G.B

# Critical & Creative Thinking:

the Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children
Vol 9 No 2 Oct 2001

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The Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children

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**Aim and scope**

To provide a vehicle for the communication of ideas and a forum for discussion and debate of issues concerning the practice of philosophical inquiry with children.

To foster continuing development of the theory and practice of engaging children in philosophical inquiry;

more specifically:-

(1) to promote better teaching and curricular design for the development of critical and creative thinking amongst children through increased understanding and use of philosophical inquiry in the classroom
(2) to enrich the understanding of philosophy and philosophical inquiry as well as its role in the development of good thinking and good judgment.
(3) to increase interaction and collaboration between the academic community of scholars in universities and teachers in schools on matters of logic, epistemology, creativity, metaphysics, aesthetics, ethics, inquiry, philosophy of science, mind, personhood, community, understanding, learning, thinking, dialogue, discussion
(4) to promote discussion of the place of philosophy in the national and school curriculum and its infusion into the present curriculum; the place and contribution of philosophy to the intellectual, creative, moral and social development of individuals.

**Structure**

The journal will carry a range of articles reporting on all aspects of the practice of engaging in philosophical inquiry and developing critical and creative thinking. To this end it will be organised into four main Sections or Departments as follows:-

(1) Theory and Applied Research

a. Contributions concerning the more theoretical aspects of philosophy and inquiry such as:-
the nature and purpose, of philosophy, inquiry, community, conversation, dialogue, critical thinking, creative thinking, reasoning, etc.
the nature of childhood, adolescence, mind; the philosophy of childhood and development, etc.
epistemological, social, political and ethical dimensions of the practice of engaging children in philosophical inquiry,
policy and planning, future studies and directions; implications of recent Government Reports

b. Research studies of classroom practice: the impact of philosophy for children on classroom interaction, classroom discourse and dialogue; pupil participation, thinking and learning; teacher thinking and behaviour; classroom climate, etc.

(2) Philosophical studies
discussion and clarification of key philosophical concepts, topics and issues embedded in and raised by classroom readers and other materials;
exegeses of the philosophical literature on such matters.

(3) Reports from the field:

a. Reports from practising teachers on their experience of engaging children in philosophical inquiry; discussion of practical problems and possible solutions; innovative ways of using classroom materials, arranging classrooms, grouping, interacting with pupils.
Children's reactions and views new materials or exercises.
This section may well stimulate other research projects.

b. Children's work - writings, illustrations, etc

(4) Resources & Reviews (R&R)
Reports from in-service or workshop experiences and challenges. News and reports from national and international conferences. Discussion of different approaches, new materials, exercises and such. New philosophical stories, teacher manuals and other materials. Reviews of books and other materials.

## Welcome to Critical & Creative Thinking

Welcome to the ninth volume of Critical and Creative Thinking - the Journal for the Federation of Australian Philosophy for Children Associations. This Journal is dedicated to improving the teaching and research of critical and creative thinking by providing a forum for discussion and debate on all aspects, theoretical and practical, of the practice of engaging children in activities intended to develop and improve their thinking. We encourage classroom teachers as well as academics to send in their contributions for publication. Critical & Creative Thinking is intended to be a teachers' professional journal featuring a combination of theoretical and research articles with articles from teachers on their classroom experience and practical strategies for engaging children in critical and creative thinking activities. Whatever program you are trying with your class, please write in and let us know about it and its impact on your students as well as its influence on your own teaching practice. There are many others who are interested in what you are doing, together we can help each other become even better teachers and educators.

Clive Lindop
Deakin University-Warrnambool

### Notes for contributors

All contributions are welcome. Manuscripts should be typed and doubled spaced on A4 letter or US letter paper and accompanied with a disc copy, preferably 3.5 in Macintosh disc in Word 5.1 format (though IBM MS DOS is acceptable). Alternatively, to save time and avoid damage or loss in the mail, contributors may send their articles by E-mail (ASCII text) to:-

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### Letters to the Editor

If often happens that one reads an article and wants to respond, but not in the form of a lengthy article. Such responses, which might simply add to a point made by the author either in agreement or disagreement, or offer an alternative view, etc. could appear as a 'Letter to the Editor.' The idea here is to encourage dialogue between readers and authors- in effect using the Journal to create a community of inquiry!

**Send all postal contributions to** Clive Lindop
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## Aristotle, Children and Morality II: philosophical and ethical inquiry*

Tim Sprod: Friends School, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia.
e-mail: tsprod@friends.tas.edu.au

In *Aristotle, Children and Morality I*, published in the previous issue of *Critical & Creative Thinking*, I was concerned to understand and interpret the place of habituation and reason in Aristotle's theory of virtue ethics, specifically in relation to moral education. I was particularly interested in the extent to which his meta-ethical theory is sympathetic to the use of moral reasoning and discussion with children. I concluded that Aristotle's account requires that we bring up children to be reasonable if we wish them to be virtuous.

In this article, I want to take up the tension between habituation, which seems as if another must initiate it, and reasoning, which would seem to be autonomous. My primary interest now is not so much in the application of an orthodox Aristotelian account of ethics to moral education, but rather in gleaning from Aristotle that which stands up to scrutiny. In this light, I wish to focus on two particular issues to do with Aristotle's virtue ethics.

In the first place, we can explore a distinction between the use of practical reasoning, an essential element of critical habituation in the development of the virtues, and the engagement in a theoretical study of moral philosophy. I have claimed that Aristotle's dismissal of the latter did not entail that he would also dismiss the former. Sherman (1989, 197) argues the case that the former is an integral part of becoming moral, and a prerequisite for coming to the point where the latter is possible, at some length. She concludes:

> Thus if we are to become critical listeners of discourse on ethics, we must first be trained to become critical inquirers. Ethical education must, to some extent, include this training.

I wish to go further. I wish to claim that it would be wrong to dismiss the study of moral philosophy by children as an element of their moral development (whether Aristotle actually held this position, as I have characterized it, will be discussed below). I will be developing an account of moral development that gives a central place to the engagement of children in moral philosophizing, at the level appropriate to their development. This, I will argue, is an important element in training them 'to become critical inquirers' in the context of ethical education. Thus, I will be arguing that Sherman has oversimplified: becoming critical inquirers in ethical matters can be achieved through (amongst other things) becoming critical listeners and speakers in discourses on ethics. In other words, becoming a critical inquirer is achieved (best, possibly only) by engaging in critical inquiry.

In the second place, I wish to claim that Aristotle's analysis of the development of moral virtues is applicable also to the intellectual

***Acknowledgement**

This article, together with Part I (published in the March issue of Critical & Creative Thinking) form a considerably expanded version of a section of Chapter 4 of my "Philosophical Discussion in Moral Education: the community of ethical inquiry", published by Routledge of London in January 2001. I Routledge for permission to publish them here.

virtues - in particular, practical wisdom - in a way that undermines any claim that the young cannot benefit from philosophy.

As we shall see, this second claim flows directly from the first. But, because engaging in moral philosophy is to use practical wisdom, I will approach the two issues just identified in the reverse order. Hutchinson (1995, 207) gives a useful summary of Aristotle's account of practical wisdom:

> All in all, practical wisdom is an appreciation of what is good and bad for us at the highest level, together with a correct apprehension of the facts of experience, together with the skill to make correct inferences about how to apply our general moral knowledge to our particular situation, and to do so quickly and reliably.

Practical wisdom, we can see, contains three parts: moral appreciation (or an appreciation of the moral virtues); apprehension of facts; and practical reasoning. Now, practical wisdom is one of the five intellectual virtues (I.13). The moral virtues are, as we have seen, based on habituation - a critical habituation. Is the same true of the intellectual virtues - in particular, is it true of practical reason? Vygotsky (1962) thinks so: we become able to make certain intellectual moves because we have been engaged, repeatedly, in conversations where those moves have been made. Thomas Reid (1872, 641) makes a similar point:

> Our judgment of things is ripened, not by time only, but chiefly by being exercised about things of the same, or of a similar kind... I am very apt to think, that, if a man could be reared from infancy, without any society of his fellow-creatures, he would hardly ever shew any sign of moral judgment, or of the power of reasoning.

In other words, moral judgment and reasoning is something that needs to be learned from others, and it must be practiced in the company of others, who are already better at it than we are, and in the contexts in which we are to subsequently use it. To return to Sherman's quote, to become critical inquirers involves firstly being critical listeners (and critical speakers).

We might paraphrase Aristotle here, for being capable of practical reasoning is not merely being capable of making intellectual moves. It is a matter of accessing the right intellectual moves at the right time, with reference to the right subject matter, in interaction with the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way. The habits of intellect need to be reflexively turned upon themselves, if we are to reach practical wisdom. For the same point applies to habituated reasoning as to habituated virtue - if we allow the habituation of poor or sloppy reasoning, then it becomes very difficult to set it right later.

So we cannot treat practical reasoning as a given - something that is merely applied to moral appreciation and the apprehension of facts. Practical reason is itself a meld of habituation and reflection. Practical reason ought to develop hand-in-hand with habituated virtuous action, if either is going to be developed to anything like the desirable extent, for both are the product of practice and critique.

With this understanding I will turn to the first problem again. Let's look more closely at the thesis that, according to Aristotle, children are incapable of benefiting from studying moral philosophy. Indeed, the thesis seems to include young men as well as children here; it is well known that Aristotle excludes women of any age from philosophical

inquiry as well. This, I wish to claim, is just wrong. I don't think that I need to mount the case for women: many another has done this. It might be easy to believe that it was cultural blindness that led Aristotle to make such a claim, though it would be easier if it wasn't for the fact that Plato avoided it. However, the claim that children are incapable of studying moral philosophy may seem more plausible than the claim that adult women are incapable. Indeed, it is a claim that some present day philosophers still make.

However, we need to be careful here. Aristotle's claim is a precise one, and it is important to understand exactly what it is that he claims only men of virtue, experienced in the world, can do. Let's look at two of the passages where the claim is made once again.

> Now each man judges well the things he knows, and of these he is a good judge. ... Hence a young man is not a proper hearer of lectures on political science; for he is inexperienced in the actions that occur in life, but its discussions start from these and are about these; and, further, since he tends to follow his passions, his study will be vain and unprofitable, because the end aimed at is not knowledge but action. And it makes no difference whether he is young in years or youthful in character; the defect does not depend on time, but on his living and pursuing each successive object, as passion directs (I.3, 1095a2).

> Anyone who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is noble and just and, generally, about the subjects of political science must have been brought up in good habits. (I.4, 1095b3)

In both passages, the activity to which Aristotle refers is listening to lectures. In the first, the lectures are on political science, and the too-young man's study is said to be vain and unprofitable. In the second, the lectures are about what is noble and just, and it is only those brought up in good habits who can listen intelligently. If we try to merge the two, we come to the conclusion that only older men, experienced in moral action because of a good upbringing, are capable of profiting, through intelligent listening, from a lecture concerning abstract notions of the good and the just in society. So much seems reasonably clear.

What is not clear is the type and level of the lecture. Since the *Nicomachean Ethics* is understood to be notes for Aristotle's own lectures, it would seem to be reasonable to assume that the sort of lectures to which Aristotle is referring are his own. These are lectures from one of the greatest minds of his age (or any age) to students gathered at one of the elite educational establishments of the time. So we might conclude that Aristotle is merely claiming that a great deal of experience and moral maturity is needed to benefit from *his* lectures, and that many in the society would not be capable of gaining from them. Such a claim seems relatively uncontentious. These days, the only part of it of which we might be wary is the claim that moral rectitude is needed to gain from cutting-edge moral philosophy. Having separated (to some degree, at least) meta-ethical knowledge from moral action, we might well allow that a morally unworthy person could intellectually gain from such a lecture. Whether we are justified in doing so, in the light of Aristotle's argument that the point of lectures on morality is action, not knowledge, is of course a more contentious point.

Yet the interpretation of Aristotle that is widespread holds that he claims that none but the already experienced, morally habituated person can get anything out of *any* engagement in moral philosophy, at

no matter what level. Thus Sherman devotes a good deal of space to establishing the role of discussion and reasoning in habituation - a role that has been denied in much Aristotelian scholarship. Even such a sympathetic commentator as she slides between 'explanation... of the sort that Aristotle's lectures on ethics can yield' and 'some theoretical and general account of the substantive and formal features of good living' (Sherman 1989, 194). It is arguable that the latter can be addressed at a level considerably below that at which Aristotle addresses it - a level that lacks his rigor and breadth, but which is still recognisably philosophical and well within the reach of the young.

Another commentator sympathetic to the place of practical reasoning in habituation, Martha Nussbaum (1994, 97), makes a similar, but longer, slide in worrying about 'a tension in Aristotle's position' between his partially cognitive account of emotion and this requirement fully to form the moral emotions (ie, the virtues) before studying moral philosophy. She says:

> On the one hand, he describes the emotions as closely bound up with judgments and therefore capable of being modified by the modification of judgment. This picture implies not only that emotions can play a role in rational deliberation, but also that they can be changed as beliefs of all sorts can be changed, *by* deliberation and argument. On the other hand... he makes a sharp distinction between character training and the philosophical study of ethics, on the grounds that the emotions need to be balanced *before* the student can get anything much out of his philosophical arguments. Why, taking the view of emotions that he does, does he appear to insist on a separation between character training and philosophy? Why can't philosophical argument shape character?

'His [Aristotle's] philosophical arguments' (presumably as delivered in a lecture, not as studied at leisure) turn in the following two sentences into 'philosophy' and 'philosophical argument' in general (note that these latter activities can be much less academic than Sherman's 'theoretical and general account of the substantive and formal features'). What if we were to compare this to a modern parallel? If, say, Steven Hawking were quoted as saying that no-one could benefit from his lectures without having become thoroughly habituated to tensor calculus, so that it was second nature, would we conclude from this that children ought not to be exposed to mathematical inquiry? I venture to think not.

Nussbaum's tension dissolves if we take Aristotle to be talking only about terse, dense, verbal delivery of a tightly argued system, and not about all philosophical inquiry. Indeed, it is difficult to see how he could be talking about the latter, since much general discussion has a philosophical aspect, and there can be no sharp line drawn between philosophy and other types of inquiry. I shall take up this line in the next subsection.

**Children and moral philosophy**

Having presented this argument, I now wish to leave to one side the question of whether restricting the scope of Aristotle's reference to encompass only formal, high-level lectures is legitimate or not. Since his remarks have often been taken to be a claim that children (not to mention women and young men) are incapable of either doing moral philosophy or benefiting from it, I shall engage the argument at that level.

There can be two sorts of attack on this view. One is an empirical one, and it can be mounted by pointing to examples of children doing moral philosophy, or by attempting to discuss moral philosophical issues with groups of children and assessing whether they do, in fact engage in something that is recognizably moral philosophy. I do not intend to take this approach here. Others have, and have compiled an impressive amount of data to show that children can and do philosophize, from as young as four years old (see, for example, Matthews 1980; Matthews 1994; Pritchard 1996).

The second approach is to attack philosophically the view that children are unable to engage in moral philosophy. Such an attack will have two prongs, both of which have been foreshadowed in the above. Firstly, I will argue that philosophy is not such a radically different undertaking from general discourse about ethical matters that a sharp wedge can be driven between the two. Secondly, I will draw on the understanding gained above concerning the development of reasoning, particularly practical reasoning, to argue that the recognition of the philosophical element in moral development warrants more explicit study of moral philosophy in order to assist children to become ethical agents.

Philosophers who are considering the place of moral philosophy in the world quite naturally construe philosophy as that in which they are engaged. Philosophy is reading the greats (or the not-so-greats in journals), it is attending learned seminars, it is writing learned and technically difficult articles and so on. For the ordinary member of the public, philosophy is something quite different. It is something like an approach to things, an underlying way of looking at the world, a listing of important guides to life. It can be talked about in ordinary language on ordinary occasions - around a coffee table, or over a beer - whenever we slow down a little and think a bit more reflectively. We pass on our philosophy of life to others whenever we muse a little and talk about what is important to us in the big picture. Often, we do this when we are talking to our children or to the young in general.

This everyday conception of philosophy is quite different from Aristotle's lectures in many ways. It is much more diffuse, less rigorous, more poorly connected and systematic. Yet it also shares some important features. It is about 'the big questions', included amongst which is the question 'How ought I to live my life?' Answers to this question are, in the main, philosophical answers, whether they arise in the context of a tightly argued lecture series, or in epigrammatic utterances. Of course, the *quality* of the answers, as philosophy, varies in the two cases (though we need to be aware that the quality, as advice for life, might not co-vary with the philosophical quality).

This characterization of philosophy as attempts to ask and to answer the 'big questions' (and I don't wish to attempt to spell out just what makes a question 'big', or to list them) makes it clear that philosophy is something that most - probably all - people engage in at various times. In particular, any attempt to bring up children to be moral that extends beyond mere mechanical habituation, that attempts to give reasons for actions and attitudes, is to that extent somewhat philosophical. As both Nancy Sherman and I have argued, such an extension is essential to any effective habituation in the ethical, and so all but a small minority of severely ethically disadvantaged children do engage in at least a

low level of philosophical inquiry in the course of growing up and acquiring an ethical outlook.

If we accept that there is an inherently philosophical element in ethical education, even if it is quite unfocused, then the question arises as to the degree to which it is useful to make this element more focused in the ethical upbringing of children. Perhaps it is useful at this point to think of a spectrum of 'moral philosophicality', extending from a few wise saws offered with little opportunity to explore them, through to Aristotle's lectures.[1] Aristotle, clearly, thought that a course in highly abstract moral theory was of no use, and it is hard to disagree with this view. Nor, in the light of the arguments presented above about the need for the development of nuanced judgement in the building of virtue, can we accept that the odd 'philosophical advice' without conceptual exploration will suffice. The answer lies somewhere in the middle - but exactly where?

My answer to this question brings me to the second strand of the present discussion: the development of practical reason that must parallel the development of good moral habits. Arguments such as those advanced above by both Nancy Sherman and myself have established that habituation cannot be a blind, repetitive process. It must contain a strand of critical evaluation. Now, Aristotle is quite right that a failure to habituate the young into good moral habits makes the attainment of practical wisdom much more difficult in adulthood (e.g. X.9, 1179b30 and 1180a14, quoted above). Since the same applies to the attainment of practical reasoning - it too must be habituated, and this habituation involves critical evaluation - then sound ethical education must involve both the insistence that children act morally and the insistence that they learn how to judge whether their actions are moral or not. Being able to do the former requires the latter.

