left, on the grass, a glittering slime, which he intended to use on his way back. “I’ll soon be at the sea! I’ll soon be at the sea!” He kept repeating very cheerfully, rubbing his little antennae against each other.

Then, he came across a cricket. “The sea is a short way from here, isn’t it, Mr. Cricket?”

“The sea, the sea is probably there, but then again, it may be somewhere else… When I say there, I can also say over there.” The snail left the cricket juggling with his vain speeches and discretely turned his back on him.

He crawled and crawled. He saw other animals, all of
which concerned with their own lives and alien to the sea.

The snail crawled and crawled. 

Slowly, because he could only crawl slowly, the snail, who had started his adventure at an early age, was feeling old. He was really very old, but not tired. That was impossible. Near a cane plantation, he saw a frog, which was an animal he had never seen before. Very politely, he asked her the same question: The frog answered, in a smiling croak: “The sea, the sea is right over there. You’ll get there in two leaps.”

Unfortunately, the old snail couldn’t leap. And, besides, his shell was weighing heavy upon him. So, it took him another year, two months and eight days to get to the place the frog had pointed to. But, when he arrived… how dazzling! Yes, it was the sea, his beloved sea, which he had so dearly wished to know.

There it was, wide, looking like glass, stretching as far as the eye can see. In the distance, he could see more cane plantations. “Another land, a strange land, beyond the sea…”, he thought.

The calm waters reflected the two little antennae of the old snail, who was peering from the bank. He had finally fulfilled the dream of his whole life. It felt so good!

Slowly, very slowly, the snail made his way back home. He’d have a lot to tell!

Poor snail! Little did he know that he hadn’t gotten to the sea, but only to a small lake of quiet waters, rain waters and they were very ugly, dirty and swarming with mosquitoes… Well, a pond amongst cane plantations. What does it matter? It might not be the sea, the real sea, but it surely was the sea of that adventurous snail.

Teacher’s Guide for ‘The Snail and the Sea’
by M. Figueiroa-Rego

About this story:

This story by Antonio Torrado tells us about a snail and its lifetime dream, its true and only ambition - to see the sea! This is a very rich text in philosophical terms that you can use and work with your students. First of all, what is a dream exactly? What meanings can this term assume? What is a dream when understood as an ambition, as a life project? This is the sort of dream that one endeavors to achieve while awake – thus it is a conscientious one. It is a tremendous will striving to succeed. All things considered, this dream is nothing more, nothing less than a leitmotif, a meaning for one’s existence, a purpose for living, a goal to live by.

It is interesting to note that this type of dream constitutes an individual project that is not always shared or even understood by others, by those one is surrounded by. In spite of its slow-moving pace which implied a substantial amount of effort and time in its locomotion, the snail never gave up on his quest to reach the sea. Let us take the lizard as an example. It would surely be much easier for this animal to undertake such a project, taking into account its speediness and agility. Yet such an enterprise was not appealing to the lizard – all it wanted to do was to lie still enjoying the warmth of a sunbath. Although blessed with extraordinary skills for locomotion, it was attracted precisely to the pleasures arising from a state of motionless, of immobility. It was not therefore interested in such an adventure.

Let us focus now on the ant. For this insect, locomotion would not be a problem but rather a question of time, since it was caught up in the midst of an organizational process. It was far too busy and so stressed that it hardly had time to answer the snail’s query. Besides, the ant was too restricted to its own routine to be able to have any other sort of life experience than that which it repeated to exhaustion. Apart from the anthill, it knew nothing of the world nor did it find interest in anything that was not related to its routine. It was an extremely well-organized being, no doubt, but a very limited one.

As the narrative evolves, we find different characters with different time and space perceptions applied to the snail’s quest. Depending on their physical constitution or way of living, these characters give the snail different answers about how long it would take to accomplish its dream. They evaluate the distance according to their perceptive and to their time-space coordinates, life experience and motion skills. All these make us wonder how can we objectively evaluate distances? We probably do it as a rule by taking something as a reference. In order to reach some sort of agreement in terms of what can be considered ‘far’ and ‘near’, we have something we can all safely rely upon: time and space measurements. We can then objectively say that the ocean is 10 km away, for instance. This statement can be universally understood. Yet, for some, it could mean that the ocean is near, whereas for others, it could mean that it is far way. If you are travelling by car, it is not all that far; but if you are walking, there is a very different time perception altogether. In the end, it is very difficult to escape this relativism regarding the way we perceive time and space and - in this particular case - in the way we perceive distances. Our sensorial experience cannot be objectively translated to others, at least not in absolute terms; nevertheless it is real for us, since we have lived it and live by it. Experience is real in existential terms, with all the ambiguities it bears.

Furthermore, the way we relate to our surrounding reality is framed by our life experience. What the sea represents to you depends on the way you have related to it during your lifetime. Depending on what one’s life experience might have been it affects the way one feels and what one knows about the sea. For instance, if your relationship with the sea is one of leisure or one of labor, this reflects on your appreciation of it. The way a child relates to the sea is not
necessarily the same as that of an adult. By the same token, your relationship to the sea is not the same depending on whether you know how to swim or not, for example.

But the unexpected ending to this story raises another question: did the snail really managed to see the sea? Did he succeed in his quest, or not at all? Is the sea what we think the sea is? Or what we want it to be? Or even what we believe it to be? Can the sea ever be the same to everyone? The lifetime dream of the snail turned out to be reaching a pond, not the sea, the real sea. Does it mean that its dream turned out to be nothing but an illusion?

If the sea looks calm and peaceful on some days and turbulent on others, is it always the same sea? And if it looks blue on some days, or at certain times, and more greenish on others, how can we ever be sure that we know the real sea, since it does not remain the same forever?

Themes:
- Ambition
- Dreams
- Probably
- Being/feeling old
- Time-space relationships
- Impossible things
- A lifetime dream
- The sea

Discussion Plan: Having an ambition
1. Can it be a bad thing to want something desperately? Can you give an example?
2. Can it be a good thing to want something desperately? Can you give an example?
3. Is it possible to get something without having to want it really badly?
4. Is it possible not to get something we want really badly?
5. What does it take to have that which you really want?

Discussion Plan: Dreams
1. Is it possible to have a dream without being asleep?
2. What is the relationship between dreaming and really wanting something?
3. Can a dream be an idea?
4. In what ways is a dream like a movie picture?
5. Is having a dream the same thing as having a will?
6. When someone says: “It’s just like a dream”, what does it mean?
7. Would it make a difference if there were no such thing as dreams?
8. Why do we have dreams?
9. How do the dreams we have while we sleep differ from the snail’s dream, which was being able to see the sea?
10. Can we have dreams while daydreaming?

Activity: Dreams (sweets)
For the teacher: Take some sweets called ‘dreams’ to your class. While students are enjoying the treat invite them to enquire about the name given to that dessert, what possible reasons could have justified such a coincidence.

Activity: A lifetime dream
The snail’s lifetime dream was to see the sea. Write a small text, poem or make a drawing letting us know what your lifetime dream is all about. Can it ever come true? What would it take for it to come true?

Exercise: Probably
In the following sentences what do you think the word ‘probably’ means?

a. If you haven’t eaten anything yet you are probably starving by now.

b. To walk into a lion’s cage is probably not the best way to know this animal better.

c. If you do not pay attention in school you’re probably not learning as much as you could.

d. Most probably, you’ll get presents at Christmas.

e. It doesn’t seem possible to stop thinking but you’ve probably realized it already.

f. At this point, you probably know what ‘probably’ means.

Discussion plan: Being/feeling old
1. What is it to be old?
2. Is it possible for someone to be old without having lived many years already?
3. What is it to feel old?
4. What can make someone feel old?
5. Is it possible for a young person to feel old?
6. Is it possible for an old person to feel young?
7. What is the relationship between having lived a lot and feeling/being old?
8. Starting from what age are we suppose to feel old?
9. Can you feel your age?
10. Can you own your age?
11. Can you feel an age that is not yours?

Exercise: Space-time relationships
1. Taking into account the distance between two opposite walls in your classroom, how much time (a lot or very little) would it take for the following beings to get from one side to the other:
	a) An ant
	b) A fly
	c) A frog
d) A snail
e) A grown-up person
f) A child
2. Who would be the quickest?
3. If the distance is the same for all of them, how come they would all take different times to cross it?

Exercise: Impossible things
What do you consider as being impossible to happen and why is it so:
a. A flying elephant?
b. Time running backwards?
c. Water falling from the sky?
d. Water climbing up to the sky?
e. Numbers coming to an end?
f. A dream coming true?
g. To know it all?
h. To be in two places at the same time?

Activity: The Sea
Invite your students to listen to sea-related music such as, for instance, Debussy’s The Sea in ‘From dawn to noon on the sea’ (9:40) or ‘The Sea’, by Rimsky-Korsakov in ‘Scheherazade, Symphonic Suite from 1001 Nights’ (13:07). You may even suggest a comparative hearing of both pieces, whose time length is indicated between brackets. In this case, it would be advisable to engage a whole Philosophy with Children and Youth session in it. You may, of course, have a different choice of music as long as it is suitable for this line of work.

Game (I): How do you relate to/perceive the sea?
Distribute the following characters among your students. According to their character, ask each of them how they feel/think about the sea:
1. A lifeguard
2. An adult swimmer
3. A child
4. A fisherman
5. A painter
6. Someone who doesn’t know how to swim
7. A blind person
8. Someone who has never seen the sea before
9. A fisherman’s wife
10. A surfer
11. A marine biologist
12. A woman fishmonger

Discussion plan: Game (II): How do you relate to/perceive the sea?
After having played this game, ask your students:
1. Has each of the different characters looked at the sea in the same exact way as the others?
2. Does a blind person perceive the sea in the same way as, for instance, a fisherman?
3. Are there as many seas as sea viewers?
4. Is the sea but one and the same in spite of its viewers?
5. The poet Alexandre O’Neill wrote: “There is sea and sea; there is going and returning”. What could this mean?

References
Abstract

The article deals with the problems, troubles and successes of P4C in Russia. There is a description of the first steps of it, contemporary situation, and author’s reasoning about it through the discussion with opponents. P4C in Russia started from the meeting of Nina Yulina and Matthew Lipman more than 20 years ago.

In memory of Nina Yulina

I met Nina Yulina firstly when I was a PhD student. Before that I pretty well knew her works in the sphere of American philosophy which I used to study American Protestantism. It was the subject of my PhD dissertation. In terms of scientific authority - for me, she was on the top. Our first meeting was very short. I got a qualified consultation that helped me to finish my research. Then I got my PhD in philosophy and started my philosophy teaching at the Pedagogical University (1987). In 1992 I organized philosophical games for children in Moscow and soon I met N.Yulina again at a conference in my University. I was surprised that she had started writing on philosophy for children. How did it happen?

At the Perestroyka period Russian scientists for the first time got a chance to cooperate with their foreign colleagues on a wider scale. Nina Yulina was known within the philosophical circles of the USA since for many years she had been studying American philosophy and spread the information about it among her compatriots. As she told me herself, one day she got a phone call and a lovely voice asked her if she wanted to go to the University Of Montclair (USA) in order to learn about the “Philosophy for children” Curriculum. The inviting party was, for sure, supposed to cover all the expenses. Matthew Lipman was the one calling. It’s easy to guess what kind of answer Nina gave. That’s how she got acquainted with the program

After her visit to the USA, Nina became an advocate of “reasonable thinking development” according to Lipman’s Curriculum. She organized a visit of Lipman and his followers to Russia, wrote and published two books and a number of articles explaining the value of the Curriculum being used in more than 40 countries of the world. Her first book “Philosophy for children” was brought out in 1996, and the second one - in 2005, the both books were very interesting to philosophers and pedagogues. From 1992 to 1998 her seminar on “Philosophy for children” worked at the Institute of Philosophy of Russian Academy of Science, which resumed its work in 2009 for short period. The seminar has its purpose to prepare coaches and teaching pedagogues.

Before I met Nina for the second time I never knew about the Curriculum. This was the period of 1990s and by that time I had already published the first book on my method “Philosophical games for children and adults” (hereafter referred to as PG) (Merry Wisdom M., 1994). Having got acquainted with Lipman’s curriculum, I noticed many coincidences with my ideas. Lipman’s works enriched my own practices greatly. I am especially pleased to recollect in memory the fact that after my first presentations of PG to the P4C community Ann Sharp assessed them highly.

Each of those who start doing P4C faces similar difficulties and problems, poses similar objectives. The most important thing is that everyone uses the accumulated experience of philosophical reflection.

P4C in Russia came across similar opponents as everywhere in the world. These were professional philosophers, practicing teachers and, of course, government authorities. They had a number of objections against the whole idea of P4C.

The first of them was a psychological one. Traditionally it is believed that philosophizing requires the use of high forms of reasoning - complicated skills to operate abstract notions and linguistic meanings, provide arguments and make logical conclusions. It is also believed that little kids (at the age of 10 and below) are dominated by perceptive (based on senses and images) and affective (based on emotions) comprehension of the world while the speaking
skills are very poorly developed - that is why they can hardly philosophize.

However, both Lipman’s Curriculum and my PG are developed for kids at the age of 7 and older. According to the previously mentioned point of view (which goes back to the intellect concept of Jean Piaget) philosophizing is preceded by long practices of reading, speaking and writing. Only after that one can form the skills of thinking reflectively, consequently, one can start philosophizing. Piaget’s concept is highly disputed today. For instance, Lev Vigotsky’s research gives us some reason to state that even little kids are capable of thinking abstractly. A child acquires this skill not after learning to speak but alongside with this process. You yourself can find a lot of proofs if you recollect in memory how your children developed and what they were telling. For example, when my niece was 3.5 years, she was given a task in the kinder garden - to make a story about her family.

It’s important to understand that in Russian tradition all the people have a name and a patronymic name. A patronymic name is a modified father’s name which is usually mentioned when a person is being addressed. That is the story of little Anna: “My name is Anna (name) Yurievna (patronymic name), I have a father - Yuriy (name) Georgievich (patronymic name), a mother - Tatyana (name) Timofeevna (patronymic name) and a sister - Evgeniya (name) Yurievna (patronymic name). We are sisters - we have the same patronymic name. Moreover, I have an aunt - Larisa (name) Timofeevna (patronymic name). Her and my mom are sisters, they have the same patronymic name. I have a grandmother - Raisa (name) Nikolaevna (patronymic name) and a grandfather - Timofey (name) Nikolaevich (patronymic name). They have the same patronymic name, but they are not sisters”. The girl has classified the relatives and divided them into several groups (mother with father, her and her sister, mother and mother’s sister, grandmother and grandfather). Then she has made an analogy. Later on she has clearly distinguished an external common element of analogy’s subjects (an element which is not a part of the analogy) - same patronymic names of her grandparents are not the reasons to put them in one group, while the same patronymic names of the sisters show that they have one and the same father. This is the high form of reasoning.

According to Vigotsky, both perceptions (the one based on senses and images and the one based on emotions) is impossible without high forms of reasoning. He was calling them “highest psychological functions”. Those endless “why”, unexpected associations, unpredictable conclusions following certain logic is the proof that a child is predetermined to philosophize. That’s what Matthew Lipman noticed and later on he convinced Nina Yulina of the possibility and value of philosophical trainings for children. It is not by chance that his Curriculum is based on the conclusions made by Vigotsky and Nina Yulina mentioned that in her books.

The second block of criticism against P4C is based on the current educational practices.

First of all, from the very beginning of regular university education in medieval Europe only those student who had finished their courses in mathematics, physics, astronomy and other exact sciences, Latin and ancient Greece were allowed to study philosophy (which was very much connected to theology).

That is where the cultural pattern towards philosophy as a somewhat elitist discipline originates from. However the followers of academic tradition forget that philosophy never developed linearly. There are numerous philosophical practices that are not connected to books and lecture-based tradition of philosophizing. The main of them is Socratic dialogue. It is based on the oral form of expression and, what is more important, on the birth of a thought. It is a way to focused ratification of philosophy, i.e. combining it with everyday life. Furthermore, all the philosophical questions raise from everyday life. These questions allow us to conceptualize our perception of the world. The initial conceptualization is the thing that becomes the major philosophy strategy pretty understandable both for children and adults.

When I deliver lectures to students, I try to describe the philosophical path of Socrates and his unique position as vividly as possible. These peculiarities are the assurance of the fact that to speak is better than to write; the search of controversies in the speech of an interlocutor for the sake of “the Truth”, i.e. the desire to know and hear “the Truth”; all the above-mentioned could be used to describe the children’s point of view. Children’s questions that “extremely clever” adults are driven crazy by are numerous. Plato starts putting down the dialogues of Socrates. How is he different from Socrates? He is different in a way that the Socratic endless path to “the Truth” turns into the path to the “world of ideas”. Eidoses (ideas) are not just claimed to be these truths (that Socrates could not but fail to find).

These ideas are considered to be the limits of perception. That is how not the concept but the conception is born, that is how not the idea but the philosophical system with all its components (ontological, epistemological, ethical, political and so on) is born. That is how something that could be memorized, learned and, consequently, taught, appears. It differs from an eternally alive thought of Socrates. It is different in a sense that this is the thought that was stopped and given a certain form in a way that we pour sea water in a jar. The whole sea could be poured in a jar, but does it remain a sea in this case? The water from the very same sea could fill thousands of jars of different shape - that is how different conceptions appear. Plato is the author of the one that turned to be the basis for the antique philosophical
tradition and later on the European philosophical tradition, which was transmitted through hundreds of years via the system of education. Philosophy for children (in American tradition, my program and many others) uses the Socratic tradition. The tradition that states the question is much more important than the answer. The question is an initial problem-posing that guides the direction of thinking. We teach to philosophize (not philosophy itself), i.e. the process of perceiving the reality. It’s important to point out that I. Kant believed it was possible to teach how to philosophize (the critical thinking) not the philosophy. Thus, philosophy for children is not the practice of teaching the ideas, but the practice of questioning that helps children “to give birth” to their ideas.

Secondly, the Soviet ideologization of education turned into the ideology of Marxism being introduced into the program of higher education all over the country. This played both positive and negative roles. On the one hand, students only thought a very limited number of philosophical ideas and conceptions. Moreover, the very teaching of Marx was dogmatized (even though it is not dogmatized by its nature, because philosophy by Marx’s definition cannot be a dogma). On the other hand, getting acquainted with the philosophy of Marx remained a training to develop rational thinking, because Marxism is also a kind of philosophy of very high level. Students had a chance to acquire the skills of using higher forms of thinking. In today’s Russia philosophy remains in the university as an obligatory subject. Nowadays students learn far more than just the philosophy of Marx. Alongside with that, a number of people still have some prejudices about teaching philosophy at all. It is based on a false understanding of philosophy as ideology. Philosophy is seen as a bunch of ready-made ideas, norms and principles, imposed on a person.

