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Credits
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Correction
The article by Dr. K. Helmut Reich, in Vol. 12, No. 2 of Thinking, failed to indi-
cicate the mean values of complexity as set forth by Suedfeld and Tetlock. These values
were, respectively, 4.64, 1.95, 2.75, 1.71 and 4.71, for the crises they reported.

Fiona had saved up her money to buy a dog dish, although she had no dog. Every day she put the dish on her front porch and filled it with water. She hoped a dog would drop by and stay for a few minutes. Then she could make friends with the dog, and, perhaps later, with the dog’s owner. That way she could make two friends.

Instead of a dog, what dropped by (in fact, what dropped in!) was a bee. Fiona knew it would not be good for a dog to start drinking the water in her dog dish and end up drinking a bee! Before she even had a chance to make friends with the dog or its owner she would be in trouble with them both.

Also, Fiona felt sorry for the bee and wanted to rescue it. Realizing that an angry bee might sting, Fiona carefully and cautiously slipped a twig under the bee, which then slowly dragged itself onto Fiona’s finger. What should she do next?

Fiona developed a plan. She would walk slowly and carefully, so as not to make the bee angry, to the park. In the park she would look for a sunny place with flowers so that the bee, which by now had moved up to her shoulder, would happily fly off and snack on flower nectar.

As Fiona walked ever so slowly and stiffly to the park, a little girl called out to her, “Yike! Don’t move! There’s a bee on your shoulder.” Fiona calmly explained that she had saved the bee from drowning and that it seemed to like her. The little girl, Barbara, was impressed. Barbara introduced Fiona to her brother, Larry, who was also impressed. “I never knew anybody who had a bee,” Larry said.

Soon Fiona was surrounded with kids, all of whom were impressed that she was walking around with a bee on her shoulder. They all watched, with admiration, as Fiona sat down in a sunny spot near flowers. Then, as expected, the bee flew off Fiona’s shoulder and lit on a flower.

The other kids wanted to know if the bee would return to Fiona’s shoulder when it had stuffed itself with nectar. “I’m not going to wait,” said Fiona wisely. “Dogs and cats need people,” she said firmly. “Bees don’t.”

All the kids said good-bye to Fiona’s bee and went home with Fiona. They talked about training bees and lions and cobras. They played a bit and then, as the other kids left, they all said, “See you tomorrow!”

When Fiona’s mother asked her that night if she had had a nice day, she nodded and explained, “I saved a bee and got famous.” She added, “I don’t know if I’ll still be famous tomorrow, but I sure have a lot of friends.”

Admittedly, there is peril in being friendly with a bee. The author of this delightfully off beat story underlines the peril and encourages precautions. But she also encourages respect, not just for the bee’s sting, but also for the bee itself.

Bees are indeed remarkable. They are the only insects we have been able to make into “farm animals.” Their social organization is complex. The “waggle dance” of honey bees, by which they direct each other to good nectar sources, has been the subject of Ph.D. dissertations in philosophy and linguistics. Even Aristotle, who described, with supreme confidence and authority, the habits of dozens of animal species, admitted to being flummoxed by bees. (Generation of Animals 3.10 760b27 33)

What animals could be pets? I know someone who has a pet pig, and someone else who has a pet lizard. What about people who keep horses? Are their horses their pets? It seems a little odd to call a horse a pet. But why?

No doubt there are practical limits on what can count as a pet, and sometimes practical steps needed to make an animal into a suitable pet. Skunks need to be “deskunked.” Poisonous snakes need to be defanged.

What about the morality of keeping an animal as a pet? Fiona says, simply, “Dogs and cats need people. Bees don’t.” It is certainly true that some dogs are ill suited to live as strays. But others do better. Some animals seem to like human companionship. Others don’t. Is it moral to keep as a pet an animal that is indifferent, or even hostile, to human companionship?

Parents and teachers often think it is good for children to have pets at home and at school. Fiona’s Bee offers a good opportunity to discuss with one’s children what a pet is and what the limits are, or should be, on keeping animals as pets.
Children Playing and Children Doing Philosophy: Why Are They Both So Interesting?

Jan van Gils

Playing and philosophizing are related. Philosophizing, as far as it begins with wonder, can gain a lot from playing: doesn’t real life reveal itself in and through the game? In this fashion, Plattel (1967) starts his plea for a more “frivolous” philosophy, for a philosophy which goes through life in a thinking-while-playing way and a playing-while-thinking way. It is this kind of playing and philosophizing which children like.

Nowadays, a lot of attention is being given to philosophizing with children in Flanders, Europe, Latin America and the United States. Centers for children’s philosophy are being founded in many countries all over the world, and relevant courses have a big success. What started in the United States under the stimulation of Prof. Lipman (1972) has become a movement spread over the entire world. It concerns the systematic thinking on an abstract level by children about their own vital questions (Lipman, 1980, 1988). This deals with:

- Thinking: children who are thinking for and by themselves, and not through the study of famous philosophers;
- This thinking happens systematically, not casually: one really has the intention of thinking;
- On an abstract level: One departs from concrete experiences, but one starts to talk on an abstract level through the addition of and comparison with other experiences;
- Children do it themselves and in groups: They for a “Community of Inquiry”;
- They philosophize together about questions they have formulated themselves and for as long as they find this relevant.

Prof. Lipman has elaborated various stories for this philosophizing. Every session can start with a part of a story which is larded with philosophical themes. Children determine what they want to talk about after having heard the story. And then the philosophizing can start (Van Gils, 1995).

The attraction this philosophy holds for children can be compared to the attraction of playing. This explains why we want to make the comparison between philosophizing and playing. We do this starting from our own experience of philosophizing with children with a group in Meise, (a group of seven 10-year-olds), from the research experience of playing (Van Gils, 1986, 1992, 1995) and from a too limited knowledge of philosophy.

1. Playing and philosophizing are both important to get a grip on oneself, on others and on the environment.

To get a grip on yourself, on others and on the environment is the driving force of philosophizing, and also the driving force of playing. The ambition which impels both activities, the fundamental impulse which speaks from them and which provides the energy for them, is the will to get a grip on life. “Getting a grip on” shouldn’t be understood as becoming master of. Getting a grip on is understanding, is a process of learning to know one’s position and to define one’s own relationship towards the others and the environment. As one understands, one learns to situate oneself with regard to the others. It is about the search for sense, for cohesion in time and space.

This explains why it is very understandable that children between the ages of 10 and 12 are eager and enthusiastic to philosophize about animals. They try to position themselves with regard to these animals. An example of the group in Meise:

“Can animals speak? They can certainly understand us and I also understand our cat. I understand what she tells me at certain moments. so, my cat and I can talk to each other.”

“Does your cat understand everything you say, would she, for instance, understand this conversation?”

“There might exist a language of cats.”
“And a language of dogs.”

“Is it possible that cats participate in a language course to learn the language of dogs?”

When children talk and think like that, they determine their own position with regard to the animals. They turn around the matter spirally and they get a grip on animal life.

We can see the same movements regarding playing. We see such a spiral movement in the determination of agreements before the beginning of the play. The negotiations, the game of power, the quarrel, the threat of leaving, the invention of new rules, the agreements on the beginning and the end of the game—this while social happening is a process of getting a grip on each other, of determining position. The construction of a camp is getting a grip on the branches, the wood, the rope. It is a terribly complex happening where the child adapts itself to the materials on the one hand, and where it develops techniques to use these materials for its own purposes on the other hand. And, if this has to take place in interaction with other children, taking into account the own physical possibilities and certain rules of the game on the playground, we can see how the child finds a place in the middle of that environment: it more or less gets a grip on its surroundings.

2. Getting a grip on, the continuous defining of one’s own position is an experimental happening: it happens while doing

Children don’t try to realize certain aims in an intentional, planned way. They don’t try to extend a certain project while playing or philosophizing. Children don’t build a camp to get a grip on the materials in their environment, children don’t philosophize to clear their relationship towards the animals. They just do it. It is not a process planned in advance: one chooses more or less for what’s uncertain, for the unknown.

While philosophizing, one doesn’t know what the result will be; one starts to talk about a certain question, but a counter-piea can turn the discussion around. One can start from animals and end with “what are words in fact?” The same thing can happen while playing: the play where one pretends to be father or mother can lead to going to the park, preparing dinner, having babies....

One doesn’t arrange that. One starts with the interaction (and that’s the initial decision), but the result can’t be determined in advance. In fact, playing and philosophizing have several inherent dynamics in common.

3. They have an open ending

It isn’t clear in advance where and how the activity will end. This feature is closely connected with the foregoing and the following which also deal with the emphasis on the activity itself.

Playing marbles loses its excitement when it is clear in advance who will win. It isn’t a game any more. The season of playing marbles ends when the power relations are clear, when it is always the same children who win and the same who lose. Playing marbles doesn’t have an open ending any more. One speaks of fraud in the football game when it is arranged in advance who is to win. When the end is previously determined in the sociodrama, it is called theater.

Also, philosophizing is an open-ended activity. When the result of the thinking is already determined in advance, it is no longer philosophizing, but teaching, learning or manipulating. One who works in the direction of the moral of the story is giving a lesson in morality or religion (and that is certainly allowed), but it is not what philosophizing is about. Philosophizing is, in fact, thinking about questions which will (probably) never get a final answer: what is good, what is beautiful, what is life. Philosophizing is actually much more thinking about a question than searching for an answer. The search for an answer is the pretense of allowing to philosophize.

4. They are not instruments

Playing and philosophizing aren’t being used in the function of a purpose outside itself; they aren’t applied to realize a certain effect either with themselves or with others. They aren’t useful like that. Playing and philosophizing are not instruments, they don’t fit within instrumental thinking. They do fit within the communicative praxis and the intersubjectivity seen by Habermas as preceding the subjective and intentional understanding and acting (Masschelein, 1987). Playing and philosophizing give shape to the common environment, they are essential in the process of giving sense, but one can’t use them for that, they aren’t regainable.

The playing of children ends when it becomes an activity to prove oneself, or to play a nasty trick on someone. Philosophizing ends when marks are given and when one has to score with effective argumentation (for instance: our group in Meise was philosophizing with children during a live television broadcast. They not only were philosophizing, but they also tried to attract attention).

5. They are without engagement

Playing is pretending: I pretend to be a dad. I pretend that I am going to shoot you. I pretend to be your girlfriend. I pretend that I am big enough to.... I pretend to be a famous football player... In a certain way, this pretending makes playing that is not binding. The fact of being without engagement makes it possible to search for certain experiences, without having to undergo them in all their consequences. The boy can look for the experience of being a mother without the need to turn into a woman. The girl can change into a fairy because she is sure that she will always be Suzanne. One can always go back: it isn’t for real—it was just playing. But in the meantime, one has done it, one went through it. In fact, one can’t lose anything, can’t fail. Playing allows a lot more than real life does.

It is also the same regarding philosophizing. Children can take very extreme stands—even racist ones—while discoursing about differences between people. But one can’t nail the children down on that. They often play with thoughts. They test what the result is when they fully consider something. They push back frontiers, even pass them while philosophizing. But it is without engagement. One doesn’t have to change his life after a session of philosophizing with children: it doesn’t hurt to reflect, to the bone. What one does with it, is another mat-
ter. But in the meantime one has thought and talked about it and that sticks. That takes it out of one.

As we said before: the activity in itself is important. Being busy playing, being busy thinking; there are activities with their own purpose.

6. They are serious occupations

Being without engagement does not alter the fact that it concerns a serious matter. The concentration regarding playing and philosophizing is very strong. Children are strongly engaged in playing and philosophizing, starting from a strong intrinsic motivation (Van der Kooij, 1989). They are activities which can fully claim them. It is an intense happening with a strong involvement of children (Laevers, 1992, Tabbers, 1994).

The seriousness is a character without engagement, strangely enough. It is not overwhelming seriousness, not deadly seriousness, it is first of all a strong involvement. Children who are making little pies in the sand-pit don't hear or see what is happening around them. A bomb may explode (in a manner or speaking), they continue to play. And, the heavy discussions which suspend a game of rules also point out the big involvement. Children take playing seriously and that explains their incomprehension when adults act a bit compassionately regarding their play.

Children also take their philosophizing seriously. The child who continuously makes irrelevant jokes during the session is being continually reproved. Children take their thinking a lot more seriously than their thoughts.

This involvement isn't continuously equaly strong. It changes. It can be constantly being interrupted, cut down and built up again. It is probably a good indicator of the intensity of the game. Like this, it isn't without engagement: children are engaged in the process, not in the product.

7. One doesn't do it alone

One doesn't play alone, one doesn't philosophize alone. Playing and philosophizing happen in the inter-subjectivity, no matter how personal the engagement and involvement are.

It isn't an individual occupation: it happens between people, in people's living environment.

First of all, while playing and philosophizing, one uses the tangle of common significations and norms: they make these occupations possible, they are a condition for them on the philosophical and sociological level. Starting from the philosophy, we can state that the common living environment and the communicative praxis in it is the condition for the development of "identity". Starting from sociology, we point out how man, while being busy, is part of networks, groups, and as such, he shares their pattern of values and norms.

Secondly, philosophizing and playing take place at the agora, at the common place existing between people. This common space belongs to all participants, but to no one in particular. Players and philosophers cannot determine afterwards who gave the happening a certain turn: this turn occurred in playing together, thinking together. Nobody claims the turn, it belongs to all the participants.

A concrete story illustrates this: a group of boys between the ages of 10 and 11 have discovered a bunker and have agreed to explore it together.

The expedition was more or less prepared. They agreed that some would take care to bring some light and that others would bring chisels and hammers. They arrived at the bunker and the first problem arose: who would go in first? They decided to toss for it. The one appointed by fate didn't feel like going in first, but very quickly, there was a substitute. The children wanted to use the flashlight, but the batteries appeared to be almost drained. There was still the candle. The five boys went in. It smelled there, the place was filled with dried leaves, a musty smell hung there, everything moved. They decided it was high time to get out and get some air. Then, the boys went in again, they spotted another space, but they didn't dare to go in. They argued about it and decided to build a fire in order to have more light. But very soon they were running from the smoke filling up the entire space. The boys were sitting outside waiting for the smoke to disappear and they were telling comparable experiences, etc., etc.

While philosophizing with children, one talks about a "community of inquiry" formed to think together, to reflect. The group of children in the bunker is also a "community of inquiry". They are putting their fear together, and also their curiosity, their light, their Coca-Cola, and their candy, and they investigate. It is a phenomenon which is being described in many children's books. The children's philosophy group of Meise is also a community. In this group of seven children, there are two who hardly say a word, who listen very attentively. But they are as well a part of that group, because the group is more. It is very different from an addition of individuals: the created common space is a space for and of all of them.

8. Children decide on it themselves

Philosophizing and playing can't be commanded. One can't be forced to play, to philosophize. One can be invited to do so, stimulated, even tempted, but if one doesn't agree on this activity, one doesn't participate. One can't be obliged to really play, really think (from a certain age, children can perfectly pretend that they are playing, philosophizing). Playing and philosophizing require a personal step, a personal agreement (Internal Locus of Control, Van de Kooij, 1989).

Within the pedagogic process, the educator disposes of a lot of instruments to influence, to educate the child. But, playing and philosophizing are processes of which the child finally disposes. This probably explains the involvement of children in playing and philosophizing: it is something which belongs to them, it is an educational instrument that they have in their own hands. Children in Latin America, especially street children, are strongly interested in philosophizing. While philosophizing, they discover themselves as people who are thinking. They discover their own thoughts which no one can take away. They discover their self-respect in their rough social circumstances. Also, children in Western Europe feel this: while philosophizing, they draw themselves up, they straighten their back, they under-
stand the socializing educational instrument designed for them.

While playing children are doing the things they want to do. This doesn’t mean that children can’t be restricted in their playing by several limitations in time, space, material and company. It only means that playing isn’t possible without the active cooperation of the child, and that they do things in play which interest them. The child is self-willed while playing. That’s the reason why children often give a completely different interpretation to playgrounds, play-instruments and toys than the one meant by the designer. Like this, children give their own interpretation to the play-impulse of the playleader.

The child essentially disposes of the occupations playing and philosophizing.

9. A lot of effort is being made to regain these occupations

A completely different common feature of playing and philosophizing is that big efforts are being made to regain both for purposes which are not inherent in philosophizing and playing. Enormous efforts are being made to impart various skills to children through playing: therefore playing material is being developed, toys and plays are being made which have the intention of imparting conceptions of mathematics to children while playing, of teaching children while playing how to deal with power and the execution of power within the framework of peace education, of stimulating the physical development of children, etc. Also, stories are being written, songs produced, and children are being challenged by means of theses and pictures to think about certain themes and in certain directions. A lesson in religion or morality can at first sight look much more like a session “philosophizing with children”.

Within this context, it isn’t our intention to judge these activities, but to show how one can integrate these activities within the intentional, instrumental pedagogic thinking by taking into account a number of features of playing and philosophizing (and by ignoring a number of other features).

Reffering to point 6 regarding the self-disposal of these activities, we don’t have to make a fuss. The difference won’t always be clear for adults, but it will always be clear for children.

10. The most important difference

The most important difference between playing and philosophizing can be situated on the one hand in the emphasis on being busy physically and on the other hand on being busy in a cognitive way. Especially physical aspects of the human being are put in the spotlight regarding playing, various sensory-motoric activities are often the carrier of playing. Assuming a distance in a cognitive way has a central place regarding philosophizing. But, because of the inseparability of the physical and cognitive aspects, playing and philosophizing can be put on the same continuum. Philosophizing is a form of playing: it deals in essence with exploring and giving sense, with thoughts as element. And, playing takes place in the limbo of philosophizing: it deals with exploring and giving sense, but without abstraction.

Resume and conclusion

I am hesistant to round off this thinking-while-playing and this playing-while-thinking with conclusions. Because here also the activity might be more important than the result. But, playing can curdle to games just as philosophizing can curdle to philosophies. And, the one who wants to communicate about such human activities takes the risk this congelation and hopes that the activity itself wins.

Playing and philosophizing are occupations which are a good illustration of a number of fundamental dimensions or features of being a man. They illustrate how the fact of being interlaced with the environment, how man and environment are reciprocally dependent, how intersubjectivity precedes the fact of being busy in an instrumental way. Playing and philosophizing as activities take place on the agora of the inter-human process of giving sense and precede the fact of being busy in a rational way, the strategic and intentional acting.

They fix the attention on dimensions which precede planning and individuality. And, the interest in it is a kind of re-establishment movement within our culture with respect to a large unbalanced part of being busy in an intentional, instrumental way.

Being actively busy with art may also be added to this list and this results in a trio of human occupations which are at odds with the rational mainstream in our culture on the one hand and which constantly offer the substructure of it on the other hand, because these occupations are grafted upon the intersubjective environment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Pixie the Tree-Hugger

Philip Hoebing

A campus Newsletter carried a provocative article that had been written by a professor of environmental studies. The essay suggested, with tongue in cheek, that "tree-huggers" in environmental classes presented problems when such issues as ecosystems and endangered species were discussed. This professor seemed to desire deeper thinking about the environment and seemed to believe that the "tree-huggers" did not and could not relate to the real environmental issues. The professor's observations made sense and did appeal to a number of those participating in the conference on religion, ethics and the environment. However, as frequently happens when philosophers congregate, more ideas about the environment and seemed to indicate his view.

In this paper, I have argued that the interaction of genes or genotypes with the environment and the manifestation of this interaction at all higher levels makes it possible not only for individual organisms, but also species and ecosystems properly to be considered living entities in their own right, which therefore can also have interests which are morally significant. This is the last paragraph which does not do justice to all of his argumentation but it does indicate his view.