Let's analyse further what the latter means, and how to attain it. Being able to judge whether an action is moral or not involves at least the following:

1 having a model of the moral action presented to one through speech and/or observation. This model may have been presented in the past, or it may be being presented at the time of acting;
2 having a concept of the target moral action in mind, derived from that presentation, and other previous presentations;
3 having an accurate picture of how one is presently performing the action, so as to be able to compare it to the model;
4 having a concept of the salient features in the action, and how they relate to the morality of the action;
5 having a grasp of the external features of the situation in which the action arises, including an appreciation of the others involved;
6 having an understanding of oneself, so as to be able to relate the action to the moral goals and aspirations that one has, for these also help form the situation in which one is immersed;
7 having the necessary intellectual tools to be able to draw conclusions from the information available.

Only point 1 is captured by a version of habituation that sees it as externally imposed repetitive action. It is the only one that *must* be presented by another, presumably one who has a greater grasp of morally appropriate action. Let's call this person the moral trainer. Each of the other six points may be present in one of three ways: in the moral trainer; in the moral trainee; or in the jointly constructed

interpersonal space that includes the moral trainer and the moral trainee.

A mechanical model of habituation assumes that all seven points are the province of the moral trainer. Leaving aside considerations of how communication can be established at all - considerations which would only strengthen the analysis to be presented here - then mechanical habituation asserts that the trainer not only provides a model for action, but also carries out the assessment of all the other points, and then communicates the conclusions drawn to the trainee, along with the information on how the action is to be modified. Constant repetition inculcates virtuous habits, until the stage is reached where the trainee is ripe for moral wisdom. This account leaves the process of transformation from unthinking trainee to candidate for moral wisdom entirely unexplained.

The second way in which the six points are present - as features of the trainee - is clearly the endpoint at which the process of ethical education is aimed. If the trainee is fully capable of instantiating all seven points, then there is no longer any need for the trainer.

It is the third possibility that provides a way of transforming the first situation into the second. The first situation, where the moral trainer has responsibility for all seven points, may not be an accurate description of the process of habituation throughout, but it is certainly close to the truth for the very young child, just starting out on the route towards moral wisdom and independence. Parents of very young children do closely monitor not just the actions of the child, but also the various features of the situation and even take it upon themselves to ascribe to the child the interests that the child ought to have.

Yet this situation rapidly changes. The parents negotiate with the child, drawing attention to salient features, talking about the concepts involved, asking the child what they desire and so on. The child reacts. In this inter-subjective space, a joint understanding of the moral import of the actions is constructed, and the child begins to build moral, conceptual and intellectual competencies. These do not appear overnight: the parents and other interlocutors of the child continue to provide scaffolding, gradually passing over competence. The child internalizes the competencies. This is, of course, the Vygotskian picture mentioned previously. Jerome Bruner (1983) maps the process, albeit in the context of learning the game of peek-a-boo rather than learning moral actions. Only such an account of moral learning is adequate to explaining how it is that habituation, understood richly, plays an important role in moral education.

There remains one more task, however, to complete this section. That is to substantiate the claim that the sort of interpersonal negotiation of meaning and competency outlined is philosophy, and that a more explicit recognition of this is important in ethical education. I shall approach the first part of this task by considering a number of the points in the outline of the judgement of moral action presented above, and show that they are, at root, philosophical points.

Point 2 - having a concept of the target moral action in mind - involves the conceptual clarification of key moral concepts. Conceptual analysis is clearly a core philosophical pursuit. Yet the clarification of key moral concepts need not take place through explicit conceptual analysis.

Many people become able to use concepts adequately through everyday interactions with others. Is this philosophy? We can take a number of attitudes to this question. We can deny that it is philosophy in any sense of the word, because it is something imbibed, something learned through an unconscious induction from examples. Or we can call it a simple kind of philosophy - folk philosophy, perhaps - noting that we do at least sometimes turn our attention informally to the meaning of such concepts. Either way, it ought to be clear that to make the process of exploring concepts more explicit would be to make more likely the improvement of our conceptual grasp of key moral concepts.

Point 4 - having a concept of the salient features of an action, and how they relate to morality - is necessary because description of any action can be infinitely expanded. Some features of any action will be irrelevant to its moral import. For example, if I am repaying a debt I owe you, then it is (at least in the West) morally irrelevant whether I give you the money with my left or right hand, or even if it is cash or a cheque. The latter becomes relevant, however, if the cheque is post-dated, or if it will bounce... unless I am unaware that it is going to bounce. Even this simple example shows that moral relevance is not straightforward. As in the discussion of point 2, a feel for moral relevance can be attained experientially, but an explicit, philosophical exploration of what makes features morally relevant will assist the moral judgement of actions so as to know how to adapt them to more closely match the target virtue.

Point 5 - having a grasp of the external features of the situation, including others - shares the rationale of point 4, as external situations are also complex, and the relevance of their features to moral matters is also not clear. But there is a further complication at work here. An understanding of others requires an understanding of how it is that they construe the world, and what matters to them. A philosophical exploration of moral matters enables them to express their views, and an engagement with these views helps us to form our grasp of others.

Point 6 - having an understanding of oneself - is in some respects a mirror of point 5. In mutual dialogue, we can come to know ourselves as we come to know others. Exploration of what *eudaimonia* means to us helps us to form ourselves. It is not a given, that we merely need to explore to understand, but a self-conception that is both revealed and shaped by philosophical reflection with others.

Point 7 - having the necessary intellectual tools - brings us back to the consideration of the formation of practical reasoning, which takes place in social interaction. The tools of reasoning, practical and theoretical, are one of the central concerns of philosophy (Lipman 1991, 27), and the engagement in philosophical inquiry is the high road to the improvement of thinking. Lipman's book is a justification of his claim that 'the capacity of philosophy, when properly reconstructed and properly taught, to bring about higher-order thinking in education [is] significantly greater than the capacity of any other approach' (3).

**Summary**

Virtue ethics recognizes the central role played by socialization in the construction of virtuous persons, especially once we have become clear about the intertwined roles of habituation to virtue and to practical reason, which must develop hand-in-glove. So, to bring up a child to be moral necessarily includes both direction as to what actions ought to be

taken, and reasoning about those actions. Neither is sufficient on its own.

Whether we can reinterpret Aristotle to be sympathetic to a place for moral reasoning throughout childhood (as Sherman argues), or whether we need to differ from Aristotle on this, there is no doubt that the Aristotelian account has left out any detailed consideration of how it is that children become moral. In this article, I have developed an argument for the place of dialogue in moral education. While the sort of authoritative parenting that was outlined in *Aristotle, Children and Morality I* undoubtedly has a vital role to play, schools and parents can strengthen the moral development of the children under their care by engaging them in philosophical discussion through communities of ethical inquiry.

## Endnote

[1] Of course, a single dimensional spectrum is probably too simple. "Philosophicality" most likely has many dimensions. Further, it could be argued that the 'wise saw' end of the spectrum has lost too many philosophical features to be properly called philosophy (although common usage seems to disagree). However, these are not topics that need deeper exploration here.

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# Dramatising philosophy

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When I speak of the dramatisation of philosophy, I envision a vast spectrum of activities designed to stir the interest of various populations - college students, elementary school children, those pursuing degrees as adults in evening schools, retired persons, and so on - in the subject of philosophy. These activities may take the form of biographies of philosophers, autobiographies by philosophers, philosophy written in literary rather than argumentative form - as allegory, parable, drama, film, poetry, short story or novel - popular histories of philosophy, the theatrical enacting of philosophy, or combining it with other forms of expression, such as music, dance, and opera.

We can distinguish between philosophy that is already in dramatic form when it is first set forth, such as the great poem of Parmenides, or Plato's *Republic* or *Phaedrus* or *Symposium*, and philosophy that is originally non-dramatic in mode of presentation, but acquires dramatisation subsequently. I am thinking here of the work of Democritus being recast in poetic form by Lucretius, or the recasting of the of a great many philosophers in the philosophy curricula that have been designed for children. (There is an analogy here with the distinction between one-stage arts, like painting, and two-stage arts, like music. In this sense, the work of Parmenides is a single-stage dramatisation; that of Lucretius is a second-stage dramatisation.)[1]

We can further distinguish dramatisation of philosophers' lives from dramatisation of their works, and we can distinguish the dramatisation of their works from the dramatisation of the teaching of their works.

**1. Dramatisation of the lives of philosophers**

Not so many years ago, the Media Division of the National Endowment for the Humanities invited proposals for projects that would make the humanities disciplines more popular, through the development of a series of television programs. It seemed to me that a 13-part series could made of the life of Plato, and I discussed it on several occasions with Gregory Vlastos, who had from the very beginning expressed a sympathetic interest in Philosophy for Children. Vlastos liked the idea of the series, and suggested that I be sure to include Terence Irwin in my working committee preparing the proposal for the pilot program. (Vlastos also suggested that Charles Kahn be considered for the role of Plato.) Irwin accepted my invitation to do so, as did Edward Pols and John Anton. I suggested we concentrate on Plato's second return from Sicily, and Pols wrote a lengthy summary of a possible script. As it turned out, our project was narrowly rejected, falling to a proposal to dramatise the life of William James. The latter project, though funded, was never realised.

I mentioned these efforts *manqués* because they so well illustrate one particular type of dramatisation of philosophy: cinematic biography. They would hardly have been the first, for I can cite, at the very least, the fine portrait devised by Roberto Rossellini in his film, *Socrates*. Nor would it be an egregious error to expect that film makers will some day succeed in dramatising the lives of such philosophers as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Rousseau, Heidegger, Sartre and Wittgenstein.

Another variety of dramatisation is the biography of a particular philosopher, or the historical chronicle of a series of philosophers' lives. These can range, of course, from the predominantly factual and analytical to the predominantly fictional and speculative. Antiquity was a fertile time for both varieties, including such works as Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, Plutarch's *Lives*, and Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. In modern times, some philosophers have had a number of biographies devoted to them, and it is not necessary to suppose that these will in time cease to appear. Even now, the life of Giordano Bruno is being re-examined, and a fresh look is being taken at the lives if Dewey, Wittgenstein, Sartre, Unamuno, Heidegger and others.

I must confess to some misgivings when I speak of a range "from the factual and analytical to the fictional and speculative." A factual account of a life need not to be devoid of dramatic elements, and an analytical account of a philosophy may be undergirded with imaginative interpretations. Conversely, it is possible to write a fictional biography chock-full of fastidiously researched facts –I am thinking of the works of novelists like Norman Miller (about the wives of the astronauts or about Marilyn Monroe) or Truman Capote (*In Cold Blood*) as well as the works of imaginative history like those of Stephen Schama. But once again the one-step/two-step distinction can come to our assistance here: by one-step dramatisation I mean the chronicling of a life that is itself so vivid that even a deadpan recounting by the biographer cannot conceal the drama inherent in the philosopher's life. To reveal the life *is* to reveal the drama. The two-step approach involves taking a personal history that is *primafacie* inert and breathing life into it, animating it by means of a sympathetic re-telling that is true to the spirit if not to the letter of the life-history revealed by the documentary evidence.

Of course, the account of a philosopher's life that appears thrilling to his or her fellow philosophers may seem to be quite insipid to the book-reading public accustomed to picaresque romances. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, when a work like Durant's *Story of Philosophy*, with its chatty balance between thumbnail lives and quick synopses of philosophical positions, invades the best-seller lists and stays on, year after year, to give the non-philosophical public an intriguing glimpse of a discipline that is a mystery to other disciplines (and to itself as well) and of a world of ideas so different from – and yet so often confused with - the domain of scientific concepts.

I come now to the dramatisation of the lives of philosophers accomplished by their own efforts. One way this can occur is through the keeping of diaries or journals. One thinks, in this respect, of Gabriel Marcel's *Metaphysical Journals*, or of the notebooks kept by Simone Weil. Another way is through the first-person autobiography, as exemplified by Rousseau's *Confessions*, Solomon Maimon's *Autobiography*, Plato's *Seventh Letter*, Collingwood's *Autobiography*, and so on. Sometimes these accounts by the philosophers themselves may be more or less thinly veiled. The narrative is related in the third-person (Henry Adams is the obvious example here) or is sweetened by a blurring of remembered information. But many who have contributed to the literature of philosophy have written their memoirs – Hume, Russell, Tostoy, Jaspers, and a variety of others can be added to the names of those already cited - and have sought to be fairly accurate in the process. In contrast, some philosophers have sought to factionalise their own lives, like Bernard Groethuysen recalling his childhood as if he were recounting the childhood of Kierkegaard. Still, as I said before, a

fictionalised autobiography may merely bring out the drama that was already in the life, rather then add to it artificially, like icing decorating a cake. Somewhere in all this belongs Santayana's *The Last Puritan* and Kierkegaard's *Diary of a Seducer.*

In addition to the fictionalisation of the lives of philosophers who have actually lived, there can be at least an allusion to those narratives that aim to present (rather than re-present) the lives of fictional philosophers. Sartre's *Les Chemins de la Liberté* comes to mind, with its fictional hero, Mathieu, or Somerset Maugham's *Lanny Budd* series, or perhaps Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Nor should we forget that presumably fictional lives, in the context of a *roman à clé,* may be stand-ins for the lives of actual people - think of Aldous Huxley's *Point Counterpoint,* or Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse,* with its ironic sketch of her father, the philosopher Leslie Stephen.

Another way in which the lives of philosophers may be dramatised is through their correspondence. I have already mentioned Plato's *Seventh Letter*, which I take to be genuine, but what about the light thrown on the life of Diderot through his *Letters to Sophue Volland*? Or the light thrown on the life of Leibniz through his letters to a variety of correspondents, including Spinoza and Descartes? Or the insight we gain into the life of the minds of William and Henry James through their correspondence with each other?

There is, of course, a limit to how far one can go in burnishing the charisma of philosophy through dramatisations of the lives of those who have authored philosophical works. There are objections aplenty to the easy assumption that one can trace important and meaningful connections between the conditions of philosophical creativity and the products of such creativity. But we have only scratched the surface when it comes to exploring the relationships between the craft of the producer and the intelligibility of the product, so that we are in no position to insist that the one is irrelevant to the other, or can throw no light on the other.

**2. Dramatisation of philosophical materials**

I turn now to the redesign of philosophical texts, as this is done with the objective of making them more dramatic, and hence more interesting to larger and larger audiences. I would like also to consider original works in philosophy, whose design is more literary or dramatic that is normally to be encountered in the dry expository writing of the philosophical tradition.

Let us take up the latter question first. It raises, of course, some troubling questions of aesthetics: are there pure art forms, as Lessing claimed - painting is purely spatial and music purely temporal - or are merged genres capable of as much authenticity as isolated genres? Is the work of, say, Lucretius, poetry disguised as philosophy, philosophy disguised as poetry, or no case of disguise at all but an authentic *mélange* of the two? Is there a rivalry between philosophy and poetry which decisively prevents them from cooperating in the same artistic ventures? Are those professors of literature correct who argue that philosophy is necessarily deficient from a literary point of view, and are those professors of philosophy correct that literature (eg. novels, drama, poetry) is necessarily deficient from a philosophical point of view? The parade of such questions threatens to go on and on, so I will put a stop to it here,

and consider some of the models of expressing a philosophical perspective or argument through means usually reserved for non-philosophical articulations. I will say only that, in my opinion, philosophy can be legitimately expressed through non-philosophical modalities when such expression succeeds in making evident certain relationships which would have otherwise been neglected, just as figures of speech like metaphors have an expository and not merely a decorative authenticity when they call our attention to subtle or recondite relationships that we might otherwise have missed completely. Thus, when, we borrow terms derived from other modes of perception in order to describe colours as hot or cold or soft or delicious, we are able to bring out aspects of those colours that would otherwise have gone unnoticed; so Plato, using myths, may bring out aspects of his philosophy that would otherwise have made a much less forceful claim upon our attention.

I do not take Homer as a philosopher trying to express philosophical ideas through poetry or as a poet trying to give his epic verses some philosophical ballast. I see him rather as providing the impartial perspective without which future philosophy could not have developed. The pre-Socratics, on the other hand, cultivated a kind of philosophical minimalism, in which they sought to suggest global or cosmic vistas by means of the tersest, pithiest of aphorisms. In contrast the allegorist, such as Aesop, offers merely a pot of message, a bit of proverbial wisdom serving as punchline, preceded by a story instead of a sermon.

What Plato tries to capture and preserve, at least in his early works, is the spirit of dialogical inquiry that so often turns into philosophy itself. The intellectual dramas of Plato are not cases of philosophy masquerading as theatre, but efforts to represent more or less faithfully the social contexts underlying the clash of philosophical perspectives and the articulation of philosophical methodologies.

In the later Plato, as in Aristotle, the academic tradition has its point of origin. Dialogue is converted into monologue, discussion into lecture, narration into exposition, inquiry into argument. From the point of view of the scholar, this is a huge step forward; from the point of view of the general public, it merely represents alienation fading into apparent irrelevance. The problem now is not to collapse the two perspectives into one, but to locate them in an order that will make it possible, by a series of perspectival gradations, to show their continuity with one another.

The dialogue form has been continuously resorted to by philosophers seeking to portray the play of ideas in a setting that suggests psychological as well as literary relationship. And if some Greek playwrights, such as Aristophanes, caricatured philosophy and its proponents, as in *The Clouds*, others, such as Euripides in his Iphigenia plays, incorporated philosophical interchanges into the dramatic texture of his dialogue.

Among the philosophers since antiquity making use of the dialogue form, one can especially cite Augustine, Leibniz, Berkeley, Diderot, Fontanelle, and Santayana, although of these, only the dialogues contrived not for the purpose of exhibiting one's philosophical originality but in order to promote or merchandise established philosophy more effectively, one might cite as typical the dialogues of Fontenelle.

The presentation of philosophy in the guise of poetry, as practiced by philosophers, is only infrequently encountered . I have already mentioned Parmenides as an example of a philosophy that is poetical to begin with, and Lucretius as an example of converting a philosophy that is not poetical into one that is. On the other hand, the presentation of philosophy in the guise of poetry as practiced by poets is so prevalent as almost to be the rule rather than the exception. One can cite towering figures like Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe, or one can simply list $19^{th}$ and $20^{th}$ English-speaking poets like Wordsworth, Blake, Dickinson, Hardy, Yeats and Wallace Stevens, to see how ubiquitous this practice is, and how frequently philosophical thinking is a part of poetical thinking.

The aphoristic tradition descending from the pre-Socratics has not survived nearly as well. Few philosophers continue to write in aphorisms –Wittgenstein is exceptional, and there is little left to the literary tradition of aphoristic expression. (Proverbs, in contrast, continue to be produced in quantity, but they are largely the product of a culture rather than of individual writers.)