Philosophical knowledge by its nature is open-door knowledge. Classes of philosophy for children require the development of independent thinking skills. It is necessary to understand yourself and the world around you. According to Aristotle, philosophy starts from amazement. First, we are amazed at the world, then we want to explain it. There is an opinion that childhood is over the day when a person is no longer amazed at anything. Let’s combine these two claims and show them as a classical Aristotle’s syllogism of a first figure.

Everyone who is amazed at the world is a philosopher.
A child is amazed at world.
Consequently, a child is a philosopher.

Doubt, as a sign of philosophical reflection, was noticed by Rene Descartes. Taking this into account, learning philosophy can be accepted as forming the culture of doubts. Philosophical doubts are not just about denying something and not about total negativism or inability to accept somebody else’s opinion (culture, etc.) Philosophical doubt has a rational and intellectual nature. This is not a doubt for the sake of a doubt, it is a doubt as a means of critical thinking, as a path towards a better and a more adequate understanding of things. That’s what philosophical knowledge aims at. It tries to understand what is kindness, truth, beauty, love, freedom, happiness, life, harmony, knowledge etc. It’s impossible to enumerate all the “eternal questions” being considered by philosophy. These are not ready-made formulas, but the senses created independently, entering the mental world of a child during philosophy classes. That is why philosophizing is not just a means of forming rational thinking skills, but the agent of personal growth, the effective way of socialization. These issues were raised in the books of Nina Yulina, Nina Yulina and A. Sharp that would never be forgotten.

My personal experience of teaching philosophy to children at the age of 8-13 in the family club “The Club of Socrates” (established in Moscow in 1992) proves that children while philosophizing can easily acquire the logical instruments of thinking - analogy, comparison, contradiction, etc. During this experiment we have found an effective way to operate abstract notions through artistic images. It turned out to suit the childish perception of the world, since it combines emotional and still poorly developed rational components. Imagine you are given a task to do within 10 minutes: taking a certain idea as a basis, come up with a fairytale, legend or a picture. We have children that have been visiting the club, and I see how mature their thoughts become, how easily they cope with cognitive and creative tasks, the situation of a moral choice. The result of these classes in a club include: better academic record at school, the decreasing level of agreeableness, high communication ability and self-confidence that are fixed during psychological monitoring. Similar results are attained if children take a course under the Curriculum “Philosophy for children”. According to the data provided in N.Yulina’s publications, classes that took the course were 33% more successful in mathematics and 66% more successful in humanities.

The provided results show that all the opposition against philosophy for children has no reasons. I believe Nina Yulina was one of the first Russian philosophers who realized that. Her authority added weight to this issue, so many more steps could be taken in this direction. Today the very phrase “philosophy for children” is not regarded as nonsense, and more and more people support our activity.

There are the Center of Philosophy with Children in Moscow State University named after Lomonosov and some others. Namely the Interregional Fund “Philosophy
for Children” was established, Russia hosted 5 international conferences (2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012 in Moscow) on the topic, many books and textbooks were published. There are more than 100 teachers and professors presented their experiences of some kind of philosophical practices at schools on our conferences. I name some of them.

My last book “Journey in the labyrinths of wisdom: Philosophy for primary school students” was published in 2012 (before that were 3 books else). It is used today in some schools in deferent towns of Russia, for example, in Lypetsk gymnasiums N 1 and 12, Ufa – lyceum “Commonwealth”, in Moscow – progymnesium N 1801 and the largest in Russia center of additional education – Moscow Palace of Kid’s Creativity (there are 9 groups of 10 kids each, working in this program with 3 teachers).

M.N. Dudina, a doctor of pedagogy, professor of the chair of pedagogy of the Urals State University, translated Lipman’s two books “Elfie” and “Pixie”. With these books studies have been organized at several schools (“Stupeny”) and gymnasiums (N13) in Ekaterinburg. Under the leadership of Dudina M.N. the course “Philosophical propaedeutics” for the 2th-5th classes was introduced, Lipman’s curriculum and the etiquette course taken as the base. The effectiveness of the work on this course has been shown in a number of publications by the authors (Yatsenko O.E., Tokareva E.B.) including the reports at the International conferences “Philosophy for children” in Moscow.

There are some original Russian programs in space of doing philosophy with children. Besides of mine can be named the program by Nicolay Veraksa “Dialectical Thinking”. Professor Veraksa is the doctor of psychology, Dean of the faculty of psychology of education of Russian State Humanitarian University, editor-in-chief of the magazine “Modern pre-school education. Theory and practice”. The main principles of his program are: the principle of the amplification of a child’s development; the principle of the dialectic structuring of the contents (Publications: Veraksa N.E., Veraksa A.N. The project activity of a child under school age. Manual for teachers of nursery schools.- M.: Mozaika- Sintez, 2008; Veraksa N.E. Dialectic thinking- Ufa: Vagant,2006)

However, there are still many difficulties - lack of financial support, lack of professionals, lack of understanding from the part of governmental authorities remain the main obstacles. However, today philosophy for children does exist in Russia and this is the most important result.

The raising of people able to think critically will let us overcome the destructive tendencies in today’s educational policies.

P.S. I guess Matthew Lipman made a right choice by calling to Nina Yulina.
Nurturing Communities of Inquiry in Philippine Schools

Zosimo E. Lee

Abstract

Philosophy for Children is working because it is focusing on thinking which is the essence of education. Communities of inquiry are the ways through which training in thinking is done, and they are going to help significantly transform learning. Collective epistemic progress is possible through craftsmanlike thinking leading to better judgments. Certain processes are needed in the Philippines for these communities of inquiry to be firmly in place.

The essential contribution of the Philosophy for Children program is the thesis that thinking is the essence of education, that to improve the quality of thinking is the purpose of education. This quality of thinking is shown in the quality of judgments, in professional and civic life, in how citizens relate with one another, and in the quality of collective decisions as well. When the quality of judgment has reached this point, it can be said that thinking has become the essence of education and the Philosophy for Children program is working.

"[H]igher-order thinking...will happen only if students are given access to the tools of inquiry, the methods and principles of reasoning, practice in concept analysis, experience in critical reading and writing, opportunities for creative description and narration as well as in the formulation of arguments and explanations, and a community setting in which ideas and intellectual contexts can be fluently and openly exchanged."1

This goal of Philosophy for Children, to focus on thinking in education, is something to be desired, and becomes an important criterion by which educational systems will be evaluated---to what extent educational systems improve the quality of thinking in a society.

The question for many educational planners however has been, not that they do not see the nature and importance of the role of thinking in education, but that they have to be shown examples and models of classroom experiences focused on thinking and how it can work. In this regard, Lipman’s philosophical novels for children, including the teachers’ manuals, are really important resources as to how it can be done.2 That Lipman’s children’s novels have spawned so many other resources and books, based on how educators in different countries have adapted his ideas and the methodologies available for the implantation of thinking in schools, is a testimony to the radical reorientation in educational frameworks that Philosophy for Children has achieved.3

After working with Lipman’s novels for many years, and observing the responses of teachers and students to the novels, an important question for me has been whether the presentation of the philosophical issues embedded in ordinary daily situations, in the family and school, and among friends, for example, also has a cultural or even zeitgeist dimension, hence the philosophical novels that might capture the lived world of the child would also have to take this issue of the background culture more significantly, or more purposefully.

While some philosophical (ethical, logical, epistemological, etc.) questions may have general and even universal appeal (questions about inequality, power and wealth, relationships, what can be known, what criteria are reliable, etc.), the specific statements and cultural contexts those issues are phrased in matters. The questions that arise may be easier for children of a particular culture and context to relate with, because the predicaments that children confront are “truer” to “where they are”. The ability to tap into that deep culture would be required of those who will write philosophical novels that hope to arouse sufficiently profound questions.4

In being able to demonstrate how thinking skills can be cultivated and enhanced, using philosophical novels for children, is cultural context important? What role would cultural context have in making it easier for children to resonate with the issues and dilemmas that children are confronted with? Cultural context here would include the customs and traditions, the myths and stories, the mores and conventions of that particular society.
For the children to confront issues and dilemmas, their sensitivity to mental acts and the confidence provided by the logical rules are buttresses that can sharpen thinking and self-awareness. Sensitivity to mental acts and logical rules can also provide further confidence to the children as they tackle contested concepts and enlighten themselves further in dealing with many problematic situations.

What would be some of the manifestations of having been able to think better about a particular situation? One manifestation would be the ability to view a situation from more than one perspective, and yet at the same time also to allow these perspectives to intersect and not to remain separated. And when the perspectives intersect, can they mutually challenge each other such that not only a multi-perspective can arise but a more ‘objective’ and less partisan point of view can arise. “All things considered” can be the phrase that can aptly capture what a multi-perspectival outlook can be concerned with.

Experience with facilitating various communities of inquiry, with students and public school teachers, has afforded this writer with occasions of exhilarating joy of synergies arising out of authentic exchanges. Thoughts are provoked or inspired within the community itself as it journeys through various questions and proposals. And there are convergences and disagreements that are all contributory to a sense of a larger appreciation of a more complex phenomenon to which each one has contributed a perspective or a point of view. A sense of intellectual empowerment develops. Most everyone is engaged and involved in the discussion at hand and awaits what idea will arise out of the discussion, articulated by one and enhanced and built upon by another. The experience of an open and liberating philosophical discussion within a community of inquiry is perhaps one of the most profound intellectual and emotional experiences one can have, and when it is fully relished can yield vast insights and personal changes.

The community of inquiry can engender synergy in thinking. The quality of learning can be seen through the quality of questions propounded as well as the depth of the responses evoked. There are also accompanying emotional realizations, and when there are opportunities for students to then write their reflections, writing becomes the encoding of thoughts and organized thinking.

There is also collective epistemic progress in a community of inquiry. What does this mean?

1. Philosophical dialogue that starts from reflective thinking, brings about points of contact and tangency among the views of the participants.
2. Through mutual probing and questioning, there can be intersections among perspectives. Mutual questioning can lead to clarifications and affirmation.
3. When disagreements and conflicts of ideas arise, each participant is challenged to accommodate the challenge or come up with an alternative articulation. The disagreement becomes a challenge for the whole community of inquiry and can open up the possibility of new perspectives.
4. The community inquiry starts from a provocative question that opens up several answers and perspectives. A good facilitator attempts to make the answers and perspective “confront” each other, hoping for moments of creative conflict.
5. An impetus towards a viable synthesis of the various answers and perspectives can arise. Such a resolution responds to the concerns, worries, anxieties, perspectives and even mind-sets of those involved.
6. The important part of the community inquiry would be the articulate and establish criteria for what be legitimately accepted and recognized as valid.
7. The participants must realize what they can recognize and accept as valid results of discussions with other inquirers. They need to affirm within themselves the capacity to generate, discover and affirm ideas and realizations that reflexively are recognized to be robust.
8. Understanding can be achieved in discussions with several mind working on a question or problem, provided there is sincere effort towards constructing or building cognitive and affective results, affirmed and recognized as valid.
9. A measure of collective objectivity can thus be achieved.
10. Difficult questions become more manageable and solutions actively proffered because several minds are working together, pondering the same predicament.
11. The interplay of mental acts and the articulations of several perspectives enable an ‘enlargement of horizons’. It is an achievement of the community of inquiry when realizations arise, borne out of quality and competent thinking. A sense of collective achievement arises which in turn encourages further inquiry.

**Mental Acts**

The reflective model of educational practice through the working and active community of inquiry can become an excellent venue for self-knowledge and intellectual growth. Collective epistemic progress is possible through greater sensitivity to mental acts. We become more aware of what has been collectively affirmed as well as we acknowledge the mental acts that enabled us to affirm to ourselves what we confirm as knowledge. Transformation is demonstrated through realizations, and realizations are expressed in thoughts. Emotions become triggers and hallmarks of learning, punctuating what is significant and meaningful.

The articulations made by the participants in communities of inquiry of what they have realized affirms
more and more that thinking in education or criteria-based thinking will have vast implication for what need to be done and can be done within the classroom. The philosophical novel for children when it exemplifies the mental acts and logical rules for sound and robust thinking, as elements and grounds for a solid thinker, provides the venue for this self-knowledge and intellectual growth. Provided the novel can also incorporate and articulate a culturally-sensitive and aware context, the stories of the lives of children can depict the situations and dilemmas that children find themselves in. The illustration of various mental acts becomes a mirror through which children can also become aware of their own mental acts. And when they are able to identify their own various mental acts and the choices available to them through this awareness, a vast repertoire of responses becomes available to them. The familiarity with logical rules can provide greater confidence in their own ability to recognize bases for what we can know and why.

From children with different learning styles or thinking personalities, how a community of inquiry arises shows sound reasoning principles in action. Setting up routines that demonstrate that reflectiveness makes for reasonableness, because the reasons I provide myself must have been reflected upon and considered, makes it not difficult to incorporate into daily life the reflective practices that have been engaged in.

Should such thinking practices become more predominant within a society, what will result will be citizens who are more reflective, more craftsmanlike in their thinking and judging. Together with different sorts of mental acts and logical rules applied to ordinary and commonplace situations (where there are plenty of opportunities for children to problematize their situation and reflect more deeply on those situations they find themselves in), children will definitely find themselves equipped with facility to think through the problems they confront.

The different mental acts become part of the repertoire that any member of the community of inquiry can use in order to make a discussion more holistic and covers a larger scope. By doing so, it will be possible for the quality of deliberation to improve and attain a more sophisticated and complex level, that would not have been possible without the array of mental acts.

The repertoire of mental acts includes the following, even if some might be more significant than others:

1. thinking for oneself
2. thinking about the self
3. articulating what the problem is
4. clarifying the meaning of concepts
5. giving feedback
6. asking for evidence, proof, warrant
7. proposing criteria for evaluating reasons
8. providing alternative interpretations or points of view
9. articulating inferences, implications, consequences
10. taking context into account, etc.

What would be the factors that contribute to productive discussions? As a reflection on my practice as facilitator in philosophical discussions, it is very important that through listening one is able to accompany the student. Through affirmation and feedback, through giving a signal that what has been said has been understood genuinely, acceptance and understanding of what has been said is communicated. This helps build confidence in the student that what has been shared has been taken on its own merits, and it is furthermore possible to convey what one truly thinks and be assured that this will not be distorted nor misinterpreted.

What needs to be constructed is an environment wherein the participant in the community of inquiry believes strongly that she will be understood and her ideas taken as they are, and that there is openness to a variety of perspectives, since they are authentic expressions by real persons of what their viewpoint is. But this is only the initial moment of the growth of the community of inquiry: the willingness and openness to articulate each one’s authentic viewpoint. What is then possible is an intersection or connection among the viewpoints presented. There must be opportunities for the different perspectives to interrogate each other.

For this to happen, not only must authentic presentations be possible, there must be openness to further inquiry by allowing, especially opposing, points of view to confront and engage each other. Conceptually one would assume that there will have to be a “larger” scope that can accommodate the opposing perspectives and through which then both can be assessed and evaluated such that a convergence becomes possible, or if not, that where the essential differences are can be identified and a divergence is acknowledged. The role of the facilitator at this juncture is to articulate where the group discussion is.

By posing reflective and reflexive questions, the facilitator (and the group) develop greater self-awareness and contribute to more reflectiveness. Lessons are more meaningful if they arise out of one’s own reflections and realizations (rather than being told from the outside, or from outside of one’s own realizations), the thrust would thus be towards evoking from the thinker what her own realizations are.

The process of meaning-making

Every so often it is important to articulate what are the meanings that are being generated by the philosophical exchanges within a community of inquiry. How a person makes sense of what is going is vital. A qualitative dimension is sought over and above the particular arguments.
that are presented. Students can ask questions like: What does it mean for me? What sense do I make out of all this discussion? Students feel the need to make sense of what is going, they look for meaningfulness.

The same questions and similar questions cannot always be assumed to have the same significance to different persons, primarily because each one would have a “lens” with which to view these questions and answers. How that particular and individual lens is engaged and then made to articulate what its present state is, is part of the how the community of inquiry gathers together the meanings that emanate from each of the participants.

The sharing of meanings could possibly be the most intimate part of a community of inquiry.

The manifestations that the community of inquiry is working include the quality of the questions and the depth of the reflections. The quality of the questions can be gauged by self-correctiveness on one hand (are we asking the right questions, are we asking the questions that will enable us to get to the more important matters that we can talk about, etc.) and by the range of possible answers that can be generated. The more varied and more profound the probable responses to the question can be, the more complex the matters that can be touched upon are, most probably the better the question is. The depth of the reflections can be seen in the way that various ideas are woven into the response and made coherent because there is a larger scope that will have been reached by the reflection.

When these reflections are shared within the community, the experience of sharing and intimate thoughts because one is assured that the others will accept and understand and one trusts the other members, can be exhilarating and even liberating. One will be both profound and transparent in one’s thinking to the others. These realizations would not have been possible without the trusting and understanding environment. These intellectual exchanges are actually accompanied by emotional attachments, of friendships through shared thoughts and meanings, that can enable the more mature, “fuller” person to come out. Emotions are triggers and hallmarks of learning, to punctuate what has been realized as significant and meaningful.

Improving the ability to give good reasons is a crucial element in the learning that occurs in the community of inquiry. Seeking reasons and then assessing the reasons provided can be considered the core of learning. The criteria for reasons that are recognized as valid, robust, firm and reliable are continually the results of conception, revision, negotiation and affirmation. What are the meta-criteria for evaluating criteria would be a fantastic achievement if a community of inquiry can proceed in that direction.

Some of the criteria that can be used for assessing reasons are:

1. impartiality
2. objectivity
3. respect for persons
4. providing impetus to search for further reasons.

And the characteristics of good reasons include (being):

1. factual
2. relevant
3. supportive
4. familiar
5. final.

The community of inquiry develops practices that reinforce the assessment of reasons given criteria that are recognized as valid. When the reflective practices become ingrained the deliberations within the community of inquiry acquire a quality that can address more and deeper issues.