One person, who was familiar with St. Francis, remembered studying and reading his Canticle of Creatures when she was an undergraduate. She was able to come up with a few lines which indicated that St. Francis, the great lover of nature, might have been a "tree-hugger". She, however, with a little more research, would have learned that St. Francis, on one occasion, gave suggestions on the method of pruning trees so they would not die. The Mirror of Perfection (No. 118) has this statement regarding Francis' love for water, rocks, wood, and flowers: "He told the friar who cut and chopped wood for the fire that he must never cut down the whole tree, but remove branches in such a way that part of the tree remained intact, out of love for Christ, Who willed to accomplish salvation on the wood of the cross." (Omnibus, 1257)

Some of the lines from his Canticle that were able to be recalled were the following:

Be praised, my Lord, with all Thy creatures, above all Brother sun, who is day and by him Thou sheddest light upon us.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour, of Thee, most High, he bears a likeness.
Be praised, by Lord, through Brother Wind, and through Air and Cloud and fair and all Weather, by which Thou givest nourishment to Thy creatures.
Be praised, my Lord, through Mother Earth, who sustains and directs us, and produces fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

VanDoornik, in his book, Francis of
Assisi, a Prophet for Our Time, comments on the extraordinarily strong affinity that Francis had for the natural world. He also emphasizes Francis’ appreciation and love of the individual. Using an incident from Dostoevsky’s (The Brothers Karamazov) VanDoornik shows how St. Francis differs from the doctor who admits that even though he loves humanity he is unable to appreciate individuals.

The very situation is tellingly described by Dostoevsky in The Brothers Karamazov. The doctor confides to the staret (wise man): “In my thoughts I have a passionate desire to serve mankind... but in reality I find it impossible to spend two days in the same room with any man... But still in general I love humanity.” (Francis of Assisi, A Prophet for Our Time, by Fr. N.G. VanDoornik, trans. Barbara Potter Fasting, Franciscan Herald Press, 1979, p. 106).

Unlike the doctor, St. Francis was able to love the individual beggar, the individual leper, the individual robber and the individual wolf. St. Francis would not have even understood the meaning of “loving humanity.”

Some of the interesting problems regarding individuals and classes are illustrated in a novel called Pixie. (Pixie by Matthew Lipman, First Mountain Foundation 1981). In Philosophy for Children, there is a story of a third-grade girl who becomes involved in the problem of the universal and the individual when she visits the zoo. The little girl doesn’t realize that she is having problems asking the guard where to find it. When he gives her some suggestions she becomes upset with him.

The first thing I did was to ask a guard about the creature I was looking for. And do you know what he did? He pointed to a gorilla and said, “There’s one!” I was so disgusted. Here was a man, a guard at the zoo, and he couldn’t tell the difference between my mystery creature and a gorilla!

We are going to see as the story develops that a number of people, including the guard, make observations that are inaccurate as they try to help Pixie with her problem. As she sits crying on a bench at the zoo, Mr. Mulligan and the class find her.

And that’s where Mr. Mulligan and the class found me, sitting on the bench with my knees drawn up covering my face so people couldn’t see me crying. Mr. Mulligan took us over to a place where there was grass and shade, and we all sat in a circle.

—’Were you able to find your mystery creature?’ he asked.

I shook my head and tried to stop crying. But I couldn’t. I didn’t give him an answer. Then he said, “Could you tell me anything about it? How you would recognize it if you saw it?” By this time I was beginning to feel a little better. I managed to say—between sniffles, “All I know is that the mothers nurse their young, and they’re warm-blooded, and their bones are on the inside of their bodies, and they’re born alive.”

Mr. Mulligan leaned over and whispered to me, “Was your mystery animal a mammal?”

“That’s it!” I practically shouted. “You guessed it! there is such a thing! A mammal!”

—Mr. Mulligan turned back to me and said, “There were lots of mammals here today, Pixie. You just didn’t know that that’s what they were. In fact, some of them even paid admission to get in!”

One of the strong points of the Philosophy for Children Program is developing what Lipman refers to as “the community of inquiry.” This means that the children in the novels try to help each other solve problems and answer questions that arise as the story progresses. In Pixie’s situation, the children, in typical community of inquiry style, try to help Pixie, even though their assistance doesn’t seem to solve her mystery creature problem. Their remarks are quite interesting as everyone, including Mr. Mulligan, make what might be called “category-mistakes.” Her friend, Isabel, tries to help Pixie by comparing the class of mammal to a family. This answer did not satisfy Pixie or Mr. Mulligan who added the idea that the word “mammal” is not a family word but a class word. Poor Pixie does not seem to benefit from all the suggestions and explanations that are offered by her friends.

“That’s right,” said Geraldo, “All people who are red-headed make up the class of red-headed people.”

I said, “I still don’t get it.”

Then Chita said, “Pixie, don’t you see? We’re all students who form a class. But the class we form is not a student.”

“And,” Kate said, “the class of red-headed people isn’t itself red-headed.”

As the discussion continues, Pixie only gets more confused and disgusted and she tells us, in no uncertain words, about her dilemma:

“Okay,” I agree, “But the class of mammals isn’t itself a mammal.” Then I got mad and yelled, “So are there mammals or aren’t there?”

At that point, everybody had to start all over and explain everything to me for the second time. Pretty soon I was sick and tired of hearing how the class of ducks couldn’t swim and how the class of robins couldn’t fly.
Even Brian, who had his own problems with talking, tried to help Pixie by telling her that all the mammals in the zoo were her mystery creature didn't answer Pixie's question.

But all I could think was that my mystery creature turned out to practically nothing at all—just the name of a class, and not something warm and furry, with a wet nose and soft brown eyes.

If Pixie had been able to understand Plato and Aristotle and their philosophy, she possibly would not have been so upset. She might even have been able to appreciate the comments of Brian who said that her creature was real. If Brian had ever met Scotus, he would have learned that any creature didn't answer. If Brian had ever met Scotus, he would have learned that any creature didn't answer. If Brian had ever met Scotus, he would have learned that any creature didn't answer.

In the philosophical system of Scotus the individual reigns supreme against the general trend of his age which gave pride to the universal and relegated the individual to the domain of the accidental and perishable. Medieval man thought and lived within the orbit of a deep collective consciousness; he was absorbed into a strong social structure where he easily lost awareness of his individuality and personal responsibility. Reacting to the common trend, St. Francis of Assisi emphasized the importance of the individual in his rule, leaving much to the inspiration and guidance of divine grace. Scotus who translated into metaphysical language "the most beautiful ideal of perfection and the ardor of the Seraphic spirit" bases this integration on the principle of differentiation and individuation. He appreciates the human person as an individual in every phase of his system. His reflections are not restricted to the metaphysical order: he even gives amazing new and revolutionary glimpses into the social theories of the last three centuries. (Franciscan Studies, p. 15, Vol. 27, 1967)

John Duns Scotus (1267-1308) who has put St. Francis' ideals and values into a philosophical-theological synthesis and explains how there can be individuals within a species and how they differ from each other. In his lengthy and involved treatises Scotus built on the views of Avicenna, the tenth century Islamic philosopher, and developed a view that combined a common nature and haecceity which, taken together, explain how individuals differ from each other and how individuals share a common nature. According to Scotus both the common nature and the haecceity were real but they could not exist apart from each other. In his article Martin Tweedale summarizes Scotus' Doctrine on the Universals.

Scotus's realism about universals, then, amounts to the following: There exist extramural reality entities which of themselves have some form of unity less that numerical (i.e., specific, generic or (?) analogical), and these same entities are such that they do not of themselves have numerical unity. (This is not to be confused with of themselves having no numerical unity; if that were true of a nature, no nature could be contracted to an individual, since nothing can take on something which of itself is opposed to.) Finally, these entities combine with something that differentiates and determines them to form the things that do of themselves have numerical unity, i.e., the individuals. (Martin M. Tweedale, Duns Scotus's Doctrine on Universals and the Aphrosidian Tradition, American Catholic Quarterly, Vol. LVII, No. 1, p. 92)

Today people can get very enthusiastic about the individuality of angels and find it difficult to understand how such great thinkers as St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure and Bl. John Duns Scotus could have different opinions on this subject. A follower of St. Thomas would argue that because matter is the basis for individuality, angels had to differ from each other specifically since they did not have matter. Each angel is a species. Scotus, however, did not accept the Thomistic viewpoint, with its reliance on Aristotle, and argued that there could be many angels within each species, each one having its own special something which he named "thiness" or "haecceity." Wolter in his discussion of angels in Scotus' writing, finds that Scotus is very interesting because of his views on the nature of all reality. Wolter, a scholar who has translated and commented on Scotus for many years, when asked about Pixie's problem, Brian's solution, and the contemporary debate on endangered species suggested an explanation from Scotus' viewpoint:

If you interpret this problem as Scotus does, then individuality is something you can name, i.e., you can point to it and give it a proper name. When you speak of any kind of property, anything that requires a descriptive term, then it is universal. In the end, the name of the universal is the species. You start off with the highest categories then you go down and get more specific, until you get down to the specific.

This is what Scotus calls the most special, the species. This is the finale one. Below that then you have individuals. But you cannot say anything about the individual except in general terms. Now this introduces the species. There are the
real things, but what they are, that is their nature.

The whole problem (of Pixie and the endangered species) is the problem of the universals. Now Scotus is a realist in this that he believes that there is a common nature out there—that the nature is in that thing and that's where the real thing is. When I conceptualize that, then I realize that this thing is predictable of many and that's the formal universal. Now this conceptualization occurs only in the mind. In the individual that nature is individualized by its "thiness." Now the problem that I have with the whole question is this, not only is the species important but you cannot even speak of any kind of value to the individual except in terms of what it has specifically! (From a personal interview).

If Scotus had been able to join the discussion of Pixie's mystery creature he would have said that the gorilla was an individual animal but that it was real because it had both the real common nature of gorillas and its individualizing "thiness." Martin Tweedale begins his article on Duns Scotus' teaching on the universals with this introduction.

Duns Scotus is the scholastics' scholastic. His work deploys not only the full panoply of technical vocabulary characteristic of high medieval scholasticism but a full range of notions that Scotus himself invented as well. This is certainly a feature of his discussions of universals, common natures and related topics, and it renders those discussions very nearly inaccessible to the modern ontologist not schooled in Scotism. (Duns Scotus's Doctrine on Universals and the Aphrodisian Tradition by Martin M. Tweedale, American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. LXVII, No. 1, 77.)

In his article Tweedale traces the thought on the problem of universals and shows how Scotus developed the ideas proposed by Avicenna (930–1037) who was very influential in the discussions during the late 13th century in Western Europe. Scotus defended the position that there were natures existing in extramental reality which, of themselves, have "a less than numerical unity," but "yet a unity of sorts." Scotus argued that even though the nature does not have a numerical unity it does have a unity which can be shared by individuals. The common nature is neither singular nor universal but is a commonness in kind. Commentators on Scotus, such as Wolter, deny that the Subtle Doctor is guilty of an exaggerated realism even though it is easy to see how this interpretation could happen. Wolter and O'Neill explain the origin and meaning of "haecceity" in their work on Scotus.

And angels have no matter, even if it be of ectoplasmic or quasi-spiritual sort. Hence, he argued that in each individual there is an individuating difference which is unique and proper to that individual. It makes it this, and not that. "This" and "that" are indexical terms, philosophers of language tell us. We use them to point to what we cannot describe. Since haec is the Latin term for "this," Scotus and his disciples referred to this positive additive that individuates generically as "haecceity" (haecceitas) or "thiness." But haecceity, like individuality, is a universal, a common term, and it does not really tell us what a particular individual's individuality really is. It only describes its twofold function: (1) to make that individual unique and incapable of duplication, even by an omnipotent God; and (2) to differentiate it from each and every other individual, whether it be of the same or a specifically different type. (Wolter and O'Neill, p. 28).


One sometimes hears the criticism that the great metaphysicians of the late Middle Ages speculated for the sake of speculation and discussed nothing of practical value. Scotus, sometimes called "the scholastic of scholastics" is often considered too abstract in his writing to be considered useful in the twentieth century. In discussing the need for individuals in the universe, Wolter and O'Neill believe that Scotus' discussion of the individual which involves the common nature and "haecceity" can be very helpful in a discussion on the value of individuals in the contemporary world.

Wolter and O'Neill in discussing Scotus' view on the diversity of species and the multiplicity of individuals find his position to be closely related to his views regarding the nature of God and the purpose of creation.

Our creator, who primarily intended the order of the universe (as the principal good, intrinsic to himself) not only intended this inequality that is one requirement for order (among species), but also desired a parity of individuals (within the same species), which is another accompaniment of order. And individuals are intended in an unqualified sense by this "First One" insofar as he intended something other than himself not as an end, but as something oriented to that end. Hence to communicate his goodness, as something befitting his beauty, he produces several in each species. And in those beings which are the highest and most important, it is the individual that is primarily intended by god. (N.252) (Ordinatio II,3,7) (Wolter and O'Neill, p. 31)

Scotus has been called "The Subtle Doctor" for a good reason, for he is at his best in discussing the nature of God and his relationship to the universe. He developed his theory of individuation not only to justify objective knowledge but also to explain the purpose of all reality. Underneath all of his involved and intricate reasoning is his interpretation of God, God's love, God's goodness and the need for beauty in the universe. Accepting St. Augustine's definition of order as "the arrangement of like and unlike things whereby each is disposed to its proper place," and the emphasis on the theological truth that God is Infinite Love, Scotus developed a highly intricate argument for the value of individuals. Fr. Wolter, in his work on Scotus' Lectures on Individuation shows how the problem of individuation was a theological problem for the Subtle Doctor and how Scotus saw the necessity of individuals for God's ordered universe.

What is more, in the Ordinatio revision of this seventh question, he makes an important claim, that where rational beings are concerned it is the person rather than the nature that God primarily desired to create. His remark is in answer to an objection that individuals do not pertain to the order of the universe, for order is based on priority and posteriority, and individuals are all on a par with one another. Not only do individuals pertain to the order of god's universe, Scotus retorts, but, in communicating "his goodness as something befitting his beauty, in each species, he delights in producing a multiplicity of individuals."

"And in those beings which are the highest and most important, it is the individual that is primarily intended by god." (Ordinatio II, d.3, n.251) (7.5140 Duns Scotus' Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation,
Developing his theology of creation from Hugh of St. Victor who emphasized that the essence of God was love, Scotus argues that God being most reasonable must love himself and must also will co-lovers.

Hence, he first loves himself ordinally and consequently not inordinately in an envious or jealous manner. Secondly, he wills to have other co-lovers, and this is nothing else than willing that others have his love in them. (Franciscan Christology, pp. 156-159)

Scotus next, in this article on God discusses the power of grace and the notion of predestination but, in a very interesting manner, he discusses the sensible world in the fourth place.

Fourthly, he (God) wills those things for their sake other things that are more remote—for instance, this sensible world—in order that it may serve them (humans), so that what is stated in the second book of (Aristotle's) Physics is true: "Man is in some way the end of all sensible things," for all these are willed in the fourth place, because of man's being willed in the second place. Also that which is closer to the ultimate end is customarily said to be the end of those things which are more remote. Hence, man will be the end of the sensible world, whether it be because God wills the sensible world to be ordered to predestined man or whether it be because of his more immediate concern is not that the sensible world exist, but rather that man love him. (Wolter, Franciscan Christology, pp. 156-157)

From this statement, Scotus clearly emphasizes the need for God to have co-lovers. One might easily argue that Scotus is quite anthropocentric in his view of the world and seems to make the human being the center of God's handiwork. Sorrell in his work on the nature mysticism of St. Francis accepts the view that the Poverello considered human beings to be the highest members of God's creation. With this in mind, let us look at the last part of this article and note how Scotus discusses the question of God's love for a tree.

One must remember that Scotus believed and taught that things were good because God made them and not that God made them because they were good. This view of Scotus has been misunderstood by many who have interpreted the Subtle Doctor in many other ways. Without getting into all the intricacies of what Scotus means by essential goodness, one can say that God does not choose things because they are good but that such goodness is originally based on what God wants. There is also the affection for justice in God and Scotus' conviction that God must act in the most reasonable manner. Although Scotus was very strong in his philosophy that God was free in creating he also thought that it would be unfair for God to create an animal of a certain kind without its required nature. (Cfr. Wolter)

In the preceding statement, Scotus is quite clear that created things exist only because God chose to create them. Scotus concludes his analysis of insinuate and irrational beings in an interesting manner.

And if you object that God does not love all things out of charity since inanimate or irrational creatures are not loved in this way, I answer if inanimate things are not, properly speaking, able to be loved out of charity, since charity is friendship love and one cannot have such objects as friends, nevertheless one may have such a charitable love towards them as is possible, for I can love out of charity that a tree exists insofar as it enables me to love God more in himself. Now in this manner it can be admitted that God loves all things out of charity not by a volition that is friendship love, but by a friendship love as it is possible for him to have in their regard. (Pp. 157-158)

Scotus' arguments and discussions were based on his view that God is love and infinite in perfection. If those truths are accepted then it would follow that, since God would be the most reasonable of lovers, that he would desire co-lovers. Human beings were created to love God and the inanimate world was also created so that man could love God. Wolter and O'Neill in their discussion of the need for individuals in nature to assure its beauty state Scotus' views in this way:

Our creator, who primarily intended the order of the universe (as the principal good, intrinsic to himself) not only intended this inequality that is one requirement for order (among species), but also desired a parity of individuals (within the same species), which is another accomplishment of order. And individuals are intended in an unqualified sense by this "First One" insomuch as he intended something other than himself not as an end, but as something oriented to that end. Hence to communicate his goodness, as something befitting his beauty, he produces several in each species. And in those beings which are the highest and most important, it is the individual that is primarily intended by God. (N.259, Ordinatio II, 3,7, Wolter and O'Neill, p. 31)

Scotus is quite clear in stating that God is most reasonable and argues that god is perfectly free in his creation and that things are good because he creates them. This has bothered some commentators who have argued that Scotus seemed to be saying that God could be capricious in his acting in nature. From Scotus' discussion of the tree and from the rest of his treatment of God and his goodness one can see why Scotus is determined to emphasize the freedom of God in his creation. In the earlier text he discusses the sensible world and how it was willed by God so that man could love him through this world. He then continues to say the reason for god's willing is in the divine will alone. His conclusion about the tree being the object of God's love and how he can love the tree out of charity because it enables humans to love God more in himself, then

God can love the tree by a friendship love in so far as it is possible for him.