In my opinion, the genres that lend themselves most readily to the presentation of philosophical ideas in non-expository, non-argumentative form are poetry and fiction. Both concentrate, like philosophy, upon the purely linguistic, in contrast with film, television, drama and opera, which by adding the visual and auditory dimensions, further distract us from the purely linguistic meanings. Thus the work for theatre by Tom Stoppard is brimful of philosophical ideas, but his plays succeed in portraying the *products* of reflection more than they do reflection itself. On the other hand, one would be hard put to find in the literature of academic philosophy a more compelling intellectual confrontation that the Grand Inquisitor section of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Indeed, this is a paradigm case, against which we can test the others, in which the quality of the dramatisation is as superb as the quality of the philosophical contents being dramatised. This is the criterion that Plato strives to satisfy, although he does not always succeed in doing so.

One of the problems indigenous to the dramatisation of philosophy is that the author can so readily err to the side of overdramatisation. Make the text the least bit lurid, and the reader's attention swerves away from philosophical ideas and is soaked up by those aspects of the contents that are affectively compelling. Consequently the literary qualities have to be fairly low-profile, on order not to block out the philosophical dimension. In this sense, the low-key comedy of manners may provide a more suitable setting for philosophical interplay than would a lustier form of dramatisation, in which the heavy breathing can accommodate only light thinking.

For good or for ill, this is the formula that has been followed in the composition of the novels comprising the Philosophy for Children curriculum. The plots, such as they are, are of almost negligible importance when compared with the quality of reflection engaged in by the fictional characters, for in a sense it is this quality which is the true protagonist of each of the novels. (In contrast, what Henry James evidently aims to capture, in those rarefied conversations that are strewn through his novels, is the ebb and flow of consciousness that accompanies philosophical thought, rather than that thought itself.)

Strewn through the pages of the Philosophy for Children novels, instead, are references to the concepts that are contained in the repertoire of the philosophical tradition: truth, justice, friendship, reality and the like. Instead of studying these ideas in the contexts of the writings of the philosophers, students are given the opportunity of considering them in contexts closer to their own youthful experience. Freed from their moorings to Aristotle, St.Thomas and Kant, these ideas float lightly on the surface of the narratives. The students are at liberty to pick them up and play with them, without having to possess the scholarly apparatus necessary for understanding them only in the context of their historical appearances. In this sense, philosophical ideas are, for children, the most appealing and indestructible of cognitive toys, not to mentioned how rewarding the experience of them can be to children in search of the general, the valuable and the ideal.

## Endnote

[1] What is normally understood by the distinction between "one-stage" and "two-stage" arts is that, in the case of some art forms, such as music, composition is separate from performance, while in the other instances, such as painting, the composition and the performance are so to speak, compressed into one. (Whether painting is actually an instance of performance raises all sort of other issues that cannot be dealt with here). However, it can be argued, at least from an Deweyan point of view, that the actual distinction should be between "two-stage" and "three-stage" arts, since the work of the audience must be added to the work of the composer and to that of the performer. Thus a classroom of students reading and discussing Aristotle are doing philosophy, and an audience at a concert, whether of popular or of classical music, are in fact doing whatever it happens to be - rock or country or Monteverdi. The visitors to an art museum seem to be doing nothing but looking, and the same is true of the ballet audience, but to assent to this would be to assent to a purely behavioristic conception of the person. Once perception, thinking, and feeling are recognised as legitimate dimensions of the human being, we can more readily understand that the work of art has to be done by the audience as well as by the composers and performers.

## Experience and Aesthetics

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Without being at all glib, the foundation of Philosophy for Children can be summed up with one word: Experience. Experience can be most simply defined as an interaction between the world and one's self. However, for this experience to be able to be defined as philosophy (at least in terms of the pragmatist philosophy that Lipman's material is embedded in), a secondary process must take place - that of reflection on that experience. Dewey defines experience on two levels: primary experience is the process of people being involved in the how and what of the material world, and secondary or reflective experience that is "...what is experienced in consequence of continued and regulated reflective inquiry" on the crude material that is primary experience. (Dewey, 1994, 167)

Experience, both primary and (more obviously) secondary is more than just a superficial observation. To quote Dewey (1994) again: Experience:

> ...is no infinitesimally thin layer or foreground of nature, but that it penetrates into it, reaching down into its depths...tunnels in all directions and in doing so brings to the surface things at first hidden - as miners pile high on the surface of the earth treasures brought from below. (164)

Nor is it a one-way process. As the primary experience leads on to the secondary experience that is the result of reflection on that primary experience so does one return to the objects of primary experience with a more sophisticated and enriched appreciation. Dewey values the objects that are the result of the reflection because they "...lay out a path by which return to experienced things is of such a sort that the meaning, the significant content, of what is experienced gains an enriched and expanded force because of the path or method by which it was reached." (Dewey, 1994, 168)

This "method" is of course the empiricism that is the essence of the classroom community of inquiry. This is a special sort of philosophy - not the esoteric pondering of the positivists nor the mind-body dualism of Cartesian reasoning. These non empirical philosophies fail to use the refined products of reflection as a path back to something in ordinary experience. The result (says Dewey) is a three-fold failure:

1. There is no verification of those products
2. Ordinary experience is not enriched
3. The lack of verification means that subject matter is "aloof," abstract; it has no contact with ordinary experience (and often nothing to say about it)

One should ask of a method of philosophical speculation: "Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life experiences and their predicaments, render (them) more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful?". (Dewey, 1994, 170) Dewey rightly condemns philosophies which "...terminate in conclusions that make it necessary to disparage and condemn primary experience leading those who hold them to measure the sublimity of their "realities" as philosophically defined by remoteness from the concerns of daily life, which leads cultivated commonsense to look askance at philosophy" (ibid).

Philosophy for children is philosophy for real people living in a real world. This is, quite literally, philosophy that a child can understand and engage in. A child has experience. A child can reflect on that experience. A child can draw conclusions based on that experience and apply those conclusions, those products, to the situation from which the whole process began. In fact, children's natural inquisitiveness makes it nearly impossible to prevent them from doing so. Children are born philosophers in the sense that Dewey understands philosophy. (That, in the main, our education system carelessly squanders the opportunity to foster this faculty is shameful.)

This is philosophy for children but not childish philosophy. Children can engage in it and the sophistication of that engagement grows as they mature. They will revisit the same issues over and over through the programme but each time at a deeper level and in the different context of their developing cognitive and emotional capacity and richer life experience. Thus it is philosophy for adults too as it is a method that can illuminate both the ordinary and the esoteric, the simple and the complex; all and any of the issues faced by people in the process of living their lives - including aesthetic experience.

Dewey 's aesthetics challenge the common conventions of artistic appreciation. He sees the institutionalisation of art objects, the hanging of paintings in a gallery, as a process that takes one away from the aesthetic qualities that give the art objects meaning. In his essay, *The Live Creature*, he describes how the identification of works of art with the institutions that house them constructs a barrier to aesthetic experience and the meaning therein. He says: "When artistic objects are separated from both the conditions of origin and operation in experience, a wall is built around them that renders almost opaque their general significance, with which esthetic theory deals." (Dewey, 1979, 324) The perfection and prestige of many of the artworks in public collections "...create conventions that get in the way of fresh insight" (ibid). Under these conditions a painting such as the Mona Lisa becomes an icon to be revered, or worse, a possession to be valued, rather than the material of aesthetic experience.

This theme, perhaps best described as discovering meaning through lived experience, runs through Dewey's aesthetics as it runs through the rest of his philosophy. He discusses this in detail in Chapter Three of "Art as Experience". (Dewey, 1979, 35-57)

It is vital to appreciate the distinction between *experiencing* and *an experience.* Experiencing, says Dewey, is commonplace; in effect to be alive and conscious is to experience. Even when unconscious, one could be said to experience, dreams being a special and personal form of experiencing. But much of our experiencing is rudimentary and undeveloped, as Dewey says, inchoate. For experiencing to become *an* experience we must move from that rudimentary and beginning place to engaging in a process that we carry and are carried by through to a consummation, a meaningful end point. This process must involve us in a manner that obliges us to make our own contribution to the experience; to work with and from our intellectual, moral, and aesthetic capacities in a way that is appropriate to the experience.

Dewey repeatedly re-enforces this point: "...every experience is the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world in which he lives" (Dewey, 1979, 43-44) and "...we have *an* experience

when the material experienced runs it course to fulfilment." (Dewey, 1979, 35) and again "...the experience...has a satisfying emotional quality because it possesses internal integration and fulfilment reached through ordered and organised movement." (Dewey, 1979, 38)

Dewey distinguishes between various forms of experience; intellectual, active, and emotional. Buchler's categories of judgement are useful descriptors for illuminating these distinctions. He divides the products of human activity into three modes of judgement: The *assertive,* being when one is said to "...predicate, state or affirm...to achieve or support a belief...to cite evidence on behalf of our product; the *active,* "...to do or act, when the underlying direction is toward effecting a result"; and the *exhibitive,* wherein "...we contrive or make...when the process of shaping the product and the product as shaped is central..." (Buchler, 1994, 445) Dewey and Buchler agree that all three forms of experience / modes of judgement can be vehicles for intellectual, moral and aesthetic products. Buchler (1994) states:

> Although we associate certain types of products habitually with some one of these functions...there is no fixed type of product required for any mode of judging, and it is possible for one and the same product to function in any mode or combination of modes, depending on the order in which it is located and the conditions prevailing in that order (446).

Dewey makes similar assertions: he sees the aesthetic quality of harmony in the conclusion reached as the consummation of thinking, having as it does that "...satisfying emotional quality..." referred to earlier. (Dewey, 1979, 38) Action, usually seen as essentially a physical and often mechanical process, has aesthetic qualities when it is in an ethical context as a purposeful process culminating in accomplishment. Dewey offers, as an example of aesthetics in an ethical context, the Greek idea of good conduct that has proportion, grace and harmony that gives it an aesthetic element. He is, however, dismissive of morality that is "grudging piecemeal concessions to the demands of duty", apparently a reference to a rule-based concept of ethics. (Dewey, 1979, 39) Dewey would seem to concur with the Biblical exhortation to heed the spirit rather than the letter when engaging in a moral endeavour.

Dewey defines his conception of aesthetics as being between two poles; at one end is an aimless sensory experiencing, a process without a clear beginning, no direction and, if it ends, simply ceases rather than reaching any conclusion or consummation. This experiencing lacks purpose. It is uni-directional in that the person experiencing brings nothing to the experiencing, they are merely the passive recipients of sensation. They may take sensory impressions away from the event but these possess no hidden depths, no intrinsic meaning to be discovered by reflection. The process, such as it is, dies here.

The other pole is characterised by rigid prejudice. The person comes to the potential experience with a set of preconceptions that admit no further input. They arrive armed with spurious meanings that overwhelm the possibility of being moved by what this experience, this fragment of the world may have to offer them. There is no subsequent reflection as there has been no interaction to reflect upon. Like the other polarity, the process is one way; what looks like the crude material of primary experience is in fact merely the prejudices of the person projected into the world. This process does not die, it is stillborn.

If we look at our children and the education system we provide for them, we will all too often see children, who, in their naive immaturity, often exhibit the qualities of the first pole, attending schools staffed by teachers entrenched in the opposite pole. Dewey's aesthetics, his whole philosophical approach, falls from sight, unnoticed, in the chasm between the reality our children inhabit and the archaic, rigid and unresponsive institution that fails to serve them. The opportunity to take the raw energy of children's desire to experience and harness it to the skill of meaningful engagement and subsequent reflection is lost.

Dewey's aesthetics defy easy explication. This is in part because his aesthetics, while not entirely subsumed by his general theory are certainly inextricably intertwined within it. Furthermore, his insistence on experience as the key to discovering meaning has, in spite of its empirical foundation, a spiritual quality that is not too far from the "authentic experience" of the existentialists. Repeated reference throughout Dewey's writing to states such as "desire" and "passion" make it clear that this is not a philosophy of mere cold logic or abstract esoteric theorems. He uses the analogy of a person applying for a job as a means of illustrating just how pervasive aesthetics is. He asks:

> Where should we look for an account of such an experience? Not to ledger entries nor yet to a treatise on economics or sociology or personnel-psychology, but to drama and fiction. Its nature and import can be expressed only by art, because there is a unity of experience that can be expressed only as an experience. (Dewey, 1979, 43)

He says that the situation of the job interview is fraught with suspense and expects the applicant to respond to the situation with hope or despair, elation or disappointment and the employer to exercise his imagination to decide whether "(t)he presence and behaviour of the applicant (will) either harmonise with his own attitudes and desires or conflict and jar" (Dewey, 1979, 43) The aesthetic qualities of this experience are the deciding factors that determine the outcome. One finds aesthetic qualities in the most unexpected places.

Although I began this essay by saying that the foundation of philosophy for children is experience I perhaps should have added at the onset the rider that the outcome of this experience is the discovery and making of meaning as this permeates Dewey's philosophy and his aesthetics. The process of engagement with and reflection upon primary experience clearly would lead to the discovery of meaning in an experience - aesthetic or otherwise. What is not so apparent is the process of *making* meaning. This is a term that crops up repeatedly in the Lipman material and may be a cause of puzzlement for many people as it challenges the tacit assumption that meaning is inherent in the object or experience, that it is objective. People will look at a painting, especially an abstract painting ask, "But what does it mean? Why did he paint a thing like that?" The implication is that the meaning is in the picture, presumably put there by the artist, and it is up to the perceiver to discern it. That this meaning is elusive can be grounds for derisive rejection of anything other than clearly representational art, on the grounds that if the *what* is not apparent there must be a *why* and if that is not obvious then it is nonsense.

This appearance of objectivity fails to allow for a process of interaction with the artwork. What is needed is a recognition of ourselves as

subjects thus admitting the possibility of an aesthetic response that puts meaning into the primary experience. Dewey gives a commonplace example of this need to appreciate one's subjectivism when he points out that we find the hated person obnoxious and the one we love, loveable. (Dewey, 1994, 173) One might naively assume that we love someone because of the lovable qualities they possess and, conversely, that we hate what is inherently hateful. The challenge to this is that a person we find hateful is very likely to be loved and admired by others and our beloved disliked by some; Eva Braun loved Hitler, Prince Charles preferred Camilla to Princess Diana. In short, we need to recognise that the apparent truth what we see may simply be the projection of our unquestioned assumptions on to the world.

Once we recognise this subjectivity we take on the power to make meaning. The world is not longer a place we may take for granted. We cannot assume that everything is simply as it appears. So rather than saying that meaning should be in an abstract painting it is more accurate to say that we discover meaning in our experience of the painting, in a sense, from within ourselves. Making meaning is a process of interacting in a purposeful and reflective manner with an "aspect of the world in which we live" by using our self-awareness to acknowledge ourselves as subjects. That we make meaning rather than discovering it in the painting is not surprising; after all we are the agents in the process The painting, while having significant qualities that may arouse a passion within us, is inert; it will not engage with us, we must go out to it. We are the active agent, we must take responsibility for what we discover.

Nor should we expect the meaning in the experience to be obvious, transparent. The immediate appeal of a catchy ditty is also its downfall; it leaves us with nothing to reflect on and bring back to the primary experience and so the enjoyment quickly wanes. Contrast this with the novel that "took a bit of getting into" or the piece of classical music that "grows on you".

Dewey issues a caution about subjectivism. He equates "wholesale subjectivism" with a mental attitude that can lead to reducing our interaction with the world to the act of experiencing; to regard our experience as the reality and the objects we appear to experience as "...not-given dubious things...denied all existence save as complexes of mental states, of impressions, sensations, feelings." (Dewey, 1994, 176) This is a state similar to the aimless experiencing mentioned above; we do what we feel like doing and what we feel is right simply because we feel it. At its most extreme it becomes a Cartesian dualism as meaning becomes totally subsumed within individual consciousness, entirely disconnecting it from the influence of that which lies outside of our subjective sensations.

Dewey's experiential approach to philosophical inquiry permeates the Lipman novels. One can literally open any page at random and discover examples of the process of taking experience in the world as a starting point for the reflection which is fed back into the world to enrich the subsequent experience and develop the meaning of that experience. For example: In the Suki novel, page seventeen, beginning line 16, we have a sequence that illustrates the development of an aesthetic experience. Suki questions Harry's assertion that he cannot write and challenges him to use his senses to experience the world literally in front of him. She then helps him to reflect on that primary experience and then look

again at the world with the enrichment that he brings to it based on his reflection on the primary data. (Lipman, 1987, 17)

Another example is contained in Mr Newberry's brief instruction to Harry, who is required to write a short story, to "- deal with something in your life that you find especially interesting." (Lipman, 1987, 39) The instruction, although cryptic, is clear: Become involved with an aspect of the world that interests you, reflect on that, and enrich the experience by recording the outcome of that reflection. Suki also tries to make Harry see the value of reflection on primary experience when, in response to Harry's perception of his life as boring, she advises "It's not what you do that counts, Harry. It's what you make of what you do." (Lipman, 1987, 62) If Harry will only reflect on his "boring" primary experience he may well find that he can make that experience meaningful and consequently interesting enough to inspire his writing.

In a sense, these two examples highlight the deceptive simplicity of Dewey's philosophy: Of course you can understand stuff by doing things and then thinking about them; of course you will understand it better if you check out what you have thought by having another look at the stuff again. It's how we figure out what things mean. What is deceptive about this process is that the territory between the "aimless experiencing" that leads people to uncritically accept any nonsense which gives immediate gratification (for example almost all New Age beliefs) and the rigid prejudice of the closed mind that imposes arbitrary mean-ing on all experience (for example those who say of paintings, "I know what I like and I like what I know!") is very narrow. One can effortessly fall into either of these polarities because it is actually quite demanding to have meaningful experiences. It is far easier to take things for granted, to "go with the flow", or to "make up one's mind once and for all", than it is to be willing to shape and be shaped by one's experiences.

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# Encouraging Student Voices in Welfare Policy

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This paper is divided into three parts. The first explains the genesis of a new student welfare policy in a Sydney school and focuses on the values addressed in that policy. The second discusses those values in the context of a particular approach to values education in schools. The final part argues for the advantages of an approach to values education through philosophical inquiry.

## PART ONE

In response to concerns expressed both by staff members and parents, the staff a state primary school in the inner north-western suburbs of Sydney, decided in 2000 to develop a new, comprehensive Student Welfare Policy. The staff met regularly to work on producing a document that in its final form had three main sections:

1. An introduction which included a statement of the School Ethos and a statement of Principles, Aims and Outcomes
2. A Welfare Code which addressed the rights and responsibilities of students and staff, expected standards of behaviour, codes of conduct, school rules and policies
3. A strategies section in two parts; one which addressed strategies to recognise and reinforce student achievement and another addressing strategies for dealing unacceptable behaviour.

A draft of the document was presented to the Parents' and Citizens' Association for discussion and comment by the parents and caregivers. It is the introduction to the Policy that is the focus of this paper, since the values espoused there are made explicit in the codes of conduct, rules and policies articulated in the second section, the Welfare Code.