Practice in, and research into, the community of inquiry within the Philippines

The initiative to implement Philosophy for Children in the Philippines came from Philosophy teachers from the University of the Philippines (UP). Three faculty members were able to go, at different occasions, to the Institute for Advancement of Philosophy for Children of the Montclair State University summer workshops at Mendham, New Jersey. Over time, some faculty members from the UP began conducting training programs for various groups, most especially public school teachers from the Manila Division of City Schools since 1996. Faculty members also teach undergraduate courses on Philosophy for Children in the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy since 2005, as well as graduate courses in Philosophy of Education using primarily the texts and resources of the Philosophy for Children program at the UP College of Education in 2012.

At present, there is renewed interest in introducing Philosophy for Children among the Manila public schools because, again, it has been realized that focusing on thinking in education will be vastly different from emphasizing rote learning in the public school system. The moment might be especially auspicious because at the present moment (2013), the Philippine government is implementing a new K-12 curriculum and allows for mother-tongue based instruction (instead of the presumed national language, Filipino, or English, which traditionally have been languages of instruction) from Kindergarten to Grade 3 and encourages the teachers to utilize more of the community and local language and culture in their classroom activities.

During a recent training program (April 2013) given to Manila public school teachers, master teachers and school principals, using chapters from Harry and Lisa, the experiential learning gave the public school teachers themselves an insight into how active and participative their students can be since the learning agenda is not dictated by
the teacher (facilitator) but is determined by the questions
the participants themselves posed. Immediately what is
communicated to the participants is that, what we will
talk about will be what you are interested in investigating
further. Given their own enthusiasm and active learning,
the public school teachers were easily convinced that they
should provide this opportunity for their children to develop
communities of inquiry.

The further realization is that if they are going to be
able to facilitate philosophical discussions among their
students, the teachers themselves will have to be better
thinkers themselves, and learn how to pursue inquiry better.
They themselves need to be able to seek reasons and assess
the quality of reasons. The whole school will be vastly
different if the focus is on the student’s (and teachers’) thinking rather than rote learning of inert knowledge found
in unreliable textbooks.7

Research into the applicability of Philosophy for
Children in a local school in Daet, Camarines Norte,
south of Manila, using Filipino children’s stories has
indicated that indeed, it is possible to develop a community
of inquiry among Grade Two students after even
only five sessions using the community of inquiry approach.8
Using Ann Margaret Sharp and Laurance Splitter’s ‘marks of philosophical discussion’ (reasoning and inquiry, clarification of concepts and meaning-making) as well as Golding’s criteria of ‘philosophical progress,’ the research amply demonstrates that there is considerable increase in the children’s use of the three main critical
skills, as well as growth in the way such skills are used and how the children’s ideas develop by the fifth session.

Further research among more children and schools will
reveal why and how the community of inquiry approach
works, but at least for this one instance it has already been
shown that it does work. Further investigation will be useful
to identify what may have been the factors that contributed
to such success. Aside from Golding’s criteria for ‘philosophical progress’ it could also be further investigated
whether there are cultural factors that can enhance or hinder philosophical dialogues. Or can there be more culturally-contextualized indicators for ‘philosophical progress’ that are perhaps more germane to Filipinos. There are philosophical assumptions and presuppositions regarding ‘philosophical progress’ that need to be made more evident
and apparent. Such a theoretical discussion could even have
implications for other educational theories as well, e.g. Lev
Vygotsky’s “sphere of proximal development.”

Challenges for implementation in the Philippines

For communities of inquiry to be further developed and
couraged in Philippine public schools there are certain
processes that will have to take place:

1. Implantation of thinking skills and reflective inquiry
   programs in colleges of education.

   While there are a number of professors in colleges of
   education in the Philippine have heard of the Philosophy
   for Children program or reflective inquiry, there are as yet
   no formal training of undergraduate students of education
   in the Philosophy for Children or other thinking skills
   programs. For the next generation of teachers, especially in
   basic education, there will have to be formal instruction and
   training in Philosophy for Children, or in thinking skills
   and reflective inquiry, for them to be better trained in the theory
   and practice of a thinking skills program that will encourage
   communities of inquiry.

   The Philosophy for Children program is not the same
   as other thinking skills programs. Philosophy for Children
   focuses on enabling children to raise questions that then
   become the focal points for discussion and nurture
   community of inquiry through dialogical thinking. It is the
   evolution of thinking with others in community that is
   a vital component. The community of inquiry harnesses
critical, creative and caring thinking.

   Thinking skills programs generally speaking focus on
specific skills like deductions, inferences, generalizations,
problem-solving. Philosophy for Children can also
incorporate theses but thinking skills program per se do not
necessarily lead to nurturing communities of inquiry, and it
is communities of inquiry that are more desirable because
they develop reflective inquiry.

   This would involve a very significant paradigm shift
among professors of education and the in-service training
of basic education teachers. The professors of education
themselves would have to be proficient in thinking skills
and the principles behind reflective inquiry. Ideally,
professors of philosophy should be more engaged with the
training of education students as well in thinking skills and
the community of inquiry approach.

   Implantation of thinking skills and reflective inquiry
programs in colleges of education means that undergraduates
will be exposed to thinking skills and reflective inquiry
themselves and will not have much difficulty presumably
in being able to model these skills to their students when
they eventually teach in the schools. The reflective model
of education has to permeate the thinking of education
colleges themselves, for there to be considerable impact in
the instruction in basic education.
2. Best practices, models and paradigms of schools using the Philosophy for Children

A public school with trained teachers who are eager to use thinking skills and Philosophy for Children in their classes can be an experimental school to validate to what extent thinking skills improve the performance of the students. The implementation of the thinking skills and reflective inquiry can be monitored and documented, with a control class and an experimental class, at the same grade level, to see to what extent a thinking skills program improves performance along certain parameters.

This research should further reveal how and perhaps why a thinking skills and reflective inquiry program can work, and with what kind of interventions from teachers. The teachers involved will also have to cooperate with this research endeavor.

A pilot school can be a showcase for how thinking skills and reflective inquiry can be integrated into the present curriculum and institutional requirements (assessment and minimum learning competencies mandated by the Department of Education). Research can provide the evidence how and to what extent such thinking skills and reflective inquiry improve the learning process, given certain parameters. The lessons from such a pilot school and the accompanying research can be replicated in several other sites.

Continuing research on best practices, models and paradigms of thinking skills and reflective inquiry programs will be a significant component of how a shift in education from rote learning and memorization to thinking can be carried out.

3. Developing instructional materials

At a time when the Philippine educational system is undergoing important changes in basic education, with a redesign of the K-12 curriculum, and the emphasis on the use of the local language (the Philippines has eight major regional languages, with vernaculars in different towns and provinces) for the first three grades, and the need, therefore, to develop instructional materials for the early grades; this would be a good opportunity to develop books that can induce questions that can then be the foci for student-centered learning in communities of inquiry.

The kinds of instructional materials that can be developed can be similar to philosophical novels for children. They depict children undertaking inquiry about ordinary matters in school, in the family, in the neighborhood and community. The children can personify different thinking styles and mental acts, the panoply of which fosters, within a community of inquiry, a more encompassing and well-rounded process of inquiry. And as they interact with one another, a community of inquiry is also evolving and maturing. What can be detailed are not only the situations that induce provocative issues, but also the different points of view and perspectives that are allowed to intersect with one another, and through a simulated resolution, certain possible progressions of thinking are also revealed.

A challenge will be how to include the background culture into the context of the children’s discussion, in the manner in which they propound their perspectives, and what kind of cultural presuppositions and assumptions the development of the community of inquiry will involve. A hypothesis is precisely that the discussions of the children within the instructional material will also empower them to delve deeper into the cultural presuppositions of their communities.

The instructional materials should also propose the need to provide reasons for actions, decisions, perspectives and judgments. A high point would be the ability to discuss criteria and meta-criteria, to evaluate and assess reasons. Materials that can induce thinking about thinking, self-awareness, thinking about one’s thoughts, would be ideal.

4. Training public school teachers in facilitating philosophical dialogue

For the thinking skills and reflective inquiry programs to be undertaken in more public schools, teachers will have to experience how it is for them themselves to undertake learning tackling the questions that interest them. This experiential learning will be their insight into how children might be experiencing their own student-centered learning. The various exercises in identifying mental acts and harnessing expertise in utilizing various ways of inquiry can be the focus of such a training program.

Teachers will have to be trained further in how to focus on the thinking of their students, and their own thinking. Thinking teachers will model what it means for a person to be craftsmanlike in their thinking. For the teachers to be so sensitized, their training even in colleges of education will have to be significantly redesigned. The over-all thrust of focusing on thinking instead of rote learning means that teachers themselves will have to be confident in their own ability to question, critique, evaluate existing knowledge and embark on a process where they, in their communities of inquiry, will generate their own thinking and be confident of the veracity and validity of the results of their inquiry. Teachers will therefore not anymore just be purveyors or communicators of existing knowledge, but will have been able to acquire the skills and the confidence to generate new knowledge, or at least be able to critique existing knowledge with reliable methods and tools of inquiry. And in the process be confident that they are creators of knowledge too.

To train teachers to be facilitators of philosophical dialogue will mean that they are able to listen to the children and process the children’s thinking, think with the children,
with respect and at the same time reasoning and rationality. Reasoning and rationality in terms of articulating what is the (inchoate) thinking of the child put in such a form that the statements can be considered, examined, evaluated and put out in a manner that is accessible to the others in the discussion. By putting the thinking in sentential form and being open to review by others, thinking is actually laid out and self-reflexively scrutinized.

Summary

The focus of education has to be reflective inquiry. For thinking and reflective inquiry to become the focus of education there are certain imperatives. This paper has identified what these imperatives are: implantation in colleges of education; best practices, models and paradigms of thinking education; development of instructional materials that foster communities of inquiry; training of teachers in thinking skills and reflective inquiry, specially facilitating philosophical dialogue.

The present conditions are auspicious for Philosophy for Children, thinking skills and reflective inquiry as a whole, to be better recognized as a significant element in the Philippine basic education system and with the experience of the teachers and students themselves as evidence and support, with focus on thinking and reflective inquiry, learning is better enhanced and communities of inquiry can flourish.

Endnotes

2 Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery. The Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children. Montclair State College, 1982. as well as Lisa. IAPC, 1983. There have been other philosophical novels for children developed consequently.
4 An interesting thesis, for example, about Filipino culture is that on the surface the Spanish and American influences are pervasive because of the colonial experiences, and that while Filipinos are racially and linguistically Asian, the mind-set is actually Iberian or even European. More perceptive cultural commentators however would say that the Hindu and Buddhist influences from pre-colonial times are actually part of the deeper ethos that Filipinos have. This is shown arguably in being open and receptive to other cultures, being not so rigid in moralities but rather more relationship-oriented and community-centered. Furthermore, there is a profound emotional stability and peacefulness with the surrounding natural environment. Such a description proposes that the ‘archaeology’ of cultural influences runs deep and would have to be unearthed too. This is an example of the deeper cultural context that has to be recognized.
5 Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, op. cit. p. 143.
6 There are several major Philippine languages: Ilocano, Pangasinense, Kapampangan, Bicol, Waray, Cebuano-Bisaya, Hiligaynon, Maguindanao, Tausug; apart from the national language, Filipino based on Tagalog grammar, which is under continuous evolution through the accommodation of vocabulary from the other major Philippine languages.
7 There have been several scandals involving incorrect and erroneous information and facts found in several Philippine textbooks, especially in Social Studies as well as Science. These books have had to be withdrawn of course.
9 Teaching for Better Thinking. op. cit.
Philosophy for Children in Costa Rica: A 24-year long experience

Kattya Arroyo Guerra

Abstract
This is a chronicle of the development of Philosophy for Children program in Costa Rica. It addresses the projects of some state universities and the pioneer experience of the British School of Costa Rica, which has consistently led the program in the country for 24 years. A general account of the teaching practice is made, referring to matters of evaluation, class settings and teachers' workloads. A comparison between the aims of P4C and the International Baccalaureate programs is also considered as well.

In memory of Mat and Ann, exemplary philosophers and professors

The beginning
The very first time that the Philosophy for Children program was heard of in Costa Rica was in 1985, when Danilo Meneses, then Advisor to Philosophy Teachers at the Costa Rican Ministry of Education, brought back some of the novels and manuals from a conference held in New York City. Together with many experienced teachers, several Teaching Philosophy students (among them myself) were thrilled by the program's audacity and its clear, tangible techniques to engage children in philosophical discussions.

Some years later, in 1989, I had the opportunity to obtain a master’s degree in P4C at Montclair State University. I returned to my country with enthusiasm about all I had learned under the inspiring teaching of Matt Lipman, Ann Sharp, Ron Reed and Phil Guin, among others. At the same time, I also went back concerned about some acute doubts: Would this program work in my country? Would it be taken seriously? Barely a month had passed by following my return when I was contacted by the British School of Costa Rica. They had heard many positive things about the program and were so interested in it that they called the IAPC to ask them for information and availability of teachers. So then I contacted the school and by February 1990, Ann Sharp and I had held a couple of workshops to prepare both primary and secondary teachers. The P4C program has been working together with this institution continuously since that time.

The British School of Costa Rica (BSCR) is a private institution, with an international staff (mainly British and Costa Rican teachers), established in 1981 with the aim of being an alternative school in many respects. It aims to foster free-thinking, open-minded students with social and cognitive skills, in addition to providing them solid bilingual academic training. They wanted to be prepared to follow challenging international programs such as the International General Certification of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and the International Baccalaureate. In the process, the school's administration discovered that the P4C program could provide the thinking skills and attitudes required of it to reinforce their new educational proposals.

Is it worth it? Implementing the program at BSCR and other institutions
Although Philosophy sounds interesting to most people, typically few actually understand what this subject is all about in an academic environment such as a school. Therefore, intensive efforts at raising awareness were required of us at the BSCR during the program's first 10-12 years. We held several regularly-scheduled workshops for teachers (native and foreign), for parents, Parents & Teachers Associations, the Association of Private Schools, the Ministry of Education teachers and administrative representatives. A speech and a small document were provided to parents in all the tutor groups held at the beginning of each school year. Nowadays, a general explanation of the program is given by teachers of the class to the parents at the beginning of the year and by the administrative staff during the induction meeting for the parents of new students.

As a school requirement, a course statement is provided every semester for each subject, including Philosophy, which helps us to further spell out the aims of the Philosophy for Children program as an essential component of the school curriculum.

Along with the BSCR experience, other schools (mainly private institutions) became interested in the program, though none have stuck to the program nearly as consistently
as ours. So far, roughly five institutions have been working with the program in a regular fashion over the last eight to ten years: Escuela Arandú, Golden Valley School, Colegio El Rosario, Colegio Metodista and St. Jude’s School.

Program implementation in public education, however, has not been very successful, however. Despite a degree of interest on the part of some people at the Ministry of Education, the teachers involved have never succeeded in getting either the political or the financial support needed to develop and deploy a project. The closest thing to a P4C experience in the public schools was conducted through a state-run university, the University of Costa Rica, whose Philosophy Department decided to develop a community service project in 1990 to take the P4C program into different primary and secondary schools. This project lasted six years and involved students of philosophy and education. The program reached close to 30 schools in the greater metropolitan area of San José. Due to the budget limitations, however, this project ended abruptly and no final analysis of the overall experience could be made. Based on some final reports by students, though, we could say that the general experience was positive for both the university students and the school children. Many of the former students of the project declared that, after their teaching practice (which lasted around 7 months, almost a regular school year) there were many tangible signs that P4C changes students, such as their attitude about listening to others, the quality of their questions and willingness to participate more in class.

Unfortunately, there have been very few opportunities to record and publish something about all the different experiences of the P4C program in Costa Rica. Most people working with P4C, including myself, have been shouldering multiple responsibilities, thus preventing them from doing the writing and reporting required. A few articles have been published whose objectives have been, basically, to provide general information about the P4C program and to share some personal input regarding it, with some emphasis in one of them on the social and ethical thinking among secondary students.

Therefore, all we know about the development or cancelation of projects is through informal anecdotal data from teachers. According to my own records, among the reasons given for canceling some of the projects at some schools were financial problems, changes in administrative staff, and changes in curriculum (introduction of other programs, adding more lessons to subject areas, etc.).

At the University of Costa Rica (UCR), the community service project was canceled mainly due to budgetary limitations. Another similar project was started in 2010, but mainly for pre-school and primary school children in low income areas. Actually, one of the main institutions involved in P4C has been Hogar Santa María, an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) that looks after children whose parents are incarcerated. The project was reestablished and coordinated by Mariam Alvarez, a professor at the UCR Philosophy Department and a P4C teacher. She is preparing a report to be published at the end of this year.

On the other hand, a few groups of graduate students at the UCR Faculty of Education conducted a research study with P4C as the topic of their final graduate work. One dealt with the development of social and thinking skills in preschool children and the other on development of thinking skills in primary school children.

Another institution that has done a great job of dissemination of P4C is the Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED). This is another state-run university that began program-related activities thanks to the initiative of Dr. Zayra Méndez, who has organized several workshops and conferences since 2004, some featuring the participation of Eugenio Echeverría and Maughn Gregory. Some UNED teachers even went for training in Mexico at the Centro Latinoamericano de Filosofía para Niños in San Cristóbal de las Casas. UNED educators have led several workshops for school teachers and university professors, as well. Noteworthy of this group of teachers are some interesting, original works by Virginia Trejos (who has written a collection of short stories for children), Dagoberto Núñez and Roxana Valverde. The last two of these conducted research, along with other two teachers, on a group of preschoolers dealing with their communications skills and the Philosophy for Children program. Roxana has also created a nice short story to teach P4C to preschoolers called La Nueva Granja (The New Farm).

In recent years, many of the teachers involved in prior projects have proposed formally founding a P4C association called ACOFINI (Asociación Costarricense de Filosofía para Niños), but registration has been delayed due to bureaucratic problems.

**Adapting the program to a regular school structure**

At the outset, the program was first introduced partially at the BSCR, only in certain grades in Primary (3rd, 5th and 6th grades) and all three grades then available in secondary in the 1990 school year (7th, 8th and 9th). Each week, a 60-minute lesson was taught in secondary and a 50-minute lesson in primary; this guideline is still being followed to this day. After a few years the program was expanded to preschool, along with the other remaining levels in primary. However, new changes made five years ago in the early years program (Pre-school) and in the primary curriculum only allowed for the program to be administered from 4th grade on.

For the first ten years, philosophy lessons were taught by their own class teachers in most of the groups of primary. Beyond achieving the program’s objectives, the school wanted to use the program as an additional incentive...
for practicing English. But there were problems with the youngest of the students, whose English lacked the fluency required, and, moreover, form teachers were somewhat overwhelmed by the extra work required to teach Philosophy lessons. Consequently a decision was made to assign specific teachers to teach Philosophy alone. Therefore, Philosophy was to be taught in Spanish at all levels. Furthermore, a Philosophy department was established and a group of three teachers were assigned to teach and coordinate everything associated with the subject.