One often wishes that a time machine were a reality for it would be most interesting to bring people, such as St. Francis and Bl. John Duns Scotus to the twentieth century and have them discuss their views and values
with people like Aldo Leopold, Lawrence Johnson and even Pixie. Although St. Francis was mentioned a number of times at the interesting and enthusiastic four-day Symposium held at Middlebury College in Vermont in 1990, it would have been exciting to have heard him in person. The purpose of the gathering was to emphasize, through dialogue and presentations, that the global environmental crisis is fundamentally a religious and moral problem. Representatives from the Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, Native American, and liberal democratic traditions shared their views of the environment and offered suggestions and recommendations about the world and our relationship to it. John C. Elder in his essay, "Brooding Over the Abyss" made the following observation. His words, while not attempting to summarize the discussions of the Symposium, do indicate its focus:

Whitehead's sense of a tender voice in the Western tradition illuminates a hopeful possibility at the current moment of human evolution. The global environmental crisis does not call upon us to reject the legacy of civilization. Rather we are asked to attend to voices within our traditions which we have not sufficiently heard. This is the significance of such developments as renewed interest in St. Francis, or in that moment in the history of Buddhism when the influence of Taoism helped to transform a world-denying sense of emptiness into a celebration of nature's plentitude. We are reevaluating, realigning, even reconstructing our religious traditions, given the insights and needs of our day. This possibility for simultaneously grieving over our history's destructive errors and nurturing the birth of renewed traditions is captured in the double meaning of the word "brooding." It expresses both sorrowful contemplation and devotion to the development of fresh life. Milton captured both meanings in the invocation to Paradise Lost, where the Holy spirit "Dowelike (sat) brooding o'er the vast Abyss/And m'dst it it pregnant." (Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment Is a Religious Issue, ed. By Steven C. Rockefeller and John C. Elder, Beacon Press 1992, p. 197—198)

If Scotus had been able to make a presentation one could guess what he might have contributed much to the many provocative presentations. He would have joined in the call to appreciate the beauty and biodiversity in the world around us. He would have agreed that humans must respect and love the non-human world. At the same time one might be surprised to find that both St. Francis and Scotus accept an anthropocentric view. There are many forms and philosophical positions of anthropocentrism. As we have seen, neither Francis nor Scotus adopts an extreme anthropocentric position that views all of nature as having only instrumental value and existing solely for the use of the human race. Doyle, who wrote a perceptive analysis of St. Francis and the Canticle and who denies romanticism and pantheism in the Poverello, summarizes his view:

St. Francis conceived the whole world as one vast Friary ('Brother/sister') in which each brother and sister holds a unique and indispensable place. This is no mere romanticism, but a lovely expression of the individuality, the originality, the never-to-be-repeated identity of every creature in nature. It is akin to 'thiness' (haecceitas) as Duns Scotus philosophizes it, and to Gerard Manley Hopkins' description of the distinctiveness of things "incap". There is not even a hint at forbidding the human use of nature in terms of pan-psychism or animism. Nature has a meaning-in-itself because it is created by God, it does not have its value or meaning purely from man. Man has a duty to respect it and the right to use it by working with it, not by dominating and exploiting it. (Ecology and Canticle of Brother Sun by Eric Doyle, O.F.M., New Blackfriars Vol. 55, 1974, p. 98-99)

The view of St. Francis as presented by Doyle sees the non-human world as having value because it is part of God's creation and that humans can use this world with respect and love. Some authors in looking at Scotus' view of god and his arguments for the contingency of everything outside of God might conclude that God's relationship with the created universe is somewhat haphazard. The answer that Scotus gives is implicit in the above. Does God owe anything to creatures? Scotus believes and argues that there could be an altogether different world but that God is also a God of justice.

Scotus, in his appreciation of a God who is infinite love finds the human beings to be an essential part of the world. The view that God necessarily loves himself and that the universe is entirely dependent seems contradictory but Wolter, in his work on the ethics of Scotus, goes to great lengths to show how the Subtle Doctor interpreted these truths. One could conclude a presentation on the value of the individual by looking at Celano's Life of St. Francis.

When he found an abundance of flowers, he preached to them and invited them to praise the Lord as though they were endowed with reason. In the same way he exhorted with the sincerest purity cornfields and vineyards, stones and forests and all the beautiful things of the fields, fountains of water, and the green things of the gardens, earth and fire, air and wind, to love god and serve him willingly. (Celano, XXIX, 72-73)

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Understanding Children's Homelessness as Transcendent Evil: Applying Ricoeurean Conceptions of Selfhood and Community

Mary Abascàl-Hildebrand

The author gratefully acknowledges the inspiration of Action Alliance for Children, a nonprofit organization dedicated to informing and empowering people who work with and on behalf of children, and the cooperation of DrawBridge, a nonprofit program that provides art experiences for homeless children, for permission to reprint the accompanying children's drawings and captions.

Introduction

A homeless shelter in a large, southern California city provides evening meals at nearly double the number of beds it has available. The Roman Catholic priest who operates the shelter continues this practice despite the city ordinance allowing shelters to serve only the number of evening meals as the number of beds they provide, regardless of whomever might be turned away, and even if those who might be turned away include children. Such a policy exacerbates the social wrong already inherent in homelessness by compounding the suffering with hunger. Adi Ophir, a philosopher, provides ideas for this essay that set the context for exploring Ricoeur's thinking by writing that the study of homelessness itself as "a unique social project" (1990:101) can give us new ethical insights into social problems.

Paul Ricoeur, a philosopher and theologian, offers a philosophical view of social relations that may be of considerable help as we apply solutions from our critique of systems and the evils we find. Ricoeur's thinking suggests that we need to create a new realm of meaning concerning social relations and our obligation to be our brothers' and sisters' keepers. Ricoeur's ideas about self, other, and community offer a new way to think about our obligations to one another, and in this case, our obligations to children who are homeless. His work enlists us to think about what ought to
be our ethical aim: "to live with and for others in just institutions" (1992:172). Further, he extends substantially the idea of community as the context in which we can explore ideas of selfhood as an aspect of community. Moreover, Ricoeur's work may help us to see why when we turn our face away from those who are homeless that we compound the suffering, and thereby create a transcendent evil out of a social evil, as Ophir suggests (1990).

Introducing ideas of selfhood and community in exploring transcendent evil prevents us from looking at homelessness merely as misengineered economics (Ophir 1990). That is, exploring ideas from philosophy can help us more likely to recognize that an economic system alone does not create or respond to homelessness or its related suffering. Rather, we can recognize instead that social systems in a culture interrelate and contribute to the suffering in children's homelessness. Further, philosophy can help us to elaborate our ideas concerning the centrality of relationships in community, and the capacity for all of us, whether homeless or not, to contribute to creating community.

Homelessness is deeply wrenching for both adults and children; it creates multiple losses. Homelessness in any societ is more than not having housing; homelessness restricts participation across several spheres of community life. Homelessness means quite a bit more than having no home; for both children and adults it means having no particular address with which to carry on a variety of forms of community membership including social address. Homeless persons cannot entertain or provide refuge for friends. They cannot close off outsiders and intruders from intimate activities, from disagreeing, being sad, or being sick. They cannot maintain a personal history of possessions and memorabilia. Homeless persons have greater difficulty making significant changes in their lives. Hence, they have no base from which to retain a past-life, or engage in a future-life; they can only live a present-life, and an extremely limited one at that.

Children's Homelessness

Accordingly, children's homelessness itself is a transcendent evil, even before they are turned away from a meal, since their homelessness not only reduces their capacity to act, homelessness also prevents them from having a consistent set of supporting experiences necessary for mastering developmental tasks required for their overall well-being. The very essence of growth and development is that it is based on experience and rooted in the interplay between dependence and independence. The critical feature of children's homelessness is that it is time-sensitive in a way that is unique to human growth and development: children cannot retrieve time or recast experiences related to developmental tasks; engaging in those developmental tasks is forever lost to their growth and development. Children's homelessness is entirely incontrovertible: they cannot enjoy even temporary relief from assaults to their growth and development.

While practitioners have been reporting the long-term effects of homelessness, we continue to learn more about the effects of homelessness on children; evidence shows that they suffer what may be irreducible harm to their growth and development. Because children are still growing, they suffer more, at least at two levels: one, homelessness may interfere with children's ability to respond to normal developmental tasks because they have fewer resources and choices for the kind of trial and error they need to make sense of their expanding awareness; and, two, homelessness may interfere with their ability to develop trust and appropriate dependence needed to master developmental tasks.

The children's drawings reproduced here (Children's Advocate, November/December 1994, 1) are from a traveling exhibit created by Draw-Bridge, a nonprofit arts program for homeless children, and portray some of children's traumatic experiences with homelessness.

Clearly, experiencing homelessness assaults children's sense of trust. Because homelessness demands greater dependence as a result of general inconsistency, it typically interferes with appropriate independence. Because children's growth and development needs cannot be met, even with a safety network of shelters and services, homelessness itself prevents children from converting their suffering through some other social service.

The Stanford Center for the Study of Families, Children, and Youth in 1991 completed a study on homelessness which confirms what was known anecdotally (Children's Advocate 1994): that homeless children and families suffer symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that surface once a formerly homeless family shifts out of its survival mode. So, while statistics corroborate homeless children's needs are massive during homelessness itself (Action Alliance for Children 1994), the assault to their growth and development persists long after families find homes.

Discourse Of Evils in Homelessness

Ophir proposes that our examination of social systems ought to spring from what he calls a "discourse of evils" (1990:101) so that we can not only learn about how various social systems contribute to homelessness, we may ultimately reduce or prevent such suffering. A discourse of evil calls for interdisciplinarity through a hermeneutic stance—since interdisciplinarity enables us to reinterpret our thinking about homelessness so that we understand it as more than merely the sum of its parts. A discourse of evils can direct us then to focus more widely—on community itself.

I argue that homelessness is the antithesis of community because homelessness threatens the very meaning of community as relationship, as nurturer, and assaults the selfhood of each of us, whether or not we are homeless. Once community is assaulted by homelessness, particularly the homelessness of children, it can never make the same claims about itself; it loses its core. Once children suffer homelessness, they can never make the developmental claims they might have otherwise been able to make in a home; they have a loss they cannot retrieve. Such losses mean all of us lose, not just those who are homeless. We all suffer some loss from the malaise in a society that allows such homelessness. Such wide-scale cultur-
al deprivation ought to be of grave concern to us all.

Indeed, the problem of children's homelessness requires that we examine the problem in an expanded social grid (Ophir 1990), one that addresses but also goes beyond economics because economics reflect mostly distributive topics. This is another way to say that homelessness in our affluent, democratic society demands an interdisciplinary stance so that we can uncover whatever complex social mechanism creates such suffering and then socializes us to homelessness. Ophir explains:

Understanding homelessness necessitates an attempt to remap an entire social world. One needs to deconstruct the discourse of both participants and theorists, to suspend or question existing social categories (of socio-economic scales, desert and right, life expectancy, health situation, etc.) and look for a new totalizing point of view. Only then and from there would the production and distribution of evils appear in their own right and would evils appear as proper objects of social and moral discourse (1990:101).

Then we may understand why we must study community in multiple contexts: culture and ethics, or economics and ethics, or sociology and ethics, or politics and ethics, or child development and ethics so that we might more thoroughly reconstruct societal connections.

Since homelessness is socially constructed, it is amenable to being socially reconstructed—and thereby lessened and prevented. The idea that homelessness is preventable suffering can help us to understand social good and evil more clearly: goods and evils are not simply individual acts which provide pleasure or inflict pain, as Ophir poses. Social evils, he writes, "are inflicted and suffered for the advantage of another . . . or for the advantage of no one in particular" (1992:102), perhaps explaining why we easily succumb to facelessness in homelessness.

Social goods create conflict because goods are scarce; we position ourselves against others in our attempts to collect goods for ourselves. Ophir (1990) explains that social evils create conflict, too, because we believe we may be vulnerable to them and we seek refuge from them. As we seek refuge from them, we position ourselves economically, politically, culturally, and so on, against others to avoid evils for ourselves, and to shift evils onto others to suffer them for us. Conflicts keep us distracted from understanding that we need to limit, indeed prevent others' suffering. What happens is that we become consumed with preventing our own suffering and then are much less willing to assume some suffering so that others might suffer less.

We thereby contribute to suffering by limiting the access of those who suffer to remedies in other social spheres, because we are afraid that any such remedies might themselves affect our ability to limit or prevent our own suffering. Ophir would say, then, that a transcendent evil is one which not only limits action in one or more related social spheres, but a transcendent evil limits action in a majority of social spheres. Ophir explains that a condition becomes a social evil when those who suffer have no choice in the matter, they not only have no choice but their suffering is more than they should be expected to bear; and they are barred from alleviating their suffering in other social spheres. As a social evil becomes a transcendent evil, it affects societal members in at least three ways: one, it extinguishes in the sufferer any sense of belongingness or belief in community; two, because it makes us adversaries of homeless persons since we fear being abandoned ourselves; three, it makes it possible for us to escape social responsibility by blaming the victim.

Homeless persons in general lose community because their suffering is related to several community spheres of action: their retreat from homelessness back into homeness is cut off by endless bureaucratic limitations and personal privations they cannot overcome in order to more widely engage in other social spheres. The shattering loss of one community and the inability because of homelessness to gain access to any other community easily means that homeless persons may then have less reason for wanting to be a member of society at all (Ophir 1990). We cut them off from any social contract. Then, ironically, we blame them for the lawlessness some may display as the result of being put out of touch with our social core. Ophir explains:

In principle, it would be very hard to attribute political obligations to her, if she has never been asked, indeed, and never given her consent (to homelessness). Her dissent, in the form of political struggle, rebellion, or desertion, may be justified according to circumstances, given her share in other spheres of goods and evils, the price and prospects of each form of action to attain a positive change . . . right now she seems to be out of any contract.

Ophir claims (1990) that transcendent evil is a radical evil because it does not allow persons to convert their suffering, and it puts them farther out of the society. We allow homeless persons no means for participating in society because they are homeless. Furthermore, it explains why homelessness alone is not a justifiable reason for putting persons out of society in such a wholesale way, particularly children, as he explains, "unconvertible suffering is uncompromisable, because it is unjustifiable (in a moral community)" (1990:107). A moral community cannot act thus, because to act thus is to suppose a false moral basis for a social contract. Ophir suggests that "double system of agreement over patterns of suffering" (1990:108) can enable members of a society to enter into a moral contract to enable those who suffer to convert their suffering, and to agree to respond immediately to transcendent suffering; children's homelessness requires just such a double system of agreement. Given the moral requirement of a double system of agreement, ordinances that eliminate significant citizenship in the community challenge the basis for any social contract that the city council assumes for its legitimacy since such ordinances reduce participation dramatically and at the most basic level of life—namely, to eat. Likewise, the idea of community as nurturer demands that children's extreme vulnerability be protected from homelessness.

The priest of the shelter is acting within his ministry on the basis of such a double system of agreement when as he acts on his judgment about what is the good concerning those who are homeless and in not allowing extended suffering through hunger.
However, we see that the conflict over social goods encourages misinterpretation of the idea of a social good. The council members are acting to shore up a perceived "good" in the form of political approval from those who own businesses in the area who do not appear willing to share the suffering of those who are homeless, by at least allowing more to eat, and perhaps by participating in some policy development that would address the property value concerns. Further, the council members might be responding to their private, perceived "good" for re-election, by acting on behalf of those who claim they want "safe" streets, as if homeless persons were in fact dangerous. Business owners seek a private, perceived "good"—elimination of perceived threats to their businesses by those who might sleep the night near them. Other citizens who failed to speak on behalf of those who are homeless contribute to the inconvertible suffering that both homelessness and hunger create. Thus, many promote this transcendent evil—those in real estate and downtown redevelopment, those in government and politics, those in health care who do not speak out as citizens on behalf of indigent populations, and general citizens because they too fail to use their judgment to recognize and act to communicate widely how incontrovertible are both homelessness and hunger.

**Homelessness and a Hermeneutics of Faith**

However, given Adi Ophir's and Paul Ricoeur's point about ethical aims, the priest's apparent defiance is evidence of the priest's willingness to use his judgement about a wrong that he sees by fulfilling an obligation to take on the suffering of others, even if it means defying rulings or ordinances. The priest's defiance enabled him to aide the community of homeless persons directly by feeding those whom he could; his defiance also enabled him to communicate widely so that enough citizens in the city learned about, informed local media, and effectively forced the shame-faced city council into restoring its ordinance. Those in the community who forced the issue with the city council were also acting to limiting. And this is the pivotal point of this essay: we need to look out for the suffering of others and act readily when we see such suffering, so that our very ignorance does not itself create a transcendent evil.

While Ophir proposes we must engage in a hermeneutics of evil—an interpretation of evil—in order to confront evil and the suffering in homelessness, Ricoeur offers us another kind of hermeneutics, a hermeneutics of faith, to explain how we might be able to understand our obligations to one another. Ricoeur's hermeneutics enables us to learn that by living our obligations to one another, especially when they are most vulnerable to suffering, we more fully become ourselves as others become themselves, thereby creating new forms of community that are strengthened against callousness. A hermeneutics of faith can offer hope in the face of our awful guilt in failing to recognize the totality of the evil in any sort of homelessness. Though Ricoeur's hermeneutics of faith calls for a three-part ethical aim, "the good life, with and for others, in just institutions" (1992:172), and his discussion about the good life and about just institutions is certainly edifying, I limit myself in this essay to a brief treatment of his idea, "with and for others."

First some background on Ricoeur's idea "with and for others:" he devotes his recent work, Oneself As Another (1992), to portraying how he came to regard the idea of self as other and what this idea can mean for community. He writes that he became aware as he was writing the final part of his Volume III of Time and Narrative (1987) that while narrative mediates between the self we imagine we are and the self we hope to be, it is the relationship we create with others—that Ricoeur refers to as the other self—that undergirds the insights gained within narrative. He explains that we must surrender ourselves to the realization that we are who we are, not by virtue of assumed independence, but by virtue of our dependence on one another; we become ourselves through our relationships with others. Accordingly, we enable others in our lives to become themselves through their relationships with us. As such, we owe who we are to others; they owe who they are to us. When we fail to recognize that our own humanity is bound up in others' humanity, not only do we fail to fulfill our most basic obligation to ourselves, but we deny others their self-fulfillment. When we fail to recognize we must take on others' suffering, we are less able to fulfill ourselves as well.

This puts a whole different light on the idea of social contract, it changes it from one of negotiation to one of obligation—mutual obligation. In this view, obligation emerges mutually within our relationships—within community—it is not imposed externally.

Ricoeur provides a word to understand the priest's stance—solicitude—mutual giving and receiving (1992:188). He offers that we portray solicitude in relationships when we give the gift of taking on another's sorrows. And when we give others the gift of our sorrows we are saying that we esteem them enough that we entrust our darkest experiences to them to help us carry the burden of our suffering. We see solicitude most poignantly in the experience of one who suffers and has that suffering taken from her by someone who gives the gift of taking on the suffering. Ricoeur provides another word—similitude—to describe the fruit of such mutual giving in suffering (1992:193). The idea of similitude provides a another view of what it can mean when we take on one another's suffering; he explains similitude as another way to describe the justice and community that all of us can derive in giving the gift of solicitude.

Ricoeur's work suggests that the only kind of solicitude that is reasonable on behalf of children is to prevent their homelessness entirely because their development needs require us to lift them out of any suffering related to homelessness, simply because it is possible to do so. We must take on their suffering fully, to protect them from such suffering at all. Solicitude offers a new way to think about children and community; solicitude provides a new way to understand that a society cannot tolerate any form of homelessness concerning children; similitude provides a new way to think about the
kind of community we are obligated to explore for children.

Furthermore, Ricoeur's thinking about solitici tude explains more about our obligations. He writes that solicitu de and self-esteem "cannot be experienced or reflected upon one without the other" (1992:180). His basis for self-esteem is that it is reflexive, and does not mark differences between persons. Rather, whatever one does in relieving the suffering of the other, enables the esteem of both (1992:181). Ricoeur's point is that each self is worthy of self-esteem, "not by reason of its accomplishments, but by reason of its capacities" (1992:181). This connection between the self and respect for the capacities of others eliminates any justification we might make for claims that homeless persons have to somehow earn their way out of homelessness, or that we can rightly claim that homeless children ought to depend on their parents to earn their way out of homelessness. Instead, we must understand that homeless persons, particularly children, do not have to be otherwise worthy of our efforts to eliminate their suffering, because their being human is worth enough. Our ordinances and policies, therefore, need to remove contingencies on the suffering of those who are homeless.

Ricoeur sees reciprocity, the mutual esteeming in friendship, as the key to the idea of each person's self-esteem: "reciprocity is part of the most basic definition (of friendship)" (1992:182). Ricoeur regards friendship as our expression of hope for living well, but he regards mutuality as what everts egoism or utilitarianism in friendship. As we develop Ricoeur's ideas here we can see that his efforts can help us change our attitudes about what we ought to do to alleviate homelessness toward a much more personal portrayal of suffering, so that, reflexively, we can get to a fuller conception of community.