### 1. Introduction

An analysis of the introduction reveals reiteration of a number of values. These include:

- cooperation, mutual respect, mutual support, care, consideration, courtesy toward others, respect for others rights and their property
- responsibility
- justice and fairness
- tolerance
- a sense of belonging
- a safe, stable environment
- peaceful resolution of conflict
- understanding and respect for our cultural heritage, including the particular background of Aboriginal and ethnic groups and other cultures
- self-confidence, self-esteem, self-discipline, acceptance of legitimate authority, positive acknowledgement
- respect for the values that underpin society and for its laws
- capacity to exercise judgement
- participation by all members of the school community in school life and decision-making

This broad list of values appears to focus on three areas which necessarily build upon one another, although not in a linear fashion:-
**Individual development -** Self-confidence; self-esteem; self-discipline; acceptance of legitimate authority; positive acknowledgement (of initiative, scholarship, participation, appropriate behaviour, effort);

a sense of belonging, pride and identity; a capacity to exercise judgement; responsibility; self-direction and a commitment to life-long learning.
**Relations with others** - Peaceful resolution of conflict; Justice and fairness; tolerance; understanding and respect for our cultural heritage, including the particular background of Aboriginal and ethnic groups and other cultures; equality – rejection of sexism and racism; co-operation; mutual respect; mutual support; care; consideration and courtesy toward others; respect for others rights and for their property (honesty, courtesy)
**Our place in society** - Respect for the values that underpin society and for its laws; a safe, stable environment; participation by all members of the school community in school life and decision making; creation and maintenance of positive and harmonious relationships.

**PART TWO: Implementation – What can we achieve?**

The second part of this paper focuses on the question of the implementation of this policy and on two differing facets of the policy. The broad list of values contained in the School Welfare Policy[1] does not provide any clarification of the relationship between these differing facets of the Policy. On the one hand, the Policy affirms the importance of the students' acceptance of legitimate authority and makes explicit the kinds of behaviours and attitudes that are expected of students attending the school. It appears to take for granted that values education involves the teaching or inculcation of particular values or attitudes. Among those mentioned are: respect for the property of others, tolerance toward others, obedience to the school rules, obedience to the instructions of those in authority, and respect for peers and teachers.[2]

On the other hand, there appears to be a recognition in the Policy that in fact teachers cannot teach values such as moral autonomy or attitudes such as self-esteem, self-confidence or a sense of worth. From this perspective, teachers are responsible for providing a context within which they teach and refine skills that lead to the development of self-confidence in children, a sense of their own worth and a corresponding respect for the worth of their peers. The teacher's role in values education is thus that of a facilitator, encouraging reflection upon and the development of attitudes and values.

Now the processes of socialisation within communities require some degree of acceptance of and conformity to the demands of legitimate authority in the behaviour of members. This is one of the demands of a civil society. But the Policy indicates that the school community wants to go beyond the achievement of conditioned civility. It indicates a desire to engage children in reflection on community values, to have them consider and recognise their importance in the wider context of life and thus to adopt them as their own.

These two facets of the Policy imply that attempts are made both to inculcate particular values and to facilitate the development of particular values. Children are made aware of the guiding principles, rules and values of the school they attend. They are expected to behave in accordance with those principles and values and to adopt the moral code of their school. Indeed "practices which modify irresponsible behaviour" have been developed for those children who fail to do so. And yet verbs used in the Policy document to explain the role of the school in values education - 'fostering', 'encouraging', 'promoting' and 'enhancing' - indicate an awareness that the school cannot ensure that

particular values are adopted by students. Rather the school offers programs that aim to develop "the capacity to exercise judgement in matters of morality, ethics and social justice" and to "develop moral autonomy" in students.[3] It is taken for granted that one aspect of the development of moral autonomy will be the students' acceptance of the need for legitimate authority.

Moral autonomy, a capacity to make ethical distinctions and to apply ethical principles to one's own experience would seem to require that the child go beyond adherence to a particular code of expected behaviour or set of rules. Such capacities require that the child reflectively engages with a particular ethical principle or moral value, in the context of his or her own experience. This will demand some skill on the part of the child. For example, it might involve being able to imaginatively put oneself in the place of another, being capable of imagining how one's own actions might be interpreted by others or being able to draw an analogy between past experience and a present situation.

Two questions arise with regard to the policy at this point. Firstly, how do we develop the child's capacity to make ethical distinctions, to apply ethical principles to their own experience and to be morally autonomous? And secondly, what is the relationship between a capacity to exercise judgement in matters of morality, ethics and social justice and adherence to a particular set of school rules or a code of expected behaviour? Does the capacity to exercise such judgement and apply it to one's own experience develop as a consequence of children coming to accept the school's rules and standards of behaviour? Or, is this capacity and the capacity for moral autonomy in general developed apart from the inculcation of rules and codes of behaviour?

Joseph Flay would argue that the acceptance of any set of morals and values in young children is a matter of enculturation. He argues in "Can Children Do Moral Philosophy?"[4] that prior to adolescence, it is both impossible and immoral to teach ethics, in the sense of "some specific moral code"[5], to students. He explains that, in any event, indoctrination into morals and mores is proscribed in the United States school system. According to Flay, "the study of ethics presupposes two things: (1) that the individual has adequate experience in life, and (2) that the individual is no longer governed on the whole by passion and whim but by a desire to act according to some rational principles."[6] The pre-adolescent child possesses neither of these features and is therefore barred from any moral independence, on Flay's view. Rather the child,

> lives is a world governed by those who are beyond him in power and whose values he takes up as a given. It is a world of authority in which values are assimilated through enculturation and not derived from thought and experience. It is a perception of the world which may from time to time bother the child, but on the whole a perception which is accepted for truth, however good or bad the experience might be. The "gods"rule.[7]

Flay quotes from Simone de Beauvoir's *Ethics of Ambiguity* to support his assertion that it is not until adolescence that the individual fully assumes his subjectivity.[8]

> Men stop appearing as if they were gods, and at the same time the adolescent discovers the human character of the reality about him. Language, customs, ethics, and values have their source in these

> uncertain creatures. The moment has come when he too is going to be called upon to participate in this operation; his acts weigh upon the earth as much as those of other men. He will have to choose and decide.[9]

On Flay's view, the adolescent - who as a child has lived in a world largely governed by the authority of adults, be they parents, teachers, religious leaders or older adolescents – now notices the contradictions among adults, their hesitations and weaknesses. The authoritarian structures of the child's world cracks, showing the fallibility and deceptiveness of that authoritarian world. The adult world turns out not to be a "world in which values are mutually exclusive of each other"; it is "not the lofty, logical, stable source for values, but a world in which there is in fact no set, universal criterion for values at all".[10] Flay concludes that we are completely unjustified in teaching ethics to pre-adolescent children, since it is only as adolescence approaches that individuals have sufficient experience and are sufficiently motivated by rational principles to make the teaching of ethics appropriate. To introduce ethics before that point "is to do violence to the development of the child".[11]

**The Moral Concerns of Children**

Flay claims that in the past moral education was undertaken via the apparatus of traditional society, through *rites de passage* and indoctrination and training by elders.[12] This approach to moral education is no longer possible, on his view, since no one is formally initiated into our society. In our modern non-traditionalist society, a system of schools bringing together children of many unrelated families, replaces the apparatus of traditional society. Flay does not offer a definition of moral education, but he appears to use it synonymously with the phrases "the raw material of ethics", "some specific moral code" and "the development of a capacity to cope intelligently with the moral problems of ...[one's] society"[13].

It is moral education in the sense of teaching of a specific moral code which was "an important part of formal and informal education in the traditional societies", that Flay sees as impossible in today's schools. He appears to have two reasons for his view. One is the reason given just above, that pre-adolescent students do not have sufficient life experience to be able to deal with the raw material of ethics or to cope intelligently with the moral problems of their society; they must learn the raw materials of ethics from experience first. The other reason is that the family backgrounds of students in modern school systems are too diverse to make it possible to teach a specific moral code.

But there is something curious here, because Flay simply assumes that learning by experience and the enculturation of values are quite separate from learning through thought and decision. He also fails to acknowledge that in our non-traditional society schools plays a role in the processes of enculturation, whether they do this implicitly or explicitly. Teaching is part of the enculturation process, and the values, codes of behaviour and rules that teachers explain, reinforce and expect children to accept are an aspect of the ethical life of the school community. Flay's assertion that it is impossible to teach ethics, in the sense of "some specific moral code" [14], needs to be reconsidered in the light of the capacities young children display. Young children do appear to be

aware of and able to articulate behaviours they regard as good or bad. The results of a gender survey of Year 2 students (referred to below) suggest that teasing, fighting and unequal access to playing areas are behaviours that many students identify as unfair. Since the survey reveals that they are capable of articulating these concerns, we might well assume that they are capable of providing at least a limited list of behaviours they regard as right or wrong. To the extent that they can do this, they have learned or acquired a moral code. This is not to say that they have necessarily been taught that moral code, but nor would it allow us to conclude that it is impossible to teach a specific moral code of behaviour, as Flay asserts. There is no reason to deny any connection between efforts to teach children values and behaviours articulated in a school's code of conduct and evidence that the children have actually learned or acquired those values and behaviours.

Flay is concerned to draw attention to the limits of the child's understanding and capacity for ethical decision-making as a function of the limits of his or her experience. He believes that the existence of such limits implies that we ought not introduce rational discussion of ethics to children until we have reason to believe that children are ready to grapple with or need to address issues which they see as problematic. His position is not an unreasonable one, in the sense that the introduction of moral concerns which are beyond the ken of a child can be destructive, conducive to psychological conflict and confusing for the child.

Flay asserts, rather than argues, that "[t]he introduction of ethics is the introduction of rationality, something alien to the process of that serious world [constituted by the authority of adults]"[15] to which the young child belongs. Later he claims that "the introduction of reason into morals should be *in response to a felt need* brought about by contact with...[the authoritative, adult] world".[16] But, as noted above, these assertions fail to acknowledge that young children do have their own moral concerns and that they are capable of rational comment about those concerns. The responses of Year 2 students in gender and playground surveys conducted in 2000 at the school which is the subject of this paper, suggest that "felt needs" arise when a child's pursuit of a goal is frustrated by others, be they other children or adults. Among the responses of students to two of the questions on the gender survey were the following comments:

BOYS:

- **What are the best things about being a boy at this school?**
  "You can play soccer"; "You can play chasings"
- **What are the worst things about being a boy at this school?**
  "Boys get hurt more"; "Boys have to fight"; "Boys fight"; "Boys get on detention more"; "Boys are in trouble more"; "Girls are smarter than boys"

GIRLS

- **What are the best things about being a girl at this school?**
  "Girls don't have to fight"; "Girls get to wear three kinds of clothes"; "Girls can help the teacher"
- **What are the worst things about being a girl at this school?**
  "Boys tease girls"; "Girls are ignored"; "Girls can't play soccer"; "Boys annoy girls"; "Boys use the good parts of the playground"

The moral concerns underlying many of the students' responses included:

- respect from peers (with regard to problems of teasing and bullying);
- justice and fairness (with regard to perceived unfair use of the playground, unequal opportunity to play soccer, and unequal access to teachers); and
- self-confidence (with regard to the pressure boys felt to fight and the perception of some boys that girls were smarter than boys).

The playground survey also revealed concerns about fairness (with regard to the use of the playground and obeying rules), as well as concerns about safety and security. In many instances the survey responses reveal felt needs about fairness and respect brought about through interaction with other children in the playground. Flay takes no account of such needs and appears unaware of the young child's ability - evident in these survey responses - to recognise and articulate their needs, as well as to reflect on questions of justice and fairness in relation to their own experience.

The evidence of these abilities in young children is particularly relevant to two of the aims of the Policy mentioned above – those which aim to develop "the capacity to exercise judgement in matters of morality, ethics and social justice" and to "develop moral autonomy" in students. The survey responses suggest that in fact Year 2 students are already capable of exercising such judgement within the context of their experience. If the staff's objective is to *develop* this capacity, then this can only involve expanding or elaborating on existing possibilities. Reflection on the basis of experiential knowledge, making use of learning that has occurred in specific contexts, will facilitate this kind of development.

**PART THREE: Values Education and Philosophical Inquiry - Substantive Issues and Procedural Principles**

The moral concerns and values underlying the students' responses to the two surveys and the majority of the issues identified in the Policy refer to substantive values, that is they deal with the content of ethical discussion and inquiry, *what* we are thinking about or inquiring into. A commitment to encouraging reflection on substantive values is a procedural issue. It is a question of *how* we conduct ethical inquiry, a question of the way in which children come to their ethical understandings. Philosophical inquiry can encourage a child's reflective capacity and this gives her opportunities to integrate her knowledge, her skills and her experience. The young girl knows that fairness demands that girls and boys at her school have equal access to the playground during recess periods. Her experience is that this does not happen in practice, so fairness is an issue for her. This suggests that she has thought about her own experience in the light of a substantive value (fairness) which has no doubt to some extent been enculturated. Thus there is clearly a relationship between enculturated values and rules of behaviour and the capacity to make ethical distinctions, since this capacity is partly built on reflection on enculturated values in the light of the child's own experience.

The methodology used in philosophical inquiry can provide the opportunity to reflect on substantive values like fairness, on two levels. Philosophical discussion of the substantive value of fairness can proceed in a way that models the principle of fairness. The teacher in the Community of Inquiry can encourage students to adopt procedures that ensure the broad participation of class members. Students who develop respect for other members of the classroom Community of Inquiry are in a

position to appreciate the benefits of impartiality and objectivity. Encouraging students to be coherent, consistent and comprehensive in their thinking fosters the effective communication and rigorous inquiry central to philosophical discussion. Specifically this involves, for example, developing the skills of giving and asking for reasons, making distinctions, asking appropriate questions, looking for consequences, investigating assumptions, recognising implications and being prepared to explore possibilities. Thus the procedures adopted in the philosophy classroom can address values that educators often indicate are of concern to their students, values such as fairness, respect for the truth, obedience to rules and respect for the rights of others.

I would like to sidestep debate about whether or not the Community of Inquiry can avoid endorsing any particular set of substantive values as a result of discussion in a Community of (moral) Inquiry. With the exception of one comment, I equally wish to leave aside the question of the stronger position that Philosophy in Schools is itself necessarily involved in indoctrination [if it insists that "democratic and egalitarian conditions are non-negotiable prerequisites for philosophy in the classroom."[17]. My comment is to draw attention to Philip Cam's point that indoctrination has been taken to imply the deliberate inculcation by non-rational methods of an unshakeable belief, a closed mind on a particular matter;[18] and certainly this is not a fair assessment of our intention in the philosophy classroom.

My introduction of the distinction between substantive values and procedural principles is intended to suggest a way of approaching the implementation of a school welfare policy, at least at the theoretical level. In implementing such a policy it is important to consider not only *what* we are inquiring into but also *how* we conduct our ethical inquiry. An emphasis on the procedural principles of inquiry can provide an opportunity both to discuss moral values while simultaneously rehearsing or testing out those values. The Policy in its statement of "Principles, Aims and Outcomes" lists a number of aims that are satisfied in the procedures of a well-functioning Community of Philosophic Inquiry. These include a commitment:

- to foster a spirit of cooperation and mutual support;
- to provide a stable, ordered environment in which students can learn effectively and behave responsibly;
- to foster a feeling of belonging; and
- to create and maintain positive relationships within the school community.

Finally, the values, attitudes and skills which we promote as procedural principles of the Community of Inquiry are best applied to substantive issues which are 'alive' for our students, issues which engage them because they come within the range of their experience. Joseph Flay refers to the notion of 'kairos', or "appropriate time", asserting that any discussion of ethical issues by children must "naturally come into play" (p.156). He suggests that this might provide a rationale against introducing ethics to children, since on his view the young child's experience is limited. But the extent of the experience of young children cannot be generalised and dismissed in this arbitrary way. Rather, Flay's demand that we attempt to determine the appropriate time to introduce ethics to adolescents misses the point. As discussed above, the demands of life in a civil society require that adults initiate young children into the values that underpin our society and its laws.

Considerations of appropriateness are however relevant with regard to those aspects of the policy which aim to develop "the capacity to exercise judgement in matters of morality, ethics and social justice" and to develop "moral autonomy" in students. In the light of my argument that the Year 2 students referred to above in fact already demonstrate these capacities to some extent, I am using that sense of "develop" which refers to expanding or elaborating on existing possibilities. I am suggesting that building the reflective inquiry techniques of the philosophy classroom into ethical discussion will foster that development. This requires finding the time to fit this into the curriculum, but it also requires constructing a curriculum conducive to philosophical discussion between peers. One procedural principle that may be useful here is a commitment from teachers to spend time trying to establish what their students moral concerns are and what issues are "alive" for them at different times in their school careers.

## Endnotes

[1] The School Welfare Policy 2000 is referred to as 'the Policy' hereafter.
[2] The Policy 2000, p.6
[3] Ibid., p.3
[4] in Lipman, Matthew and Sharp, Ann Margaret (1978) *Growing Up With Philosophy*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp.145-157.
[5] Ibid., p.147.
[6] Ibid., p.149.
[7] Ibid., p.150.
[8] Ibid., pp.150-151.
[9] Ibid., p.151.
[10] Ibid., p.153.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., p.146.
[13] Ibid., pp.146-8.
[14] Ibid., p.147.
[15] Ibid., pp.153-154.
[16] Ibid., p.156.
[17] Reed, R. (1991) 'On emerging communities of inquiry' in *Bulletin of the International Council for Philosophical Inquiry with Children*, 5,1,6.
[18] See *Critical and Creative Thinking*, Vol.3, No. 1, March 1995, for a discussion of these questions by Philip Cam, Peter Davson-Galle, Roger Cresswell and Peter Hobson.

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## Applying P4C in Korean Preschool

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**Introduction**

Preschool education in Korea has several distinctive features: firstly, an excessive parental enthusiasm for education; secondly, a deep-rooted history of home education based on Confucianism; thirdly, a large number of children per class. Yet since preschool education is not publicly regulated in Korea, most young children are being privately educated. As a result, several problems have been identified. One of the key issues is the inability of the government to determine whether or not every preschool is properly conducting the government granted curriculum. The government is currently attempting to make preschool education public. It is believed that this goal will be achieved in the near future.

The curriculum in Korean preschools is designed to develop and enhance children's ability to: (1) pursue their strengths in an educational setting for the whole person, (2) exercise their natural creative talents, (3) create new values based on their understanding of Koprean culture, and (4) devote themselves to the development of commonwealth based on democratic citizenship.

These educational goals often give rise to complications with home education since there is a difference between Confucianism and democratic citizenship. Actually, in most preschools, teaching how to read, write and count still tends to be emphasised while education for citizenship and creativity lacks attention. In addition, educational programs based on Montessori or Piaget's cognitive development approach put emphasis on knowledge acquisition rather than citizenship or creative thinking. However, citizenship development and creative thinking education are the very important goals in preschool education.