**Grading Philosophy class**

Another pedagogical issue requiring time to fine tune was evaluation. At the outset, teachers resisted the idea of grading the subject because our objective was for students to be driven into discussions and classwork by their own interest and at their own pace, and not out of a need to earn a grade. On the other hand, it was commonly thought that if something was not evaluated, parents and students may consider it as not really important to the learning process.

After trying out various ideas and criteria, a set of characteristics was devised for the subject based on the aims of the Community of Inquiry and the needs of formal education, such as good written and oral expression skills. Therefore, we decided to base grading on some formal written tasks such as homework and classwork, as well as participation and some basic behavioral attitudes. The general aspects taken into account were as follows:

**a. Formal aspects:**
- Being punctual and keeping a notebook with all the work done in class
- Respectfully listening to other people’s opinions and maintaining a cooperative attitude toward classmates
- Raising one’s hand and waiting one’s turn to participate in class
- Completing class assignments on time
- Participating in class, either voluntarily or by sharing the reading of a written assignment

**b. Thinking skills development:**
- Justifying expressed ideas
- Posing questions that enrich class discussions
- Expressing ideas clearly and concisely
- Being aware of the pro and cons of a topic
- Arguing and being prepared to provide examples to reinforce one’s line of argumentation
- Providing coherent ideas about what it is discussed
- Being creative and presenting a personal view of the topics discussed
- Being able to form a hypothesis and concepts
- Recognizing fallacious reasoning
- Recognizing deductive and inductive reasoning

**c. Types of possible assignments as homework or classwork:**
- A piece of creative work (a drawing, a collage, a poem, a song, a story, etc.) to express an idea, concept or topic discussed in class
- A short questionnaire (most probably taken from or based on a P4C Manual)
- A brief research paper or an oral presentation of a topic
- A written report on a visit, movie or speech
- A list of possible questions based on an event or topic to study

Then, in order to meet the formal requirements of the school grading system, the following scale was created:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classwork</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notebook</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept*</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*this is a global overview of the student performance made by the teacher

**TOTAL:** 100%

The BSCR keeps class size small as a rule (20-24 students per room), which facilitates communication and class management. Most often problems have to do with the handing in of homework. Some students may exhibit behavioral problems and the quality of their work may be deficient, but failing Philosophy is rather uncommon. However, parents and the students themselves are usually concerned about their performance and seek advice on it as they would in any other subject.

Philosophy, then, is one more subject on the report card; therefore Philosophy teachers have the same academic responsibilities as any other teacher at school.

**The joys and pains of teaching P4C**

In general, we may say that the Philosophy for Children program has met with a positive attitude on the part of the educational communities it has encountered. Nevertheless, there have been times when issues have arisen over some complaints, most often regarding issues dealing with religion.
Some parents may feel uncomfortable because different religious ideas are discussed (for example, we discussed about people who are Bahai or Buddhist) or some traditional ideas are questioned (could it be possible for the world to have had a beginning, but not created by God?). Most doubts or consultations, however, are handled personally by teachers and administrative staff when necessary.

We do not know if we have simply been lucky in this regard, but we have never encountered any dramatic opposition from parents or students throughout 24 years of implementing the program. We have to say, though, that the general philosophy of the school fosters an open minded, respectful position (the school is registered as a non-religious institution with representation of roughly 30 different nationalities). Actually, we think that the P4C program can only function effectively if certain factors are present, such as administrative support (as expressed in viable classroom time, basic teaching materials and openness to discussion of complex, controversial topics), and teachers trained in the program and committed to/capable of following the motto of Eugenio Echeverría: “In a community of dialogue, (the teacher) has to be strong pedagogically and humble philosophically” (Echeverría, 2002, p.110).

As with any other educational project, P4C requires a consistent effort and review of activities to ensure that aims are truly attained. At the beginning some students would remark to us: “O.K., teacher, this giving our opinion thing is very fine and good, but what’s the answer to this problem? Are you going to give it to us at the end of the lesson?” Or they would talk and discuss while looking to the teacher alone as the sole authority figure. But little by little the students got used to the natural uncertainty that is part of the search for knowledge and learned to listen to one other.

Although we are still learning and adjusting different strategies to attain a real, effective community of inquiry, we have managed to cultivate some basic features that students understand nowadays as a substantial part of the subject of Philosophy, namely the following:

- they seriously consider and study the ideas of others
- they shape their own thinking from the ideas of others
- they learn to problematize everyday issues
- they learn to build consistent arguments
- they develop moral imagination
- they learn to detect underlying assertions
- they discuss with sensitivity and respect

Despite all the satisfaction we could have with the program, we recognize that there are some problems we will continually have to face. One of them is that students find the P4C novels sort of dull, especially at secondary level. However, teachers still value their content very much and so we try new approaches to the reading of the novels. Therefore, we read an episode sometimes following a short video dealing with a similar topic, or we discuss a current event similar to the one dealt in the story or we simply pick suitable chapters to read depending on the tone of the group.

We consider the novels to still be good enough to elicit many valuable discussions. Despite some alien scenarios, we believe the topics that may emerge can be as current as the students who read them. Today, for example, the issue of animal rights as addressed in chapter one of the novel Lisa is being read by students much better informed on the
subject than 20 years ago, yet the class debate it inspires is still every bit as valid and intense.

Inevitably, the reading made by each group lends a new twist to the novels used and their respective discussion topics. This could clearly entail a very special work on the part of the teachers that is rather exhausting, since they may not always be able to reuse prior notes or lesson plans for subsequent classes. While a regular subject teacher follows a main textbook and a specific set of topics, Philosophy teachers do not know their teaching agenda until the first class has been taught and have to develop many new class activities to complement those in the manuals since there are never enough to meet the students’ different interests and questions.

P4C teachers have to be very organized and count on peer support. Given the fact that usually only one lesson per week is taught, P4C teachers tend to have many groups in order to justify a full time job and might have ended up with over 200 students on his/her class lists.

**P4C and the International Baccalaureate Program**

In his book *Filosofía para Niños*, Eugenio Echeverría presents a nice summary of the features of the community of inquiry. In order to make a brief comparison of them and the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, we would like to remark on some of them:

a. “Being able to consider and study other people’s ideas
b. Developing our own ideas without fearing being rejected or not being understood by others.
c. Searching for coherence when arguing about other points of view.
d. Demonstrating sensitivity toward the context when discussing moral conduct.
e. Asking about the criteria used in a discussion” (Echeverria, 2002, p. 96).

As we can see, the P4C program has turned out to be a good complement for another program which the British School happens to be pioneering in Costa Rica, i.e., the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. This program’s learning profile aims to make students “inquisitive, informed and educated, thinkers, good communicators, honest, open-minded, supportive, bold, risk takers and reflexive.”(IBO, 2013, p.iii) Furthermore, its Statement of Principles states that the International Baccalaureate encourages students to adopt “… an active attitude of lifelong learning, to be compassionate and to understand that others, with their differences, can also be right.” (p.iii).

As we can see, there is a striking similarity between those goals and those of the Community of Inquiry. On the other hand, there is a strong relationship between P4C and Theory of Knowledge, a core subject of the IB. According to the teachers guide, the overall aim of Theory of Knowledge (ToK) is to “formulate answers to the question “how do you know?” in a variety of contexts, and to see the value of that question” (p. 22). And the aims of ToK course for students are to:

1. “Make connections between a critical approach to the construction of knowledge, the academic disciplines and the wider world.
2. Develop an awareness of how individuals and communities construct knowledge and how this is critically examined.
3. Develop an interest in the diversity and richness of cultural perspectives and an awareness of personal and ideological assumptions.
4. Critically reflect on their own beliefs and assumptions, leading to more thoughtful, responsible and purposeful lives.
5. Understand that knowledge brings responsibility which leads to commitment and action” (p.22).

At the same time, there is a close relationship between P4C and the subject of Philosophy, which is also offered within the IB program under the Group 3, “Individuals and Societies”. The aims of the Philosophy course are to enable students to:

- “Develop an intellectually independent and creative way of thinking
- Relate their philosophical understanding to other disciplines and to personal, social and civic life
- Formulate arguments in a sound and purposeful way
- Examine critically their own experience and their ideological and cultural perspectives
- Appreciate the diversity of philosophical thinking
- Appreciate the impact of cultural diversity upon philosophical thinking” (IBO, 2009, p.7).

As part of IB, all students must choose a topic on which to conduct research or write an essay in the subject area of their choice. It is very interesting and rewarding to see that many students have chosen Philosophy for this component at the BSCR. In fact, over the last three years, together with Literature, it is the subject most requested for essay work. Topics chosen have dealt with esthetics, existentialism, neurophilosophy and bioethics, for example. And although the subject demands a great deal of reading on their part, students gladly embrace the challenge and complete their assignments with intellectual satisfaction and usually with academic success. The teachers who accompany them during these processes feel extremely honored by their interest and we believe that we owe a lot to their years of exposure to the P4C program.

On the other hand, as part of the ECIS (European Council of International Schools) and NEASC (New England Association of Schools & Colleges), the BSCR has
undergone different appraisal processes for accreditation (2001-2003 and 2011-2013), which naturally considered an examination of its different educational programs. In these appraisals, the subject of Philosophy ranks highly on the accreditation standards and we think it is because there are some general categories in which the school philosophy and the P4C program show a great level of alignment. For example we can check on the following NEASC standards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>P4C input</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard A2*</td>
<td>The school’s Guiding Statements shall clearly demonstrate a commitment to internationalism/interculturalism in education, and this shall be reflected throughout the life of the institution</td>
<td>Topics about cultural integration, different religions, gender issues, different customs and ethical values are discuss continually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*NEASC, 2013</td>
<td>“Students shall have access to a curriculum that provides challenges but also supports varied development, academic, social, physical and emotional needs and fosters the development of skills and abilities that prepare students for lifelong learning”</td>
<td>Philosophy lessons encourage thinking skills by fostering structured argumentation skills, challenge biases and opportunities to evaluate information from the media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the future it will be interesting to conduct a formal research on the mutual benefit of both programs, P4C and IB. In the meantime, we can share this experience as an example of how the P4C program could complement a leading educational program in different areas. As a thinking skills program, P4C offers great practical exercises. It seems to us that P4C surpasses other logic and ethics-based programs that concentrate on these fields independently. Programs concentrating on logic have become a limited tool for preparing students to pass standardized tests but not to think effectively about different life issues, while ethics-based programs distort Philosophy itself as a whole, since they end up being courses of what Lipman himself described indoctrination. We continue to believe, together with Lipman, that Philosophy, with all of its branches and analytical methodology, is what makes the difference.

### Some final words on the future

We teachers in Costa Rica have worked with the firm conviction that the P4C program can work and contribute toward the educational development of a society that believes in democracy. We are left with the unfinished task of working harder to convince government authorities that this is a viable program for the country’s public school system, as so clearly demonstrated in the experience of Mexico, the United States, England and other countries. Several initiatives are underway in our country’s three major public universities to firmly ground and prepare educators in P4C; we hope to do so some time soon.

Most important of all for us is knowing that the project spearheaded by Matthew Lipman and Ann Sharp is still alive and, from our standpoint, it continues to grow and mature. We believe that Lipman laid the foundations for genuine critical pedagogy. The teachers and students with whom we have shared the experience of engaging in dialogue through P4C topics feel that it has changed everyone’s perspective on education and on life in a positive way. We believe that Lipman, with amazing skill, knew how to turn the purpose that Dewey had visualized for Philosophy and Education into reality, namely, that they would serve to resolve the everyday challenges of society and humankind overall.

### Endnotes

3. Cervantes, Melisa; Chacón, Paula; González, Natalia; Rodríguez, Hazel and Vargas, Carolina (2007). Desarrollo de las destrezas del pensamiento mediante el método de Filosofía para Niños, en los grupos de transición de los CENCINAI de Moravia, Sabanilla y Vargas Araya. San José: University of Costa Rica.

### References

Assessing an Elementary School Philosophy Program

Thomas E. Wartenberg

Abstract

This paper describes a research project assessing the effect on second grade students’ understanding of argumentation that a twelve-week program of weekly philosophy lessons had. The philosophy lessons were taught using popular picture books in the manner employed in my Teaching Children Philosophy program. Compared to a control group of second graders who did not study philosophy, it was demonstrated that the 45-minute weekly philosophy classes led to a significant and sustainable increase in students’ understanding of argumentation.

For more than a decade, I have taught a university course in which my own undergraduate students teach philosophy to elementary school students using picture books as discussion prompts. Developing this course took a long time and a great deal of effort. At the time I began to design it, there was no internet, so I had to hunt down people who had experience teaching philosophy to pre-college students in order to see if there was some model that I could use to base my course upon. Although many people helped me in different ways – these included philosophers who had worked with children and non-philosophers who had experience with what we now call “community-based learning” courses – I couldn’t find a model that I could easily adapt to my own purposes.

Nonetheless, I persevered and eventually was able to design a course that did what I had imagined it doing. Let me briefly explain what the course is like. Each fall, I offer a one-semester course in teaching philosophy to children. During the first half of the course – roughly six weeks – my undergraduate students learn the elements of what is necessary to facilitate a philosophy discussion in which roughly ten second graders take part. This involves their acquiring many different skills. Not only do they need to learn the skills of facilitation, but they also have to gain sufficient fluency in the philosophical topics that will be discussed for them to help move the discussion forward.

During the second half of the course, comprising some eight weeks, my students teach an introduction to philosophy course to second grade students at the Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School in Springfield, MA. The current version of the course, which is discussed at length in (Wartenberg, 2014), is modeled on a pretty traditional university-level introduction to philosophy course. That is, we survey a set of philosophical issues from most of the standard fields of philosophy, including logic, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, social and political philosophy, aesthetics, and environmental ethics. What’s different about this course is that my students initiate all of the philosophy discussions they facilitate by reading a picture book aloud to the children and then asking them a question that focuses on a philosophical issue that the book raises.

Our discussions more or less adhere to the standard community of inquiry model. That is, the facilitator initiates and moderates a discussion whose participants are the school children. In order to help the children understand what they should be doing, we highlight a number of important “moves” that the participants should make in the discussion, including listening to others, saying whether they agree or disagree with what has been said, and providing reasons for their views. And although my students initiate the discussion with a question, they follow the children’s comments, allowing the discussion to go where it does, although they are also supposed to call attention to philosophically significant comments that have been made.

At the risk of immodesty, let me say that the course has been highly successful. Both the elementary school...
and college students have really enjoyed the course. It has received a fair bit of publicity, including stories in The New York Times (Goodnough, 2009) and on National Public Radio. It has given rise to other, similar projects around the country and, indeed, across the globe.3

Once my course was up and running successfully, I decided to make a video to document what I had done and to show others that young children were indeed capable of philosophical thinking. With the help of a then undergraduate student from the University of Massachusetts, Kelly Albrecht, I made a video, Teaching Children Philosophy, that did both of those things.5

Armed with my video, I went to a number of conferences to show people what I had created and what my students could accomplish in eight sessions with the elementary school children. I was proud of what I had achieved and expected others to share my excitement. But no sooner had I finished making a presentation than people asked whether I had done any assessment of my program.

At first, this question annoyed me. “Assessment?” I thought. “Didn’t they see from the video that young children were engaged by philosophical questions and could participate in sophisticated discussions of them? Didn’t they see the excitement and commitment of the teachers we worked with? Wasn’t that assessment enough? What more do they want?”

With a bit of distance and a good deal of more experience, I now see that assessment is important, and for two very different types of reasons. First, there are what I’ll call internal reasons to evaluate a philosophy for children program. One needs to assess whether a program is really doing what it aims to do and whether there are ways in which it could be improved. Having all the people involved in a philosophy for children program provide feedback about their reaction to it serves the purpose of providing important information about the success of the program.

In fact, that is something I have done a fair bit of, although not always as systematically as I would like. I ask students to keep a journal that tracks their experience of teaching philosophy in elementary school and that requires them to evaluate the success of what they have been doing. We also routinely ask the school children what they have learned from their philosophy sessions and record their answers. Teachers regularly provide us with feedback, usually without our having to ask for it. All of this provides some information about the success of what we are doing and allows me to modify our practice in light of positive and negative experience.

But there is a second general type of reason for assessing a philosophy for children program; these are external reasons. If one is ever going to convince people in power – be they classroom teachers, school administrators, or even politicians and bureaucrats – that children should be taught philosophy at a young age, we must provide them with solid evidence that exposure to philosophy will make a difference in the lives of the children. And even if they are impressed by videos and recordings of children discussing philosophical issues, they need what’s called “hard evidence” to justify putting philosophy into their curricula.

It’s for this reason that we need to move beyond testimonial evidence from participants in and observers of a philosophy for children program. If we are to succeed at getting philosophy into pre-college curricula, we will need to demonstrate that philosophy will benefit younger students in much the way it does college students. (It has been reported that philosophy ranks second only to mathematics in the average score that majors achieved on all of the graduate school admission tests.)

This is the sort of evidence that most philosophers are not themselves able to find and present in a form that will be convincing to the people that need to be convinced. So we need to find ways to collaborate with others to produce such evidence. In my experience, cognitive psychologists are the ones with whom we need to form collaborations to provide this sort of evidence.

One way to provide evidence is to analyze recordings or transcripts of the philosophy sessions. We routinely record our elementary school philosophy sessions and one of my students attempted to develop this way of providing evidence in a thesis project in collaboration with a cognitive psychologist at Hampshire College, Melissa Burch. The idea was to show, for example, that the pattern of interactions in a classroom involved more student-student interactions rather than teacher-student-teacher interactions as the second graders learned to have philosophy discussion. (See Sykes (2009) for a discussion of the results of the study.)

The problem with such evidence is that it will only be convincing to those who see, for example, the value of students taking part in more self-directed discussions, a goal that many elementary school administrators may not see as crucial to their educational aims. If we want to truly convince them to see the value of philosophy instruction for their students, we need to provide them with evidence that speaks to their concerns and goals. And this will require us to demonstrate that children who participate in philosophy lessons will achieve things that others students do not.

I would not have known how to begin producing such evidence, but luck played a role in this as, I feel, in all of my efforts in this area. As part of the project of which my course was a part, I developed a website, www.teachingchildrenphilosophy.org. It has many parts, including modules on children’s picture books that my students contribute to each term and a description of the
course. It has been very successful, registering around 20,000 hits a month.