In writing about friendship, he explains that the self-esteem each of us can provide for one another through deeper expressions of friendship actually moves reciprocity to equality where giving and receiving have equal status. Thus, the features of friendship become the basis for justice—for a more public expression of friendship—because the esteem it enables us to have for others, enables us also to understand that we need to promote equity relationally and societally, "on the scale of a historical, political community" (1992:188).

Friendship enables us to move beyond more solitary concerns toward a societal frame. Ricoeur views justice as the virtue of friendship in the political sphere. Moreover, he argues that friendship refers to an ethics because it seeks an excellence in relationships and thereby is meant for the sake of the good, and not just for utility or pleasure. Friendship comes out of "deliberative choices and (is) capable of being elevated to the rank of habitus" (1992:182). The mutuality in friendship is what enables us to imagine justice in giving to each other through our institutions as well.

Thus, projecting our self into the experience of those who are homeless, especially those who are children, can bring us into a new realm of considering others since it is through considering ourselves that we can imagine the suffering that others might have. This personal frame enables us to want to put faces on those who are homeless and to want to find concrete ways to comfort them since our imaginations about our own suffering, were we homeless, propels us into a greater understanding of their suffering. This form of mutuality propel us into seeking solutions that are likely to reach others, and thus begin a community effort to comfort those who suffer as we recognize their having the same capacity for suffering—and for hope—as we have.

We can feel relieved in learning that Ricoeur points out, as does Aristotle (9.8.1169a18), that we are being reasonable when we seek what is best for ourselves; but we are also put on notice that this idea has within it the feature of reciprocity whereby we must also choose what is best for others. Ricoeur's discussion is located in the larger question of whether we must love ourselves in order to love one another; he points out that the larger question is whether one can be happy without the experience of reciprocity in friendship, and by extension, without the reciprocity that justice both provides and requires. Ricoeur claims that once we realize that we become conscious of ourselves only as we become conscious of the self in others, we also realize a whole different premise in looking out for others: when we look out for others we provide both for them and for ourselves. Indeed, he claims that we cannot provide well for ourselves without providing well for others.

Ricoeur refers to Aristotle frequently in his argument that friends provide what we cannot provide for ourselves, since it is through friends that we become able to both fulfill needs and derive pleasure from life. It is these two elements of relationship that enable us to more fully "establish the conditions for the realization of life in its intrinsic goodness and its basic pleasure" (emphasis in original, 1992:186). But what is important here is that Ricoeur does not stop with need and pleasure; he argues that besides need and pleasure, we must add consciousness. Thus, it is through friendship—and by extension justice—that we become conscious of life and action, and through friendship as justice we become conscious of consciousness itself (1992:186). Ricoeur contends that friendship's reciprocity in offering need and activity is that the two are not mere parts, but rather are inseparable from one another. On the same basis, Ricoeur argues that giving and receiving one another's suffering also are not mere parts but are themselves inseparable. In giving the gift of taking on the suffering of another, the self gains from the giving of the suffering provided by the suffering other—gifts that are not gifts from strength but are gifts from weakness. A gift from the weakness of the other self asks that the self draw on its own inner resources, an act which does not deplete the self's resources, but instead serves to stimulate and increase those resources as we are reminded of our own immortality.

Ricoeur explains that the sense of responsibility that forms obligation—and by extension community—emerges out of such particular regard for others' suffering. It is one thing to merely regard others' suffering, it is yet another thing to communicate that
Ricoeur suggests that there is a kind of shared fragility in solicitude that actually enlarges our sense of capacity to act in our lives and to defy the power of transcendent evil. In the case of homelessness in general, a shared sense of fragility can change our response, for example, at the very least to arguing for including more meals served at the shelter. For those who can share those meals through a renewed sense of city policy, there is renewed hope that someone understands their suffering, and their capacity for life. But for children, we have no choice other than to prevent their homelessness altogether; this is the only way we can share the fragility of children.

Ricoeur writes about the idea of nonsubstitutability to help us understand that in acting to prevent the suffering of homeless children we are not giving up something and thereby losing something, but rather that we do not lose the self we are: we can only gain through the act of mercy. We can think of nonsubstitutability as something we gain, not as something we lose, as he points out, "I do not leave my place and I do not eliminate the distinction between here and there, even when I place myself in the place of the other in imagination and sympathy" (1992: 193). Considering nonsubstitutability and children, we can only enable ourselves and them, as we enable them.

We can apply the same thinking to our work as professionals—we do not have to sacrifice something of ourselves professionally to get others from other contexts to act with us to prevent children's homelessness. According to the doctrine of nonsubstitutability, neither do we lose something when we move through our respective disciplines into those of others, when we become interdisciplinary. Rather, according to Ophir and Ricoeur, we stand to gain considerable insights into several social systems, such as insights previously unavailable to us (Abascal-Hildebrand 1995). Further, we create something new in our midst when we work through others; we become the professional self we hope to be through professional relationships with the other self.

Indeed, we can achieve something transformative also in the sense of professional community when we work with colleagues both from other disciplines and from within our respective disciplines to resolve problems, because what we provide each other makes mutual understanding more likely, and enables us to portray ideas in a new set of circumstances so that the ideas broaden our horizons of understanding. Not only can we understand what multiplies suffering and makes it intractible, but we can ultimately take on and prevent others' suffering, at the very same time, we also become ourselves.

We do more, though, than making mere exchanges of suffering, or than becoming more authentic selves. We create also out of the suffering a greater understanding and experience of self and community that has its source in the suffering other: the suffering other self not only finds compensation for the self who relieves the suffering, but I am claiming that the suffering other also creates a particular kind of compensation for the self who takes on her suffering. I claim further that the capacity of the other self to create compensation is a significant source of gifts for all of us because to create compensation means that the other self has within her the capacity needed for creating community. By extension, I believe it can also be said that the very persons whom we believe are a burden on a community by virtue of their need for community resources and services, are thereby actually the source for all of us for building community. This attitude requires certainly a different perspective on relationship and community, one that I think we can gain through Ricoeurean applications and from the insights that those applications encourage as we engage in both thought and action.

Thus, rather than believing that relationships among various members of a society are necessarily built out of unequal power, power actually becomes illuminated as what we each offer to the other. Power is something then that each of us has. In a communal form power emerges within authentic understanding enjoyed by the self through the other self that is not possible otherwise. Thereby, we not only create new energy for friendship as friendship, and in friendship as justice, we create new resources for community. My claim is that in taking on one another's suffering we not only compensate for social evils, we can expose transcendent evil, and we create community together.

While Ophir and Ricoeur are both philosophers, each of their philosophies offer us something that signals us to be more aware of the other's philosophy. While Ophir unveils transcendent evil, Ricoeur reveals thinking that offers us hope about how we can actually become our brothers' and sisters' keeper, as he suggests how, with a view to community as obligation through solicitude and similitude, we can respond to evil as well as renew community through means we have already at our disposal: ourselves.

References


That's me and that's a house. It looks pretty. I would like to live in that mouse.
Marcus, age 7

A lot of colors. It's got a door nose and window eyes. Do you see the color? The house is falling down.
Linda, age 5

This is a house with a little kid in it. His name is Sean and his mom and dad went out one night and they never came back so he's looking and looking out the window. His mom is homeless now.
Shangra, age 7
In Defense of Quiet Thought

Richard Fox

The other day I observed an unusual episode which took place in a small village primary school, a school containing mostly well-adjusted happy pupils. After a drama lesson a group of some ten 9- to 11-year-olds were asked to do a piece of writing by their student teacher. Without any prompting they fell to work, in complete silence. They wrote without any interruptions or talk for about twenty minutes. This was unusual in two ways. Firstly, it is unusual to experience complete quiet in any primary classroom for longer than a few seconds. Secondly, it was still more unusual that the silence occurred without any prior request from the teacher. These children, without any prompting, found it natural to want to compose a piece of writing in silence and they did so. I have yet to meet an adult writer, artist or composer of music, or indeed anyone striving to do sustained thinking about a problem of any kind, who did not regularly seek out peace and quiet in which to do it. Moreover, teachers I have met, who require upper primary classes (year 5-6) to work on problems, such as composing a text, in silence, report to me that the children are at first rather resentful but later grateful for this imposition of silence from time to time.

Nothing odd about that, you may say. Sustained thinking requires concentration and abhors distraction. In doing philosophy there is a time for talk and a time for silence. Philosophy for Children explicitly encourages small silences in the midst of discussion, to allow reflection. I was delighted to see that Victor Quinn (Sapere Journal, April 1994, p. 24) included toleration of silence as one of his list of intellectual virtues to use in discussions. But despite this it seems to me that there is a need to underline and defend the value of silence in the process of thinking. I was stimulated to write such a defense by hearing a paper given by Martin Coles at the “Critical Thinking in Education” conference at U.E.A. in April (Coles, 1994). In it, Coles makes the following assertions, among others:

(i) “classrooms should not silence children but hear from them.”

(ii) “Conversation is key in any curriculunm.”

(iii) “The importance of talk in the classroom cannot be exaggerated.”

Coles argues that in our present education system: “Students are, on the whole, passively learning things which are then repeated in writing.” He supports teaching and learning in the Socratic tradition, via dialogue, and considers that this view receives support from Vygotsky’s theory which suggests that internalized thinking develops from social interaction, particularly from dialogue.

While agreeing with much that Coles has to say, I find myself wanting to enter some qualifications to these bold assertions. Primary classrooms, I would say, commonly hear a great deal from children, but not always in a way which actually helps them to learn. Much of children’s conversation is “assimilatory” in Piaget’s terms, that is, it deals with, or assimilates, current experiences via existing knowledge. It is also, understandably, often a means of providing children with amusement, rather than intellectual challenge. Conversation is indeed one key to the curriculum, but knowledge is another. That is, a talk-centered view of education would be as unbalanced, on its own, as a subject- or knowledge-centered one. The importance of talk in the classroom can be exaggerated, if we start to regard it as an unqualified good, as not only necessary but sufficient in and of itself for effective learning. Children can learn through listening (which is itself an active process), through reading, through writing and through making and doing, as well as through talking. It is true that Vygotsky’s theory emphasizes the social origins of what he called “the higher mental functions” but it is worth recalling that he also placed considerable emphasis on the fact that this made internalized thought possible. Such internalized thinking, for Vygotsky, transformed the possibilities and powers of human thinking in the most dramatic fashion. He definitely did not argue that one cannot think...
except through social dialogue. Inner speech becomes a crucial tool of thinking.

We have had in Britain at least thirty years of continuous classroom research and writing, promoting the need for learners to make sense of new ideas by participation in talking and listening. From pioneers such as James Britton (1972) and Douglas Barnes (1976), through the work of Andrew Wilkinson, who coined the term “oracy,” to the recently completed National Oracy Project (Norman, 1992) the virtues of talk have been consistently advocated. Against the government’s instinctive distrust of anything which smacks of progressive thinking in education, the National Curriculum for English still contains "AT 1: Speaking and Listening" as a central dimension of language development. Classroom discussion and small group talk are indeed so widely accepted as features of good practice that the time has perhaps arrived to take a deep breath and say, “Yes, but not any talk; not all the time.” In our enthusiasm for good talk we are in danger of forgetting the value to learning of quiet, individual, sustained, thinking about a problem, over a period of several minutes at a time.

University students, who one presumes are amongst the more thoughtful members of society, frequently say that they dislike working in a library. They find the atmosphere of quietness somehow oppressive. Indeed, it is all too common for them to make sure that silence doesn't exist for long in libraries. In my local sixth-form college, students routinely talk in the library and the librarians themselves, to my deep dismay, have given up the struggle to teach them that silence is a rule which ultimately benefits all readers in libraries. We have raised children who are so habituated to the constant buzz of chatter, and the background of recorded music that they find quietness disturbing. No doubt they often do, in fact, engage in thinking, by using their powers of attention to filter out extraneous noise, but they may make life harder for themselves by having to filter out so much. They surely make life harder for one another to manage sustained reading, writing or thinking if they frequently interrupt one another with talk. I find these trends away from quiet thinking for oneself, which I observe at different levels of the education system, worrying and regrettable.

The emphasis on quiet sustained thinking for oneself, which I am trying to defend as valuable, should not be taken in any way as an alternative to discussion, or dialogue, or to be opposed to the setting up of communities of inquiry in classrooms. Rather, I take dialogue and personal reflection to be essentially complementary. No doubt it has been the development of literacy, and with it the possibility of extending thinking, including voluntary attention and memory, through reading and writing, which has been the main influence pushing human thinking towards such deliberate internalized thought, extended over time. Some, though not all, of our advances in knowledge occur as a result of such periods of internal work on symbolic representations of the world. Written composition has been described, in Vygotskian terms, as the "revision of inner speech." Children need to learn how to do this, with advice and practice.

Karl Popper has suggested that human consciousness evolved with the primary function of solving problems of a non-routine kind (Popper & Eccles, 1977, p. 125). When we can reduce a problem-solution to a routine response, requiring little conscious attention, we generally do so. (Thus, in learning to drive a car, we are highly conscious in the early stages of our movements, perceptions, plans and so on; later, we drive almost automatically, while holding conversations or thinking about other problems). This suggests that conscious thought is reserved for our hardest problems and these may well demand our full attention. In fact, at moments of intense mental concentration, we may lose all consciousness of our selves, in our absorption in the object of our thought. This sort of state may even be judged to be the highest achievement of our conscious minds. Small wonder, then, that to achieve concentrated thought we seek to cut out all outside sensory distractions. It may be that especially when we are thinking in terms of internalized language, or inner speech, that the intrusion of speech from the outside world is destructive of our concentration, of our pursuit of a single train of thought.

The great religious and mystical traditions have always paid a good deal of attention to silence, whether in the various forms of meditation or of silent prayer. One way of understanding this is as advice to turn one’s attention regularly inwards, away from the outside world, to contemplate the inner space of the mind. Admittedly such teaching also often warns the novice of the distractions of inner fantasies and self-directed day-dreaming; the intention is often to direct the mind towards some representation of God, or to empty the mind of all intellectual activity. Nevertheless, meditation and prayer may be seen as extensions of the practice of quiet attentive thought, with particular spiritual purposes. Donaldson (1992) argues that the human mind has two powerful and complementary roads to development, each one demanding a particular kind of self-transcendence. One develops the emotions towards what she calls a “value-sensing transcendent mode.” The other develops the intellectual powers towards an abstract and general “intellectual transcendent mode.” The point of interest in the present context is that the development of each mode demands a deliberate cultivation by the individual, of particular powers of attention.

The quiet pondering, or turning over of thoughts, for intellectual purposes, may be valuable partly as a means of making connections between conscious, socialized thought and deeper levels of subconscious mental activity. It also seems to be important in the processes of exploring a problem and developing one’s own beliefs and attitudes towards it. One of the drawbacks of conversation as a means of doing this is that control of the focus of thinking is shared amongst the group and thus, as an individual, one is likely to find the focus to be shifting about and often moving away from one’s own particular strands of concern and interest. Only in thinking for
oneself in a sustained way can one pursue the inner dialogue which develops those concerns in a concentrated fashion.

If this attempt to defend the place of quiet thought, in the classroom and out of it, seems redundant, belaboring the obvious, I am sorry for it. Nevertheless, try observing, next time you are in a classroom, the extent to which individual children spend time thinking quietly without interruption. Ask yourself whether the silence required for quiet thought is currently valued enough in our classrooms.

Silence, as I have tried to show, has its intellectual purposes and it also has, perhaps, a therapeutic purpose, in a noisy world.

REFERENCES

Socratic Education

Robert Fisher

This paper explores the use of the Socratic method in promoting philosophical inquiry. Two broad approaches to developing a Community of Inquiry are outlined—formal lessons for students in Socratic inquiry, and an infusion approach to Socratic teaching across the curriculum. The European tradition of formal Socratic inquiry is compared with the American Philosophy for Children tradition of Community of Inquiry. Evidence is drawn from the Philosophy in Primary Schools (PIPS) project in London schools, to illustrate ways of building a learning and teaching community in which philosophical inquiry and questioning play key roles.

The unexamined life is not worth living —Socrates (Apology 38a)

There may be many kinds of life worth living, but for Socrates the unexamined or unquestioned life was not one of them. What did he mean by this? What he seems to have meant is that a characteristic of a human life is to be critically aware of what we believe and what we do. And if we are not reflective or critical we will lead unfulfilled lives, our thinking becoming a prey to prejudice and conflict, and that “there is something disastrous about allowing our everyday ideas to remain in a state of unresolved conflict.” Part of the point of education for Socrates is to make us aware of our ignorance, of the conflicts of ideas and of current problems, and to show us that there is a method of dealing with these. This method exemplified by Socrates in the writings of Plato has a long history, and in recent years there has been a revival of interest in the philosophical and educational ideas of Socrates. But what is Socratic teaching, and is it relevant today? This paper looks at the way Socratic Teaching can help develop one of the most important elements of human thinking—philosophical thinking.

What is philosophical thinking?

Philosophical thinking is a matter of thinking about thinking, and as such it has both a cognitive and metacognitive content. The cognitive, or conceptual, content includes the exploration of the most basic ideas and problems of everyday life, such as: What am I? What is the world really like? What should I believe? What options do I have? How should I live my life? and so on. The metacognitive content is about improving one's own thinking and reasoning, so that one has a better understanding of oneself as a thinker and better tools with which to examine whatever subject matter is under review.

One of the reasons that philosophical inquiry is needed in learning is that intelligence alone is not sufficient to realize learning potential. Intelligent people are not necessarily successful at thinking and learning. They may fall into what Edward de Bono calls the “intelligence trap” of making instant judgments, of jumping to conclusions, without taking time to think about and explore alternatives. They may close off the opportunities to think and learn more. This impulsivity, or tendency to premature closure, is a characteristic of underachieving children at all levels of intelligence. Thinking is defined by de Bono as “the operating skill with which intelligence acts upon experience.”

One of the characteristics of skillful thinking is exploration, the ability to explore a situation before making a judgment. To expand consciousness so one can see more in any situation, more viewpoints and more options. Widening the range of response so that one opens up more potential paths of exploration is the heart of creative thinking and living. These thinking skills are not automatic, but they can be developed through philosophical inquiry.

We become creative when we are able to look at things from a new perspective. Einstein, who believed that the key to learning was flexible thinking, said: "To raise new questions, new problems, to regard old problems from a new angle requires creative imagination, and makes real advances". 
According to Piaget, “To understand is to invent.” We make knowledge our own “by reconstructing it through some creative operation of the mind”. “The mind,” said Oliver Wendell Holmes, “once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions.”

Torrance suggests that creativity is “a process of becoming sensitive to problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, disharmonies, and so on; identifying the difficulty; searching for solutions, making guesses, or formulating hypotheses about the deficiencies, testing and retesting these hypotheses and possibly modifying and retesting them; and finally communicating the results.” This is also a good definition of philosophical inquiry. But how is it achieved in practice?

A number of creative thinking techniques and teaching strategies, have been found helpful in developing divergent thinking. The Socratic method of teaching through questioning and dialogical inquiry is one way to support sustained creative effort in thinking. But what is the method and how is it best used?

What is Socratic teaching?
One of the reasons that Socrates remains of enduring interest is that he is an enigma. He left no writings of his own and our knowledge of him derives largely from the writings of Plato. In the Platonic dialogues Socrates plays many roles, and it is not clear that his approach can be summed up as one method. Some have seen Socrates the educator as “in some ways the greatest of good men and certainly the wisest” but others have criticized him for his arrogance, directiveness and dominance in discussion.