In consideration of this educational reality, implementing the P4C program as a reflective model of education, as suggested by Lipman who criticises trivial or information-acquisition education, is considered appropriate to achieve the educational goals set out in Korean preschool curriculum in terms of emphasising community and development of critical, creative and caring thinking. The P4C program takes as its starting point, the position that philosophy is a community experience. So in many ways, the building of a community if inquiry is the heart of P4C.

Lipman, et al. (1980) said that the construction of a community of inquiry is a more substantial achievement than the mere contrivance of an open environment. It is also stated that certain conditions such as the readiness to reason, mutual respect, and an absence of indoctrination should be kept. Since these conditions are immanent in philosophy, it is possible for the classroom to be converted into a community of inquiry if children are encouraged to think philosophically. We know that there are some theoretical objections. One of the main objections comes from the developmental theorist. They have insisted young child could not work with abstract capacity. But Mulvaney (1993) believes that young children can make a community of inquiry because that curiosity and the need to be happy constitute the twin psychological spurs to philosophical life, and they are not foreign to the young child.

Recent studies show that young children possess abilities, which can be the foundation of community of inquiry. The abililty for class-inclusion can be achieved between the ages of 4 and 6 through methods which reduce the number of classes or use familiar objects (Markman, 1978). Children aged between 4 and 7 can carry out transitive inference if they can memorise the conditions correctly (Brown, Kane, & Echoes, 1986). Children aged 3-4 can demonstrate the ability for perspective-taking by achieving decentralised perspective taking (Broke, 1975). In addition, children have the ability to understand psychological causal reasoning and as a result, are able to understand others' internal beliefs [emotion, need, intention, motive] (Bretherton & Beeghly, 1982). Also, they possess altruism, which is the foundation of pro-social reasoning ability.

Since the theoretical possibility of establishing a community of inquiry by young children is recognised, we hope to try to see the effects of the P4C program in Korean preschool. Though there are several characteristics of the community of inquiry, it will be possible to evaluate the community of inquiry in terms of classroom interactions, thinking skills, and dialogue contents. Therefore, in this study of how the P4C program can affect the community of inquiry, the following questions have been asked:-

1) What changes occur in classroom interactions after applying the P4C program?
2) What changes occur in young children's thinking skills after applying the P4C program?
3) What changes occur in young children's dialogue contents after applying the P4C program?

**Background of Study: P4C program in Korean preschools: 1996-1998)**

To apply the P4C program to Korean preschools, the following were required:- (1) training teachers, (2) selecting target preschools, (3) developing teaching methods, (4) selecting stories.

**1. Training teachers**

Enforcement of the P4C program is an entirely new educational approach, different from previous ones where knowledge acquisition and information transfer is considered important. So researchers have carried out a training course consisting of theory, modeling, and practice before applying the program.

Teachers received approximately 40 hours of theory training. The contents of this training were: an introduction to developmental psychology; the P4C program; a community of inquiry; techniques in philosophical discussion; and philosophical questions. For modeling training, researchers engaged in philosophical discussions with teachers by utilising Harry, Nous, and picture books. A 60-hour practice training course consisting of 30 hours of P4C activities with preschoolers and 30 hours of seminars in which class evaluations were conducted.

Upon finishing this training course, teachers reported a variety of personal changes: (i) instead of suggesting instant answers to preschoolers' questions, they found that by asking questions they gave preschoolers more time to think, (ii) they became more considerate and allowed preschoolers the opportunity to experience self discovery and thinking pleasure, (iii) they pay more attention to

preschoolers' questions and talking, (iv) they realised that they are not a deliverer of knowledge but a member of the community.

**2. Selecting target preschools**

Since 1996, two private preschools have carried out the P4C program and verified the effects. Both the parents and director of the preschools were supportive and active in the P4C program application. The parents were invited to observe their children's class activities in order to make them better understand the program. Then the next time, the parents participated in 3 hours of P4C theories and class activities. Currently, other preschools are trying to implement this program.

**3. Developing teaching methods**

A few things were taken into consideration when enforcing the P4C program in Korean preschools: (i) classes usually consist of 30-35 children so small group activities are used, (ii) since young children tend to like variety (Mackrill, 1995), such activities as making up stories, drawing pictures, & drama are conducted in addition to philosophical discussion, (iii) the hour of P4C-related activities is maintained for 20-25 minute periods since the attention span of young children, aged 5-6, is not long (Berk, 1997), (iv) since preschool curriculum concentrates on one subject for 1-2 weeks, picture books which are appropriate for the preschool curriculum subject and which stir preschoolers' philosophical curiosity are selected, (v) Korean fairy tales are attempted in consideration of Korean culture.

In consideration of all these features, the P4C program in Korean preschools consists of 7 teaching-learning steps: 1. selection of a story, 2. establishment of a discussion plan, 3. offering a story, 4. constructing an agenda, 5. discussion, 6. making up a story, 7. drama. In a real classroom setting, teachers selected a story and established the discussion plan before class, then the P4C program was divided into 4 parts: (1) offering a story and constructing an agenda, (2). discussion, (3). making up a story, (4). drama. These four categories were applied for a period of 20-30 minutes, 4 days a week.

**4. Selecting stories**

For the model class for a community of inquiry with teachers, Harry, Nous, & picture books were utilised. The picture books used in preschool classrooms were selected based on the following standards: (i) Are the stories related to subjects in the preschool curriculum? (ii) Can these stories stir preschoolers' philosophical curiosity? (iii) Can the main characters in the stories show the model of philosophical discussion activities? (iv) Are the conversations rich enough? (v) Is ethical research possible?

## Methods of study.

**1. Subjects of study**

The subjects consisted of 33 five-year-old children (19 boys and 14 girls). The teacher graduated from a 2-year-college, having 5 years of teaching experience in preschool and 2 years of experience in the P4C program.

**2. Procedure of study**

A short story entitled "A baby frog" written by a researcher (Seon-hee Jo) was used under the pre-post test design. For each test, philo-

sophical discussions were carried out with the preschoolers in the classroom. The pre-discussion was carried out on Aug. 12, 1998. After then, a 10-week P4C program was applied using picture books. Then a post-discussion was carried out on Dec. 1, 1998. The same story was used in both the pre-discussion and the post-discussion.

The teaching material used in the 10 week P4C program consisted of 10 picture books. Teacher introduced a new book each week. During the program, the issues discussed with young children were as follows: (i) Should rules be kept? (ii) What's a friend? (iii) Useful and useless things, (iv) Change in appearance, (v) Sharing with others, (vi) shape, (vii) Is joining hands with others always reasonable? (vii) What does 'the fear' mean? (viii) Colour, (ix) the meaning of family.

Prior to class, seats were arranged in a U-shape, to allow preschoolers to see each other. The questions from preschoolers were written on the blackboard. Philosophical activities of a community of inquiry were divided into 4 steps; 1. offering a story and constructing an agenda on Monday, 2. a philosophical discussion on Tuesday, 3. making up a story on Wednesday, and 4. drama on Thursday. It is important to note that every step must be based on previous step so that each step is inter-related. The activity time for every step was approximately 30 minutes (between 10:10 AM to 10:40 AM).

**3. Collection and Analysis of data**

An evaluation of the community of inquiry can be conducted in various ways (ex. test, observation, and analysis of protocols). Among them, analysing a protocol is the very helpful in determining the qualitative index of the development of a community. In this respect, the protocol of discussion was used as data in this study.

The main researcher and two assistants took part in all discussions and observed and recorded the discussions. Then they made a protocol, referring to the observation data. (In this study, a researcher and 2 assistants analysed the protocols of pre- & post- discussion.)

1) Analysis of classroom interaction change

This analysis was done in terms of children's participation ratio, and the classroom interaction dynamic. And the classroom dynamic was analysed in terms of teacher's speaking ratio, children's speaking style, and the structure of teacher-children interaction.

Speaking styles of preschoolers, based on Sprod (1997), were divided into response to teacher, response to other children, transfer to new subjects, returning to previous subject, and the rest. For analysis of the structure of teacher-children interaction dynamic, topics of discussion were abstracted.

2) Analysis of preschoolers' thinking skills change

Since the categories of thinking skill are inter-related rather than independent, and understanding the goal hidden behind preschoolers' speaking requires a lot of inferences, there are some problems in classifying preschoolers' speaking as thinking skill. Especially in the case of young children who lack the same thinking skills, used by adults. So this study focused on abstracting thinking skills shown in protocols and analysing the features rather than counting the categories.

(3) Analysis of dialogue contents
The most controversial issue is whether philosophical conversation is possible among young children. G. Matthews said young children could perform philosophical reasoning, which is considered meaningful. This study put emphasis on the conversation that is considered meaningful. However, the analyser may fail to understand the world of young children.

**4. Limits of study**

1) In Confucian society, asking parents many questions or requesting explanations is not considered polite. In that respect, inter-related education with home is necessary. This study prepared training programs for parents and had a chance to inform on the basic features of this program to them. Nevertheless, due to time restraints, it was very difficult to make parents completely understand the objectives of the program.
2) Since a lot of young children (33) took part in the program, every child was not given enough opportunities to speak.

**Results and discussion**

**1. Analysis of classroom interaction change**

1) How many children participated in the discussions?

**Table 1.** Frequency of children participating in discussion

| | Pre-discussion | Post discussion |
|---|---|---|
| Total no. of children | 33 (100%) | 33 (100%) |
| No. of c. participating in dis. | 9 (27%) | 15 (45%) |

At the pre-discussion, 27% of preschoolers participated while 45% of preschoolers took part in the post-discussion. This indicates that the number of 5-year-old preschoolers who participated in the discussion increased as the discussion activities continued. However, it showed that only 45% of them participated in the discussion activities of the post-discussion, which means that more than half of them didn't say a word. It can be said that half of them failed to have a chance to speak in spite of the teacher's efforts due to the large group (33). So it is necessary for teachers to seek various ways of encouraging more children to participate in the discussion in order to apply the P4C program to Korean preschool.

2) The dynamics of the classroom interaction.

**Table 2.** Teacher's speaking ratio

| | Pre-discussion | Post discussion |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher | 33 (36%) | 39 (34%) |
| Children | 59 (64%) | 77 (66%) |
| Total | 92 (100%) | 116 (100%) |

According to Santi (1993), less than 30% of intervention from teachers in classroom discussion is appropriate. In this study, teacher's speaking amounted to 36% in the pre-discussion and 34% at the post-discussion. As the discussion was underway, the speaking ratio of the teacher decreased a little bit, showing an insignificant difference.

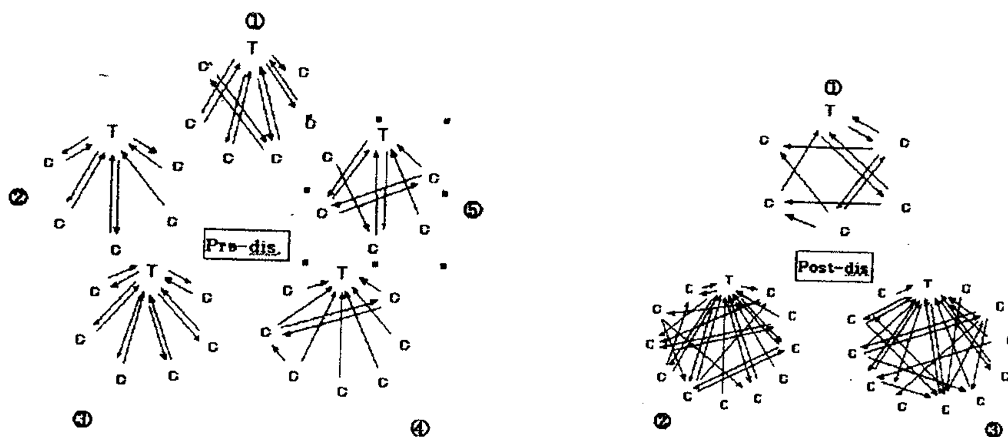
**Table 3.** Children's speaking styles

| | Pre-discussion | Post-discussion |
|---|---|---|
| To teacher | 38 (64%) | 42 (55%) |
| To other c. | 18 (31%) | 30 (39%) |
| Transfer to new subject | 0 | 2 (3%) |
| Returning to previous subj. | 2 (3%) | 1 (2%) |
| Rest | 1 (2%) | 2 (3%) |
| Total | 59 (100%) | 77 (100%) |

Also, 64% of preschoolers' speaking in the pre-discussion was in response to teacher and 31% to other children while 55% in the post-discussion was in response to teacher and 39% to other preschoolers. This result shows that the pattern 'question by teacher - answer by children' has decreased and that he interaction among preschoolers has gone up. As we can, the teacher-centred interaction was used more in the pre-discussion while increased interaction among preschoolers was demonstrated in the post-discussion.

To further analyse the dynamic of teacher-children interaction, topics of discussion were abstracted, and a structure of interaction was made per topic. The topics of pre-discussion were 5, as follows: (1) Can people and frogs be friends? (2) Is it possible to be friends in spite of skin colour difference? (3) Is it possible to be friends in spite of size difference? (4) Is it possible to be friends in spite of face difference? (5) Can people and insects be friends? The topics of post-discussion were 3 as follows: (1) Can people and frogs be friends? (2) How does a friend feel if I treat him badly? (3) If we were friends, should I do everything for him?

**Figure 1.** Structures of teacher-children interaction.




In Figure 1, it appeared that in the post-discussion, the intervention of teacher was reduced and preschoolers' spontaneous discussion became more active. This result agrees with the explanation by Splitter & Sharp (1985), that classroom discussion and conversation can be done via teachers at the first stage of the discussion activities, then made by community members afterwards. But it is slightly different from the community of inquiry where interactive conversation between teachers and children occurs because in this study the teacher plays leading roles in directing the scope of the conversation. However, it shows a big difference from the general conversation pattern of Korean preschool where conversation between teachers and preschoolers is made with all the preschoolers looking directly at the teacher.

**2. Analysis of changes in preschoolers' thinking skills.**

1) Offering alternatives

Offering alternatives was not introduced at the pre-discussion. But, at the post-discussion, some alternatives such as making a parachute, sticking it to the frog's legs, and putting a blanket on the floor prevent to the frog from dying were suggested.

Sung-ho: It won't. I'll make a parachute and put it on the frog.
A-Rum: Then, what if it gets pricked with a stone?
Dae-woo: There's grass under it.
Min-jung: Putting a bed or blanket under it could work

2) Asking for good reasons

Initially, preschoolers tended to pay attention to a specific phenomenon and think about it on the grounds of self-centredness. Within in short amount of time, they were able to compare and explain situations considering others point of view. For example, they failed to compare and explain the reasons at the pre-discussion, showing interest only in a specific phenomenon, saying things like: 'It has different colour skin ', 'People and frogs cannot make friends because frogs are too small' To the contrary, at the post-discussion, they could search for the reason in consideration of other's viewpoint. Comparisons and explanations were also possible, as shown in these examples: 'If a frog plays alone, it'll get bored', 'Min-su wants to be friends with the frog', 'If Min-su treats his friends well, his friends will treat Min-su well, too'

Sung-ho: Why did Min-su let the frog play with his toys?
Teacher: Why did he do that?
Jin-hee: If a frog plays alone, it'll get bored. Min-su wants to be friends with the frog.
Dae-woo: We should treat others well so we can make friends with them.
Jae-won: Why is that?
Dae-woo: If Min-su treats his friends well, his friends will treat Min-su well, too.

3) Reasoning

At first, the children sought results based on their thoughts. After a while, it was possible for them to use reasoning to consider other's viewpoints. For instance, at the pre-discussion, they made conclusions based on their own thinking, saying things like: 'If a frog is put in a house, it will run away from the house while people are sleeping, and if it runs away quickly, it will be hit by a car.' In contrast to the pre-discussion, they could reason a frog's viewpoint at the post-discussion, saying things like: 'What a pity!' 'If a frog is tied with a string, it will get angry', 'the frog is not going to play with Min-su'
Bo-kyeng: The frog is likely to get hurt

Teacher: What do you think about it, Jin-hee?
Jin-hee: What a pity! If a frog is tied with a string, it will get angry, and it's not going to play with Min-su.

4) Clarifying

Though clarifying was not seen at the pre-discussion, the clarifying was seen at the post-discussion. It was evident when students helped their friends when others failed to understand their friend's words.

Jae-won: We made friends with each other
Jin-hee: A friend told another friend that they should make friends with each other, so, we now get along well.

5) Relation finding (finding a relation or relationship?)
When asked at the pre-discussion, "Can people and frogs be friends?" children said "No, it's not possible, when we grow up".
However, conversations about more complicated relationships appeared at the post-discussion. For example, 'That's on the relation between a big eagle and a small one, not a person',
'So, you can't give away only Mom, Dad, and brother? Then, how about grandpa and grandma?'

Dong-ho: Last time, we talked about (whether) people and small animals can make friends or not. What's the difference?
Sung-ho: No that's on the relation between a big eagle and a small one, not a person
---
Dong-ho: So, you can't give away only Mom, Dad, and brother? Then, how about grandpa and grandma?

6) Producing examples
This is not seen at all at the pre-discussion. However, at the post-discussion, they were able to take up examples; Mom, Dad, and brother are things that we cannot give to a friend.

Sung-ho: I can do everything to my friends except three things
Teacher: You can do everything except 3three things, what are the three things? I'd like to hear you.
Sung-ho: I cannot give away Mom, Dad, and brother. Are these the three things?

**3. Change of dialogue contents**

In analysing dialogue contents, it was noticed that specific features (skin colour, size, face) were used as the criteria of friendship at the pre-discussion while more abstract ideas were utilised at the post-discussion; 'How does a friend feel if I treat him badly?' 'If we were friends, should I do everything for him?' Preschoolers, like adults, hold biased views of friends. To them, age, sex, height and appearance can be a standard, and sometimes, the size and type of apartment in which they live. A question such as "Can people and frogs be friends?" is an attempt to break away from the biased views.