This web presence attracted the attention of a graduate student in cognitive psychology at Boston College, Caren Walker, who had received an MA in the philosophy of science and saw an opportunity for collaboration. She and her professor, Ellen Winner, contacted me and, after some discussion, proposed that we pursue a research project together.

Part of the impetus behind their desire was their realization that previous studies designed to test the impact of doing philosophy with young children had not employed the appropriate experimental design for state of the art psychological research. What needed to be done, they told me, was to develop a research project that would be deemed adequate by the standards employed in cognitive psychology, and they claimed that previous research did not meet this standard.

There were a number of things that were required if our project was to meet this rigorous standard. First, we had to use “instruments” that were acknowledged to test what they sought to test. Here, they told me that this would be easy, for there was a standard way to measure children’s understanding of argumentation. I had suggested this as the skill whose development we should investigate in our research because our philosophy lessons were intended to develop the reasoning skills of the children. We stress the importance of providing reasons for beliefs and stating whether you agree or disagree with the views of others. So argumentation was at the basis of our interventions and measuring whether there was improvement in children’s understanding of what an argument was seemed a good way to gauge the success of our work. It was lucky that psychologists had a standard means of evaluating children’s understanding of arguments.

Second, and most centrally, our study would have to employ a control group so that we really could claim that the changes in scores we measured in the children were not due to the maturation of the children. If we only showed that the group of students we worked with had increased their understanding of argumentation, that would not be deemed sufficient, because we could not demonstrate that this was the result of our sessions. Comparison with a control group could do just that.

Third, we would have to control for the skilled teacher factor. It has been noted (Kane, Rockoff, and Staiger, 2008) that a skilled teacher has a tremendous impact upon student learning. We would have to be sure that the effect we hoped to find was not due to the skill of the philosophy teacher rather than the philosophy lessons.

The experimental design that we came up with satisfied these three criteria and we implemented it in our study. Our study took place at the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School in Hadley, MA. I chose this school for a number of reasons. First, they had only one second-grade class, so we could use this class for the study. Second, we had not done any systematic philosophy lessons there, so there would be no “contamination” of our results as there might have been if we were working in a school where the teachers were familiar with our method. Its physical proximity to Mount Holyoke meant that the undergraduate facilitators I used would have easy access to the school. And the school principal was eager for her students to be exposed to philosophy.

Our study took place over an entire academic year, since that is when I had access to college students to do the facilitating. We divided the second grade class into two groups. One group had philosophy discussions using our standard method facilitated by Ariel Sykes, a student who had previously taken my class. The other group was the control group. We had some trouble deciding on what activity they should engage in. I wanted it to be as similar to what the other children did, but not to involve any sort of philosophy discussion. In the end, we decided to offer them what I called “an art history class,” led by another former student of mine, Nicole Giambalvo. In each class session, the “teacher” read a picture book, but the students were given an art project instead of taking part in a philosophy discussion. The art project asked them to create something – what that something was changed each week – in the style of the artist whose works they had seen in the picture book. For example, after being read Degas and the Little Dancer by Laurence Anholt, the children were given a piece of aluminum foil and asked to make their own foil sculpture.

After the first twelve week session, the two groups were switched, so that the philosophy students became the art history students and vice versa. Both Ariel and Nicole stayed with their groups, to control for differences in the two students’ teaching abilities if any. This is because the philosophy would be taught by Ariel in the first semester, but by Nicole in the second. If one of them was a better teacher, that effect would show up in the results.

The researchers administered tests to the PVCICS students three times during the year: once before we began the program; once after the first set of philosophy lessons; and once at the end of our teaching. Each time, they interviewed individual students over the course of a morning.

The researchers developed a set of “argumentation skills tasks” to assess children’s understanding of and ability to present arguments that covered a range of topics that had earlier been employed by Valle (2009). The children were presented with a picture book that presented conflicting sides dealing with the following child-relevant issues:
Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children, Volume 20, Number 3-4

1. Physical (e.g., the existence of aliens)
2. Social (e.g., boys versus girls)
3. Value (e.g., candy in school)
4. Aesthetic (e.g., classical versus rock music)

In order to give you a sense of what these “picture books” were like, I reproduce below the dialogue, though not the pictures, from the value issue concerning candy in school, number 3 above:

Some people think that soda and candy should be sold in the lunch room in school. They think that kids should choose what they have to eat and drink.

Other people think that soda and candy should not be sold in the lunch room at school. They think that adults should decide what children are allowed to eat and drink.

The children were scored on their responses to these four questions asked by the researchers, who recorded the children’s responses:

1. What do you think? Why?
2. Can you be sure that you are right?
3. Is it possible that there could be new things you could find out that could make you change your mind?
4. Disagreeing Alex says, “No, No, No! That’s not true.” Now you tell me what Alex says next. What would Alex say if he was trying to convince you that he is right?

The scoring was as follows:

- 0 pts. (“I don’t know”)
- 1 pt. choosing a side or repeating the claim (“Children should not have candy in school because parents should decide what they eat”)
- 2 pts. citing the word “evidence” or “proof” or providing irrelevant evidence (“Children should not have candy because there is evidence that parents should decide what they eat” OR “Children should not have candy in school because school is for learning math”)
- 3 pts. providing relevant, anecdotal evidence (“Children should not have candy in school because once I got a tummy ache from too much candy”)
- 4 pts. for providing relevant, non-anecdotal evidence (“Children should not be allowed to have candy in school because too much sugar will make them crazy and they won’t be able to sit still in class.”)

You can see the results in Figure 1.

Pre-Test (before the lessons began), both groups scored approximately 16 on the argumentation test out of a possible 32 points. After the first semester intervention, the philosophy group scored an average of 21 while the art students’ scores declined slightly. At then end of the second semester, the 1st semester philosophy students scored about 22 and the 2nd semester philosophy students now raised their scores to about 21. The researchers told me that these
differences met all the statistical tests for significance. (See Walker, et al., 2012, from which the figure is taken.)

What this shows is that taking part in a 12-week philosophy discussion improved children’s understanding of argumentation in a significant manner. This effect was durable in that it was maintained over a second semester even when there was no philosophy lesson.

Although this research project was an unqualified success, I think it also highlights the need for further assessment of projects like Teaching Children Philosophy. Although we have now shown that a one-semester philosophy intervention based on picture books can have a significant effect on students’ understanding of argumentation, there are many other things we need to research. Let me just mention two.

First, given the current climate, we need to look at the effect of philosophy lessons on standardized test scores. In Massachusetts, we have the MCAS tests or Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. My experience is that most researchers in education are opposed to these tests, so it is hard to find qualified researchers willing to do this sort of research.

Second, we need to have more longitudinal studies. These would ask, “What effect does studying philosophy have on children five or ten years down the line?” Although my program has been in existence for more than ten years, we have not set up a research study that would track both children who studied philosophy and children who didn’t in order to show the benefits of philosophy. Of course, it would be hard to establish causality if the philosophy lessons were not part of, say, an entire elementary school curriculum. Nonetheless, this would be important to attempt.

Let me end on a more positive note. To anyone who has seen young children doing philosophy, there can be no doubt that they love the thinking process they are engaged in and benefit a great deal from it, not only in terms of the skills acquired, but also through the development of a more secure sense of self. Our task as researchers is to find a way to present this evidence to decision makers in a form that will allow them to see the benefits of doing philosophy with young children, benefits that we in the field know to be both real and extensive.

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Endnotes

1 I want to thank Caren Walker for her comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I.
2 I discuss the course in some detail in, (2009).
3 The National Public Radio story can be accessed at: http://www.teachingchildphilosophy.org/nepr.mp3
4 Many of these programs can be found at: http://www.teachingchildphilosophy.org/wiki/Associated_Programs
5 You can see a clip from the video at teachingchildphilosophy.org/wiki/video, where you can also order a copy of the complete video.

References

Assessment of Philosophy for Children in Catalonia, Spain

by IREF

Abstract

After more than 25 years of development of Filosofia 3/18 project – Philosophy for Children- in Catalonia, the Superior Assessment Council (Consell Superior d’Avaluació) of the Ministry of Education of the Government of Catalonia (Departament d’Educació de la Generalitat de Catalunya) conducted an external evaluation in order to see the results of the application of this project after so many years. In this report, you will see the results.

P4C has been working in Catalonia for 25 years, under the name Filosofia 3/18. GrupIREF in the teachers’ non-profit organisation has adapted and translated P4C into Catalan. GrupIREF has also developed other P4C programs. Nowadays, more than 200 schools work with this educative proposal. In 2012, The Consell Superior d’Avaluació de Catalunya and the ICE (from the University of Barcelona), with the assistance of GrupIREF, have developed research to assess this widespread practice.

P4C is an educational proposal for kindergarten, primary school and high school. Its main objectives are the development of the students’ thinking skills, the awareness of the intellectual heritage they have, and the improvement of their abilities to participate in a democratic society.

Today, we have a large and systematic curriculum. It is focused on the general desire to teach thinking skills, through the Community of Inquiry methodology in order to encourage critical, creative and caring thinking. P4C has philosophy discipline at its core.

The conceptual background of P4C is the history of philosophy itself: the questions and ideas that have been (and still are) part of philosophical reflection. For example: What is a good argument? How can we tell if a statement is true or false? What does being beautiful mean? Or in Kantian terms: What can we know? What can we do? What can we expect?

Commemorating 25 years of experience, it was considered that a broad and institutionally supported study was needed, including opinion from experts, teachers and management teams from the schools where the Filosofia 3/18 has been put into practice. This assessment takes into account four aspects: interviewing experts in philosophy, didactics and ethics; surveying schools in which the project is being practiced (asking management teams and teachers); and, finally, interviewing some schools that have been working with the P4C curriculum and methodology for many years and have become good representatives of its practice.

Aims of the research

The aim of this research is to assess the practice of P4C in different schools of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands.

In the following section, we present a summary of the research results presented by the Assessment Board of Departament d’Ensenyament de la Generalitat de Catalunya, in April 2012.

The assessment takes into account the following points:

1. Educational potential of P4C
   - It empowers reasoning as a basic skill through accuracy, argumentation and conversation.
   - It encourages students to read and talk, thoughtfully and critically. The students get used to asking for and giving reasons for their point of view.
   - The students see themselves playing a leading role in their learning process.
   - It promotes the skills of drawing conclusions, troubleshooting, giving examples and counter-examples.
   - From the viewpoint of social skills, the project fosters the capacity to see things from different points of view.
   - It also fosters emotion management and the value of respect as a part of a conversation.
· It develops a sense of tolerance, the ability to listen to others and
· It improves the pupils’ self-esteem and the group’s cohesion.
· Almost 90% of the teachers acknowledge that P4C fosters students’ personality-building process.

2. Innovative potential of the project P4C
   According to experts:
   · The project bases itself on constructivist and active learning.
   · It has an up-to-date methodology.
   · The results from the students are innovative themselves.
   · It is still innovative to ask the group of students to form a circle to maintain a deliberation on ethical matters as a group.
   · The project is considered to be open and there is the possibility to add new materials.

3. Applicability in the Catalan school reality.
   · The project’s aims are substantial enough to be put into practice in different cultural environments. The materials are flexible and can be easily adapted.
   · A large number of schools (very different from one another) integrate the project P4C in their pedagogical project.

4. Characteristics of P4C curriculum
   · P4C curriculum is considered to be necessary, pertinent, clear, systematic and efficient. It also makes planning and evaluation easier.
   · Narrative novels stimulate reflective thinking. It is also considered as an essential means to move from the particular to the universal.
   · The stories fascinate students, but perhaps some of them should be revised. It is acknowledged that they are very dense and training is needed to work with them.
   · The guides are very useful, as they give some clues, suggestions and encouragement.
   · Planning the sessions is not simple because teachers cannot anticipate what is going to happen and which interest students will raise.

5. Reasons to work with P4C and expectations
   The main reasons provided to put P4C into practice are:
   · The lack of reflective thinking and reasoning among students (75% of teachers and 82% of management teams agree or totally agree).
   · Poor oral communication (57% of teachers and 54% of management teams agree or totally agree).
   · The need for respectful relationships (35% of the teachers and 47% of management teams agree or totally agree).

6. Results of practicing P4C in the school

   Improving reasoning. Most teachers said they agree in the following matters (in order of intensity):
   · Students are more capable of finding reasons for their opinions (94%)
   · They show more respect for other students’ ideas (92%)
   · They participate more constructively, creatively and carefully (92%)
   · They have more flexible opinions (87%)

   They improve listening and speaking skills. Specific substantial improvements in comprehension and speaking skills:
   · They analyse the meaning of the concepts more deeply (72%)
   · They use more accurate words (60%)
   · They speak more carefully (58%)

   Improved intellectual autonomy. Specific improvements in intellectual autonomy (in order of the percentage of agreement among teachers):
   · They make better arguments (90%)
   · They make better judgements more often (73%)
   · They give more examples and counterexamples (67%)

   They improved their democratic participation.
   Regarding democratic participation, the specific improvements are:
   · Students improve their ability to listen and talk to each other (87%)
   · They are more capable of participating in a conversation (86%)

   Regarding students’ responsibility, the specific improvements are:
   · They build upon their ideas more (79%)
   · They reassert or correct their own opinions more often (77%)
   · They accept their own mistakes easier and review their opinions (72%)
   · Improved social skills
   · They are more tolerant towards other students’ opinions (88%)
   · They participate more often and more seriously (85%)
   · They communicate and investigate more collaboratively and cooperatively (82%)
   · They make better observations (82%)
   · They help each other and cooperate more often (81%)
They show more respect towards their classmates (78%)
They think more seriously about what they want to say before asking for permission to speak (78%)
They have higher self-esteem (78%)

7. Proper training
87% of Teachers and management teams agree or totally agree and 3% Disagree or totally disagree about:
· More teachers’ training sessions are needed.
· Teachers’ trainers are a good support and strengthen their motivation
· Some of them also think that P4C improves their personal development.

8. P4C’s General contributions to education
· Improves students’ reasoning (94%)
· Contributes to their personality building process (88%)
· Educates emotionally (85%)
· Contributes to the development of citizenship and democracy awareness (82%)
· Through its content and strategies, P4C takes into account the students’ diversity (79%)

9. Proposed evaluation in P4C: Figure-analogical evaluation
Teachers’ opinion regarding the evaluation in the project in terms of Agree/ totally agree
· Evaluation is useful to improve the practice 79%
· It is easy to follow the instructions to evaluate the sessions 64%
· The figure analogical evaluation is practiced 61%
· Students evaluate themselves more rigorously 61%

10. Situations that can undermine P4C’s success according to management teams
· The lack of continuity in teaching staff (68%)
· The lack of specific curricular periods (48%)
· Scheduling problems (39%)
· An excessive number of students in each group class (33%)
· The lack of proper spaces (20%)

Abstract
Deep personal concern along with querying the issue of Philosophy as a school subject having been moved to the periphery of secondary education form the starting point of this research study. The impression of students' opinions, as directly implicated in the teaching process led to a series of interesting outcomes. Certain significant findings, among others, include students' positive attitude towards the subject of Philosophy: acknowledging the necessity for its presence on the school curriculum; recognizing the practical value and contribution of Philosophy on the ethical and intellectual impact on a young individual's personality; and demonstrating the educator's pivotal role in the formation of students' attitudes and opinions.

1. Introduction
It is widely accepted as evidenced in the literature that the in-depth study of the opinions, reasoning, attitudes, preferences and proposals of students - as a basic factor of the teaching process and recipients of the curriculum - constitute an indispensable prerequisite of every attempt at educational reform (Inlow, 1972, p. 47-49; Kelly, 1988, p. 51-55; Oliver, 1977, p. 117-142; Sailor and Alexander 1974, p. 43; Taba, 1962, p. 231-239; Tankard, 1974, p. 17-20; Tolman, 2003, p. 9-21; Tyler, 1950). When drawing up educational policy it is of the utmost importance that the plethora of essential data and critical parameters, made evident through extensive empirical studies showing the interests and views of students at all levels of education, must earnestly be taken into consideration. Hence, the study of students' opinion on the undervalued subject of Philosophy in Greek secondary education gives rise to important conclusions: identification of data which needs to be amended and decision-making on important issues, such as the syllabus, textbooks, teaching methodology and student evaluation.

2. The position of the subject of Philosophy in the Greek education system
Despite the fact that rational thought and critical reflection first appeared as a science in Ancient Greece, it seems that those responsible for educational matters in present times have not grasped the significance of Philosophy. A first look at any school timetable – let alone a more critical and/or comparative study of the curriculum as a whole – immediately reveals the inequality in terms of how much time is allotted for each subject. Since the establishment of the Modern Greek State (1830) up until the beginning of the 21st century, the mean time that the subject of Philosophy has been allocated on the school timetable per week is a mere 1.88%.

The most significant alteration that has taken place since 1998, however, and which overturned a Greek educational reality effective almost since the founding of the Modern Greek nation, pertains to the two-hour weekly lessons of Philosophy, but taught only to students in the Theoretical Direction of study and only to those who are in the second to last year of their high school training. The majority of students who have elected to do the Applied or Technological Directions of study are therefore deprived of the possibility of coming into contact with basic philosophic principles. By making Philosophy an elective subject the misconception thus arises that fundamental philosophical issues (such as those concerning knowledge, virtue, ethics, existence, nature etc), the development of thought, and the intellectual quest are the avocation of a privileged group of people with a certain professional orientation.

Moreover, in the school year 2000-01 a further negative change to the school curriculum was made by removing the two-hour/week lesson "Philosophic Texts" which introduced fourteen-year old students in the third year of junior high school to the until then unknown world of Philosophy.

In addition to the limited time allotted to the teaching of Philosophy, even fewer references are made to it in the curriculum and in the Directives sent by the Ministry. On the rare occasions when definite guidelines are given, they mainly deal with general aims and the syllabus, presented in telegraphic form and falling short of providing any enlightenment to educators. This fact clearly indicates that the subject of Philosophy is under-estimated by the decision-making body of the Ministry itself. Furthermore, this is unfortunate as Philosophy is by nature a difficult subject and teachers need to have directives and instructions in order to meet their objectives. A special booklet from the Ministry of Education in 2001 was an exception where a first praiseworthy attempt was made to overcome the subject's previous ambiguity. In this booklet 17 pages were dedicated
to specific aims and content, with methodological proposals and with recommendations for evaluating outcomes in order to attain the best preparation for teachers.