The contradictions in Socrates’ character mirror the contradictions characteristic of many teachers—a mixture of patient listening and preaching, of humility and arrogance, of kindly tolerance and aggressive persistence, a profession of ignorance and a jealous rivalry with fellow teachers. What then was the nature of the pedagogy that Socrates developed in the agora and open spaces of Athens?

It is clear that Socrates saw an intellectual and moral vacuum in the society that he lived in. The old order of social and moral custom was breaking down, and the new education that was replacing it, inspired by the sophists, was worldly and materialistic. Perhaps there are parallels here with our society and its preoccupations today. When the sophist teacher, Protagoras, was asked whether he believed in the gods, he is said to have replied: “The question is complex and life is short.” Man (or human needs) was to be the measure of all things. Socrates did not believe he knew the measure of all things. He was not a sophist or teacher in the sense that he presented himself as a learned or all-knowing person. He was a philosopher in the truest sense of the word, as “one who lives wisdom.” As a teacher, what Socrates was trying to establish was a new moral and intellectual discipline founded on reason, and a method of inquiry through questioning. The marketplace for Socrates was more than a place for making money, it was a space for thinking, for asking questions and for developing one’s creative judgment about important and complex human problems.

To insure that our lives are properly examined we should not merely accept the views of others, or rely on our own solitary meditations. We must engage in discussion. By listening and responding to what others think, we come to learn what it is to think for ourselves. In articulating, sharing and modifying our ideas through the process of dialogue we come to take responsibility for what we say and think, and “empower others to do these things too.” To educate, for Socrates, could not simply be a question of transfer of knowledge. Education was an activity of mind, not a curriculum to be delivered. To be involved in learning in a Socratic sense is to be involved in a personal drama, for it depends both on critical thinking and emotional commitment. It has both a rational and a moral purpose, it exists to engender intellectual virtue, a thinking that engages and develops the learner as an individual and as a member of a learning community.

Socrates justifies the use of dialogue as a means of approaching truth through the use of reason in a shared inquiry. Socrates believed that a wise person, or teacher, is one who has recognized their own ignorance and uses it as a spur to better understanding. This may have been little more than the debater’s trick of showing “scholarly ignorance”, but it was the peg on which he hung his philosophy of education.

This philosophy can be roughly summed up as:
1. Knowledge can be pursued, and can lead to an understanding of what is true;
2. The search for true knowledge is a cooperative enterprise;
3. Questioning is the primary form of education, drawing out true knowledge from within rather than imposing knowledge from outside;
4. Knowledge must be pursued with a ruthless intellectual honesty.

For Socrates the search for truth is also a moral enterprise. It is to do, in D.H. Lawrence’s words with the “wholeness” of a person “wholly attending”. At the center of Socrates’ moral concern is the psyche. This is generally translated as “soul”, but it encompasses under a single head the life-principle, intellect and moral personality. His mission he said was to persuade people “first and foremost to concentrate on the greatest improvement of your souls” (Apology 30). One element of this, and one function of teaching through dialogue was to gain self-knowledge. This is the Delphic injunction: “Know yourself”, expressed so well by the Elizabethan poet, Sir John Davies:

We seek to know the moving of each sphere,
And the strange cause of the ebb and flow of the Nile
But of that clock within our breasts we bear,
The subtle motions we forget the while.

If there is one constant in the research into effective thinkers and learners it is that they know more about themselves as thinkers and learners. It is this metacognitive element in human intelligence that is a focus in the most successful thinking skills programs and teaching strate-
gies. For Socrates the search for this kind of self-knowledge through dialogue was linked to the paradoxical belief that virtue (arete), in the sense of "goodness" and "excellence", is knowledge. If I really and fully knew which course of action was best how could I fail to follow it? There is an ambiguity here about what "best" means, between a narrowly ethical sense and a more general sense. What Socrates seems to be arguing against is the pragmatism of the sophists, and of relativists today, who claim that there can be no absolute standards of truth or goodness. Socrates believed that there was a goal towards which a dialogue, if it was to be philosophical should be heading, which was a personal understanding of what was true and right in knowledge and action. It is because we don't know the truth that we need to talk.

The Socratic method of teaching is through dialogical inquiry facilitated by questioning. The teacher is to assist people to give birth to their own ideas (Socrates likened his method to that of a midwife). The aim of education is to uncover, through discussion what our personal understanding and knowledge is in order to discover the truth. This personal understanding is gained through trying to define more clearly the concepts we use in everyday speech, and so helping us to understand more about the world and more about ourselves, so that we become better able to lead a good and fulfilling life. This final point brings Socrates closer to the sophists of his day, and to a utilitarian view of education, in that Socrates tended to equate the good with the useful—so the Socratic method would also help develop intellectual and communicative skills, and that these would be taught as much by the model of the teacher as the process of inquiry. But many argued then, as they do now, that the Socratic method is not a desirable philosophy of teaching.

Socratic versus Academic: two traditions of teaching

Traditionally, the contrast has been drawn between the "Socratic method" and "academic" traditions of teaching (from the Academy, which Plato founded). The following is a summary in simplified form of the main differences between these two traditions of education, both of which have had adherents throughout educational history, and have champions today:

For Socrates, philosophy was an activity, something you do, rather than a set of philosophical truths to be learned. To become a philosopher you need to acquire philosophical skills, you need to know how to philosophize. To acquire these skills you need to practice with someone more skillful than yourself. In the earlier dialogues Socrates made use of analogies with martial arts—you begin by sparring with a teacher, and later you become an equal. It was a process in which the teacher, professing ignorance, was also learning. Philosophy for Socrates was the highest form of cognitive apprenticeship, which benefited both teacher and learner. Whereas for Plato it was a body of truths that had to be learned and understood. The teacher as expert led the student with knowledge, and the student was a passive learner in the process. For Plato, truth was an objective body of knowledge, for Socrates knowledge is obtainable but in practice needs always to be questioned.

The principal characteristic of the Socratic method, according to Aristotle he was the use of "inductive" arguments, which is the process of reasoning from particular cases to general truths. The Socratic method was more than this for the particular cases he started from was what other people said and thought. He believed people learned to become philosophers not by being instructed in philosophical concepts or by being given academic knowledge but by being drawn from their pre-philosophic state into a questioning and reflective awareness of what they believed and of the words used to express those beliefs. Philosophy was linguistic and the ways in which we seek to structure or mirror reality in words. He searched out what people meant by what they said. The problem in seeking truth through a search for true definitions is that any definition uses words which themselves need definition, thus a genuinely Socratic dialogue often ends inconclusively.

Socrates believed that philosophy was open to all, and that philosophical skills could be developed by anyone who had the power of speech. Plato on the other hand argues that dialectic (philosophy) is an academic subject to be introduced after many years of training and to those who have reached the age of thirty and professional philosophers today have echoed this view arguing that philosophy is not "an appropriate subject of study at school". There is no philosophy for children in the academic world of Plato, but Socrates saw philosophy as of benefit to everyone, including children (cf the dialogue with the slave boy in The Meno). Philosophy was of practical value—it would help you do your job better and make you a better person.

One of the major differences between the Socratic method and Plato's academy is the Socratic view that the spoken word is superior to the written word. A dialogue is interactive, it forces on the participants the need to articulate thinking and personal understanding. The experience of participating in a Socratic discussion can never be the same as reading a dialogue. In the Phaedrus Socrates argues that writing and speech-making (lecturing) are poor instruments of education because they merely rely on rote memory, they do not express a lived process of mutual inquiry. Among the biggest changes set in motion by Plato's academy was the shift from open discussion to lectures and written texts, from oracy to literacy. This academic tradition persists in the emphasis in educational practice today on written examinations and coursework, and
the emphasis on individual or private study. What the academic tradition recognizes is the value of the written word as a vehicle of thought, and the use of personal writing as a powerful means of encouraging students to make meaning and to express understanding. What is needed perhaps, is a better balance between the Socratic and academic modes of teaching. We need people who are knowledgeable in a range of academic and practical disciplines, but who are reflective and critical about what they know, who can apply their learning creatively to practical situations, who are articulate in speech as well as writing, who can cooperate with others, who can see things from different perspectives, who are willing to revise their ideas and who committed to lifelong learning.

There is a need at all levels of education to talk more effectively for learning. This is seen in the problems that many students have in articulating their ideas, in the needs expressed by employers for improved personal skills in communication, cooperation and teamwork in their employees (see Fig. 2), and in the needs of society for creative participants in the processes of democracy.

Socratic teaching today can be divided into two broad approaches:
1. Socratic inquiry—formal lessons of Socratic inquiries.
2. Socratic questioning—an infusion approach to Socratic teaching across the curriculum.

1. Socratic inquiry
In this century a European tradition of formal Socratic inquiry has been inspired by the work of Leonard Nelson,21 his disciple, Gustav Heckmann22 and by philosophers trained in the method, principally from Germany and the Netherlands but extending to Britain.23 For Nelson, the power of the Socratic method lies in “forcing minds to freedom.” Only persistent pressure to speak one’s mind, to meet every counter-question, and to state the reasons for every assertion transforms the power of that allure into an irresistible compulsion.24 The essential skill of the teacher is to give responsibility to the student, to give no answers, but to set the interplay of question and answer going between students. The aim of education for Nelson is “rational self-determination.” This is not to be gained from learning the rules of logic in abstracto but by the learner exercising the faculty of judgment. The mere asking and answering of questions is not sufficient to exercise the faculties of judgment. The explicit aim is to help students find an answer to their questions but the implicit aim is to force participants through dialogue to express their thoughts clearly, to systematize judgment and to test their own beliefs against the arguments and views of others.

The method of Socratic teaching for Nelson lay not in the teacher giving answers but in asking questions, for example: “What do you mean by that?”, “Can you give an example?”, “What has the answer to do with our question?”, “Who has been following?”, “Do you still know what you said a few moments ago?”, “What question are we talking about”? As can be seen from the last question a characteristic of the Nelson/Heckmann style of Socratic teaching is that the focus is kept on the question in hand, and the emphasis in discussion is on the experiences and thinking of the participants involved rather than on what they have read or experienced second hand. The aim is to reach some form of consensus or agreement between all participants.

Part of the process is a review at the end of each session, in which students and the teacher write down their thoughts about the discussion. This provides an opportunity for quiet reflection, and helps participants to explore their own personal understanding of what was said. These reviews can provide a starting point for the next session, as an aide memoire or to introduce a new line of inquiry.

In America, the tradition of “Community of Inquiry” developed by Matthew Lipman, Ann Sharp and others was influenced by the philosophies of Socrates, John Dewey and C.S. Peirce. Lipman and his followers have produced specially written educational materials—the Philosophy for Children (P4C) program25—to create a curriculum of philosophical inquiry for use in primary and secondary schools. Though they share many similar features of pedagogic practice derived from the Socratic Method there are some differences between the Philosophy for Children approach and the European tradition of Socratic Dialogue (Fig. 3):

There seems a strong case here for more Socratic teaching to develop the competencies and dispositions of articulate and creative thinkers. What then are the implications for teaching in the classroom? The discussions that Socrates had in the marketplaces of Athens were voluntary. How can we infuse Socratic teaching into the involuntary context of the classroom?
Children (students or adults) generate their own questions for discussion after shared reading of an episode in the story. The community agrees which question to discuss, and the teacher models a Socratic approach to facilitating the discussion and any follow-up activities.

In Socratic Dialogue, no special educational materials need be used. A philosophical question is chosen by the facilitator for discussion, and an important element of the dialogue is the meta-discourse. The facilitator and participants are encouraged to think about how the discussion is being conducted and can voice at any time their pleasure or displeasure about the behavior of others or the way the problem is being tackled. Meta-discourse allows for the feelings and frustrations that may arise during discussion to be aired, without affecting the content of discussion. In Philosophy for Children communities of inquiry questions are written down on a blackboard or flipchart mainly to set the agenda at the beginning of a session, whereas in Socratic Dialogue questions and statements are added during discussion to provide an overview and to monitor progress.

The aim of Socratic Dialogue is to achieve consensus. The facilitator encourages participants to reformulate what they said earlier, and to include in their own words the views of others so as to focus on points of agreement in the subject under discussion. Philosophy for Children facilitators tend to emphasize “dialogue across differences,” where difference of viewpoint can be challenged and questioned. Socratic dialogue is more directive. The facilitator keeps attention focused on the question being discussed, whereas Matthew Lipman describes a Philosophy for Children community of inquiry as moving “forward indirectly like a boat tacking into the wind.”

Despite differences of emphasis and practice what unites these two methodologies is the belief in the formal practice of philosophical inquiry as a shared experience focusing on questions of importance for the participants, and in which the teacher or facilitator is “philosophically self-effacing” and adopts a role of scholarly ignorance. The focus is on what the students have to think and say rather than on what the teacher has to say. Indeed in Socratic Dialogue the essential role of the teacher is that of questioner and facilitator of discussion. The following are examples of this in practice taken from a discussion on thinking between a group of 11/12-year-olds:

**RF:** Do you think all the time or just some of the time?

**Child:** It depends what you mean by thinking.

**RF:** What do you think it means?

**Child:** When you’re asleep you are not really thinking because you are not talking to yourself in your mind.

**Child:** You only think some of the time.

**Child:** You relax.

**Child:** You rest.

**Child:** You’re not just relaxing... you can sleep.

**Child:** When you’re asleep your mind is still working... Like it is dreaming and stuff like that.

**RF:** So thinking is different from your mind just working?

**Child:** Thinking is talking to yourself in your mind. You say things to yourself, like you’re talking.

**Child:** And talking to other people.

**Child:** I think that thinking is talking in words.

**RF:** Can you think without words?

**Child:** You can think without words... you can think in pictures as well.

**Child:** I agree with Tom. You can think in words and pictures, like I’m thinking of a cartoon, and that’s words and pictures.

**RF:** Does everyone agree that you think in words and pictures?

**Children:** Yeah.

**RF:** Have we decided that we think while we are asleep?

**Child:** No, you’ve got to be conscious. You’ve got to know you are thinking otherwise you are not thinking.

**Child:** I disagree with Tom. If you dream you are thinking.

**Tom:** No because you can’t change anything about it. You don’t know what’s happening.

**Child:** Thinking is your thoughts. Your thoughts is what you get when you think, I think, he thought.

**RF:** Perhaps it would help to ask... can you think without thinking of something?

**Child:** You can’t think without thinking.

**Child:** You’ve got to think of something. If you don’t...

**Child:** You can’t think of nothing.

**Child:** No. I agree with Paul, there is always something going on in your head. There’s never a time when there’s nothing going on... you’d be dead.

**Child:** What happens when you’re unconscious?

**Child:** You are still thinking, but you don’t know what you’re thinking... if you’re knocked out. That’s what it means... you’re out... you are out of your mind. (Laughter)

**Child:** You can think of nothing.

**Child:** But if you are thinking of nothing you are thinking of something. You can’t think of nothing. If you are thinking of nothing, you are not thinking.

**Child:** If you have nothing in your mind you are still thinking of something.

**Child:** That’s impossible. That’s not how it works.

**RF:** If you were thinking of the word “nothing” would you be thinking of nothing?

**Child:** Yes, that would be nothing. If you’re thinking of nothing... it’s nothing.

**Child:** I disagree with Jake, because if you think of the word “nothing” you are still thinking of something.

(After further discussion about the nature of thinking, I tried to round off the discussion by seeking through a question a summary and consensus of the views of the students involved)

**RF:** What can you say now about the difference between thinking and dreaming?

**Child:** You can control your thoughts but you can’t control your dreams.

**Child:** Yeah... dreams don’t always make sense.

**Child:** In the day you’re thinking all the time. You have millions of thoughts but only a few dreams, or no dreams.

**Child:** You can’t control your dreams, but you can start thoughts by thinking of something.

**Child:** Like we’re doing now.

**Child:** You can’t control your dreams...

**Child:** Thank you. I think we’ll have to stop now... can anyone think of any other questions about thinking we’ve not asked?

**Child:** Can you think in your Mummy’s tummy... I mean, before you’re born?

**RF:** That’s interesting, thank you. O.K.... Can you write down any thoughts you’ve got about what we discussed, or any questions or ideas you’ve got ready for another time...?

In this dialogue the facilitator has tried to model the Socratic method, using elements from both the European and American traditions during a session of philosophy with children, allowing the discussion to tack back and forth between the group, being non-judgmental, intervening with questions on the theme under discussion, and encouraging the children to do a review or “thinkwrite” at the end of the session.
Formal discussions such as this are not the only way in which the Socratic method can contribute to education. Socratic questioning can be used as a teaching strategy in all curricular subjects. But what are Socratic questions?

2. Socratic questioning

There are many different sorts of questions that can be asked of students, but the most common distinction is between open and closed questions.27 Research studies show that the questions teachers use most often are closed, factual-type questions. Socratic questioning can be used as a stimulus for thinking and responding, and Socratic questioning differs from queries where the teacher does not question is a genuine invitation to think clearly about the concepts we use to structure our thinking about the world.

Socratic questions are of follow-through questions that probe reasons and assumptions and which take the inquiry further. Some questions, such as “Why are we here?” may be an ordinary open question or a question that invites philosophical inquiry.

Socratic Questions

1. Questions that seek clarification:
   - Can you explain that...
   - What do you mean by...
   - Can you give me an example of...
   - How does that help...
   - Does anyone have a question to ask...

2. Questions that probe reasons and evidence
   - Why do you think that...
   - How do we know that...
   - What are your reasons...
   - Do you have evidence...
   - Can you give me an example/counter-example...

3. Questions that explore alternative views
   - Can you put it another way...
   - Is there another point of view...
   - What if someone were to suggest that...
   - What would someone who disagreed with you say...
   - What is the difference between those views/ideas?

4. Questions that test implications and consequences
   - What follows (or can we work out from) what you say...
   - Does it agree with what was said earlier...
   - What would be the consequences of that...
   - Is there a general rule for that...
   - How could you test to see if it was true...

5. Questions about the question/discussion
   - Do you have a question about that...
   - What kind of question is it...
   - How does what was said/the question help us...
   - Where have we got to/who can summarize so far...
   - Are we any closer to answering the question/problem...

Socrates is said to have called education “a festival for the mind”, and philosophical inquiry is essentially a celebration of ideas. Socratic questions help us to focus on ideas or concepts as the basic ingredients of thinking. All ideas, elicited by questions, are to be viewed as potential sources of truth. Such questions invite us to attend to our familiar everyday experiences. (Lawrence’s definition of thought as “wholly attending”), to look further into things, and to explore the wonder and mystery we find there. The questions urge us to “dig deep”, and to think clearly about the concepts we use to structure our thinking about the world.

Socratic questions are the kind that can add rigor to any discussion, whether the lesson is history, art, science or any curriculum subject—and at all levels of education, from kindergarten to college, in school, at home or in the marketplace of life, they help to move discussion away from the unstructured swapping of anecdotes, items of knowledge or unsupported observations to a discussion with purpose and direction. The eventual aim is for the questions to become internalized questions that students ask themselves, indeed one criteria that can be used to assess the effectiveness of any inquiry is to compare the number of students asking questions compared to the number asked by the teacher. There is no fixed set of questions that are Socratic, but Fig. 4 presents a summary list of questions that are open, and Socratic in the sense that they act as invitations to better thinking.29
References

16. Sir John Davies poem is from his set of philosophical poems entitled, *Noose Trespas* (1599) — “Know thyself”.
25. Karen Morris, a Dutch philosopher and teacher, has introduced the European tradition of Socratic teaching into her work in Britain. She has founded a Center for Philosophy with Children at Old Acres, Charvil, Berks, RG109QI, England. A European Philosophical Inquiry Centre (EPIC) has been established at the University of Glasgow by Dr. Catherine McCall. Both centers draw upon European and American traditions of Socratic inquiry.
28. This dialogue formed part of a research project—Philosophy in Primary Schools, undertaken in west London schools. For further details contact: Robert Fisher, Brunel University College, 300 St. Margaret's Road, Twickenham TW1 1PT.
Profiting from Plato

H.P. Rickman

TO ARGUE THE IMPORTANCE of philosophy in a world beset by urgent practical problems means meeting a double challenge. On the one hand philosophy is sometimes identified with a fairly down to earth practical response. "Be philosophical" is understood as "be patient," "don't lose your cool," etc. Referring to someone's "philosophy of business" means pointing to principles directly concerned with practice. On the other hand—and more frequently—philosophy is seen as an abstract—and indeed, abstruse activity of speculating on issues of no interest to most people because they seem irrelevant to the problems of living.