Under the question "Can people and frogs be friends?" preschoolers go one step from previous viewpoint of biased standard. The appropriateness of the standard has been verified. An idea of playing together can be appropriate as a standard of friends? Is it possible to tie a string to a frog's legs, then play with it like a yoyo? Preschoolers put themselves in the frogs' place. They feel sympathy for them, the foundation of caring thinking. Hoffman said such sympathy didn't occur at the first stage of education. However, in Confucianism it is supposed that even a young child can feel sympathy because sympathy is human' natural character. They also suggested a solution to tie a frog loosely but, at the same time, bringing up another problem that it may come untied if they tie it too loosely. When they imagined that frogs might have a string pattern on their legs when tied with a string, we can surely see their moral imagina-

tion spread further. When talking about the standard of friends at the pre-discussion, they said that frogs have different colour and appearance from people, so they cannot be friends with people. But at the post-discussion, preschoolers use internal standard as the friendship (rather than external ones). Of course, it's not a perfect idea like Aristotle's. And they thought that if they were friends, they should treat their friend well, demonstrating that they are able to move towards a reciprocal thinking level. We saw this behaviour when observing Dae-woo who thought that if Min-su treated his friends well, then his friends would treat Min-su well, too. Even though Piaget said that young children couldn't understand the reciprocal principle well, his theory was disproved in this situation. Jae-won suggested on the basis of his own experience that we can get friends while we are getting along, not the result of good treatment. Kids also expressed their ways of treating friends through imagination. Sung-ho insisted that he could give everything to his friends except his Mom, Dad, and brother. Dong-ho asked in return "Then can you give your grandpa and grandma?"

**Conclusion**

Making the community of inquiry was the most mindful of all in applying philosophical class to preschools. Knowledge transfer by teachers was the core part of traditional classes. However, philosophy lies in making a community based on secured freedom, inquiry, and friendship. In this study, we learned that preschoolers made the community of inquiry as a result of the P4C program. In other words, preschoolers established it through a free atmosphere, not through the information transfer by an authoritarian teacher. Seen from the relatively authoritarian Korean culture, this result is a very fresh shock. Still, I doubt this community can be developed after this educational atmosphere. In this study, it is emphasised inter-linked education with home through parental training in this program. Open classes for parents, which allowed them participate to in the class for the community of inquiry, were quite effective. A parent confessed that he was shocked to see such a dynamic change in his child.

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# SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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## Philosophy goes to the movies

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In recent times there has been a significant increase in the use of films to help teach philosophy both in Australia and overseas. Films have been used as a component in undergraduate teaching in philosophy, especially for first year teaching. A number of introductory philsoophy courses entirely structured around the discussion of a series of feature films have been offered here and elsewhere. Resources in this area have also increased. There is a large website, the Film-Philosophy site, devoted to film and philosophy, see

(http://www.film-philosophy.com/salon);

and a number of lists of philosophically relevant films have been posted on the net in recent years. I myself have recently set up a Film and Philosophy database which details the philosophical relevance of over 500 films (see *http://arts.anu.edu.au/philosophy/videodata*).

This paper offers some reflections on the use of cinematic material to teach philosophy and to explore philosophical ideas and themes. I examine some of the possible objections to the use of film in this way, and argue that these objections are ill-founded. I then look at the different ways in which films can usefully relate to philosophical issues and themes, and as an example consider in some detail the philosophical relevance of one film in particular, *Total Recall*. In the final section I relate what I have been saying about the philosophical uses of films to some of the broader issues that come up in connection with teaching philosophy. To begin then, let us look at some of the possible objections to the philosophical use of film.

**Philosophy and film**

On the face of it, films might be thought an unlikely medium for conveying philosophical ideas and arguments. Films tend to make their points in the realm of action and experience, rather than reflection and debate.[1] They may thus seem far removed from philosophy, which is often perceived as a formidably abstract and esoteric activity, considering issues and questions far removed from everyday life. And philosophy itself has contributed to this way of thinking. Within philosophy there is a certain degree of prejudice against the visual imagery. Philosophers have often portrayed the use of visual images as indicative of a more primitive, or childlike, form of thought, remote from the austere world of conceptual understanding, and only employed by those who do not have a more sophisticated means of expression. In essence, images are concrete and particular, whereas philosophy is concerned with the abstract and the universal.

This is a prejudice that arguably goes back to the very beginnings of philosophy, to Plato. In *The Republic*, Plato formulates his powerful and haunting myth of the cave.[2] In this he portrays the philosophically unenlightened as captives who are bound so as to see only shadows before them on the wall of a cave, and who take these shadows for reality. Philosophical enlightenment, Plato argues, only comes when we escape from the cave and go out into the sunlight where we can see the real objects. Plato's claim is that sense experience only gives us access to shadows; by breaking free from dependence on sense experience, using reason alone, we can grasp the true nature of reality, the proper task of philosophy. On the Platonic view, then, visual images do not offer a pathway to philosophical enlightenment. And things look even less

promising when we consider specifically cinematic images, because the very structure of the modern cinema is reminiscent of Plato's cave. In the cinema also we sit in a darkened space, transfixed by images removed from the real world. So as cinema-goers we seem to be once again like Plato's captives, and it might seem that films would be no help whatsoever for an understanding of philosophy. Philosophy could only begin once we escape from the cinema.[3]

There is however another way of looking at what Plato's cave has to tell us. With this myth, Plato himself makes use of a vivid image to illuminate his own philosophical position, to convey a sense of what he wants to say. The image Plato is using is not an illusion or mere appearance that we have to tear our eyes away from in order to start to do philosophy. Rather, it is playing a positive role in his discussion, as a way of illustrating and illuminating his position; and hence it serves as pathway to the understanding of his philosophical thinking. The use of images to illustrate philosophical positions and points in this way is not specific to Plato. Despite a lingering Platonic tendency to disparage the image in their 'offical' pronouncements, philosophers down the ages have nonetheless also resorted to a multitude of arresting and vivid visions to illustrate or clarify their position, to formulate a problem, or to provide some basis for discussion. Philosophy is full of strange and wonderful images and inventions of this sort. A cursory survey of the philosophical literature reveals: a ring that confers invisibility, a ship that is transformed piece by piece into two distinct vessels, a donkey starving to death between two equal bales of hay, numerous visions of a perfect, utopian society, harrowing visions of life without authority of any kind, an evil demon that causes people to go wrong even in what they think is most obvious, a melting piece of wax, a missing shade of blue, a statue that smells roses, an island of idle South Sea islanders, a brain in a vat whose 'experiences' are generated by a mad scientist, an 'experience machine' in which all desires will seem to be satisfied, a society in which people are chosen by lottery to be killed for their organs; the list goes on and on.[4] As the contemporary French philosopher Michele Le Doeuff puts it, in this literature there is 'a whole pictorial world sufficent to decorate even the driest "History of Philosophy"'.[5]

So, Plato and those who come after him have often had recourse to vivid images to illustrate, to illuminate and provoke philosophical thinking. My present interest is not so much in the role of the image in philosophy, but rather in the philosophy we can discern in the image. In other words, my concern is with the image insofar as it is illustrative, insofar as it makes philosophical ideas concrete and accessible. Yet here also the image is not merely illustrative. To recognise philosophical ideas, themes and perspectives illustrated in the image is once again to call into question the illusion that philosophy is only concerned with abstraction and universalisation. It is to bring philosophy down to earth in an important way, to show how philosophical themes and issues emerge out of, and relate to, concrete situations. So overall, it seems to me that recourse to images serves to illustrate and illuminate philosophical ideals and themes, and to show how philosophy enters into our everyday experience. And it is in this spirit that philosophy can turn to film. For in the cinema we have a vast repository of images, a galaxy of representations of characters, events and situations, in which philosophical ideas, themes and perspectives find concrete embodiment, and to which we can turn in order to illustrate, illuminate and provoke philosophical thinking.

There is a second possible line of criticism to this use of films, this time not from the point of view of philosophy, but rather from that of films. In making use of cinematic images to tell us about philosophy, it might be argued, don't we run the risk of distorting the films in which they figure, of reducing what is going on in films to mere examples or illustrations for philosophy? Isn't that to violate the integrity of the films we are discussing, to tear the relevant images out of their proper cinematic context in order to subject them to alien purposes? Consequently, shouldn't the discussion of films perhaps be left to film theorists who are concerned with film as film? Well, there is absolutely no guarantee that these other approaches will be any more respectful of the specific character of the films under the discussion. Film theory itself has at times been guilty of burying films under a mass of theoretical (typically Marxist or psychoanalytical) machinery, of reducing them to mere instances of a global theory. What is important, it seems to me, is that whatever approach one takes, due regard is paid to the particularity, the untidy, disorderly actuality, of the films themselves.[6] With regard to the use of films to tell us about philosophy, there is no suggestion here that turning to cinematic images in this way exhausts what is going on in a film. Films do much more than serve as illustrations of philosophical themes. They are extraordinarily rich texts that can be understood in many different ways. If they happen to have a philosophical dimension, this is only one aspect of what is going on in the film.

By the same token, it remains the case that an aspect of the films under discussion is being brought out here. To identify philosophical positions, themes or questions that are being presented or worked through in particular films is also to understand something important about what is going on within these films, to say something about their philosophical content. Once again it needs to be stressed that philosophical thinking and films are not diametrically opposed. Even if films tend to make their points in the realm of action and appearance, rather than that of reflection and debate we should not be misled by this. For all their seeming 'naturalness' films are thoroughly constructed. As such they not only presuppose but also embody a multiplicity of ideas, conceptions of life and action, views of the world and so on; and philosophy, in reflecting on ideas, can tell us something of the intellectual content that films embody and explore. Indeed, philosophy can also learn from film. Films have their own philosophical points to make, their own truth, their own insights into the human situation. Consequently they can sometimes act as a corrective to philosophy, especially a philosophy that has lost itself in abstraction and universalisation. This is another reason why it is important that philosophy turns to films with a due respect for what the film is saying; if it does, there is a chance that philosophers might learn something new.

It might be thought that philosophically significant issues only appear in 'arthouse' movies or those belonging to 'respectable' genres, but this is a misconception. It is certainly true that some films have greater philosophical content than others, but philosophical issues are raised or invoked in a wide variety of films, both mainstream and arthouse, in a wide range of genres. It might be surprising to realise that a mainstream science fiction film like *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990) presents a wealth of interesting questions not only about personal identity but also about what we can be said to know. Of course one might argue that with sufficient ingenuity any film whatsoever could be made philosophically relevant, and this is quite true. However, the important point here is that some films require more ingenuity to make them philosophically

relevant than others, and as a result there is a sense in which those films are being forced into philosophical service. Other films suggest themselves readily in connection with various philosophical themes. This circumstance also provides support for the claim that in identifying philosophical positions, themes or questions that are being presented or worked through in particular films, we are not simply imposing a significance upon them but bringing out something of what is going on within the films.

At the same time, it needs to be stressed that the kinds of philosophical themes or subjects a film is able to illustrate are not necessarily intended to be so evoked by the film-maker. They may certainly be intended - the film maker may have a philosophical point to make - but films have the structure or content they do for all sorts of non-philosophical reasons as well. For example *Total Recall* has scenes which raise various questions about knowledge or personal identity not because the film-maker is particularly interested in exploring philosophically interesting issues, but because the scenarios presented make for good entertainment. Nonetheless the intentions of the film-maker are not the sole determinant of what a film means for its audience. The meaning of films are not reducible to the intentions of their authors. They also have meanings or implications which others, coming to them from different perspectives, can draw out. Consequently it is quite possible for a film to evoke certain philosophical themes or issues which may be far distant from anything the film-maker themselves might have explicitly intended, which are only apparent when one approaches them from a certain perspective, but which nonetheless are not simply imposed on the film but represent an aspect of the film in question.

**Four roles for film**

There are at least four ways in which films link up with philosophical themes, and thus become useful for teaching purposes. Firstly, films may have, as their subject matter, specific philosophers and their work; secondly, films may be made of literary works that were philosophically inspired; thirdly, films may explicitly and self-consciously make use of philosophical ideas and positions; and fourthly, films may present scenarios which, though not necessarily explicitly making use of philosophical ideas and themes, can be used to explore and discuss philosophical issues. Let me say a little about each of these categories in turn.

1. Philosophers in Films. In their hunger for subject matter, films have occasionally featured philosophers amongst their characters. Naturally, given the dramatic constraints of film, the discussion of the work, the specific ideas, of philosophers, tends not to feature centrally. The interest has usually been in the character of the philosopher and the events in their lives. The philosopher may appear as a kind of stock figure, as Socrates does in *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* (Stephen Herek, 1989). They may also appear because the philosopher's life has some sort of dramatic appeal, as in *Stealing Heaven* (Clive Donner, 1988) which features the medieval philosopher Abelard and his doomed love affair with student Heloise, or *Beyond Good and Evil* (Liliana Cavani, 1984) which speculates on the nineteenth century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's love life. But there are also cases where a serious attempt is made to portray not only the philosopher's life but also their thought, as in Roberto Rossellini's trilogy *Socrates* (1970), *Blaise Pascal* (1971) and *Augustine of Hippo* (1975). A recent, highly stylised film in this vein is Derek Jarman's *Wittgenstein* (1993).

2. Film adaptations of philosophical books. Films have been made of a number of philosophically inspired works. Generally speaking it is fictional works that get this treatment. For example, films have been made of short stories and plays by the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (e.g. *No Exit*, Jacqueline Audrey, 1954), and of novels by Simone de Beauvoir (*All Men are Mortal*, Ate de Jong, 1995), Albert Camus (*The Stranger*, Sergio Gobbi and Luchino Visconti, 1967) and Umberto Eco (*The Name of the Rose*, Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1986). Very occasionally, non-fiction works are adapted to the screen. For example, one of the French thinker Michel Foucault's philosophico-historical books was the basis for the film *Moi, Pierre Riviere* (Rene Allio, 1976). This is not to suggest that these films are able to faithfully reproduce the philosophical content of the works involved, and nor of course is there any requirement that they do so. Considerations quite apart from the philosophical content of the original texts dictate the shape and content of the film narrative.

3. Explicit reference to philosophical ideas and arguments in films. Philosophical ideas and arguments are sometimes explicitly invoked in the cinematic narrative. This is by no means always successful because the very explicitness with which it is done may detract from the film's dramatic flow. Nonetheless it can be done quite effectively, especially in comedy, where the philosophical references becoming part of the joke. The Monty Python team are particularly good at making use of philosophy in this way. Their comedies *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones, 1975), *The Life of Brian* (Terry Jones, 1979), and *The Meaning of Life* (Terry Jones, 1983) feature the employment of philosophical themes and ideas for comic effect. Woody Allen's early films like *Love and Death* (1975) contain numerous parodies of philosophical arguments and positions. And in *Dark Star* (John Carpenter, 1972) and *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (Alan Bell, 1981), there are a number of self-conscious philosophical references.

The last two comedies mentioned also belong to the science fiction genre, and science fiction often comes close to explicitly evoking philosophical themes and ideas. Thought experiments proposed by philosophers themselves to explore philosophical themes often have a distinct science fiction ring about them. What would happen if one's brain was transplanted into another body? Would one be the same person if one was duplicated by some machine, and then one's original killed? And conversely, science fiction films often seem to be self-consciously exploring philosophical themes, from the Nietzschean themes in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) to the various ethical and metaphysical issues explored in the various *Star Trek* series, and the multiple philosophical references in *The Matrix* (The Waichowski brothers, 1999). Of course, as I mentioned earlier in connection with *Total Recall*, even if certain philosophical themes are invoked, the film-maker may not be directly or primarily interested in exploring them, but in using them for their entertainment value. To that extent, this category shades into the next one.

4. Films that illuminate philosophical ideas in various ways, without self-consciously seeking to do so. Films do not have to explicitly or self-consciously cite philosophical ideas and positions in order to be philosophically interesting, and to illuminate philosophical themes and issues. In pursuing their dramatic course, they may simply present certain scenarios or situations which happen to serve this purpose. This

can occur in films from almost any genre, and it is relatively rare to find a movie that has no philosophical relevance whatsoever. This is by far the most common way in which films can have philosophical relevance. For present purposes it is probably best to consider a single representative example, and this will be *Total Recall.*

**An example:** *Total Recall*

*Total Recall* was inspired by the short story 'We Can Remember It For You Wholesale' by Phillip K. Dick. Its plot is as follows. Quaid (Arnold Schwarzenneger), apparently a lowly construction worker, has dreams about Mars. He goes to Recall, a 'travel' agency which implants memories of holidays for those who can't afford the real thing, and asks for the 'Martian secret agent adventure'. In the course of the procedure it becomes apparent that he really was a secret agent called Hauser on Mars, whose memories have been wiped and replaced with false ones. Afterwards Quaid goes to the Martian mining colonies, which are governed by the oppressive Administrator Cohagen (Ronny Cox), in order to find out why someone wiped his memory. There, he seeks the help of the local resistance movement, whose leader is reputed to have psychic powers. However, it turns out that he has in fact been set up by Cohagen and his own former self to do just this, in order to lead Cohagen to the elusive resistance leader. Although the plan is partly succesful, Quaid is captured and the resistance leader is killed, Quaid refuses to undergo the process that will remove his new memories and return him to his former self. He escapes and helps the resistance movement to overthrow Cohagen.

This film can be used for the discussion of a number of philosophical themes in the areas of epistemology, personal identity, and social and political philosophy. In the area of epistemology, the specific theme that can be addressed is that of Cartesian scepticism. The relevant text in this connection is of Rene Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, especially the first Meditation. Here Descartes employs a series of sceptical arguments to call our existing beliefs into question, in order to determine if here are any that remain unquestionable (it turns out that the only thing I cannot doubt is that I exist). One such argument is the 'dream argument', in which Descartes argues that he can doubt what his senses are telling him about the world because he cannot be sure whether he is awake, sitting by the fire and writing, or in bed, dreaming that he is doing these things. This argument has enjoyed a more recent incarnation in the 'brain in the vat' scenario, which raises the possibility of doubt about what our senses tell us about the world because we might be brains floating in a vat, being fed input which produces all the experiences we take to be reality.

The aspect of not being sure whether one is awake or dreaming figures prominently in Total Recall, and there is one scene in particular which offers a situation, combining elements of the dream argument and the brain in the vat scenario, which calls into question the evidence of one's immediate experience. In this scene a doctor comes to Quaid's hotel room on Mars and tries to convince him that everything that has happened to him is a dream, and that he is really back on Earth, strapped in his chair at Recall, playing out his chosen adventure. The procedure has gone wrong and an image of the doctor has been sent into his mind to help him escape from his delusional state. Quaid must swallow a pill, the doctor tells him, as 'a symbol of his desire to return to reality'. So is the doctor telling the truth, or is this just a ruse by the Martian authorities to drug and capture him? This scene raises very clearly the issue of how

we are able to tell whether we are awake or in fact asleep, dreaming, and actually in a situation quite other than the one we think we are in.