In a nutshell, the unpleasant truth of the matter is that in approximately 180 years of the existence of the Modern Greek State, the subject of Philosophy has never been given the position it rightly deserves in any school curriculum. In fact, especially in the last decade it can justly be characterized as being even further displaced or more undervalued.

3. Aims of the research

The issues that constitute the basic areas of the questioning of the present study are assembled into three thematic groups as follows.

A. The Attitude to the subject of Philosophy

The students were required to:

1. First, indicate the degree of interest they have in the subject of Philosophy and then to place it on a hierarchical scale in relation to other humanities subjects
2. Recommend whether Philosophy should remain on the school curriculum or whether it should be abolished
3. Suggest in which high school year/s and how many hours per week the subject of Philosophy should be taught and
4. Evaluate the foundation of their philosophical knowledge on completion of the Philosophy course in the second year of senior high school in comparison to the initial perception they had about their philosophical knowledge.

B. The Attitude to the subject of Philosophy as a field of knowledge

Students were asked:

1. To assess the practical value of Philosophy and to evaluate its contribution to various fields
2. To assess whether the issues Philosophy posits can be answered by other sciences and at the same time to pinpoint their differences
3. To state whether or not they would be interested in studying Philosophy at University.

C. Teaching and evaluation of the subject

Students were requested to comment on the educator’s teaching methods, to assess their degree of satisfaction and to make proposals. The same three sets of questions, this time on the issue of subject evaluation were posed.

4. Method: Tools of research, Sample, Data collection

The triangulation method was chosen for the data collection, which in the social sciences attempts to interpret the wealth and complexity of human behaviour in a more integrated manner by examining it from numerous perspectives through the application of both quantitative and qualitative data (Cohen and Manion, 1997, p. 269-286; Patton, 1990, p. 186-198). Therefore, survey research was implemented as the primary method and the interview was conducted as a supplementary method of data collection.

Survey research was judged as being the most appropriate method on account of the possibilities it offers. On the one hand, research subjects are given the opportunity to participate anonymously, quickly and with relatively little effort, and on the other hand, the researcher is able to collect data, record, and study the attitudes and views of subjects speedily and at relatively low-cost. In addition, it was the preferred method since the statistical analysis of the data can under certain conditions lead to a generalization of the findings to the wider population (Kerlinger, 1979, p. 421-423).

The basic aim of conducting interviews was to clarify certain responses with interpretational difficulties, which could arise from the quantitative data (Best, 1977, p. 182). It was decided that the interviews should not to be strictly standardized, as this would simply result in a reproduction of the preceding survey research and most likely would not contribute anything new to the collection of empirical data. Therefore, the semi-standardized interview was chosen, which contains particular questions for each thematic group of the research study while giving the interviewer the flexibility to follow up things of interest as they arise in the interview process (Phillips, 1977, p. 227-228).

Given the practical impossibility of studying the entire population of Greek students who are taught the subject of Philosophy (N=28854), a subtotal (N=923) was applied with the method of cluster sampling (Kidder, Judd and Eliot, 1986, p. 162-163). SPSS 14.0 for Windows was used for the statistical analysis.

The interviews were conducted on a research sample of 25 students at two different senior high schools. One of the research aims was that the two schools represented a broad spectrum of socioeconomic stratification, i.e. one school was located in the higher echelons, while the other was in the lower.

5. Data analysis – Results

Following the statistical analysis of the data, the most significant results of the research are presented below. The findings that came to light are in relation to the research thematic groups and the association with the individual student characteristics (gender; educational and socioeconomic levels of parents; place of origin and residence; school achievement and marks in the subject of Philosophy).
A. Attitude towards the subject of Philosophy

1. Philosophy is a subject that appeals to a significant majority of students. Only 12.7% stated that they were indifferent (to a greater or lesser degree) in contrast to a large 62.7% that claimed to have a ‘quite high’ or ‘very high’ interest in the subject. That students prefer Philosophy is further confirmed by the findings, which show its high position on the comparative-hierarchical scale among the other four basic humanities subjects on the Greek school curriculum (History, Modern Greek Language, Modern Greek Literature and Ancient Greek). The distribution which shows that 1/5 of the students rank Philosophy in the first position of interest (Figure 1) and its high mean rank (Table 1) are judged to be particularly positive, if its tenuous position in relation to the other humanities subjects, which are taught from the beginning of secondary school, is taken into consideration.

Figure 1. Students’ positioning of Philosophy on hierarchical scale in relation to the other Humanities subjects (History, Modern Greek Language, Modern Greek Literature and Ancient Greek) with the criterion the interest these subjects present.

Table 1: Mean Rank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Greek Language</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Greek Literature</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Greek</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the same ranking scale of humanities subjects, the criterion this time, however, being the ‘level of difficulty’, the findings that are of particular interest. On the one hand, is the significant proportion of students (22.2%) who consider Philosophy to be easier than the other humanities subjects, and on the other hand, the relatively small percentage of students (just 10.4%) who consider it to be more difficult (Figure 2). This result was rather unexpected given that Philosophy is not a main subject on the High school timetable and in addition is by nature difficult.

Figure 2. Students’ positioning of Philosophy on hierarchical scale in relation to the other Humanities subjects (History, Modern Greek Language, Modern Greek Literature and Ancient Greek) with the criterion the level of difficulty these subjects present.

2. A large percentage of students (85%) are in favour of Philosophy continuing to be offered on the High school curriculum. The overall degree of students’ interest in the subject has an important effect, without however determining totally their desires regarding the fate of the subject, since most of the students who have a ‘neutral’ interest in Philosophy prefer it to be kept on the curriculum; the same applies to the considerable proportion of students who expressed having ‘little’ or ‘no’ interest in the subject. Therefore, it is ascertained from the findings that a significant percentage of students who claim to have little or no personal interest in the subject, do not wish it to be abolished from the school curriculum. Another important factor, which accounts for the high regard that students have for Philosophy is the close association it has with wider societal problems. It is indicative that all students who are interested in the subject and recognise its practical value strongly wish it to remain on the school curriculum.

3. Despite students’ almost unanimous opinion in favour of maintaining Philosophy as a subject on the curriculum, there appears to be a relatively wide difference of opinions in terms of the specific position it should have on the overall school curriculum.

Along general lines, students’ views can be summarized as follows:

29% of students judge that the teaching of Philosophy should begin in earlier years, in order for students to be better acquainted with the basic philosophical concepts and to enable the smoother transition to a deeper and
more analytical level in later years. In this way we can avoid the lurking danger of students, who have no experience of philosophically and are wholly unequipped to deal with sophisticated philosophical texts, developing a future aversion to Philosophy because of a distressing or even painful initial learning experience. Nevertheless, the large majority of students (71%) do not consider it appropriate to increase the number of hours that Philosophy is taught to younger classes, mainly due to those students’ immaturity of age and the inability to comprehend a naturally difficult subject.

Students’ opinions are likewise divided as to whether Philosophy should be a compulsory or an elective subject. More specifically, almost half (48.2%) agree with the decision of the Ministry of Education to confine the teaching of Philosophy to the Theoretical Direction of study. The chief reason for this view is that there would be very few students in the Applied Sciences who would be interested; the vast majority would be indifferent or bored with the idea of having a philosophical subject, unrelated to their field of knowledge, added to their syllabus. However, over half (51.8%) disagree with the subject being taught only to students in the Theoretical Direction of study, since this means that students in the other two Directions (Applied and Technological) are denied the opportunity of being introduced to basic philosophic principles; a fact which deprives them of the scope to develop and sharpen their skills in critical thought and to generally enjoy all the positive aspects inherent in the study of Philosophy.

Students appear to have divergent views in regards to the actual number of teaching hours that the subject of Philosophy should be allotted. More specifically, while 42% consider that two hours a week is sufficient, 58% express the wish that not only there be an increase in the number of hours per week, but also that the subject be taught in more years of secondary education. It is apparent from the findings that the almost universal student preference in favour of retaining the subject of Philosophy on the curriculum, does not carry over in desiring an increase in the number of hours it is taught.

4. The results indicating that almost 2/3 of students are totally ignorant of Philosophy before their second last year of High school are to be expected. This is largely due to the Greek curriculum, which makes Philosophy available to students for the first (and essentially the last) time in this particular school year. It is therefore left up to the adolescent student’s discretion to not only make a conscious personal choice to study Philosophy, but also to find time within their usually heavy study schedule and numerous extra-curricula commitments, pursuits and activities. It appears that family background, and more specifically the parents’ educational level, play a fairly important role in influencing the student’s decision; that is to say that the higher the mother’s and father’s educational level, the more likely students are become involved in Philosophical pursuits.

The vast majority of students (81%) who acknowledge an improvement (to a ‘sufficient’ or ‘very high’ degree) in their knowledge of philosophy following the completion of their studies indicates that the work accomplished during the school year is assessed by students as having been valuable. However, most students who took part in the interviews stated that although they did acquire some knowledge of Philosophy, it was superficial due to the limited time the subject was taught, and at the same time they expressed their concern that their acquired philosophical knowledge would be of short-term duration. These participants supported the view that under the present educational arrangements, gaining a deeper understanding of Philosophy is not feasible, or at best a problematic.

**B. Attitude to the field of Philosophy**

1. A significant number of students (64.6%) recognises the association between Philosophy, life and society. This was a rather unexpected result because in the literature there is widespread concern about the general depreciation of Philosophy nowadays. Students who are interested in Philosophy as a subject at school and get good marks in it, who read other books apart from required school texts and who watch documentaries or the news on television, tend to acknowledge the practical value of Philosophy.

2. Most students believe that Philosophy contributes to making their critical thought skills more acute (65.2%); reinforces the disposition to formulate problems and problem solving (74%); as well as developing intellectual maturity (60%). In contrast, only 29.6% of students accept that Philosophy contributes to self-knowledge and an even smaller percentage agree that it augments democratic conscience (16.9%).

3. As regards the questions that Philosophy poses, a significant proportion of the study sample (66.7%), believe that these are not accessible to other sciences. This finding supports an indirect recognition of Philosophy’s independence and value as a field of research and study. 1/5 of the students state that the key difference of Philosophy from the other sciences lies in the theoretical character of the former; meaning that there is subjectivity and conflicting approaches for the same issue. In contrast, a more positive view of Philosophy is held by those students who state that the most important difference between it and other sciences is its contribution to a better understanding of world matters (14.5%); its enhancement of intellectual cultivation and the sharpening of critical skills (13.5%); as well as being conducive to strengthening one’s disposition for questioning (9.9%). The tendency to recognize the
limitless creative opportunities that the field of Philosophy offers to all areas of life is evident in the opinion of 42 students. Thirty students consider it as different because it is seen as a means to instill ethical values; this opinion can perhaps be attributed to the large emphasis that is placed on the ethics dimension of Philosophy on the syllabus. The approach which supports the view that Philosophy involves the unreal, i.e. what might exist, appears to be more the consequence of the school textbook on the Introduction to Philosophy which promotes the differentiation of subject matter and ideas between philosophers and other scientists. It is of interest to note that 22 students have the impression that Philosophy is shaped by a free rein of opinions and ideas resulting from the fact that in Philosophy there are no right or wrong answers. Such a notion may be partly due to the fact that indeed at almost no point in History has Philosophy ever been identified with any particular way of thinking or the widespread convergence of any specific intellectual viewpoint, since the main focus is on differentiation and plurality of approaches; but it may also be influenced by the selection of texts from the assigned school books, which tend to emphasise the Sophists’ theory on the existence of many truths.

4. Almost half the students in the sample (46.9%) regard the possibility of studying Philosophy at University positively. In conjunction with other compatible responses, this finding is most encouraging in terms of how students regard the subject of Philosophy by dispelling the fallacy that students have an aversion to Philosophy at school because it is difficult and boring. The percentage of students who have a positive attitude towards studying Philosophy at tertiary level might actually have been even higher, if the very real possibility is taken into consideration that some students may have responded negatively not due to lack of interest in Philosophy but as a result of the limited career opportunities that University Departments of Philosophy can offer to graduates. In fact, in the interviews a significant number of respondents expressed their concern that there is a low association between Philosophy Studies and the job market, which naturally makes them skeptical about deciding to study Philosophy at University. Another point which arose in the interviews and is of particular interest is that although students do not intend to continue with philosophical studies at tertiary level, they would be very willing to enlarge their knowledge on the topic by reading books, articles and so on in their free time, or to select two or three university courses on Philosophy within their studies.

C. Teaching and Evaluation of the subject

1. In accordance with the responses of the study sample, 44.3% stated that teachers chose dialogue as their main teaching methodology – in other words, having discussions with students primarily in the form of constant questioning – while almost the same percentage (42.7%) stated that teachers preferred the lecture format, which is a more teacher-centred approach. Notably smaller is the proportion of students (13.3%) who state that their teachers combine both these two methods with the extensive use of excerpts from original sources. Students state that they are more satisfied with educators who choose the dialogue technique and original sources, in comparison to those who for the most part implement lectures as the basic teaching tool.

2. The finding which shows 57.6% of students to be ‘quite’ or ‘very’ satisfied with the way Philosophy is taught and only 19% who are ‘a little’ or ‘not at all’ satisfied, is a relatively positive outcome in regards to educators’ teaching competency, if one takes into account, on the one hand, the intense skepticism coupled with the strong criticism that adolescents often express about both individuals and institutions, and on the other, students’ philosophical knowledge being next to nil prior to their introduction to the subject in High school.

Although the degree of satisfaction that students have with the teaching approach does not appear to be affected by any independent variable, it does influence their opinions towards the three thematic groups of the questionnaire to a statistically significant extent. More specifically, educators’ teaching competency produces a number of positive effects, such as bolstering students’ interest in Philosophy; reinforcing students’ desire to retain the subject of Philosophy on the High school curriculum; raising students’ awareness of the importance of Philosophy and promoting a more encouraging attitude to engaging in Philosophy Studies at tertiary education level. Furthermore, the degree of satisfaction in the way Philosophy is taught contributes to improving students’ performance and simultaneously decreasing the time required for preparation and/or homework.

Needless to say, the educator who implements the most appropriate teaching methods to create a receptive atmosphere and stimulate students’ interest in learning is rewarded with the result of a marked improvement in student performance. In addition to this, when the most appropriate teaching methods are applied, students are not only able to concentrate and remain focused on the lesson, but they comprehend many of the difficult concepts being taught and more easily digest the fundamental information of each unit, with the ensuing result that the required preparation time is reduced and therefore the extra time can be put to productive use for personal study, revision and consolidation.

3. Regarding students’ proposals for the most appropriate teaching method, the findings indicate that no students supported monologue-like lectures as a constructive teaching
tool, in stark contrast to their overwhelming preference for extensive, insightful philosophical dialogue, not only among students but also between teacher and students. Student interview responses presume that lecturing should take up only a small part rather most of the lesson time and should be utilized either to present significant information to students, which they are unable to find themselves, or to summarise the most important points in order to reach conclusions or to create philosophical speculation.

11% of the students consider the analysis of the original texts as the key methodological tool. 9.4% of the students prefer a deeper examination and analysis of the issues, regarding the existing process as lacking or superficial, while the same percentage would prefer lessons to be presented in the simplest and easiest way possible, since they claim to have difficulty in understanding the intricate and complex philosophical concepts. 7.3% suggest that audiovisual means should be used to teach Philosophy and 5.8% want a tangible connection to be made between Philosophy and current social and personal issues which pertain to their interests and concerns. 5.8% think that the only valid solution for the achievement of the teaching goals is to increase the number of teaching hours of the subject, as well as be taught Philosophy in other years of High school. Another 5.8% believe that Philosophy should be taught by more specialized personnel, while 3.9% recommend having individual or group assignments as homework and 3.3% believe they should be referred to a bibliography apart from the required school textbook. Finally, from the interview responses it was revealed that many students strongly believe that the only ‘antidote’ to the present monotony and boredom experienced in the subject of Philosophy is for educators to implement a variety of teaching methods.

4. The most standard evaluation procedure used by almost half the teachers is to orally examine students in every lesson. 15.9% of teachers set their students an hour-long, end-of-term examination, 15% examine them on the critical questions, whereas only 4% choose to evaluate students with the use of short written tests at regular intervals throughout the term. It must be noted that approximately one in five teachers uses a combination of two of the above methods with equal weight.

It appears that the type of evaluation method has an effect on the degree of student satisfaction. It is ascertained from the findings that students are most satisfied when teachers use critical questioning as the main evaluation tool and least satisfied when teachers evaluate student performance by placing the most weight on the mark they achieve in the one-hour examination at the end of term.

5. In the findings, students assess teachers’ evaluation of their school performance more leniently as compared to the teaching methodology applied; only one in ten students claim to be ‘dissatisfied’, while a high 72.1% state that they are ‘quite’ or ‘very’ satisfied with the evaluation of their performance. To further clarify this finding, it is apparent that when students express a high satisfaction with their teachers’ evaluation results, it shows that the teacher has previously assessed their teaching approach and implemented the most appropriate teaching methodology in order to achieve the teaching goals. The covariance therefore, of these two variables (as basic components of teaching) inevitably leads to their relevance to many similar dependent variables. In this way the role of the teacher can clearly be seen to influence the formation of students’ attitudes and thought on Philosophy not only as a school subject but also as a field of knowledge.

6. The brief oral examination in each lesson and the regular short written test are the two methods judged to be the most appropriate by students for the evaluation of their performance in the subject of Philosophy (25% for each). The findings from the interview present a difference of opinion as to the preferred way of executing the oral examination. Some students are in favour of an open philosophical discussion with the participation of as many students as possible under the teacher’s guidance, while others, assuming that such a proposal is an impracticable objective for students to achieve, recommend instead that all students are examined as they appear on the class roster which will compel each one to study. Furthermore, the interview responses show most students to be of the opinion that considerable merit should be given to their general conduct and their overall effort. In other words, in order for there to be a fair evaluation of students’ performance the extent of their active participation in the lesson should be acknowledged, which provides confirmation of the level of interest as well as feedback to the teaching methods applied. Lastly, in the questionnaire, 18 students expressed serious reservations concerning the purpose of grading a subject such as Philosophy, as well as the ability to grade it equitably, when considering that to cast personal views within ‘evaluation moulds’ goes against the essence of Philosophy.

6. Conclusion

The research study on the attitude and opinions of school students to the subject of Philosophy is particularly useful in identifying the elements which need to be altered so that the appropriate measures are taken in order to reassess and improve both the subject’s content and standing on the Greek High school curriculum.

The findings, some of which are unexpected, present great interest.