To counter such distortions requires showing the connection between "real" human concerns and the abstract speculations of philosophers, a connection perceived by most great philosophers and firing their efforts. I can think of no better illustration than Plato's Theory of Forms. Notoriously abstract it also runs counter to our commonsense views. Without elaborating at length on this complex and greatly contested theory, we may remind ourselves of its general thrust. The Forms accessible only to thought (and not to the senses) constitute true reality and, being unchanging, provide the only proper subject of knowledge. They are models or patterns which underpin the empirical world whose fleeting and changing appearances can only be objects of opinions. Geometry provides an illustration. The triangle to which geometrical theorems apply is an object of thought to which any triangle we draw on the blackboard, let alone triangular lawns or bars of chocolate, only approximate or, in a sense, "resemble." Similarly what is dispensed at the Old Bailey may fall short of true justice but is measured against an ideal standard, which, for all we know, has never been fully realized but yet represents "real" justice.

The two illustrations already hint at the answer proposed, for both Geometry and the administration of justice have practical uses. To be more specific I'll refer to one of the texts in which Plato expounds and applies his theory of Forms, The Republic. The general subject matter of the Republic is one of universal interest: how can we achieve personal fulfillment and social harmony? As the two are inter-related, Plato, more specifically, pursues the questions: How can we get governments which intelligently pursue these aims? Man's rational abilities are successfully displayed in mathematics, medicine and the development of technical skills. Why are they less prominent in the public running of human affairs? Why are government actions often more stupid than other products of human intellect? These questions were posed some 2500 years ago. Who would dare to argue that they are irrelevant today, or of no practical importance?

In response to his own questions, Plato examined a range of practical issues and proposed practical answers. Here I am not concerned with evaluating them one by one. Suffice that they have been enormously influential and have been widely adopted. The implementation of some is under active consideration today. Simply listing them will make my point. Plato stresses the need for specialization (in government and other spheres) and pursued its wide-ranging implications. He proposed the equal education and equal opportunities for women (mainly so as to avoid wastage of talent) and considers the changes in the pattern of family life required for such emancipation. He considers safeguards against the exploitation of the governed by the government and against the abuses which military governments, the rule of the rich, or an excess of liberty bring in their wake. He opposes selection procedures by which the wisest should become rulers and—related to this—maps out a comprehensive system of education from nursery school to university including details of what should be taught at each stage.

Plato's grasp of practical issues—for example, small children should be surrounded by beautiful objects and encouraged to play carefully selected games—and his facility in producing
fruitful hypotheses—for example, that emphasis on wealth will lead to a polarization of a nation into the rich and the poor—are remarkable enough, but the crux of the matter is that all these proposed remedies to social problems spring from a unitary metaphysical vision. I do not intend to argue the intrinsic merits of that vision, only to stress its immense fruitfulness, the way it triggers his specific proposals.

The Theory of Forms as Framework for Social Policy

Governing the hierarchy of Platonic Forms is “The Good,” which thus represents the bold hypothesis that not only the world of tools or bodily organs, but the whole universe is functionally ordered, is a cosmos in which everything can be understood in terms of its role or function (what it is good for) within that whole.

To grasp intellectually these functional relationships is the philosopher’s task and requires not only native ability—to be picked out by selection—but also a long course of systematic education and dedicated application. From these hard-gained insights the Philosopher then infers how reason, instincts and will were functionally related, as well as the functional relations between sections of the community which would make society harmonious. This knowledge enables the philosopher to point both to the good life for individuals and to the optimal arrangements for organizing societies.

His specific proposals were for a comprehensive educational system, the stratification of society in terms of specializations and the achievement of personal happiness through the benevolent rule of reason over the whole of the personality. These were all worked out in fine details—are grounded in, and justified by, his metaphysical theory. It’s not enough to say that the philosopher should rule because of his trained reason, or that personal life should be organized by reason, without explaining why. The persuasive power of Plato’s philosophy and the spell he cast over the subsequent intellectual history of Europe are due not only to the wide range of perennial problems he tackles and the wealth and originality of the many specific answers he offers, but, above all, to the fact that these answers do not stand in isolation but are brought together under the roof of a single, coherent philosophic scheme.

Plato’s Forms as Intellectual Tools

Over and above providing such a comprehensive framework for a host of social and political recommendations the theory of forms has played a more specific function. Whatever one’s ultimate judgment of it as a metaphysical theory, it would be hard to deny its successful role in providing powerful intellectual tools. Here the link is even clearer. Even if it were possible—though never plausible—to argue that it was a happy coincidence that Plato combined his capacity for soaring metaphysical flights with a practical inventiveness which led him, for example, to invent and institute the first University, one could not ignore the direct methodological application of the Theory of Forms in the pages of The Republic. It has continued to inspire most subsequent science, including the social sciences.

The first application makes its appearance in Thrasymachos’ “role theory.” As he bases his case on a down-to-earth reliance on the facts of experience, his resort to a kind of theory thus involves him in contradictions and defeat in argument. But the theory is interesting and fits in well with Plato’s own case. We can and must—so his theory runs—distinguish people from the roles they play. Being a doctor or a ruler means conforming to a pattern based on the function to be fulfilled, to a script, as it were which defines what it means to be an ideal—which in this case also means a “real”—doctor. His function is to heal and if the individual, the complex human being, who treats your illness makes mistakes he fails to be a doctor or play a role inadequately.

The second—extended and spectacular—application of the theory of Forms occurs in Plato’s exposition of what are collectively called “imperfect societies.” The four societies discussed—timarchy, the rule of the colonels; oligarchy, the rule of the rich; democracy and tyranny—reflect features of societies Plato knew, as timarchy, for example, with the political arrangements of Sparta.

However, Plato did something of much more lasting interest than describing particular societies. He worked out the implications of societies each functioning according to a single dominant principle—the acquisition of wealth in oligarchy, the pursuit of liberty in democracy, etc. In other words, he produced not empirical descriptions but models and developed a dynamic of political change in terms of the inadequacies of each principle leading to the replacement of one model by another. In terms of his theory of Forms, the pure embodiment of the principle of liberty would be ideal democracy, the Form of democracy or “real” democracy (which here carries no moral implications). Interwoven with this account is also a typology of personality structures. For example, corresponding to democracy is what we would now call the “permissive man” while the obsessional character is counterpart to tyranny.

The Relevance of the Forms for Science

There should be no need for further details—amounting to a general commentary on Plato’s writing is enough to point to the relevance of these ideas for future science. Let me start cautiously—from a basis of very limited knowledge—with physics. The law of gravity is, as I understand it, not simply a generalization of observational data. The law is about free fall and frictionless movement. We may never encounter these in our experience because they represent an ideal movement to which the movements we encounter only approximate more or less. But it is these ideal movements which are the immediate objects of our calculations which we qualify afterwards by allowing for the intrusion of external factors such as friction, air resistance and the like. Being a physicist means being, in this sense, a Platonist.

The relevance of the Forms in the human studies is even more obvious and well established. Plato’s role theory is alive and well in sociology and
social psychology as is his use of
typologies of personalities. (To take
just one example, a pure introvert is an
ideal limit, a Form to which individuals
more or less approximate.) Similarly,
Plato’s account of his “imperfect soci­
eties” has a precise counterpart in Max
Weber’s ideal types as heuristic
deVICES.

Put in modern terminology, the
use of the Forms means constructing
models which demonstrate how the
consistent application of a principle or
group of principles works out. Such
model-building is, I understand, wide-
ly used in Economics. The concept of
“economic man” involves a simple,
highly general example of such a
model. This creature functions entirely
on economic principles (buys where it
is cheapest, etc.). He does not actually
exist, as human beings invariably have
mixed motives just as a combination of
factors are always at work in a social or
political set-up, as they are in the fall
of the metal balls Galileo is supposed
to have dropped from the convenient-
ly leaning tower of Pisa. But working
out the consequences of being purely
motivated economically can be illumi-
nating and useful.

All this is not only to recommend
reading Plato even though his texts
date back some 2,500 years, but to
advance the claim for philosophy to be
taken seriously, not just philosophy in
any of its narrower senses as logic or
the philosophy of science but in its full
range including metaphysics which
is—far from being idle speculation,
the perennial endeavor to create by
bold speculation—grooves along
which human thought can fruitfully
move.
The Community of Inquiry at Mendham: A Mini-Case Study

Lena Green

It was not reassuring to be told incorrectly, it now appears, that I was probably the first psychologist to venture into the Mendham community of inquiry. When I discovered that I would have to lead a philosophical discussion I felt even more uneasy. Since I knew I could not talk about Aristotle, I decided to do what psychologists love to do: analyze, process and present it to the group as an object for reflection.

The examples below are all verbatim utterances from our discussion sessions—classified, for convenience—in one of the many possible ways in which this could have been done. I proposed that we try to preface our input to the inquiry with a descriptive label, using the categories which we were, in fact, already using.

THE CATEGORIES:

1. Asserting and Agreeing
   I think that ...
   For me it looks like ...
   It seems to me that ...
   Maybe we can look at it this way ...
   Aristotle says that ...

   OK, right ...
   I can agree with that ...
   That makes sense ...
   I like the notion of ...

2. Justifying
   It must be like this because ...
   (offering reasons)
   That is a good point because ...
   (providing an example)
   We arrived at this conclusion via these steps

3. Challenging
   What about/But ...
   (introducing a counterexample)
   What makes you say that ...
   How can you be sure that ...
Why do you think that ...
I don't agree that ...

4. Exploring Implications and Consequences
If what you say is true then...
And so ...
I was thinking that one could infer ...
I wondered about the consequences of ...

5. Clarifying
a) Rewording
   So you're saying that ...
   b) Asking a question to check one's own understanding
      Would that mean ...?
      Is this the distinction you're making ...
   c) Asking for/offering an example
      Could you give us an example ...
      This anecdote may be helpful ...
   d) Using an analogy
      Is it as if ...
      Would it be like ...
   e) Exploring assumptions
      It seems you're assuming that ...
   f) Expressing confusion
      I don't see ...
      I'm confused ...
      Can you say that again ...
      I'm not sure I follow ...

6. Connecting
   To build on X's point ...
   I'd like to go back to ...
   That's what Y said ...
   Does that have something to do with what X said about ...
   This may connect to ...
   I think it also relates to ...
   Do you see a link between ...

In reflecting on this experience I would like to talk about two things: the complexity of doing what I proposed and the overlap between the interests of philosophers and psychologists.

For some people, the idea of consciously noticing process was immediate and distasteful—perceived as likely to make the discussion artificial and lacking in spontaneity. Others were interested in attempting it but frequently forgot as they were drawn into the argument. Most of us managed to do so at times. I noticed repeatedly how difficult it is to be cognitive and metacognitive simultaneously. I had hoped to be able to identify the content and form of both my own and other people's utterances. At the same time I wanted to follow the argument the group was developing and to maintain a sense of the psychological climate and of individual affective states. I found that my attention varied in its focus, and in my case what tended to suffer was my sense of the argument as a whole. Does everyone have this kind of difficulty in one form or another? And if so, is this because we have a limited amount of "space" available to us in working memory? Or can it have to do with the fact that we often need to hear what we say before we can decide what kind of utterance it is? The important question is: how do we become better at managing this complex process? Does it happen automatically with exposure to a community of inquiry? Can it be helped along by conscious reflection?

The second point I want to make is that the processes described reflect the interests of both philosophers and psychologists. The disciplines may differ in their terminology but there seems to be a substantial overlap in meaning between "cognitive skills" and the tools of reasoning and philosophical inquiry.

Cognitive psychology began by trying to analyze cognitive acts into parts small enough and discrete enough to be mapped on to brain functioning or modeled by a computer. While this has remained of interest to a number of researchers, others, particularly those concerned with education, have turned to the investigation of the psychological processes occurring in working memory, and the ways in which those processes might be enhanced. They are interested, inter alia, in children's growing abilities to notice similarities and differences, to classify and to discern relationships. Many would stress the importance of metacognition, that is, the ability to watch one's mind at work and consciously select effect—cognitive strategies.

Writing about intelligence, (a topic to which psychologists have devoted a great deal of attention), Perkins (1995) identifies neural, experiential and reflective dimensions. He very clearly states that "intelligence" can be taught. He explains that this is done by improving the quality of reflective intelligence and counteracting the default characteristics of human thinking, which he names as tendencies for our thought to be hasty, narrow, fuzzy and sprawling.

Moreover, many cognitive developmental psychologists now recognize that the cognitive processes made possible by the human brain develop in a social context. They evolve from their more primitive forms into what Vygotsky (1978) calls "higher mental functions" through a process of social mediation. What is the community of inquiry but a special case of social mediation?

I had expected some overlap. I was surprised at its extent. In addition, I observed that several of the skills of "translation" were precisely those that psychologists emphasize as essential for effective communication. However, while it is helpful to identify areas of overlap, it seems to me equally important to be clear about the ways in which Psychology and Philosophy are different. Psychology does not intentionally set itself up as a normative discipline, as philosophy does. Nor is it in the business of concept formation and development. Teachers working with the Philosophy for Children program in schools need to be aware of this distinction, and of the extent of their own competence, if the program is not to risk losing its integrity.

The socially constructed boundaries between academic disciplines are analytically helpful, but not impermeable. Psychologists need to admit that what is humanly possible is not as limited as we once imagined, and philosophers need to acknowledge that what human beings ought to be like must take into account the nature of the psychological processes for which our biology is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. In this way the disciplines may enhance each other's contributions to the quality of thinking in society and to the ways in which we can reflect on what it means to be human.

REFERENCES
Nothing New Under the Sun?

Tim Sprod

One perennial problem I have always had with the IAPC Philosophy for Children materials is: "What do you call the stories?" Nor do I think the problem is confined to myself. Perhaps it is just our philosophical bent which makes us dissatisfied with any particular term, but I have had this discussion with many others over the years.

Are they novels? To call them this seems to ascribe a purpose to them at odds with the one for which they were written, and which invites them to be judged by literary standards. Are they texts? In a sense they are, but they are not meant to be sued in a way consistent with the connotations of the word 'text', at least as commonly understood by most teachers today. Are they trigger materials? This is the term I commonly turn to, but it can be used for a wider range of starters than just the stories, and it gives too imprecise a view of what the stories are.

One of the reasons why there does not seem to be a well-accepted term for them is that they are just so unusual. Nothing quite like them seems to be used in schools today. They read like a novel, yet they are to be used in certain ways like a textbook. Surely this is something new to education.

Well, as my title indicates, this is not entirely the case. I was intrigued when, on explaining the Philosophy for Children program to my colleague, Paddy Lynch, he pointed me in the direction of a series of books published 140 years ago (author unknown, 1855). He had come across them during the course of a survey of the development of science textbooks (Lynch & Strube, 1983). The Rollo Series, like a number of other texts surveyed by Lynch and Strube, was designed for educational purposes, though the books read like novels.

The series consists of 14 books, of which I have only seen the four which are explicitly about science (though it is called 'philosophy', presumably as a shortened version of 'natural philosophy'). The Foreword to these four books reads, at least in the first paragraph, uncommonly like an antiquated version of some of the claims of Philosophy for Children:

The main design in view, in the discussions which are offered to the juvenile world, under the title of The Rollo Philosophy, relates rather to their effect upon the little reader's habits of thinking, reasoning, and observation, than to the additions they may make to his stock of knowledge. The benefit which the author intends that the reader shall derive from them, is an influence on the cast of his intellectual character, which is receiving its permanent form during the years to which these writings are adapted.

The acquisition of knowledge, however, though in this case a secondary, is by no means an unimportant object; and the discussion of the several topics proceeds accordingly, with regularity, upon a certain system of classification. This classification is based upon the more obvious external properties and relations of matter, and less upon those which, though they are more extensive and general in their nature, and, therefore, more suitable, in a strictly scientific point of view, for the foundations of a system, are less apparent, and require higher powers of generalization and abstraction; and are, therefore, less in accordance with the genius and spirit of the Rollo philosophy.

As teachers have, in some cases, done the author the honor to introduce some of the preceding works of this class into their schools, as reading books, etc., considerable reference has been had to this, in the form and manner of the discussion, and questions have been added to facilitate the use of the books in cases where parents or teachers may make the reading of them a regular exercise of instruction.

—Foreword to the Rollo's Philosophy books.

Of course, it is an oversimplification to claim that books of this sort, called conversational texts by Lynch and Strube, are exact forerunners of the Philosophy for Children series. In the following, I would like to present some lengthy extracts from one of the books (Rollo's Philosophy-Fire) with a commentary on the similarities and differences from the IAPC texts.

The extracts that appear below are drawn from three consecutive chapters, and also contain a summary of a part of one episode. Interspersed with the segments reproduced here are episodes where Rollo is instructed by his father on matters more to do with scientific content, and episodes where Rollo and his younger brother try out some practical experiments, such as attempting to make charcoal. I have
chosen the extract below because of the similarity of the issue it raises to the type raised in Philosophy for Children texts. Note that, since 'philosophy' is being used in the sense of 'natural philosophy,' (what we would not call 'science'), 'philosophers' needs to be read as 'scientists'.

"He said that, in books, burning was always called combustion, and I told him I meant to ask you why they couldn't as well call it burning."

"It is true, no doubt," added his father, "that in philosophical books, philosophical terms are very often used, instead of the common language which we ordinarily employ."

"Why are they, father?" said Rollo. "I think the common words are a great deal easier to understand."

"Yes," said his father. "But they are not precise enough in their signification. They are vague and ambiguous, and so philosophers, when they wish to speak accurately, employ other terms which have an exact signification."

Rollo looked perplexed. He did not understand at all what his father meant.


"There now, father," said Rollo, "you have not explained to me yet about combustion and burning."

"No," said his father, "we had almost forgotten that. I will explain it now. It will only take a few minutes. Let me see—I began to tell you, didn't I?"

"Yes, sir," said Rollo, "but I couldn't understand very well."

"I was telling you that the language that we use in common conversation is not precise. It is often ambiguous."

"What does that mean, sir?" asked Rollo.

"Why, language is ambiguous when it has two meanings," said his father. "For instance, the word 'burning' is used in conversation to express two or three very different things. If you put your finger upon a hot iron, you say you have burned it. 'Burn' in that case, is the name of a painful feeling. But if you say you burned a piece of paper, you mean you put it in the fire, and allowed it to be consumed. In that case, 'burning,' instead of being the name of a painful feeling, is the name of a peculiar process by which the paper is consumed and destroyed. Thus the word 'burned' is used to denote two very different effects. In fact, it is used in other senses besides these."

"What others, sir?" asked Rollo.

"Why, when we say that a little girl was out in the sun, and burned her face and neck, we do not mean that her face and neck were consumed, or that they felt a painful sensation, but that the skin was reddened by the sun's heat. So, when we say that the grass was all burned up in the drought we mean that it was dried and withered. Thus 'burned' and 'burning' are used to denote a great variety of effects produced by heat, which effects are very different from each other in nature. So that, you see, when we are going to speak philosophically of that peculiar process by which bodies are actually consumed by fire, it becomes necessary to have some term to denote that process alone, and not all the other kinds of burning. Now, the word the philosophers use for this purpose is 'combustion'. The burning of a stick of wood upon the fire is combustion; but the burning of your finger against a hot iron is not combustion, and the burning of bricks in a brick kiln is not combustion."