In the event Arnie is able to decide the issue. As he is about to take the pill he notices that the doctor is sweating nervously, and concludes that the story is a lie. The possibility of radical skepticism thus seems to be nipped in the bud. But one of the features of the dream argument is that it is in fact very difficult to come up with a convincing criterion for determining whether one is awake rather than asleep and dreaming, since any criterion we might come up with, such as pinching onself in order to feel pain, might itself be part of the dream. So there is some question as to whether Quaid's solution is adequate, and indeed this is itself slyly alluded to at the end of the film when Quaid says to the heroine 'I've just had a terrible thought. What if this is all a dream?'. In other words, he is wondering if everything that has happened to him on Mars is part of his 'virtual holiday'. Perhaps the film tries to have it both ways here, permitting an easy resolution to the dilemma in order to get on with the plot, and belatedly suggesting that it might not be so straightforward. But however the issue might be handled in the film, the pill scene provides a useful springboard for discussing the question of what, if anything, could count as a criterion for determining whether we are awake or asleep.

Secondly, the film is useful for discussing the self and personal identity, and in particular the idea of the memory condition for personal identity. This is the idea that I am the same person I was yesterday because I can remember things I experienced and did yesterday. This is the view of personal identity put forward famously by John Locke in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (11, xxvii. 14). Locke's view here is that 'consciousness makes personal identity', an idea which has been developed by later writers who have defended the memory criterion for personal identity. In the film, the issue comes up in the following way. Quaid, who has been captured by the Martian authorities, learns from a message recorded by his former self, Hauser, that he has been set up by his own former self. Hauser has had his memories wiped and has become Quaid in order to get access to the resistance leader, whose psychic abilities would have allowed him to spot Hauser. Now Hauser wants to be restored ('that's my body you've got there, and I want it back'), which entails the destruction of Quaid's memories, of his whole personality. There is also an earlier scene in which Hauser, again through a pre-recorded message, first informs Quaid that 'you're not you, you're me'.

Here, personal identity is tied very closely to memory. It is not seen to be bound up with bodily identity, with having the same body. On the basis of their different memories, Quaid is distinguished sharply from Hauser. Despite having the same bodies, they are not considered to be at all the same person. Moreover they are presented as very different moral agents. Quaid is the good guy and Hauser is the villain, and Quaid is not taken to be responsible for the deeds of the wicked Hauser. This portrayal invites reflection on what counts as a criterion for personal identity, and whether Locke's memory criterion is adequate. Are Quaid and Hauser indeed two different persons with the same body, or are they simply the same person with radically different memories? Our willingness to accept that Quaid and Hauser are different persons in the film shows that the memory criterion has some plausibility, but would would we for example be willing to accept that a person with amnesia is not the same person as they formerly were, because they can

remember nothing of their former life? And there is the related issue of moral responsibility. Once again, we might be happy to absolve Quaid of responsibility for the wicked deeds of Hauser, but if, say, someone cannot remember crashing a car because they were drunk, can they really be said not to be responsible for the accident?

Thirdly, the film is relevant to discussions of the relationship between individual and society, and in particular of the liberal conception of the individual. This is the understanding of the individual as an essentially self-contained, self-determining agent, capable of existing fully formed in a state of nature prior to organised society, and for whom society is essentially an external imposition. This conception of the individual is widespread and tends to be absorbed unthinkingly as we grow up. It contrasts with the kind of view that sees the individual in essentially social terms, with close connections between the kinds of attitudes, values, dispositions and ways of acting that individuals exhibit, and social structures, including institutions like the family, education systems and government bodies. From this perspective, the liberal view of the individual is a distortion, systematically overlooking these connections between the individual and wider social structures. The liberal conception of the individual is particularly evident in the Hollywood movie, which is often dominated by a hero understood as the strong, autonomous individual whose actions cannot easily be explained in terms of social structures or influences. As Tony Schirato and Susan Yell point out, in typically American genre movies like the Western, action movie or private eye film, the hero also tends to be distinguished very sharply from the ordinary members of the community. Ordinary members of the community tend to be mere 'types' who behave in a predictable way. In contrast, the hero 'is a law unto himself, an outsider, someone who acts almost in social isolation even when intervening to set society straight'.[7]

*Total Recall* provides a useful example of this individualistic portrayal of the individual. As the quintessential action hero, Arnie is above all his own man, in charge of his own destiny. Here we can turn once again to the pill scene, discussed earlier in connection with scepticism. The idea that he might be the subject of external influences, conditioning or manipulation by other people, and that he needs to question his most basic perceptions and understanding of his situation, radically calls into question his self-possession and status as a self-determining individual. So here we have another reason why the film only briefly dabbles with the issue of scepticism, and so quickly resolves the issue. As the autonomous hero, the possibility that he is subject to external forces can only be an aberration, a matter of momentary doubt, that needs to be quickly overcome.[8] As the discussion of personal identity shows, Arnie is also subject to external influences in the sense that as Quaid he has been 'constructed', provided with false memories and an identity by Cohagen, as part of a plan to lead Cohagen to the rebel leader. But once again this is not allowed to fundamentally call into question Arnie's status as a self-possessed individual. He very quickly becomes his own man who repudiates his past self, thwarts the villainous Cohagen, and helps the rebels overthrow the corrupt administration. Here we also have another reason why the film presents the good Arnie and his evil former self as such different moral agents. As the autonomous hero, a 'law unto himself', the good Arnie owes nothing to his past.

*Total Recall* thus provides a very clear portrayal of a certain conception of individuality and also makes it possible to raise a number of questions

about it. We might ask whether social influences on the individual can indeed be seen as essentially no more than aberrations to be overcome; or whether it is really possible for individuals to repudiate their origins, past and circumstances so completely. But regardless of what we think of the film's treatment of these themes, the film provides a basis for thinking about our concept of the individual, how the individual stands in relation to society, and whether it is possible to view the individual as an essentially self-contained, self-determining agent, capable of standing apart from all social influences, and for whom society is essentially an external imposition.

**Film and teaching**

*Total Recall* provides an example of a mainstream Hollywood film which touches on a number of philosophical themes to do with scepticism and knowledge, the nature of personal identity, and the individual's relation to society.[9] It does not address these themes self-consciously, but the film nonetheless provides a useful basis for discussing them. I want to finish off now by briefly relating what I have said about the use of films to broader considerations regarding the teaching of philosophy. The use of films in philosophy teaching arguably contributes to continuity between academic and ordinary understanding, a continuity a number of commentators have argued is pedagogically important to maintain. Winifred Lamb argues for the need for such continuity particularly in connection with teaching philosophy for children. Here Lamb draws on Gareth Matthews (1996), who argues that childhood should not be seen as a 'primitive' state of thinking and understanding, one that needs to be overridden and superseded if students are to reach adult understanding. Rather, what needs to be acknowledged is the continuity between childhood and adult philosophical thinking. Philosophy needs to acknowledge that the questions it pursues are child-like, the questions of the inquiring child who is willing to be baffled and amazed, and that there are real, positive links between childhood freshness, inventiveness and wisdom, and the adult philosophical endeavour. Hence as Lamb puts it, '[E]ducating the whole child... involves recognising and respecting this continuity and pedagogically, it means that teachers will value children's questions as genuinely valuable and philosophical'.[10]

Underlying these concerns regarding continuity is a more general claim about academic disciplines and their relation to everyday life. Lamb draws on the philosopher of education R.K. Elliott (1975), who argues that academic understanding is more specialist and technical than common understanding, and is shaped by developments and questions that are internal to the particular disciplines themselves, whilst common understanding is 'more vitally connected with life and concerns that arise from it'.[11] As a result, Elliott argues, the freshness and vitality of ordinary understanding is sometimes sacrificed when it is taken over by academic understanding, when understanding is no longer so closely linked to concrete concerns but begins to serve other interests and concerns. Hence the importance, particularly in teaching, of maintaining a continuity between the natural questions and concerns that arise in common understanding and the pursuit of them in academic inquiry. And these considerations are clearly relevant not only to philosophy for children but to any kind of philosophy teaching when those being taught are coming to the subject for the first time.

In the context of these concerns, the use of films in teaching philosophy has particular relevance. The view that Matthews criticises, that

childhood is an underdeveloped state that needs to be overriden and superseded if proper, adult philosophical understanding is to be attained, is paralleled by the idea that visual imagery of the sort we find in cinema is a more primitive, or childlike, form of thought, only useful until more sophisticated conceptual forms of expression are available. I have suggested that on the contrary, coming to recognise the philosophical themes, ideas and issues illustrated in the image serves to work against the idea that philosophy is an esoteric discipline concerned only with abstract issues and problems that have no relevance to ordinary life. It shows how philosophical issues and concerns arise in and relate to concrete situations. To repeat an expression used earlier, it helps to bring philosophy 'down to earth'. As such, film is one practical way of helping to foster the kind of continuity between academic philosophical understanding and ordinary understanding that Lamb and others have argued for. By making philosophical issues and themes concrete, bringing them down to earth, film helps to show that philosophy deals with topics and issues that are 'vitally connected with life and concerns that arise from it'.

A bridge is supposed to run in two directions, of course, and films also provide a useful way for students to enter into philosophy. Films are a familiar and widely accessible medium. Most students can be counted on to have a considerable experience of movies, since they are a major form of mass entertainment. They know very early on how to 'read' films, to a surprisingly sophisticated degree. The prior degree of interest in and understanding of film as a medium means that there is already a basis for teachers to draw on in getting students interested in the philosophical issues. Moreover, given that the philosophical dimension is not the only aspect of what is going on in a film, given that film is a rich medium capable of being read in a number of different ways, it is also possible for teachers to use films to indicate what distinguishes a philosophical issue, question or approach, what sets it apart from other kinds of approach. Another advantage of using film is that it allows students to become a part of the discussion very quickly. By using video tapes, students can examine particular scenes for themselves and exercise their own interpretive capacities. Film thus provides a forum for students to develop and also defend their interpretations. Finally, opening up the philosophical dimension of films in this way provides a stepping stone to the consideration of more general, more abstract philosophical ideas and concerns. If films are a way of bringing philosophy down to earth, they are also a ladder by which one can ascend to its more abstract reaches.

## Endnotes

1. See V.F. Perkins, V.F. (1972) *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies.* Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1972, 69.
2. The cave myth is discussed by Plato the *Republic*, 514-18
3. See Ian Jarvie (1987) *Philosophy of the Film: Epistemology, ontology, aesthetics.* New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 48.
4. The imaginative visions of philosophers referred to here are Plato's ring-of-Gyges, the Ship of Theseus, Jean Buridan's Ass, Thomas More's Utopia, Thomas Hobbes's state of nature, Rene Descartes' evil demon, David Hume's missing shade of blue, Ettienne Bonnot de Condillac's statue, Immanuel Kant's south sea islanders, Hilary Putnam's brain in a vat, Robert Nozick's experience machine, and Jonathon Harris's survival lottery.

5. Michèle le Doeuff (1989) *The Philosophical Imaginary*, London: Athlone, 1989, 1.
6. See the introduction to Wilson, George (1986) *Narration in Light: Studies in Cinematic Point of View*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, for a discussion of this point..
7. Tony Schirato and Susan Yell (1996) *Communication and Cultural Literacy: An Introduction*. St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 144
8. Ibid, 145.
9. For further discussion of *Total Recall*, and of similar films dealing with the themes of scepticism, personal identity and the individual's relation to society, see the Film and Philosophy database; and also Chris Falzon, *Philosophy Goes to the Movies*, London: Routledge (forthcoming)
10. Lamb, Winifred (2000) Philosophy for Children and the 'Whole Child', *Critical and Creative Thinking* 8 (1), 3
11. Ibid, 4

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# SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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**International Council for Philosophical Inquiry with Children**

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**The Award for Excellence in Interpreting Philosophy for Children**

An award of US$200 will be made by ICPIC for the best essay (5000 words maximum) written during the year on the nature and significance of doing philosophical inquiry with children.

The jury includes Dale Cannon (Western Oregon University),
Walter Omar Kohan (Universidade de Brasília),
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Jana Mohr Lone (University of Washington) and
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The jury is able to read essays in English, Spanish, Portugese, French, Italian, the Scandinavian languages, Chinese and Korean.

**Essays must be submitted to the jury by January 30, 2002**

There is no age limitation and jointly written essays are welcome.

Send one copy of your essay to:-
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email: cannodw@wou.edu
and one copy to:-
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## The Seven Dwarfs and the Game of Knowledge and Belief

**A play highlighting some of the differences between knowledge and belief and how these differences apply to claims about the existence of objects©**

Crystal Baulch: student, Deakin University, Warrnambool, Vic 3280

**Scene** – In a secluded forest grove seven dwarfs are assembled in various postures of relaxation exhibited only be those that have long forgotten the ways of the working world. Two of these short-statured individuals sit either side of the base of what was once a great tree. A heated card game is in progress, the hands already dealt, six cards to each man.

**Narrator** – Since the departure of Snow White the seven dwarfs have found themselves with much idle time on their hands. As a result of this they have become a rather quarrelsome bunch who think too much and act too little. Rather like philosophers in fact. They prefer to cheat and gamble to accumulate more gold than the alternative of an honest day's work in the mine.
See now, look in yonder grove. Grumpy has such a plan in mind. He has picked what he considers an easy target, Dopey, as we all know that Grumpy doesn't like to lose. The game they are playing is called Knowledge and Belief.

**Grumpy** –[grinning wickedly as he lays down his first card]
Ah-Ha! A dragon. Well, everybody knows they exist.

**Dopey** –[hesitantly] Naar Wal . . . . . . , what's a narwhal?

This exchange gathers the others' attention. They too wonder what a narwhal is. They have never heard of such a beast.

**Sneezy** – How? may I ask, dear Grumpy. How do you know of the existence of dragons?

**Narrator** –[whispers in the foreground] You see, the idea of the dwarfs' card game is to get knowledge of the existence of the creature they may happen to draw. If a player can only muster the alternate, the inferior; belief, then he loses the game and must forfeit his gold. As you can see the stakes in this game are high, as Dopey, unlike the other dwarfs is unable to indulge in deep thought. Because of this he has much more time to search for and find the precious gold.

**Grumpy** –I know because [he pauses and lays down his next card with a flourish, all too happy with himself] I have *Reason*. How can the holder of a mere *Narwhal* compete with that?! [he sneers]

**Dopey** –[looking worried as he is beginning to wonder what he has got himself into lays down his next card]. I have ... *Belief?*

**Grumpy** – laughs

**Happy** – I wouldn't be laughing if I was you Grumpy.

Grumpy looks across shocked.

**Happy** –[continues] For Dopey to have belief in narwhals he must also hold some amount of reason. This is a presupposition of any kind of

belief, without reason the card he holds in his hand would be *Faith* not *Belief*. It is a necessary truth by definition and therefore cannot be denied. So at this stage in the game Dopey is actually winning.

Dopey gives Happy a shy and rather thankful smile from across their impromptu card table.

**Grumpy** –[is beginning, if he wasn't already, to get angry. He slaps his next card rather violently onto the table] *Logic*, tell me how you're going to beat that!? *Logic* tells me that there must be dragons because otherwise there would not be knights. Knights only exist to get rid of dragons. Heaven knows, they're not much bloody use for anything else.

Dopey places his next card, *Justification* on the table and glances wildly at Happy for help. Happy shrugs his shoulders.

**Sleepy** - [yawns] Ahhh! Dopey, it seems to me you're still in front. Both *Logic* and *Justification* are ways in which both of you might argue as to the existence of your chosen creatures. Neither one nor the other ensures the truth of the existence of your creature but allows you to argue towards the possibility of such a truth. *Justification* has a bit more strength in this battle. Like a knight holding a longer lance, one of the essential conditions of *Justification* is proof, a weapon which *Logic* can, on various occasions lack. On these grounds, for the empiricist at least, it's given more weight in the pursuit of knowledge than *Logic* on its own, especially concerning matters of existence.

**Narrator** – One wonders at times where Sleepy comes up with such deep thought. It seems, like Descartes, that his long mornings lying in bed have proven to be of great benefit to his mind.

**Grumpy** – [frowns as he lays down his next card] *Proof*,
[he grumbles], I suppose for the same reasons as *Reason* this still leaves me somewhat behind.

There is a general murmur of consent as the others forward their agreement. Dopey, looking decidedly happy lays down his next card. There is a gasp released by those watching.

**Sneezy** – *Empirical Proof!!* Surely Dopey, with this card you must have it won.

**Happy** –[softly, though no-one appears to be listening] Sneezy, you may not be correct, experience cannot give us philosophical truth about such a fundamental question as this. Physical experience is not always a condition necessary for deciding on that which we have knowledge of. Surely you've read Descartes.[1]

**Bashful** –[softly addressing Happy] If you yourself are so well read, you must really consider O.K. Bouwsma[2] before embarrassing yourself with such exclamation. When it comes to the existence of objects, and remember that is what we are arguing about here, he confirms that knowledge of such things is limited to that which we physically experience of the world through the senses. To construe knowledge of the existence of objects in this world in any other way than being

based on *Empirical Proof* leaves the notion of existence rather meaningless.

**Happy** – Oh.

**Grumpy** –[looking decidedly beaten lays down his next card like a condemned man] *Perception of Fact,* [he mumbles almost to himself], *Perception of the Fact* [gaining confidence now]. If I have a *Perception of the Fact* of the existence of my dragon then surely, surely, as knowledge is based on physical experiences of the world like perception, surely I must now have knowledge and I must surely win. AH HA! [he shouts], THE GOLD IS MINE!!!

**Narrator** – It appears the game is over as no-one has risen to reject Grumpy's claim. Still, three more cards remain. Who knows what might happen?
[pauses]
This last card has been the subject of much debate among the dwarfs. It was originally just plain *Fact* as philosophically *Proof,* in the form of *Fact, Justification* (which can also include *Logic*) and *Belief* are all considered presuppositions of knowledge and are therefore high scoring cards in this game. However Happy argued rather successfully with the group that none of these could, in actual fact, give knowledge of the existence of any object so therefore the card should be changed to *Perception of the Fact.* Doc had warned that in arguing in this way Happy was going 'to sublime the logic of our language' an idea that had been developed by Wittgenstein,[3] and such behaviour would bring about the formation of many awkward and unnecessary problems in the future to come. None of the dwarfs really understood what Doc was on about so, subsequently they ignored him.

Dopey lays down a new card and to this eyebrows are raise all round.

**Bashful** – *Correct Perception of the Fact.* Hmmm!. . . . This makes things interesting.

**Grumpy** – What do you mean? Its just the same card as mine, it must be a mistake. Dopey, put it back and select another. We can't both have the same cards in this game.

Dopey reaches toward the pack to get another but is stopped by Sneezy who grasps his arm.

**Sneezy** – Wait! These cards aren't the same. Dopey's is *Correct Perception of the Fact,* yours is only *Perception of the Fact.*

**Grumpy** – So?

**Sneezy** – So that means your *Perception of the Fact* of the existence of your dragon may not be correct. Dopey's is.

**Grumpy** – Rubbish! When is my perception of fact ever incorrect?

**Happy** – What about that night when you were so drunk that you kissed a tree because you had perceived it to be a beautiful princess?