On the one hand, many of the prevailing views were overturned, and certain ‘myths’ prevalent in the wider
Greek society were dispelled, such as, that students have an antipathy to Philosophy and it is difficult for them to comprehend, as well as the fact that as a field of study and thought it has been downgraded. One of the most common claims put forward by the Greek Ministry of Education in order to justify the restrictions placed on Philosophy in the school curriculum is, first, students’ antipathy and, second, the high degree of difficulty of philosophical concepts and theories, whose understanding presupposes a high level of intellectual maturity that the average adolescent does not possess. Therefore, whereas the great majority of the young descendants of Plato and Aristotle agree with the need to retain the subject on the curriculum due to its contribution to the ethical and intellectual development of their personality, the country’s political leadership appears not to share in this sentiment.

On the other hand, the findings of the present empirical research confirm certain logical hypotheses, such as, firstly, that the majority of students come with a philosophical blank slate up until the beginning of the second last year of Secondary school, where for the first and last time they are taught the subject of Philosophy; secondly, that it is impracticable to achieve a deeper understanding of Philosophy under the present school system; and thirdly, that the role of the teacher is decisive in forming student attitudes and opinions.

Further findings of interest include the fact that the majority of students regard extensive, insightful philosophical dialogue as the most appropriate teaching method and that the most ideal means of evaluation of their school performance is brief oral examinations in each lesson as well as regular short written tests.

Philosophy, in the country of its birth, is a contentious issue not for the youth but for those in power at any given time who carry the responsibility for establishing educational policy. However, as indicated in the literature, the commonly accepted fact that today’s high school graduates are seriously lacking in philosophical contemplation and critical thought makes it imperative for those with authority in educational matters to seriously contemplate reorienting their compass and give priority to reinforcing the subject of Philosophy within Greek secondary education.

References

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Between the De-traditionalization and ‘Aurorality’ of Knowledge: What (Can) Work(s) in P4C when It Is Set to Work

Stefano Oliverio

Abstract
The proposed paper situates the question about the ‘success’ of the P4C program within the ‘what works’ debate which has taken place in the Anglo-American educational community over the last 15 years. Against this backdrop, the cultural significance of P4C is highlighted and a special focus is devoted to how P4C has changed (or should have changed) the practice of teaching. Finally, the P4C-oriented teaching of disciplines is indicated as a possible promising way out of the current educational predicament marked by the de-traditionalization and individualization of knowledge.

Introduction: Disliking the victor’s cause
When Matthew Lipman launched his program, he understood it as nothing less than a challenge to the educational status quo. Indeed, in his first theoretical volumes, the idea of a Philosophy for Children is always preceded by the emphasis upon the need for educational redesign (Lipman et al., 1980, p. 3 ff.) and for remaking the foundations (Lipman, 1988, p. 3 ff.).

By analogously drawing upon a well-known Sartrian (1960) distinction we could even state that his operation aspired to be a philosophical not an ideological one, ideology consisting in the filling of the gaps of an existing conceptual system (“ideology is a parasitic system which lives at the margins of Knowledge”, Sartre writes [p. 22]) and philosophy, on the contrary, being the expression of a whole reconstruction of thought, a totalization of knowledge which expresses the self-awareness of a rising class and is, therefore, connected with deep changes in society.

But this analogy risks being slippery. Indeed, while there are good reasons to read Lipman’s undertaking against the backdrop of the socio-cultural climate of the mid ‘60s and the early ‘70s of 20th century and to construe it as one (of the) endeavour(s) to give philosophical-educational expression to a more global change in society (and, therefore, through a typically Sartrian lens), society and educational systems seem to have gone another way (see for instance Ravitch, 2010) and, from this point of view, we should celebrate – let it be said without any hint of irony – a failure in a Cato the Young-like mood. I am referring here to the adversary of Caesar in Lucan’s Pharsalia (Book I, v. 128), who being defeated by Caesar exclaims that Victrix causa dei placuit sed victa Catoni “The victor’s cause pleased the gods, but the vanquished pleased Cato.” In the same way, we should settle for being pleased by a vanquished cause. Along these lines the question of whether P4C has worked would probably make little sense.

But when I suggested the Sartrian analogy I meant to allude to a much less wide-ranging consideration, namely, one confined to the sole domain of educational theory and practice (to the field of a ‘discipline’, so to speak) and not also to the realm of socio-political transformations (although such a distinction is obviously problematic). I wanted to point out how the educational program proposed by Lipman was not understood as a mere addition to the existing educational theory and practice but as an appeal to a complete reconstruction of what educating means. And it was philosophical, then, not only in the sense that it put philosophy at the very centre of the curriculum but also (and, maybe, mainly) because it put in discussion the whole rationale of education as it was realized in schools. In this sense, to preserve the Sartrian vocabulary, we can call ideological all those educational proposals which confine themselves to adding something to existing curricula (in terms of new ‘contents’ or new ‘methods’) and philosophical those which invoke a radical revisitation of the very principles on the basis of which curricula are designed.

This qualification of the use of the analogy does not delete anything, alas, of what has been stated in the previous paragraph: educational systems do not live in a world apart and, in contemporary scenarios, there are major pressures on education for it to become an agency to promote skills and abilities to engage in global competitiveness (see for instance Nussbaum, 2010). But, although as an educator I am (even painfully) aware that things should not be kept separated, my focus is here specifically on educational theory and practice, on what education is considered to be like by those who theorize and practise it more than on how education is supposed to be by socio-political powers. From this specific point of view has P4C worked?
I will develop my argumentation in two steps: first I am going to situate the issue about the ‘working’ of P4C within the broader debate, very heated in the Anglo-American community, about the question of “what works” in education. After establishing at what level I think the question of P4C ‘working’ should be raised, I am going to investigate a distinctive issue, which will allow me – hopefully – both to provide an example of what P4C ‘working’ means and to indicate a challenge which we have ahead of us.

1. The ‘what works’ debate and P4C as a ‘working’ paradigm

“Education is on the brink of a scientific revolution that has the potential to profoundly transform policy, practice, and research” (Slavin, 2002, p. 15). With these thunderous words, fairly astonishing within an allegedly scientifically-minded discourse, Robert Slavin commented on some official documents on education and research issued by the US government. Thanks to this change of approach, “[a]t the dawn of the 21st century, education is finally being dragged, kicking and screaming, into the 20th century. The scientific revolution that utterly transformed medicine, agriculture, transportation, technology, and other fields early in the 20th century almost completely bypassed the field of education” (ibid., p. 16). Slavin points out that

[i]t is possible that these policy reforms could set in motion a process of research and development on programs and practices affecting children everywhere. This process could create the kind of progressive, systematic improvement over time that has characterized successful parts of our economy and society throughout the 20th century, in fields such as medicine, agriculture, transportation, technology, and other fields early in the 20th century almost completely bypassed the field of education” (Ibid., p. 16). Slavin points out that

However, the experiment is the design of choice for studies that seek to make causal conclusions, and particularly for evaluations of educational innovations. Educators and policymakers legitimately ask, “If we implement Program X instead of Program Y, or instead of our current program, what will be the likely outcomes for children?” For questions posed in this way, there are few alternatives to well-designed experiments. (Ibid., p. 18).

Without dwelling in detail upon Slavin’s position (representative of a much wider front advocating an evidence-based orientation), I will confine myself to picking up some major points of the “what works” movement in educational theory (to get an idea of what is at stake in the debate and what are the different positions, ranging from support for evidence-based approaches to frank opposition, as can be seen in the rich literature on the subject, including Hargreaves, 1996, 1997; Hammersley, 1997; Davies, 1999; Edwards, 2000; Hammersley, 2001; Pirrie, 2001; Olson, 2004; Ashkanasy, 2007; Biesta, 2010):

i. Educational research and the designing of new programs should be conducted after the model of other disciplines that reach “replicable paradigms for development, rigorous valuation, replication, and dissemination” (Slavin, 2002, p. 17).

ii. Among the disciplines by which education should be inspired there is principally medicine.

iii. Indeed, the relationship between educational research and educational practice should tend to become similar to that obtaining between medical research and the practice of doctors. In particular, in the words of another of the champions of the “what works” front, “educational research should and could have much more relevance for, and impact on, the professional practice of teachers than it now has. […] Doctors and teachers are similar in that they make decisions involving complex judgements. Many doctors draw upon research about the effects of their practice to inform and improve their decisions; most teachers do not, and this is a difference. Educational research could and should generate a better equivalent for teachers; reducing the difference would enhance the quality of teachers’ decision-making” (Hargreaves, 1997, p. 405 and 406).

If i., ii., and iii. hold, then education can be said to be “working” in a non haphazard, commonsensical and fundamentally pre-scientific way. And the prospects of real advances would be opened up, rather than relying upon intuitive approaches or vague constructs.

It would be possible to dismiss this perspective by denouncing its search for certainty (Dewey, 1929), which betrays some problematic epistemological assumptions not only on what education should be like but even about the practice of science itself. But I suggest interpreting charitably these appeals to an evidence-based approach and, despite the reservations we can legitimately nurture about them, as we will see, making the most of them in terms of what indications we could gain.

I propose such an attitude not because of the political ‘weight’ of the evidence-based approach (indeed, it is, if not accessory to the main policies, at least a valid support for
them. Anne Pirries (2001, p. 132) is not completely wrong in stating that “[e]vidence-based practice is [...] a social and political value of the moment”); it is rather because it should be recognized that it raises important issues: how can we, as educators, choose between two programs? How can we assess their value and effectiveness without any criteria? And have the criteria based on soundly experimental evidence not turned out to be particularly reliable? Should it not be taken seriously the appeal to modelling education according to the paradigm of other important branches of social activities which have been proven to make constant and cumulative progress?

All this constitutes an important memento, above all because the risk is constantly looming over us that educational theory and practice are reduced to a matter of dear old common sense wisdom. I am thinking, for instance, of statements like the following (the author is a cognitive scientist!):

[…] teaching and learning are among the natural, intuitive mental skills that humans display through a tacit knowledge rather than explicit theory or doctrine. In the light of an undeniable history of centuries of successful teaching, it seems clear that teachers and learners may manage effectively, even superlatively, without knowing or caring about psychology, much less epistemology or metaphysics [...] I have suggested that teaching in general may be more like instruction for bicycle riding: the best advice is ‘Hold tight and pedal fast.’ (Slezak, 2010, p. 109 and 110)

The counter-argumentation against the evidence-based approach has been insisting essentially on the difference between medicine and education in many respects, but I want to focus only on some of them: medical research is built upon the identification of causal connections, which are much more difficult to establish in educational research in a non-controversial way (Hammersley, 1997; Berliner, 2002, p. 19-20; Biesta, 2010, p. 33-34); furthermore, in medical research randomized experiments can be conducted, whereas it is debatable whether or, at least, to what extent this can occur in education (in forms comparable with those of medicine); finally, the relationship between research and professional practice is different in medicine, whereas it is debatable whether or, at least, to what extent this can occur in education (in forms comparable with those of medicine); finally, the relationship between research and professional practice is different in medicine, where it tends to “the technical end of the spectrum” (Hammersley, 2001) whereas in education it tends to the reflective one (for an insightful, though not conclusive, problematization of such a dichotomous way of putting things see Hargreaves, 1997, p. 409 ff. Although I do not share the author’s position as a whole I find his line of reasoning to be worthy of very careful examination and discussion).

Without rehashing these criticisms further, which are well-founded and on target, I suggest that there is a use we can make of the requirements put forward by the evidence-based approach. To put it in a nutshell (because my attention will be directed elsewhere): although there is a sense in which P4C is a sort of pedagogic creed (or even an educational faith) and ‘by its fruits we recognize it’ as a fundamental way of improving education and promoting thinking (and although I personally see nothing bad in it), we should keep a constant vigilance on the need for evidence in order to avoid what could be called Stuart Chase’s doom, according to which “For those who believe, no proof is necessary. For those who don’t believe, no proof is possible.” The challenge of the evidence-based approach, despite the legitimate misgivings that a lot of its tenets can raise, can function as a spur to the continual devising, fine-tuning, and revising of instruments to test empirically P4C (in its different dimensions) and P4C as a practice can hugely benefit from the increase of this ‘testing’ attitude, which could appear, at first, poles apart from the philosophical matrix of the program.

But this is not the argumentative trajectory followed in this present paper. As a matter of fact, if I recognize that, insofar as it is accepted as an incentive, the insistence on evidence might operate as a healthy corrective against tendencies to an acritical self-satisfaction or unwillingness to put a model to the test, however the limits and the narrowness of the evidence-based approaches can not be passed over in silence. The most promising line of criticism in the ‘what works’ debate seems to me that which shifts the focus and explores different dimensions of the question of what ‘to work’ means.

By referring to a brilliant ‘definition’ of science by Nobel prize-winning physicist Bridgman (science is made by people “doing their damnedest with their minds, no holds barred”), David Berliner highlights that

[help]ing us to do our damndest with our minds by promoting rational debate is likely to improve education more than funding randomized studies with their necessary tradeoff of clarity of findings for completeness of understanding. [...] Promoting debate on a variety of educational issues among researchers and practitioners with different methodological perspectives would help both our scholars and our government to make fewer errors. (Berliner, 2002, p. 20)

In a similar vein, Elizabeth Atkinson intervened in the debate by emphasizing the role of ideas in teachers’ (and educators’) practice and inviting us not to overstress the part that the ‘end-products’ of evidence-based investigations can play in improving education:

The possibility of finding final answers to pedagogical problems through educational research is questionable at best; but the possibility of promoting and extending critical discourse among both researchers and teachers, and of opening up
channels for debate and consideration of a range of solutions to classroom problems, will remain fruitful as long as educational research continues to exist. Furthermore, the view that research into practice is the best or only way of informing and improving teaching ignores the role that theory plays in determining teachers’ day-to-day thoughts and actions, whether they are aware of it or not. […] What I am suggesting, however, is that a narrow focus on ‘what works’ will close the door that leads to new possibilities, new strategies, new ways of reframing and reconceiving the educational enterprise. ‘What works’ looks back, in reality, to what has sometimes worked for some people in the past. Educational research, both theoretical and empirical, needs to look forward, not to guaranteed improvements, but to the rich potential of critical discourse and the promise of an uncertain future. (Atkinson, 2000, p. 322 and 328. Emphasis in the original)

This is important because educational problems are not (only/always) technical but invest the ethical realm, the latter understood in a non-moralistical and non-homiletical way, as the domain in which the question about values, about the type of flourishing of subjects which is envisioned, is absolutely crucial (Carr, 1992, Biesta, 2010, p. 35-36).

Within this horizon, the issue is the cultural role (De Vries quoted in Biesta, 2010, p. 44 ff.) that P4C has had. In Biesta’s words, not originally referred to P4C, we should ask if P4C “helps educational practitioners to acquire a different understanding of their practice, if it helps them to see and imagine their practice differently” (Biesta, 2010, p. 45). The emphasis upon how P4C has helped teachers to understand differently their practice seems to me particularly important. On the one hand, one of the chief motifs of the evidence-based approach is that it can contribute to improve effectively professional practice by bridging the gulf between a merely ‘theoretical’ (in a derogatory sense of the word) research and an ultimately intuitive and rule-of-thumb-based practice. It could (and should) be shown, therefore, that a transformation of “meaning perspectives” (in Jack Mezirow’s phrase) has a decisive impact on practice. Has P4C had this impact on teaching as a practice? In what ways? Is there something more to be done?

On the other hand, to focus on the effect on teaching as a practice seems to me an aspect of an evaluation of how far P4C has worked which should not be overlooked. From the point of view of the cultural role of the Lipman enterprise, there are obviously at least three chief outcomes that should be first and foremost taken into account: the ‘invention’ of the child as a philosopher; the creative mobilization of a venerable but too often academically encrusted discipline such as philosophy as an educational tool; and the conception of a particular educational setting, the community of
philosophical research. In all these respects, Lipman’s project changed educational perspectives powerfully, well beyond the scope of those who practise Philosophy for Children. But while these aspects can be considered virtually indisputable and ascribed to Lipman as his crucial contribution to the history of educational theory, the question of the impact of his proposal on teaching practice continues to be an open one (both at the theoretical and the practical level). In the Italian context the issue of the need to make the ‘transition’ from the traditional position of the teacher to that of a P4C facilitator has always been a major concern up to the point of using Stevensonian accents (in a poster presented at the XIV ICPIC Conference in Padua an Italian school spoke of Doctor Facilitator and Mister Teacher: the poster is accessible as an added electronic material to Santi & Oliverio, 2012b).

In the wake of this *Wirkungsgeschichte* my question is whether teachers trained as P4C facilitators should have changed also their teaching practice and more radically what this transformation would have required. Indeed, on the one hand, a mere separation of domains could be imagined: whenever a P4C session is conducted, one is set on the ‘facilitating’ mode, so to speak, while during a ‘normal’ class the teaching mode gains center stage again (at best hybridized with the experience of facilitating P4C sessions). On the other, the restructuring of one’s own teaching practice in the sense of the ‘facilitation’ could be considered sufficient.

Both alternatives seems to me unsatisfactory: the first fails to meet Lipman’s challenge, which was ‘Sartrianly’ philosophical and not confined to the addition of a new activity (possibly organized in a different style) within an unmodified framework. The second would not allow us to reply to the objection that P4C, as far as its impact on teaching is concerned, is nothing very different from many other ‘constructivist’ approaches. On the contrary, I would like to insist that the cultural significance of P4C has consisted (or should have consisted) also in giving teaching a new bending, by discovering the philosophical dimensions of disciplines. In this sense, first, facilitation in a Lipmanian vein should not be a mere variant of a typically constructivist pedagogy but should have a recognizable specificity; and second, *philosophy should go to school* not only by means of sessions with children about philosophical matters but also as a main ingredient of the teaching practice in whatever subject-matter. *Philosophy should be a peculiar habit of teaching*, that is, a peculiar way of in-habiting subject-matters.

This different way of inhabiting disciplines to be taught is at the same time a result of Lipman’s project and a frontier still to explore. As a matter of fact, Lipman is quite clear about the pivotal role philosophy should play in school curriculum and about the reasons for that (Lipman, 1988, p. 32 ff.). But the recognition of such a centrality was not adequately accompanied by a more detailed investigation on how the teaching of disciplines itself should be transformed on the basis of the identification of their philosophical matrix. By omitting to pursue this way, the risk is that of ‘re-disciplining’ P4C, of making it a sort of discipline along with the others instead of the fulcrum of a global educational redesigning. At the same time this is a frontier still to explore but I interpret it not as a merely extrinsic application of the Lipmanian approach to areas not originally comprehended within it but rather as an articulation of it in a quasi-Kuhnian (1969) sense.