"Nor the burning of grass in a drought," said Rollo.

"No," said his father. "thus you can see that combustion is a term of precise and definite meaning; it denotes a particular process, and that alone. But burning is a vague and ambiguous term. It has a great many meanings, or, rather, it stands for a great many different effects, very much unlike in their character. In fact, they seem to be alike in no respect, except that they are all produced by heat."

"Yes, father," said Rollo. "I understand."

"Sometimes," added his father, "the word used in common life doesn't mean enough, instead of meaning too much. For example, there is the word 'freeze'. what is the meaning of the word 'freeze'?"

"It means," said Rollo, "—'freeze'—it means—water turning into ice."

"Yes," replied his father, "when water is cooled beyond a certain point, it becomes solid. It is just so with lead. Melted lead, when it is cooled below a certain point, becomes solid. The hardening of the melted lead into solid lead, and the hardening of water into ice, as they cool, seem to be phenomena of precisely the same character, and yet the word 'freeze' applies only to one. We say the water freezes but we can't say the lead freezes."

"Why not, sir?" asked Rollo.

"Because it is not the customary use of the word. If we use the terms of common life, we must use them as they are customarily used, or we shall not be understood. Freezing, therefore, will not answer to express all cases of the hardening of a liquid by cold, because that is a term which is only applied to a few of the cases. Now, philosophers want a term which will apply to all the cases of the same kind."

"And what is their word?" asked Rollo.

"Expiration," replied his father.

"Thus you observe," continued Rollo's father, "in common language words are not used in a precise and definite manner. Their meaning is determined by the outward and visible effects that we see, and not by the natural nature of their causes. Thus a great many different effects are called 'burning', in common language, because they are all effects produced in various ways by heat. But the terms used by philosophers are definite and precise, each one being confined to one specific process or phenomenon."

—Rollo's Philosophy—Fire, pp 41–46.

This chapter continues with Rollo's mother later asking whether inflammable means "that a thing takes fire easily, or that it burns with a great flame when it does take fire?" His father admits that he doesn't know and that he has not previously thought of the distinction. After experimenting with some substances that do either or both of these, Rollo avers that the latter is the meaning. His father replies, "We can't tell by the reasoning about it. It depends on the usage of the word," and they look it up in the dictionary. The questions at the end of the chapter, however, are quite closed on the question of meaning, and merely ask for recapitulation of the reasons and answers given by Rollo's father.

There is a great difference between understanding theoretically how a thing is to be done and being able to actually do it; for, in practice, various difficulties are apt to occur, which are not foreseen by one who knows only the theory.

"Are you sure you can make charcoal?" said James.

"Yes," said Rollo. "I know I can. Jonas told me everything which I must do. You see we are going to have a slow combustion."

"Slow what?" asked James.

"Slow combustion," replied Rollo. "Don't you know what combustion means?"

"No," said James.

"It means burning; that is, one kind of burning. You see there are a great many kinds of burning. Combustion is when it burns all up. If you put your finger in the fire and burn it, it doesn't burn up, does it?"

"I suppose it would if I held it in long enough," said James.

"Yes," said Rollo, "but—there, I think we've got enough now."

—Rollo's Philosophy—Fire, pp 70–72.

Perhaps the most obvious features, to the modern reader, of these extracts (and indeed the rest of the texts) are those that make it appear a little strange due to the changes in social mores and language since the time it was written. The books are strikingly sexist in that the font of knowledge is invariably male (usually Rollo's father), as are the questioning children. But
since this is true even of books written much more recently, we can pass over it. Similarly, the use of the terms 'freeze' and especially 'congelation' sounds strange to modern ears, pointing to a change in usage.

Lynch and Strube characterize these Conversational Texts thus: they rely heavily on naturalistic conversation, often between children and adults (or older and more knowledgeable children), almost always male. The important terms are often italicized and defined in conversation. There is frequent invocation of poetry, etc., emphasizing the unity of knowledge. The children are portrayed as eager and questioning. The science is taught largely without practical work (though the characters do try out experiments), utilizing story-telling illustrated by the objects of common experience; the explanations are offered within the discourse, and analogies are drawn from common life. Often, as in the Rollo series, they are accompanied by comprehension style question at the end of chapters. Overall, the intention is to portray science with a human face; science as one means of producing an educated, rational, moral audit. They go on to comment:

The conversational texts stem from a Pestalozzian influence—that of the object lesson in teaching. Today, the object lesson (the conversational dialogue using everyday objects) is considered to be somewhat passé but it represents an attempt to build a linguistic bridge between the scientist's world view and the child's world view—something which is still difficult to do. The conversational text has waned in popularity but still has much to recommend it, and it would not be surprising to see a modern day revival. (Lynch & Strube, 1982, p. 242).

We can consider the Philosophy for Children texts as such a modern day revival. If we look beyond some of the surface features, we can see the similarities. In both we have a narrative presentation, with children exhibiting curiosity, puzzlement and asking lots of questions. The stories are embedded in the social world and the questions arise out of the everyday experiences of the protagonists. Knowledge gained is not infrequently put to the test soon after in the story.

Yet they are a revival with many differences, and these point to differences in the educational philosophies behind the books. Strong contrasts exist in the relationship between the children, the adults and knowledge. In the Rollo series, the children are inquirers, certainly, but their inquiries are directed towards mentor figures, such as Rollo's father and some of the older boys. Infrequently, Rollo's mother is also asked, but she is an infrequent participant and, even then, much more commonly asks a question rather than answering it. When the youngsters do discuss matters together, as in the last incident reproduced above, what comes out is a garbled version of the adult account, and Rollo glosses over the contentious point by changing the subject.

The knowledge provided by the mentors is presented as largely uncontestable; although Rollo and his friends often do try it out, this is more in a spirit of verification than puzzle-ment. Richard White, commenting on Lynch and Strube's paper in his Learning Science (White, 1988) points to the need for debate, not a mentor/student relationship, in texts of this kind. That, of course, is exactly what the Philosophy for Children texts do provide.

Perhaps it might be apposite to mention at this stage another modern revival of the conversational texts that has a lot more in common with the description provided by Lynch and Strube. If we leave aside the gender of the characters and the differences in the social climates, then Sophie's World (Gaarder, 1995) reads much more like the Rollo series than do the IAPC texts, even down to the italicizing of terms. The infuriating answers of Sophie ("Go on", "I should hope not", "Okay, I got it" are three examples drawn rapidly from a couple of pages) almost exactly reflect the answers of Rollo in the extracts above. Sophie has minimal input into her conversations with Alberto Knox, apart from occasionally asking a Dorothy Dixer (Australian slang for a question asked in Parliament purely so that the answerer can score a political point). In both the Rollo series and in Sophie's World, there is a strong "party line" being pushed, in a way that is seldom evident in the IAPC texts.

So, perhaps we have a name for the IAPC texts: we can call them "conversational texts". Lynch and Strube are right in foreseeing a revival of this style of educational text, though care must be exercised in the writing of them. In my opinion, the strengths of such texts that Lynch and Strube pointed to, in that they can "build a linguistic bridge between the scientist's (or other expert's) world view and child's world view" make them of great utility in education, but they need to also build in a problematizing of the world, and a model of true inquiry amongst the children in the story: characteristics that Harry, Lisa, Suki, Elfie, Pixie and their friends would recognize immediately, but which Rollo and Sophie would not.

Bibliography
[Author not stated] (1855). The Rollo Series, composed of 14 volumes:
- Rollo Learning to Talk
- Rollo Learning to Read
- Rollo at Work
- Rollo at Play
- Rollo at School
- Rollo's Vacation
- Rollo's Experiments
- Rollo's Museum
- Rollo's Travels
- Rollo's Correspondence
- Rollo's Philosophy—Water
- Rollo's Philosophy—Air
- Rollo's Philosophy—Fire
- Rollo's Philosophy—Sky

New Edition, Revised by the Author.
PHILOSOPHY AND NARRATION is a new program which IREF has designed for the first years of primary education, that is to say, for children from six to seven years old. It was tested in the city of Palma by a group of teachers and this academic year, 94-95, we will extend it to the rest of Catalan-speaking schools.

It is the first program which we have developed independently and it is an outgrowth of the aesthetics branch, which has been energized by IREF through exhibitions and works in the area of contemporary art. In this case, it deals with a literary background; “Literature as a form of knowledge” would be its slogan.

The program consists of two books, in keeping with the other material: the student’s book, The Jolly Postman, which was already on the market, and Thinking with Stories, the manual which accompanies it, written by Irene de Puig and published by IREF.

The Jolly Postman was originally written by Janet and Allan Ahlberg, and has since been translated into more than ten languages. It consists of a story which tells the tale of a post-man’s day delivering letters. But, the surprise is who the recipients are—as the letters have been sent to The Three Bears, The Witch, The Giant, The Wolf, Cinderella and Goldilocks. That is to say they journey through the world of children’s literature.

This book wasn’t chosen by chance for the first stage of Primary; we chose it because it has at least two advantages which make it attractive for Philosophy for Children.

On one hand, the text adapts itself perfectly to the global Philosophy for Children project, in the sense that students’ books are always stories whose aim is neither to entertain, nor to be pleasurable, although they don’t avoid being so. They are also fundamentally texts for debating, an excuse for discussion.

On the other hand, the text interconnects with literature, which is the communicative form which the whole curriculum adopts. Thus it is an exercise which prepares children for longer and more attentive reading, giving them a predisposition for fiction and helping to create that climate of collective empathy which the arts, and consequently literature, have.

The success of using familiar, popular literature as a starting point and catalyst for the creation of a new narrative convinced us that we had made the right decision. The idea of a walk or journey through the different stories has diverse possibilities of order, and thus many new possibilities are opened up. We saw that this text has many virtues.

It is rich in itself before we begin, because no child is completely new to this field. Virtually all children carry with them the baggage of the stories and tales which they know, which they even know by heart if they like them or are scared of them.

It allows the creation of a distance between the character in the story and the child (the Bad Wolf in Little Red
Riding Hood is converted here into one of the postman’s customers, and direct feelings (fear, contempt, hate which children’s stories can create) are sifted by the effect of literature within literature.

The exercise of dealing with the protagonists of the tales as secondary characters in another context facilitates the very rich mental exercise of “contextualizing” which situates and resettles the children between reality and fiction.

The illustration, the ingenuity of the presentation and the care with which it is executed also make it a book which is lovable for its form and design and, consequently, its aesthetics.

Thinking with Stories is the manual which accompanies The Jolly Postman, and contains, like the other manuals in the curriculum, a lot of resources which help the educator to develop philosophical discussion in the classroom.

In a certain sense, we can talk of continuity with the American curriculum, but also we have included some of the discoveries made by our young teachers.

A good part of the exercises and comments or reflections for teachers are related to the program of the American curriculum and the indigenous experiences which are already present in our classrooms. The majority of the proposals for exercises or discussion plans emerge from a strictly philosophical base, but elements of pro-sociability, psychological flexibility and linguistic immersion (introduction of Catalan to native Castilian Spanish speakers) which have struck us as being particularly useful in this stage of education have been introduced and adapted—when they have fit in well with the objectives which we had set in choosing this story.

We have talked of continuity, but we would also like to underline once again the coherence with the global educational project. Starting out from a literary text—in fact, The Jolly Postman is a story which was not created expressly to be worked with in a philosophy program—it has a lot of conditions to be assimilated and used profitably for the task of reflection. On one hand there is the metalinguistic aspect, the relationship between popular literature and creative literature which provokes a double game, and on the other hand the close relationship which is established between the graphic part and the text, fundamental in a program for children who are learning to read. The move from the reading of the drawing to the reading of the adult linguistic code is significant enough in itself that it can go unnoticed.

Finally, we would like to highlight the novelty of the inclusion of a popular fairy tale in the project, not from within it, with a folklorical connotation, but with the motivation of profiting from that which is universal in fairy tales: communicative structure, analysis of characters, ancestral symbolism such as initiation rights as preventive and therapeutic elements, and as derivatives of the ancient cosmological myths.

If these are some of the relationships which can be established with the original curriculum, they are also the coordinates which enable us to relate the new program with the work of IREF. Thinking with Stories means newness, continuity and coherence with the trajectory of IREF, as it coincides with the line of work in aesthetics of previous years, especially through contemporary art. We are not, then, setting out on a new line of work, but rather, we are broadening what we have to offer in aesthetics, making high and popular literature, the printed word and drawing flow together, applying it all at an educational level which is still new to us.
Mathematical Knowledge and Moral Education

by Marie-France Daniel, Louise Lafortune, Richard Pallascio and Pierre Sykes

Previous observations in the classroom had led the researchers to realize that, within the school curriculum, children like some subject-matters and dislike others. Most of them usually succeed in arts, physical education and language arts, but many have difficulties succeeding in mathematics. Why? Some studies in the field of mathematics (Burns, 1990; Davidson, 1990; Lafortune, 1992, 1994) suggest that there are myths and prejudices about mathematics in primary schools. Actually, the school system does not really support dialogue or cooperation among peers about mathematical concepts and problems. Often, it does not invite enough students to express emotions in class about mathematics, nor does it favor enough creativity.

Erlwanger's case studies (1975) demonstrate how students' mathematical learning can be damaged by restricted teacher-student or student-student communication and how this lack of "negotiation" about mathematics leads to a nearly total absence of personal construction of meaning regarding mathematical concepts and problems. And Dewey (1916/1983) explains how students' social and moral development can be limited if mathematics teaching and learning are reduced to the memorization of procedures and formulas.

Although the Ancient Greeks modeled mathematical instruction through dialogue two thousand years ago (e.g. Plato's Meno), most practitioners have not put much emphasis on the social and moral dimensions of teaching and learning mathematics. The paradigm of constructivist epistemology, which they value in other disciplines, seems to be forgotten when it comes to mathematics education. Students' mathematical learning is rarely viewed as a personal construction of mathematical meaning by the means of dialogue and negotiation with peers; it is mostly viewed as a mere competitive academic performance (Pallascio, 1992).

In face of the present prejudices, beliefs and attitudes in mathematics teaching and learning, the question arises as to whether there is anything researchers and curricula designers can do to change mentalities and help students perceive and experience mathematics in a more social and moral fashion. Based on a different way of thinking about mathematics, as well as a new way of doing philosophy, we seek to invite primary school students to participate in philosophico-mathematical "communities of inquiry" that will help them cooperate with their peers, and ultimately tame mathematics for students by enabling them to derive greater pleasure and understanding.

In this study, we will examine, based on a pragmatic perspective, the ethical foundations and epistemological principles inherent to the philosophico-mathematical approach and see why it is significant to foster mathematical knowledge as well as moral knowledge.

Philosophico-Mathematical Approach

As we previously said, traditional teaching and learning in mathematics often lack the cooperative (moral) attitudes, freedom of thought and originality that ought to be developed in this subject-matter. As a consequence, students often view mathematics as a demanding and highly competitive discipline, where only one right answer is correct and one way of solving problems is accepted. If learning as development of the whole self means


anything in learning mathematics, one
shall permit the involvement of stu-
dents into mathematical “communities
of inquiry.”

Influenced by Matthew Lipman
and Ann Margaret Sharp’s approach,
Philosophy for Children, has been
experimented in Québec since 1986.3
It is based on research carried out by
Louise Lafortune concerning the
importance of affectivity in mathe-
matics and that of Richard Pallascio
reflecting the constructivist perspec-

tive. As a result we have come to a
different way of thinking about mathe-
matics teaching and learning.
Currently, we are designing a material
which finds its essence in philosoph-
ico-mathematical communities of
inquiry. When we use the term “philos-
ophy,” we do not refer to the courses
dispensed in traditional academic set-
ings, but rather to a dialogical prac-
tice of philosophy, a “doing” of philos-
ophy with peers, which takes its source
in Socrates’ maieutic (Lipman, 1980,
1988, 1991). A philosophico-mathe-
matical community of inquiry is a locus
where students exercise reflecting


together on mathematical concepts,
notations and prejudices. It is a locus
where students can search together for
mathematical meanings, where they
can share points of view and construct
mathematical thinking. It is a locus
where they can teach mathematics to
peers and learn from them (Daniel,
Lafortune, Pallascio, Sykes, 1994).


a) The novel and the manual

The curriculum we are designing
includes a novel and a teacher’s manu-
explains, relying on Whitehead,
Ricoeur, Egan and Bruner, one should
begin with stories, for stories contain
romance, adventure and discoveries.
Indeed: “Since the usual text is an
organized sequence of prepackaged
material that has been simplified
conceptually and stylistically in order to
make it acceptable to beginning read-
ers, it drains readers of their interest
instead of energizing them. A story, on
the other hand, can make the subject
come alive.” (p. 214) Although this
point of view is shared by a majority of
persons, the conceptors of mathe-


dents to essentially the same answers
or conclusions. They do not invite stu-
dents to ask questions or devise ways to
answer them.4 And as Nicholls writes,
“in workbooks, the question posed is
often of marginal interest and imper-
fectly comprehended, and the form of
the answer is constrained” (Nicholls
and Hazzard, 1993, p. 75).

The philosophico-mathematical
material that is now available is
designed for primary school students
from fourth to sixth grade. It should
be used one or two hours a week with-
in mathematics class. Its main objec-
tives are: 1) to foster philosophical dis-
cussions among students with regard
to mathematical concepts, problems
and prejudices; 2) to help students
develop cooperative (moral) attitudes
within the mathematics class; 3) to
give students the opportunity to construct
and experiment with their own mathe-
natical theories, principles and prob-
lems, in order to feel the same fascina-
tion, excitement and pride the first
mathematicians felt when they cleared
their mathematical laws.


b) Ethical foundations and epistemo-
logical principles

The methodology of the philoso-
phico-mathematical approach evolves
in three steps: 1) the reading aloud
of a chapter of a novel by students taking
turns; 2) the gathering of students’
philosophico-mathematical questions
arising from this reading; 3) the mathe-
ematical activities and philosophico-
mathematical discussion among stu-
dents with respect to the topics they
decided to investigate. Let us study
each of these steps and see how they
contribute to the development of moral
attitudes as well as significant
learning in mathematics.


THE FIRST STEP

The first step consists of reading a
chapter of a novel. The specificity of
the reading is that it is done taking
turns and aloud. It is a shared reading.
Traditional school programs do not
favor the reading aloud method, for
specialists advocate that it does not
lead students to a complete compre-
rehension of the text. And traditional
mathematics programs do not usually
involve students in the fostering of


reading skills. Yet, when reading aloud in mathematics classes, students learn to establish useful relationships between various skills and different subject-matters. They experience what John Dewey calls the "principle of continuity" (1897/1972).

Also, reading in mathematics class by taking turns helps students develop social and moral attitudes: a) by speaking and listening, they learn reciprocity, tolerance and respect for each other; b) by sharing sentences of the novel, they experience part-whole relationships; c) by actualizing a common goal, which is to understand the story together, they learn to focus on community rather than on oneself.

Finally, while assimilating the philosophico-mathematical content of the novel, students discover that mathematical concepts and problems can be contextualized. The context of the novel reflects not only school situations, but daily life experiences with respect to mathematics. In this sense, reading the novel helps students model the transfer from mathematics learning at school to the resolution of personal, social and moral problems.