Grumpy is quickly hushed and reclines sullenly on his tussock. Without a word he lays down *Definition.*

**Grumpy** – Sleepy, Wake Up! [he gives Sleepy a shove] Didn't you say that truth by *Definition* cannot be denied.

**Sleepy** –[blinking sleep out of his eyes] Yes, but what exactly is being defined? Of course the description 'dragon' is true by definition otherwise none of us here would know what *Dragon* meant. But you can't claim knowledge of the existence of the dragon by *Definition.* That would be absolutely ridiculous. If this were true it would mean, as I am getting rather hungry after all this hard work, that I should be able to define a enormous banquet into existence, right here, right now, right in front of us all. As wonderful as this would be, we all know it's impossible. So Grumpy, *Definition* doesn't really give you anything towards the existence of your dragon. Next thing we know, you'll be claiming the existence of a giant at the end of the beanstalk!

**Bashful** - [ever the peacemaker] Don't get too upset, Grumpy. It would be a different matter all together if you were contesting knowledge of the fact that two plus two equals four. You simply misapplied what Sleepy said before.

**Grumpy** - [grunts indignantly]

**Narrator** –[with the air of a sports commentator] So there they stand, two searching and five watching, for knowledge of the existence of two objects. In this game the objects are a *Dragon* and a *Narwhal.* One card left, the game is close, who knows who is going to win!

Complete silence, all characters are frozen in apprehension as Dopey lays down the last card.

**Dopey** – *Consensus?*

The group smiles all around except for the grimacing Grumpy. They breathe a sigh of relief for our intellectually impaired winner.

**Sleepy** – That's it. It's all over. When knowledge of the existence of your *Narwhal* is still in doubt even after you have *Belief, Justification, Empirical Proof* and *Correct Perception of the Fact,* if you have a *Consensus* as to the knowledge of the existence of your *Narwhal,* meaning we all agree with you on this point, you win.

A cheer erupts, and all the dwarfs, except Grumpy, slap Dopey on the back.

**Grumpy** – Belief, that's all I get [he grumbles]. I won't take part in your consensus. I believe I have more than just belief as to the knowledge of the existence of my *Dragon.* Anyway who ever heard of a *Narwhal?* What is it? Some kind of giant aquatic version of a unicorn? I don't care what the cards say, I know for a fact that such a ridiculous creature would never exist.

**Doc** - [this is the first time he speaks] Well Grumpy, when it really comes down to it, it doesn't really matter whether you know or believe in the existence of such objects as narwhals or dragons. Your

belief or knowledge is based on *your perception* of the fact of their existence, *not the fact* of their existence. The fact of their existence is independent of any one person's perception. Thus your belief about such objects does not affect the fact of the existence of such objects, it only affects your perception of the fact of the existence of such objects.

**Narrator** – Well I guess they don't call him 'Doc' for nothing. He is, after all, a Doctor of Philosophy.

**Doc** – But then again, Dear Grumpy, your loss only depends on where knowledge of the existence of your dragon has to lie. If, like Happy you insist on sending 'language on holiday'[4] it could be argued that you do in fact have knowledge of the existence of your *Dragon*. With your cards you could argue that you have knowledge of the 'existence' of your *Dragon* as it resides, in a metaphorical sense, inside your head. The others would be unable to deny this.

Grumpy gives an extremely wide ungrumpy like grin.

The play is left there just as a rather violent argument breaks out among the dwarfs debating the knowledge of the fact of who actually won the game.

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## Endnotes

1. Descartes, R. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, (tr. J. Cottingham)
2. Bouwsma, OK., 'Descartes' Evil Genius,' in G. Bowie et al, 236-243.
3. Wittgenstein, L, 'Meaning as Use,' in G. Bowie, et al, 275-282.
4. ibid

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**Discussion Questions** arising from the reading that you might like to pursue (prepared by Clive Lindop, Lecturer in Philosophy, Deakin University)

1. How do you know whether or not your shoes exist?
   What are the tests for existence that you used here?

2. Do dragons exist? How do you know? What are the tests for existence that you used here? Do unicorns exist?

3. In what way is belief inferior to knowledge?

4. Do you have to have reason to know of the existence of something? Why/why not?

5. If *you* don't believe in the existence of something, does it then not exist at all, for anyone? How do you know? And if no one believes?

6. If you do believe something to exist, does it?

7. Can there be things that exist that you don't hold any beliefs about?

8. Is Happy right, faith is belief without reason to believe?

9. What does Happy mean by a necessary truth?

10. What is truth by definition? Give three examples of propositions that are true by definition.

11. Can you bring something into existence by definition? Give an example.

12. Critically assess Grumpy's reason for saying that dragons exist (for otherwise there would not be knights).

13. What do you think Grumpy means by logic ( "Logic tells me that dragons ons exist ......").

14. Is Grumpy's reasoning good reasoning or not? Say why.

15. What is the difference between belief, logic and justification?

16. Can any of these, alone or in combination, establish the existence of anything? Why/why not?

17. Is Grumpy right, that proof, for the same reasons as reason, leaves him somewhat behind?

18. What does the word "empirical" mean? What is the difference, if any, between proof and empirical proof?

19. Why may not experience (empirical evidence) give one the truth about the existence of something?

20. What difference, if any, is there between proof and evidence?

21. Is Bashful right, that to construe knowledge of the existence of something in any other way than being based on empirical experience/proof, leaves the notion of existence meaningless? Say why. (You may want to follow up this point by reading Bouwsma's article in which he replies to Descartes' scepticism about existence.)

23. If you have justification for your belief in the existence of something which, in fact, exists, is your claim to know that it exists true? Give the reason s for your answer.

24. Is Sneezy right, that the cards, *Perception of the Fact* and *Correct Perception of the Fact,* are different? Why?

25. What is the difference between the fact that 2+2=4 and the fact that your shoe exists? Give reasons.

26. Are the other dwarfs right that there must be consensus about the existence of things for us to know that they do? How is consensus related to proof? to evidence?

27. Is Sleepy right, that Belief, Justification, Empirical proof, Correct perception of the fact, and Consensus are required for you to have knowledge of the existence of narwhals and any other thing?

28. Is Doc right, that one's belief about the existence of something does not affect its existence? Why/why not?

29. So, in the light of all this: Do dragons exist? Do narwhals? Why?

30. Does your shoe exist? Does Santa Claus exist? Does Easter Bunny? Do unicorns? How do you know?

31. Reference was made to a couple of Wittgenstein's remarks ('to sublime the logic of language' and 'sending language on holiday'), both of which he regarded as sources of error in philosophy. How does it apply to talk about dragons? Well, take the two propositions: 'Dragons exist' and 'My shoes exist,' in each case ask yourself, "How do I know?" and give the tests (criteria) for existence. In the case of my shoes, I know because I (and anyone else who cares) can see, feel, smell, taste, them. But none of these apply to dragons. So there's something different about the two claims to existence. In the first case, the claim to existence is an empirical one, as philosophers say. And the claim can be checked by anyone else (remember the consensus that Sleepy and the others approve of). But this is not the case for the second one (dragons). (Why is it not an empirical claim?) But don't dragons exist because I believe they do? Well, obviously not in the same sense as my shoes do. We might distinguish the two senses as exists and 'exists': My shoes exist, dragons 'exist.' Likewise with Santa Claus, Bugs Bunny, unicorns (and the Seven Dwarfs?). Wittgenstein would say that in the case of my shoes, the word "exist" is being used in its ordinary, everyday, work-a-day sense, whereas in the case of dragons, Santa, and the rest, the word "exists" has been sent on holiday, as it were, so that it is not doing it's ordinary job. In this case, we might say "exist" is being used metaphorically and not literally (as in the case of my shoes). When we don't recognised these different uses of words we can get ourselves into (philosophical) trouble by thinking that we are talking literally when, in fact we are not. When we make this mistake we then go on to create the false problem of trying to find the criteria for the truth of the claim we think we are making (eg that dragons actually exists in the world and trying to determine the [non-existent] criteria for knowing that they do). Wittgenstein would claim that Descartes made this sort of mistake (hence the reference to Wittgenstein, and Bouwsma). Gilbert Ryle made he same point about the word "mind" in his book *The Concept of Mind.*
What do you anticipate Wittgenstein (and Ryle) would have to say about the use of the word "God" in the proposition, "God exists?"

## Book Review

Tim Sprod: ***Philosophical Discussion in Moral Education.***
Routledge: London, 2001

**Verdict:** Philosophically and pedagogically sound.
Highly recommended.

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Moral education programs can fail in spite of the good practice of the teacher when they are either philosophically, educationally or pedagogically flawed. Tim Sprod's contribution is a welcome relief from such programs, offering instead a program which has sound philosophical, educational and pedagogical foundations. The key ingredients are reflected in the title of the book, for to construct a program that has a decent chance of success requires understanding of what philosophy and philosophical discussion is about, what education (as distinct from instruction, training, indoctrination) is about and what morality (as distinct from social enculturation) is about. Sprod clearly does. And it shows, for he is not only a practising teacher but also a well qualified and successful philosopher who is at home both in the school classroom and in the halls of Academe.

His book is highly recommended to all engaged in education from theorist through practitioner to interested spectator. I recommend it to all educational administrators, principals, teachers, teacher-educators, education students, and parents. It provides a thorough philosophical grounding for sound moral educational practice. Not only that, his writing is careful, clear, concise and, in my view, mostly correct. In my judgment, one aspect needs expansion - but more on that later.

It is a well structured, readable, book divided into the three parts reflected in the book's title, 'Philosophical discussion in Moral Education. Part I explores the philosophical foundation for the discussion referred to in the title, suggesting that the traditional view of the rational autonomous inquirer/moral agent provides an inadequate account of moral inquiry, especially for classrooms, the focus of the author's attention. Sprod's aim is to provide a coherent philosophical position on moral education that is informed by educational practice, and this he does admirably. Within the Philosophy for Children world, the distinction between rationality and reasonableness is well appreciated and Sprod uses this to show how the Kantian tradition on moral education is deficient because it does not take the development of persons throughout childhood sufficiently into consideration. Here the social and linguistic developmental ideas of Vygotsky are incorporated, for one doesn't become rational, or reasonable, on one's own. Morality is social engagement with others. Moral agents are not just rational, more importantly, they are reasonable. Sprod shows how reasonableness provides a much richer conception of rationality that proves to be an important enabling capacity for moral development. When this is combined with the insights from Habermas's theory of communicative action, Sprod shows how to develop autonomy and reasonableness into communicative autonomy through interpersonal relationships in a community of moral inquiry.

It is to his great credit, and ours, that Sprod is not overwhelmed by Habermasian theory. For a forthright, critical and thorough account of

Habermas's theory of communicative action and discourse ethics, I highly recommend Sprod's. It is the best, certainly the clearest, explication I have come across. While recognising its strengths, he also identifies its weakness as a theory of educational practice. But Sprod uses it creatively to develop his own account of pedagogic action, the unique action that teachers employ in classrooms, usually without realising it. To become explicitly aware of what they are doing can only contribute to better practice from teachers. For this reason alone, every teacher should have this book - it ought to be compulsory reading in all teacher education programs.

Part II of the book turns to consideration of the target of moral education: what it is to be, and to become, a moral person. And this requires an account of what it is to be a person (which is lacking) as well as moral education. Sprod's account of the latter, in my view, is the best available. With the small addition just noted (and argued for at the end of this review), it would be complete. He develops his account out of a judicious synthesis of Aristotelian virtue ethics, Vygotskian social development and Habermas's discourse ethics. Discourse ethics enriches virtue ethics, and the incorporation of the Vygotskian account of the intersubjective development of reasonableness in becoming-persons (children), provides us with a more adequate model of moral education. In what seems to be a sop to post-modernism, Sprod argues that his synthesis of virtue ethics with discourse ethics renders the product multi-dimensional rather than monolithic (as are the Utilitarian and Kantian ethical systems). Such a synthesis makes it highly suitable for classrooms in our pluralist-liberal society. It is, but not because it is not mono-dimensional. I will elaborate this point shortly.

Moral education starts from somewhere, and typically this will be the children's own understanding of right and wrong acquired through habituation at home and in their wider cultural setting. Thus the virtues espoused, including the teacher's own, are likely to be varied; an ideal stimulus for inquiry. The inquiry central to Sprod's moral education is philosophical inquiry not only because such inquiry focuses specifically on the virtue concepts and descriptions of morally relevant acts with their entailed judgments or discriminations, but also because this is a mutually interactive process creating an intersubjective space in which the morally charged claims and actions of others make more sense to those involved. Such engagement is more likely than any other to engage all participants in the higher-order thinking that accompanies good judgment and moral decision making, and so develop what traditionally has been called, practical wisdom.

With the theoretical foundations of moral education firmly established, Sprod turns, in Part III, to its practical application in the classroom. The pedagogy is not new to practitioners of Philosophy for Children, that of engaging children in the community of ethical inquiry. For those unfamiliar with this practice Sprod investigates the notions of community and inquiry, exploring why their intersection can be expected to be not only educationally, but also ethically, powerful. He shows how the community of ethical inquiry provides the conditions for linking the development of reasonableness and the reflective consideration of what it is that ethical living requires to the way the students' lives are lived. In the final chapter he addresses a number of questions that teachers often ask about the process, always providing the philosophical foundations for his answers and advice. Here again we see underlying the pedagogic action that teachers engage in to induct

students into the abilities needed for moral reflection and communicative autonomy, the substantive commitment to *respect* inculcated through the practice of practical discourse in the community of inquiry.

Given the underlying commitment to respect for persons it is somewhat suprising to see Sprod claiming in Chapter 6 that he is developing a multi-dimensional meta-ethical theory rather than one based on a single, monolithic principle. In one sense his model of moral education is multi-dimensional in that it begins with the various, taken-for-granted virtues that students bring to school with them. But in another sense, his model, as he says in several places, rests on the foundational principle of respect for persons. Although he refers to it as *a* foundational principle, it seems to me that it is *the* foundational principle. He instances a case which precipitates a discussion of fairness (a child takes most of the coloured pencils from the table supply, p98). In this case fairness is exemplified as a concrete distribution problem. Reasoning about this and similar cases is used in order to explain the notion of fairness and have the children acquire the habit of being fair. But how do you reply to a child who asks, "But why should I be fair?" One doesn't just shrug one's shoulders and say, "Because!" or "Reasoning has to stop somewhere and this is where." It's not left hanging as one principle among many others that children could, and should, adopt.

Of course, no one has to be fair. Being fair is a choice one makes. As Sprod points out later when talking about harming others (137), "If it is established that I can harm you both by playing Barry Manilow CDs and by cutting off your hand, then *respect for you (and morality)* require that I do neither." (my italics). Which is also the answer to the above question: one acts fairly if one respects others. But I don't have to respect others; only if I want to be moral do I respect others. Here respect for persons is the foundational principle appealed to. There is nothing impossible or undesirable about urging everyone to act in accord with it. It is a practical version of Kant's categorical imperative. Sprod himself recognises that respect is the substantive moral commitment underlying pedagogic action, a commitment that must be inculcated through the practice of practical discourse (205). He even insists that if the virtue of respect is challenged in the classroom and in danger of being lost, the teacher must spring to the defence of respect (171). And why defend respect or act in accord with it? Because I respect myself. This is the point where Virtue Ethics and Discourse Ethics meet. One who does not respect oneself will have no qualms about contradicting oneself, deceiving others, abusing others and generally taking advantage of others whenever it suits one. A person with self-respect, with virtue, does not lie, cheat, steal and so on, because it is beneath one to do so, it is self-denigrating to engage in such behaviour. This may be why hypocrisy is so abhorrent to the moral person. It is a matter of honour, of self-respect. One is virtuous out of respect for oneself. Or as Discourse Ethics puts it, to engage in such behaviours while maintaining that one is seriously engaged in communicative action with others about how we ought to behave, is to put oneself in a position of performative self-contradiction (just as Kant recognised). Indeed, for RS Peters, the originator of the idea that Habermas developed into discourse ethics, respect for others is an intimate part of the concept of person itself, without which one cannot seriously engage in practical discourse about what one ought to do ( 1966, 208-214). One can, of course, engage in performative self-contradictions but at a cost - the loss of virtue (or as RS Peters might say, loss of personhood). It is here that Sprod's account

is wanting: it needs a fuller account of what it is to be a person, especially when one is engaged in developing moral *persons*.

Where people may disagree is about how to interpret what is going on, how to recognise moral principles in action. Here one can become confused for two reasons, Firstly one can become confused by failing to distinguish between form and content or substance, about how this formal principle of respect is played out (instantiated) in actual situations. People from different cultures may well have different ways of showing respect for others (and the particular instance from one culture, if used in another, may well cause affront, as many Europeans in Asia have realised later).

Secondly one can become confused by failing to make an adequate distinction between persons and individuals. And this is where Sprod's account is wanting. The respect that is the foundation of morality is respect for persons. If one thinks only of individuals then one is like to conclude, as Sprod does, that a given set of virtues (eg Aristotle's) is contingent and variable over time and place. Aristotle has no concept of persons as individuals with an assertive point of view who are determiners of their own destiny, and responsible for it, as opposed to individuals who are members of a social group whose roles and responsibilities are determined by their place in the society to which they belong. It is quite possible for such people to live without distinguishing any difference between a social order and a natural order, and to think that individuals are relatively powerless in relation to both (see RS Peters, 211). In such cases, virtue consists of being faithful to one's established role. When comparing societies and cultures in this way, as sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists are want to do, one is likely to slide into the pit of ethical relativism. A differentiated concept of person that is central to morality, is a comparatively quite recent historical discovery. And the move from virtue to morality, as Sprod, intuitively recognises is to be based on such a differentiation. Nor is it one that everyone may be able to make until their consciousness is raised. Being moral is a choice one makes. Unfortunately not every one chooses to be moral. But we are still entitled to say they are (morally) wrong not to be so. And once we understand the situation, have an accurate description of the act in question, we can legitimately judge their actions as morally right or wrong. If ethical multi-dimension-alism implies we cannot do this, then it is mistaken (as is post-modernist relativism) for the reason given above by Discourse Ethics.

In summary, Sprod's model of moral education provides a generally sound and holistic ethical development program, one which avoids the dangers of indoctrination, ethical relativism and moral indifference, and one which clarifies, for teachers, their role in this vital endeavour so urgently needed in the troubled world of today. This book provides the philosophical foundations for turning classrooms everywhere into active communities of ethical inquiry, the cornerstone of any program of moral education. Coupled with the book reviewed in the previous issue of this journal, Freakley & Burgh's *Engaging with Ethics*, teachers and teacher educators have a solid foundation for constructing an engaging curriculum for effective moral education.

## Reference

Peters, R.S. (1966) *Ethics and Education*. George Allen & Unwin, London.

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