In this perspective, the question of whether Lipman’s program has worked acquires one more meaning. Lipman’s project can be construed in terms of the establishing of a paradigm. A paradigm works not because it solves all problems by providing definitive answers, but because it promises that, within its framework, problems can be tackled and solved. And, in this way, it promotes further investigations. A paradigm works insofar as it is articulated. The articulation of a paradigm consists in ‘filling the gaps’ of the paradigm itself (that is in refining it, both at the theoretical and methodological level, in extending the scope of its working and in bringing it more into agreement with ‘reality’). What I propose is that the revitalisation of the teaching of disciplines through a Lipmanian lens is one of the ways of articulating P4C as a paradigm. The endeavours, all over the world, to devise curricula for the teaching of disciplines by using the Lipmanian community of philosophical inquiry and stories invented after Lipman’s style bears witness to how P4C has worked as a paradigm. In the following paragraph, I want to briefly investigate the reasons why this appears to me one of the most crucial heritages of P4C in contemporary educational scenarios and one of the most promising cultural roles it can still play.

### 2. Initiating (into) knowledge or paradigm lost (and regained)

In order to investigate the role which P4C can play in the teaching of disciplines I take my cue from some insightful considerations of David Kennedy:

Apart from reflection on the concepts, the disciplines are like the graveyards of the living dead; but through reflection, all the inert conceptual material rendered moribund by the reification of the concepts in the form of information and by their imprisonment within ideologically locked-down networks of concepts can come suddenly to life. […] Exploring them through problematization and interrogation in communal dialogue makes a dimension of academic work visible that is typically thought of as coming after mastery of the discipline, but which I would suggest should always come
with the discipline. That is to say, the philosophical dimension, in the form of the interrogation of concepts, should be a primary activity from the very beginning, because that interrogation opens a space which renders the nature of the scholarly and empirical work in the discipline more transparent. (Kennedy, 2012, p. 233)

This approach appeals to a pedagogy based on the community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) which reconstructs the relationship with textbooks and ‘normal’ didactics (normal being here used in a Kuhnian sense):

A single-discipline approach will identify a group of concepts in, say, science, and through a process of shared questioning and their own deliberative dialogue, teachers and students will develop a series of exercises, discussion plans and activities. Those concepts may be keyed to the science textbook currently in use, such that the concept organism, for example, is explored through communal philosophical inquiry in the chapter in which it is produced and defined. This is in fact an invaluable strategy for demythologizing official texts and encouraging students and teachers to enter into dialogue with their epistemological assumptions, rather than accept them as given. (p. 239)

I will not follow Kennedy’s interpretation of such a mobilization of the CPI in Deleuzian terms, because I am interested in elaborating on a couple of his remarks and in situating them within a different horizon of questioning. First, Kennedy points out that without a work of problematization and interrogation disciplines become a graveyard of concepts and that this work should not occur necessarily after mastering them but also as a “primary activity from the very beginning.” That means jettisoning the classic progression according to which prior to any active exploration of a field of knowledge a form of initiation should take place. On the contrary, Kennedy is suggesting that being initiated into knowledge is the more successful the more it involves a philosophical questioning.

It is important to highlight that this reference to a philosophical questioning entails, in my opinion, something different from a mere co-construction of knowledge. The quid pluris of a P4C-oriented approach to teaching should consist precisely in the clear recognition of this philosophical moment as ‘auroral’ for any initiation into a discipline. I speak of an auroral moment because, once again in a Kuhnian sense, philosophy emerges in a period of crisis of a paradigm and before the establishment of a new paradigm. Putting the ‘normal’ didactics into a crisis (to ‘interrupt’ it, as Nadia Stoyanova Kennedy (2012) nicely calls this move, by appropriating a Biesta (2006) expression) implies, then, endeavouring to make the initiation into disciplines an initiation of disciplines, that is, installing oneself in the moment in which a discipline emerges as a framework to ‘read’ reality. The teacher should act, in reference to his/her own discipline, as a ‘revolutionary scientist’ and not as a ‘normal’ one. S/he should not (only) propose activities of puzzle-solving but should usher students into that (primarily philosophical, also in a typically Kuhnian perspective) work through which a paradigm is established.

This is how I suggest interpreting Kennedy’s reference to a kind of demythologization of textbooks. A discipline as a ‘normal science’ lives on manuals (Kuhn, 1969) and thrives on dogma (Kuhn, 1963). Whenever we act as ‘normal’ teachers, the fact of mythologization (in a quasi-neutral sense of the word) is at work. To ‘philosophize’ disciplines means putting them into a crisis, from which alone they can emerge as a web of living concepts. It is hardly necessary to note that without this kind of ‘philosophical awareness’ on the part of teachers no real CPI can take place.

In comparison with other constructivist approaches, a P4C-oriented teaching, as I am suggesting construing it, which, by philosophizing disciplines, allows teachers to differently inhabit them, appears to me more promising for several reasons. First of all, organizing a class in terms of the co-construction of knowledge does not exclude in principle puzzle-solving. In other words, it is possible to stick to a constructivist pedagogy and to continue to stay within a ‘normal’ pedagogy, as I am interpreting it in this paper. It can happen that one takes leave of textbooks (or what is called, with an inappropriate expression, ‘realist pedagogy’) without entering the ‘auroral’ moment which only a ‘philosophical awareness of disciplines’ (in both senses – subjective and objective – of the genitive) provides us with.

Secondly, in the auroral moment, while no paradigm is taken for granted, there is an orientation towards the establishing of a paradigm, which is a conceptual matrix intrinsically connected to the coalescence of a community of inquiry. One of the perils of some constructivist approaches is that, by insisting upon learning as a construction of knowledge, they excessively focus upon how people make sense of their own ‘experiences’ (understood in a fairly subjectivist way) and overlook the need for knowledge to be something which enables people to explore the ‘world.’ To put it in Biesta’s (2010, p. 18) words, ‘learning is basically an individualistic concept. It refers to what people, as individuals, do even if it is couched in such notions as collaborative and cooperative learning.’ On the contrary, the ‘philosophizing’ of disciplines entails both an invitation to a shared inquiry and to an effort to explore the world. The teacher as a ‘P4C-facilitator of knowledge of the subject-matter,’ then, is committed to operating for the development of the communal inquiry, which results in the ‘establishing’ of a ‘paradigm.’ Or to put it differently, s/he is committed
to taking care of the progress towards truth (Gardner, 1995/1996).

In this sense s/he has a regulative task, which corresponds to ‘truth’ as a regulative idea (Lipman, 1988, p. 148. See also Gardner, 1995/1996). To this end, [f]acilitation alone is not sufficient. Simply letting a discussion follow “its course” will not create a Community of Inquiry for the very reason that without explicit intervention by the facilitator, the discussion will rarely follow “a course.” And without “philosophical direction,” the discussion will almost certainly not follow “a philosophical course.” It may very well be true that the first step in successfully inducting traditional teachers into the practice of Philosophy for Children is to convince them to “let go of the traditional reins of authority.” The next step, however, must be to help them create a new set of reins […] (Gardner, 1995/1996, p. 105).

The same as in the practice of Philosophy for Children holds in the case of the ‘P4C-oriented’ teaching of disciplines. In this sense, such a kind of teaching is not exposed to the criticisms which can be legitimately leveled at constructivist pedagogies.

Such a reconstruction of the idea of teaching, which does not limit itself to playing a constructivist note, can be strategic in contemporary scenarios in order to meet some of the challenges which education has to engage with. I am thinking of some analyses of the French philosopher Marcel Gauchet, who sees a major educational predicament in the loss of meaning of knowledge and in the vanishing of the sense of the transmission. This process is due to changes in the relationships to the past, in the modes of socialization and, finally, in the social statute of culture and knowledge (Gauchet, 2010, p. 65 ff.). Here I am particularly interested in what he calls the impact of de-traditionalization (Ibid., p. 69 ff.) and the replacement of anticipation with individualization (Ibid., p. 75 ff.).

The de-traditionalization is the dissolution of the sense of tradition within society and in particular in school. Schools have always been in modernity a peculiar institution combining, on the one hand, the revolt against tradition (insofar as the acquisition of knowledge was not understood any more as a mere impregnation with the past but as the outcome of the rational appropriation of it [Ibid., p. 71]) and, on the other, the necessary connection to a tradition, of which the school had to guarantee the transmission. What makes the current situation absolutely unprecedented is, according to Gauchet, the fact that now schools are attended by “beings who, spontaneously, are contemporary with no past. We are the first in history for whom there is but a dead and dumb past” (Ibid., p. 73). This has a decisive impact on education as it has been understood for a long time.

This weakening (or even disappearance) of tradition goes hand in hand with the individualization of knowledge. The ‘precedence’ of knowledge, insofar as it is inscribed into a tradition, required the anticipation, which is “the fundamental principle of the modern school as an institution” (Ibid., p. 77): the teacher ushered the young into the realm of knowledge because “the one who had to enter into what pre-existed […] need[ed] a mediator to do that” (Ibid., p. 76). What Gauchet calls the individualization of knowledge, which we can interpret in the wake of Biesta (2006, 2010) as the process of learnification, that is, the emphasis on learning as a kind of deployment of individual cognitive resources, compels us to face a new situation: “The delegitimation of the educational anticipation is one of the most powerful challenges issued to the future of our educational systems” (Gauchet, 2010, p. 79).

I am not interested here in Gauchet’s therapy, rather in his diagnosis. In relation to these processes inter-related with each other, a teaching of disciplines inspired by P4C and mobilizing CPI seems to me to offer the most promising reply. Indeed, as the processes described by Gauchet are connected with epoch-making changes, any merely re-actionary way of engaging with them (for example insisting on the old ‘canon’) is doomed to failure (apart from the exterior successes it can boast). But also a fervent extolling of the ‘magnificent and progressive fate’ (Leopardi) of the new production of knowledge seems to be educationally perilous (and, ultimately, accessory to the political interests hinted at in the introduction).

On the contrary, by understanding the initiation into disciplines as an initiation of disciplines, aiming at re-establishing over and over again a tradition, that is, operating this constant renewal of the auroral moment when a tradition (a paradigmatic framework) emerges, and by fostering a communal inquiry (and, by so doing, creatively intersecting and cross-grafting the anticipation and individualization of knowledge), a P4C-oriented teaching can represent a way to face the current predicament yielding neither to misoneism nor to an uncritical progressivism, which dismantles the meaning of ‘transmission’ of knowledge and does not recognize the gift of teaching (Biesta, 2012a, 2012b). In this horizon the project of Matthew Lipman can continue to be ‘workable’ and live up to its Sartrianly philosophical inspiration.

Endnotes
1 The author writes these remarks within the context of an attack on radical constructivism and its alleged excesses in theory.
2 I am prescinding here from the emphasis Atkinson puts upon postmodernism in educational research.
3 For a necessary caveat about the way this comparison should be taken see Santi & Oliverio, 2012a, p. 10, fn. 1)
References
Davies, Ph. (1999), What is Evidence-Based Education?, British Journal of Educational Studies, 47(2), pp. 108-121.
Richard Morehouse, is a renowned scholar in the community of people involved in the practice of Philosophy with Children. One of his most important contributions to our community is his educational and psychological research, a domain that has been present from the very beginning of this philosophical project. When I first approached Lipman’s and Sharp’s program in 1985, one feature that drew my attention was their desire to offer evidence of their project’s validity. They did not just state that doing philosophy in the classroom would improve children’s thinking skills and other valuable educational skills; they did not just present a sound philosophical argumentation in favor of the practice of philosophy with children; they also offered empirical evidence for their claims. Lipman’s seminal book Philosophy Goes to School included two chapters with the findings of two studies on the program’s implementation in the classroom.

Although my philosophical background was far from this kind of research, I accepted the challenge and have since devoted part of my activities in P4C to doing research with the same aim: to demonstrate that our main claim – doing philosophy with children in the community of inquiry fosters their cognitive and affective skills – is right and supported by strong evidence. Other colleagues have made similar efforts and as a result we have a rich literature that supports the positive impact of the practice of philosophy on children’s cognitive and emotional development. Professor Morehouse shares the same interest and has done a valuable work for many years. He is one of the scholars I have read in order to gain a deeper understanding of the requirements for doing educational and psychological research.

Professor Morehouse begins this new book with the thesis he held in the book he published in cooperation with Pamela Maykut, Beginning qualitative research: A Philosophical and practical guide, 20 years ago. He admits that they made a mistake; they allowed the wrong (or at least not good enough) questions to guide them to incorrect answers. Qualitative research is not an approach opposed to quantitative research; both methods may be valuable. In this new book he explores and develops a different conceptual frame of reference that allows him to address in a more fruitful way the requirements of research in social and human sciences, and even more in educational practice.

However, I think that Morehouse’s approach may lead to further confusion since it remains too close to a somewhat dichotomous view of research. On the one hand the approach of the natural sciences identifies as positivist, while on the other, the research in social and human sciences identifies as interpretative, a more holistic approach focusing on the interrelationship between human agency and the world in which they live.

I completely agree with him that researchers should always take into account the underlying epistemological and ontological framework of their work, thereby analyzing the philosophical underpinnings of their research focus. However, it may not always be desirable to explicitly expose these grounds, since this may become a brief mechanical repetition of some ideas that are taken for granted, or take away the attention from the specific topic to be investigated. It is very important for any researcher, however, to maintain this interpretative stance and be aware of it.

Achieving an interpretive approach to research is essential in all kinds of research, be it in the field of physics (natural sciences) or education (social and human sciences). Now this is best achieved if we clearly explore the fundamental questions that should guide all research: what are we investigating, who is doing research, what are the aims and goals of our research, and how to investigate. These four questions allow me to make some observations in dialogue with Professor Morehouse, highlighting some ideas about his contribution while offering what I see as a more unified vision of scientific research.

What are we investigating? Certainly the reality is in process, especially human and social reality, and there is a continuous interaction between reality and the observer of reality. Nevertheless, it is not enough to interpret reality, it is necessary to understand and explain it, and that requires accepting that reality is not just a construct but something that, however complex it may be, is out there and we have to discover, finding the laws governing their existence and behavior. In this quest for knowledge, it is essential to guide us through the pretense of reaching an understanding that is not only fair (p. 23) but also objective, i.e., an understanding that comes close to what is reality in itself, regardless of
the interpretive bias that necessarily introduces an observer, always part of a context and with a specific frame of mind. Without any doubt, observers are always situated persons, “embodied and embedded in a complex world.” But this is only a part of the story of the search for truth, and the true challenge of the community of scientific inquiry is to overcome these parochial limits.

On the other hand, in order to achieve valuable research, many times we have to focus on very concrete aspects of reality (break the world into small pieces), although without ever losing sight of the whole. We never lose the holistic perspective or the philosophical underpinnings (ontological and epistemological) of our research, but we center our attention on the parts, in a constant “whole/part back and forth process” (p. 89). So we have to select specific variables, those we think will offer a tentative explanation and understanding of a problematic situation we cope with and want to solve. And this focus on small parts of reality is needed in all areas of reality: for example, to explain the movement of the falling bodies (we focus only on space and time), tuberculosis (the target is Koch bacillus) or academic achievement (we focus on problems solving or mathematical skills).

Who is doing the research? To a large extent, the problem with Morehouse’s approach stems from the fact that he is doing research on people and human relationships, as opposed to physical objects (p. 25). In these sciences, both the researcher and the participant are agents seeking meaning: this shared condition provokes the “agentic paradox.” We can’t see the researcher as an agent featured by intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness, and the human beings we wish to study as passive objects, stripped of the very properties of an agent. This is an interesting approach to an old problem raised by Wilhelm Dilthey more than a hundred years ago; a problem that was the center of the positivism dispute between Popper and Adorno 50 years ago; a dispute that is still alive today, although in a different way (feminist epistemology, deconstructionism, anti-cartesianism, etc.), as this book proves. Morehouse indicates that if we wish to overcome this opposition, which can be very sterile, it is useful to recover Dewey’s criticism of the Galilean approach to scientific research. “Dewey sees inquirers as agents who are embodied, seek harmony from divergent perspective and are grounded in lived experiences” (p.26). Scientists should be more interested in seeking meaning than truth.

We do not have to go as far as Professor Morehouse is going. We are not facing an epistemological or metaphysical dilemma where we are required to choose each of two contradictory (paradoxical) options. The educational researcher is certainly an embodied, situated agent, working outside of the laboratory with people who are also agents, but this fact does not override the requirement of being as neutral as possible in order to avoid a biased point of view. There are different possibilities between a situated observer and an observer who takes a God’s eye view. This needed neutrality is one of the reasons why researchers in medicine or environmental sciences, for example, have to specify at the beginning of their reports or papers who is sponsoring their research.

There is a third question, probably the most important: why and for what are we investigating. Once we decide to do research on some educational problem, we have to focus not just on the effect of prior events, that is, on efficient causes, but on final causes. Then, the interpretative stance Morehouse is presenting in his book emphasizes seeking meaning as the fundamental and basic goal of social and human research (p. 47-49); the search for truth may be a more appropriate goal in natural sciences, where research does not try to capture people’s action and effort to make meaning of their lives and of their world in a lived context. This is again too dichotomist an approach to the aims of investigation. Of course, the more fundamental goal of any human being, from a holistic point of view, is to make meaning of their own life, but the struggle for meaning has to be based on and intertwined with the search for truth, and truth should always be a necessary aim of our research. It does not make any sense, and can even be very damaging, to split meaning from truth.

My previous comments and personal reflections are aimed to emphasize the importance of taking into account the epistemological and ontological assumptions of any research, a need that Morehouse emphasizes with solid argumentation. But this is not enough: we also have to adopt a rigorous, valid and reliable methodology that allows us to reach well-founded and convincing conclusions. This is my fourth question: how investigate. Part II of the book, the largest, is dedicated to offering a detailed account of what it takes to make good research or evaluations, from the development of ideas for an inquiry, and step by step until the final stage of work, the moment when we share our results with our colleagues, through a published paper or conference presentation.

This second art provides great insights to all those wishing to engage in research: the coverage of this topic is complete, clear and useful. Again, Morehouse makes oppositions that I do not share: I think it is possible, even necessary, to have a very clear research or evaluation focus, but we also have to offer a tentative hypothesis of the thesis or result we want to prove. I agree with Morehouse on the need to use many qualitative instruments, yet I also very much favor Galileo’s dictum: “Measure what can be measured, and make measurable what cannot be measured.”

Four appendices, a good bibliography and a useful index complete a great book that should be read by those who do research in the field of philosophical practice in education.