THE SECOND STEP

The second step of the Philosophy for Children methodology is the gathering of questions that may arise in students' minds after the reading. This second step is not usually part of traditional mathematics pedagogy. Indeed, in the traditional mathematics class, it is the teacher's privilege to ask questions. Moreover, teachers' questions are usually related to a kind of testing; they seldom lead to inquiry among students. We believe, along with more and more researchers (namely Davidson, 1980; Burns, 1990), that traditional mathematics teaching favors the competitive model of one question/one good answer or one question/one good way to resolve problems. Instead, the Philosophy for Children approach, applied to mathematics, fosters the search for mathematical meaning within a community of inquiry. And the community of inquiry's starting point is students' personal questions.

To formulate pertinent questions in mathematics is not an easy task. In fact, it is usually more demanding than to give answers, for answers often come from memorization. Actually, the elaboration of questions engages students in a process of comprehension, assimilation and maturation. The conception and formulation of questions presuppose (and develop) the use of cognitive skills and moral skills. Indeed, to formulate a philosophico-mathematical question presupposes that one is able to apply her or his comprehension of the mathematical novel content to more general contexts of philosophical inquiry; it presupposes that one can bring forth ambiguities, relationships, doubts, problems and uncertainties related to the field of philosophy of mathematics; it presupposes that one develops intellectual reasoning as well as moral judgment.

Some might argue that the task of conceiving a question does not in relate to moral education, because it is an individualistic task. And to some extent they are right, for questions usually proceed from an individual's reflection. But this criticism does not follow if we take into account the difficulty of formulating philosophical questions in mathematics, which involve higher-order cognitive skills such as reasoning, concept formation, translation, and inquiry (Daniel, Lafortune, Pallascio, Sykes, 1994). In this particular context, students often need the assistance of peers to organize ideas, to clarify concepts, to verify relationships and analogies, and to render questions significant. In this sense, they have to take into consideration others' suggestions and points of view; they learn to decentralize.

To corroborate the relationships we are making between the formulation of philosophico-mathematical questions and moral education, let us study the possible meanings of the verb "to question," within a mathematical context. First, to question means to ask something to someone (teacher or peer) in order to learn notions, statements, facts, or whatever is not known in mathematics. In this sense, to question involves curiosity and openmindedness.

Second, to question means to ask oneself a question in the sense of to wonder and to reflect about something. This type of questioning appears less factual and more philosophical than the previous one, for it presupposes that the one is engaged in a reflective and even a metareflective process. As Gabriel Marcel puts it, writing about metarefection:

reflection at the power of 2 is the reflection by which I ask myself how has been possible the process of an initial reflection which was assuming ontology without me really knowing it. Reflection at the power of 2 is the capacity to think about oneself. This reflection which acts on an initial reflection is, according to me, philosophy itself.

The metareflexive process carries in itself a moral dimension, because it helps one to have a clear perception of oneself and to develop a sense of personal identity, which constitutes an indispensable part of moral judgment and moral conduct. Also, metarefection implies that one reflects on his own questions, knowledge and beliefs, measures her or his opinions to those of others, analyzes them and modifies them, if need be. This type of activity is part of the moral process, for it places the person, as a unique individual, into a situation of pluralistic and cooperative interaction.

A third meaning for "to question" is to inquire, that is, to propose a revision of existing notions, beliefs, statements, facts, etc. In this sense, to question means to doubt, which is a state of mind that represents the starting point of any process of inquiry (mathematical or moral), which implies higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking.

This third type of questioning is related to moral education in the sense that it engages students into the path of the "quest for meaning," which is considered as a moral process. On one hand, the quest for meaning leads a person to two moral challenges: 1) to assume the responsibility for the expression of one's own network of meanings and 2) to contribute to the unending emergence of consensus in social life. On the other hand, the quest for meaning has two moral functions: 1) an anticipative function that gives finalities to existence and orients conduct; 2) an explicative function that proposes an explicative and unifying vision of things and gives content to the search for realization.
Regarding critical thinking, we agree with Lipman who considers it self-correcting and sensitive (1988b). For Lipman, critical thinking is sensitive in three ways: sensitive to oneself (Lipman and Sharp, 1985, p. xiii), sensitive to others (Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, 1980, p. 161) and to context (1988b). Actually, in mathematics class, the degree of meaningfulness of students' questions is strongly dependent upon their sensitivity, for if students are not sensitive to their own interests, to others' perspectives and to the particular philosophico-mathematical context, their questions will not be effective to the community of inquiry nor efficient. Here, effective means the accomplishment of common goals and efficient, the satisfaction of individual objectives.

To establish the relationship between sensitivity and moral conduct, let us look at Dewey's writings. First, Dewey considers that sympathy is the foundation of moral behavior. He writes that intelligent sympathy widens and deepens concern for consequences. To put ourselves in the place of another, to see things from the standpoint of his aims and values, to humble our estimate of our own pretensions at the level they assume in the eyes of an impartial observer, is the surest way to appreciate what justice demands in concrete cases. (1908/1980, p. 107)

Then, Dewey relates sympathy to sensitivity when he writes that sympathy implies two moral attitudes, open-mindedness and sensitivity. In regard to sensitivity, he writes that the insensitive person is callous, indifferent. A person must feel the qualities of acts as one feels with the hands the qualities of roughness and smoothness in objects, before he has an inducement to deliberate or material with which to deliberate. Effective reflection must also terminate in a situation which is directly appreciated, if thought is to be effective in action. "Cold blooded" thought may reach a correct conclusion, but if a person remains antipathetic or indifferent to the considerations presented to him in a rational way, they will not stir him to act in accord with them. (p.128)

Regarding the affective dimension of the second step, let us add that this step encourages students to become intrinsically motivated to learn. Actually, the second step considers that students are responsible for a part of their mathematics education: teachers do not plan the program for them, but rather are guides whose role is to accompany them in a philosophico-mathematical path they have chosen to follow. In traditional settings, the teachers are the only ones who know the objectives of the mathematics program; they let students partially discover them as the process progresses; it is only the teachers who prepare the contexts, the experiments and the problems to solve; the teacher's role is to supervise students' work and to give explanations about what they believe is important for students to learn (Bouchard and Arseneault, pp. 75-85, in Pallascio and Leblanc, 1993). In philosophy of mathematics, it is the students who motivate themselves to investigate and to learn; students are made responsible for what they will discuss.

Responsibility, in moral education, is a central concept. On one hand, responsibility is linked with solidarity, for human beings are social, which implies that human beings feel solidarity with each other or, in other words, they are "responsive to the needs and claims of others" (Dewey, 1908/1980, p. 170). On the other hand, responsibility has its foundations in the unicity of the individual and in one's freedom to conduct her or his life the way she or he chooses, making sure this does not interfere with the development of others (MEQ, p. 10-13). In short, responsibility is moral, because it is related to freedom and, in this sense, it differentiates human beings from other beings such as animals. Because it is related to solidarity, responsibility allows the survival and the quality of existence of human communities.

In the classroom, it appears crucial to develop intrinsic motivation and responsibility, because they lead to freedom and to solidarity, which allow students to structure themselves as individuals and as members of a collective. Also, when students recognize that adults respect them and give them the opportunity to take part in their own education, they become motivated to think better, to ask better questions and to get increasingly involved in the process of inquiry. By letting students create the agenda for mathematics classes, the second step of the philosophico-mathematical approach actualizes the affective criterion of intrinsic motivation and doing so, gives students the opportunity to gain in mathematical knowledge and moral knowledge as well.

THE THIRD STEP

The third and last step of the Philosophy for Children approach is based on an ancient pedagogy that is still revolutionary in the world of education. With respect to mathematics, the last step is characterized by the philosophico-mathematical dialogue within a "community of inquiry" and also by mathematical exercises and activities which constitute an integral part of the dialogical process.

A philosophical dialogue about mathematics is a guided discussion which aims at helping students in the development of personhood. Indeed, "to dialogue" is not synonymous with "to converse" or "to talk" (Reed, 1983, 1992). The term dialogue has its source in the Socratic dia-logos, which is strongly related to the pragmatic conception of "authentic communication" (Rorty, 1988/1990). Dialogue is thus understood in its sense of participation in the reconstruction of personal and social (moral) discourse. In mathematics, to dialogue involves a search for meaningful exchanges about mathematical concepts, notions, problems or myths, instead of preformulated answers or rhetorical arguments. As such, the philosophico-mathematical dialogue is pluralist in its essence, for it invites students to share a plurality of means to solve a problem, a plurality of meanings for ambiguous concepts and a plurality of reactions towards myths and prejudices. Here, pluralism should not be confused with relativism, for the purpose of the philosophico-mathematical dialogue is to verify the validity or the pertinence of existing knowledge, traditions, norms and values with respect to mathematics. It allows individuals to verify their own initial hypotheses, opinions and beliefs and, if needed, to modify them.

Within the philosophico-mathematical dialogue, students develop moral attitudes, for they practice
thinking in common, they experience communicating in an authentic fashion, and learn to deal positively with interdependency.

In relation to interdependency, let us mention that a philosophico-mathematical community of inquiry is not a mere grouping of students (Daniel, 1994). It occurs when each member considers that intersubjectivity is better than subjectivity and when each member recognizes the importance of the parts in relation to the success of the whole. Actually, there is an authentic community of inquiry when each student is conscious of the point made by Paolo Freire: "It is not because I think that we think, but it is because we think that I think."

Thinking and communicating are recognized as specifically human. Thinking and communicating are at the heart of both human condition and moral activity, for they constitute the means by which one comes to meaningful decisions and significant choices. Communication, as we know, is interrelated with thinking, for when one speaks, one constructs and defines one's own ideas and meanings; one learns to correct oneself and, consequently, one learns to think better.

To think mathematically does not only refer to the cognitive dimension of the person, but implies an interaction between rationality and affectivity. In this sense, thinking mathematically calls upon the individual's psychic life by the interplay of sensations, perceptions, emotions, feelings, intuition, imagination, symbolization, and so on. As an example, we could say that affectivity and rationality are simultaneously involved in the act of memorization: on one hand, memorization implies a systematization of facts and data which are processed by reason; on the other hand, these facts and data could never be memorized if the affective dimension of interest (or motivation) would not have been there to stimulate the process of memorization. It is this interaction between affectivity and rationality which allows the reflexive capacity to make moral choices, to take moral decisions, and to construct significant meaning.

Another component—more practical, this time—of the philosophico-mathematical community of inquiry which fosters moral attitudes is that there is no answer not worthy of being considered by the group. Actually, any answer is acceptable as long as (a) it is pertinent to the question that is at the agenda of the day and (b) it is justified by sound reasons. Any opinion, point of view or idea which respects these two elements is considered an enrichment for the philosophico-mathematical community of inquiry. Therefore, when children discuss the meanings of philosophico-mathematical concepts such as infinite, truth, relationships, numbers, numerals and so on, they do not compete for one right answer, but join their efforts to define, as precisely as possible, the concept with which they struggle. As Nicholls writes, "It is not hard to see the compatibility of the collaborative pursuit of knowledge with the pursuit of social justice." (Nicholls and Hazzard, 1993, p. 51)

According to him, open discussions in classrooms represent a source of hope, for they guide students in the direction of constructive conceptions of the nature and role of helping. In other words, the importance of discussion resides not only in the conclusions that emerge from them, but also in the democratic spirit and moral quality that emerge.

Not only are there no bad answers in the philosophico-mathematical community of inquiry, there also is no measurement, testing or grading. This view considers that students are responsible, autonomous and intrinsically motivated persons. And indeed, experiments in the classrooms since 1986 have shown us that students participate in philosophical dialogue because they like to search for meaning, to think for themselves and be considered as essential participants to the successful outcome of the community of inquiry.

We believe that the philosophico-mathematical dialogue would not be so efficient in developing mathematical knowledge if it were not intrinsically related to mathematical exercises and activities.

The mathematical exercises and activities contained in the manual accompanying the philosophico-mathematical novels are of four types: 1) those that encourage demythification of mathematics; 2) those that favor the development of more positive attitudes towards mathematics; 3) those that allow a better understanding of mathematical concepts; 4) and those that both promote better research methods and ways of working with mathematics.

These various types of exercises and activities help students in their moral development: first, they help students demythify the discipline itself by showing mathematics in dynamic evolution throughout history. In accordance with this evolution, mathematics is progressively viewed by students as less neutral and less objective than is often portrayed. It is also progressively viewed as a product of human invention (as opposed to a discovery), where humans can make mistakes and where they can correct them. By demythifying mathematics, students can see that mathematicians, mathematics teachers and all those who succeed in mathematics (those who seem to be "math brains") are people like others and that success in mathematics does not depend on having a particular or superior talent but depends on personal effort. Therefore, the demythification of mathematics allows students to see mathematics and mathematicians more from a reality standpoint rather than from false ideas transmitted by society, school and family. By entering the demythification process of mathematics, backed by exercises and activities of the manual accompanying the novels, students learn to become more critical towards this socially privileged discipline.

Second, by working with the exercises and activities based on metareflexion, students learn to develop positive attitudes towards mathematics. By acquiring more positive attitudes, students do mathematics with an open mind towards problems, procedures and processes of learning. In the case where students begin a mathematics course convinced of not being able to understand its content, they close themselves to teachers' explanations and sometimes fail the course. This reinforces negative attitudes. Appropriate exercises and activities invite students to reflect on the nature of
negative attitudes, their causes and consequences. In fact, exercises and activities contained in the manual stimulate the metacognitive processes of learning rather than focusing on simple memorization of definitions and procedures or repetition of exercises. In working with the metacognitive aspect of learning, students rapidly discover that fellow students do not resolve mathematics problems the same way they do. They can begin to open themselves to different ways to proceed without judging others negatively. Openmindedness towards different perspectives is a moral quality that ties in with another moral quality called sensitivity to others and to context.

Third, while working with the

> "Freedom, respect and solidarity do not happen without practice."

manual exercises and activities centered on different philosophico-mathematical concepts (such as truth, relation, infinite), students come to understand and integrate these concepts in the framework of mathematics and in their everyday life. The exercises and activities invite students to search for definitions, meanings, criteria. This community research to grasp the essence of philosophico-mathematical concepts constitutes the foundation of a meaningful moral education. Indeed, how can one, for instance, respect a person if one does not know the meaning of the words "to respect" and "person"? Regular class practice in defining concepts has students acquire the moral habit of making an effort to understand the grounds and meanings of the concepts they use in addition to their relationships with the facts or the acts they are tied to.

Fourth, while participating in activities on work and research methods in mathematics, students learn to become more thorough in their ways to think and learn. Certain activities and exercises of the manual directly favor this thoroughness such as the five steps of the scientific research method as described by Dewey. When Dewey writes in *Theory of Moral Life*, that to become a moral person, human beings need a specific tool, which is "deliberation," he refers to the scientific process in five steps that he describes in *Democracy and Education* (uncertainty and questioning, definition of the problem, proposition of an hypothesis to solve this problem, verification of the hypothesis, application of the solution to daily experience) (1916/1983, chapter 11). In fact, Dewey considers that moral and scientific deliberation should be in order to improve personal and social experience. And the only major difference he notes between scientific thinking and moral judgment seems to be in regard to content, the moral deliberation being more qualitative than the scientific one. For Dewey, moral deliberation is part of a never-ending process of research which starts within a doubt or a conflict. And both, moral and scientific reflection, put in action all dimensions of the person (logic as well as imagination, cognition as well as affectivity, individual as well as social) (1908/1980; 1916/1983). With regular use of the scientific method in their mathematics course, students learn to integrate this method to their way of thinking and being, and to use it while resolving their personal, interpersonal and social problems.

Thus, the bulk of exercises and activities of the manual accompanying the philosophico-mathematical novels aims at a global integration of personhood—sociologically, cognitively, affectively, and morally speaking. It is what contributes to give this manual its moral character.

In summary, the philosophico-mathematical approach is characterized by the following: the apprenticeship of mathematics centered on students' interests; student opportunity to actively participate in the construction and elaboration of their apprenticeship; student opportunity to become responsible (to make choices and to take decisions); favoring interrelationships between students; developing self-esteem and fostering altruism. This does not mean that the Philosophy for Children approach is a magical method which instantaneously transforms students into moral persons. Moral judgments and moral conduct are human dispositions which are developed through social activities and practice. What philosophico-mathematical communities of inquiry offer to students are: 1) a social (non-traditional) context to learn and to do mathematics and 2) the possibility to regularly exercise (one or two hours a week) a living cooperative experience in mathematics learning.

**CONCLUSION**

The philosophico-mathematical approach we advocate aims at gradually discarding the notion of knowledge as a collection of facts and gradually replacing it by a recognition that knowledge is a human construction that reflects the diverse concerns of the human beings who construct it. Also, this approach aims at the development of the rational dimension of students as well as the affective, social and moral dimensions. We believe that in teaching and learning mathematics, we should reserve a place for moral qualities such as freedom, respect and
solidarity. Indeed, what would be the usefulness of forming mathematicians and scientists who do not question the truths they once found, who are not open to others' criticisms and who are not responsible for the social consequences of their discoveries?

Freedom, respect and solidarity do not happen without practice. And we think it is the responsibility of the primary and secondary schools to invite the students, when they are young, to engage in cooperative dialogue with their peers. When mathematics education values competition, students worry about getting the right answer; when it values reflection in communities of inquiry, students see it as a cooperative adventure.

**References**


**NOTES**

1. This paper has been presented at the 20th International Conference of the Association for Moral Education (AME) at Banff (Canada), November 10-12, 1994.

2. For more information concerning these studies, one can refer to the works of A. Caron, M.-F. Daniel, P. Lebuis and M. Schleifer.

3. Some extracts of the novel and discussion plans were part of a paper presented at the NAACI's first Conference, in Austin (Texas), in April 1994. This paper has been published in *Analytic Teaching* 15 (1), pp. 29-41.


5. About the importance of contextualization in mathematics, refer to Pallascio, R., *L'acculturation mathématique inuit* (in process).


7. For an analysis of the traditional individualistic model of reasoning, one can read Slade, C. (Chapter 5), in Daniel and Schleifer (to come).


10. To know more about the quest for meaning and its relationships to moral education, one can refer to Le programme d'études. *Enseignement moral, Primaire*, proposed by the Ministère de l'éducation du Québec in 1990.

11. Concerning the capability of students to handle their own school projects and education, one can read Nicholls and Hazzard, 1993.

12. For a more complete analysis, one can read Daniel, 1992, chapter 2.


14. About the meaning of relativism from the Pragmatic perspective, one can read Bayles, 1966; Rorty, 1988/1990.

15. About the testing and the measurement of abilities, one can read Nicholls and Hazzard, 1993, chapter 2.
Joseph D. Isaacson

Were it not for Joe Isaacson, there might never have been such a thing as Philosophy for Children. He was neither a professional philosopher nor a professional photographer, although he was a superb amateur in those fields of endeavor. But more than that, he loved children and he loved to talk about how they could be stimulated to think for themselves. His was the most provocative critical intelligence one could hope to encounter. Talking with him over the years, one found oneself obliged to invent a way of educating that would meet the stringent requirements he insisted on.

Yet he was a gracious person, a generous person, as patient as he was astute. From the earliest days of Thinking, he was its staff photographer. It was how he thought he could serve the movement best. He could not have guessed how much, and in how many ways, we were indebted to him.

Mario Berrios

Mario Berrios was a key representative of Philosophy for Children in Chile, as well as philosopher in his own right, working most recently at IberoAmericana University in Mexico City. His ambition was to create a philosophical novel that would help Latin American children become aware of their Latin American cultural identity. It was only in the last few months that, with assistance from Walter O. Kohan, a theoretical groundwork was published. The novel itself will appear subsequently.

Mario will always be remembered for his unswerving loyalty to the unity between children, popular culture and philosophical inquiry, just as he will be remembered for his twinkling eyes, his drooping moustache, and his long, jaunty scarf. When we think of the problem of placing the particularity of Latin American culture in the world-historical development of civilization, we will think of Mario Berrios. He was a good man, and as his family well knows, a brave one too.
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