QUESTIONING EDUCATION: A CRITIQUE OF PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN

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It is my hope that we can achieve an education that enriches, enlightens, and liberates, that fosters understanding, strengthens judgement, improves reasoning, and imparts a clear sense of the relevance of enquiry to the enlargement of humanity.

MATTHEW LIPMAN (1922-2010)

Dedication

In teaching you cannot see the fruit of a day's work. It is invisible and remains so, maybe for twenty years.

JACQUES BARZUN

The dissertation is dedicated to my former English master, Mr McDonald, as a small token of gratitude for the ‘difference he made to this one’. Sorry it is not a cheque. He instilled in me an enduring love of William Shakespeare, Wilfred Owen, and Bob Dylan. Far more than that, he inspired my younger brother Jake and me to pursue vocations in teaching. We remember with especial fondness his biting wit, bone-dry humour, and ironic criticism. He was possessed of a rare gift for imparting knowledge whilst simultaneously nurturing curious thought. His infectious faith in two average youngsters from an impoverished background never wavered. Ultimately, this dissertation, my most mature work yet, serves as a vindication of his faith. Any misspellings in the dissertation are, of course, down to him.

Abstract

This dissertation sets out an insider's critique of the pedagogy of Philosophy for Children (P4C). It defends the thesis that P4C is in need of renewal, that P4C is an educative process of dialogical philosophy, that P4C would itself benefit from being the object of dialogical philosophical enquiry, and that practice in P4C would improve if participants spoke, wrote, and read both more often and more philosophically.

Key words: Philosophy for Children, P4C

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My professional life as a school teacher is relentlessly hectic, so it was tricky for me to find opportunities to engage in academic study during term-time. Therefore, the bulk of this dissertation was written in the summer holiday of 2011. The tight time frame meant that I locked myself away from the civilised world and school work for almost four whole weeks. I thank my family, especially the querulous *Maryanne*, for tolerating my unsociableness.

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Chapter 1. Critiquing P4C

This chapter summarises the thesis and outlines how the thesis emanates from my practice and builds on my previous academic work.

1.1. The thesis

This dissertation sets out an insider's critique of the pedagogy of Philosophy for Children (P4C). It defends the thesis that P4C is in need of renewal, that P4C is an educative process of dialogical philosophy, that P4C would itself benefit from being the object of dialogical philosophical enquiry, and that practice in P4C would improve if participants spoke, wrote, and read both more often and more deeply.

Let me detail the thesis a little further. P4C is in need of renewal because P4C's modern instantiations lack rigour and because of the changing face of the politico-educational world. P4C is educative because it fosters human growth; it is dialogical because it involves discussion with others and reflection upon their ideas. It is philosophy because it fosters reflective and critical enquiry, because it engages participants with concepts, and because it deals with questions of reality and significance. There is a real need for enquiry into P4C to raise the standard of P4C. This enquiry must be philosophical, involve participants, and be woven into practice. Finally, it is important in P4C that participation and inclusion are maximised, that writing is used and improved, that participants read philosophical texts, and that language, concepts, and skills are developed gradually and responsively through dialogue.

Note, I consistently use the abbreviation 'P4C' in place of the name 'Philosophy for Children'. I acknowledge that it is not brilliant English. I also realise that the

abbreviation stands for a name that I later argue is incorrect. Nevertheless, the abbreviation is popular, well known, and concise.

Also note, I break with convention and consistently refer to scholars by their first name as well as their surname. This is more respectful. There is no point in adhering to less ethical conventions. That said, when writing the dissertation, I was using Matthew Lipman's full name so often that it disrupted the flow of my argument; so, I usually refer to him as 'Lipman'. No disrespect is intended.

1.2. The confession

The iconoclastic philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said that philosophy is a kind of memoir or confession. That being the case, this dissertation constitutes my memoir, my confession. It articulates my vision of and rationale for P4C. It extols and inscribes my values, meanings, and experiences. My hope is that it is an authentic living out of the values it propounds; the reader, however, will be the judge of that.

It behoves the dissertation, then, to start by exposing a few pertinent biographical points. I am an experienced secondary school teacher, subject leader, examiner, and teacher educator, all in relation to Religious Studies. I studied philosophy at sixth form college and university. My first encounter with P4C was at a teacher development course led by Will Ord in 2005, and I have been teaching it ever since. I attended further courses led by Karin Murris, Roger Sutcliffe, Alison Hall, and Sara Liptai.

The dissertation builds upon some of my previous academic work. Three texts are worth mentioning. In Stone (2008), I contended that P4C is not, contrary to critical realism, primarily concerned with ultimate truth, and that, instead, P4C is an activity that strives to cultivate areté (virtue) and judgement. In Stone (2009), I marshalled a

concerted attack on James Conroy's (2008) criticisms of P4C. My principal argument was that P4C promotes criticality, reasonableness, and judiciousness, and that, more profoundly, it fosters wisdom and human being. In Stone (2010), I presented a grounded theory interpretation of the perspectives of one class of pupils on the use of P4C in Religious Education. I found that 'P4C enters pupils into dialogue with religion; they explore and think abstractly about religious concepts and philosophies. However, P4C is unreliable in imparting specified content; thus, P4C needs complementing by other pedagogies' (Stone 2010, p. v).

Chapter 2. Contextualising P4C

In this chapter, I briefly set P4C in its theoretical, historical, and politico-educational context. I argue that previous critiques of P4C are brittle and that a fresh examination of P4C is therefore timely. I also trace the historical development of P4C from its humble origins in the 1970s to its scattered presence in England today. The key theme is that second-generation P4C is more meaningful, but less rigorous than its earlier, original counterpart. Finally, I trace the contours of the new politico-educational terrain in which P4C has landed. Some implications for P4C are teased out.

2.1. Theoretical context: debates about P4C

In a recent letter to the parents of freshman tutees, I averred that P4C 'is something to which, perhaps paradoxically, I am both deeply committed and highly critical'. In reality, there is no paradox skulking between these twin attitudes. Commitment to P4C is eo ipso a commitment to questioning, reflection, and criticism; an unquestioning, unreflective, uncritical posture towards P4C is tantamount to apostasy. Conversely, criticism can itself evince commitment. Criticism takes an interest; it deems the criticised worthy of criticism. The questioning of faith can deepen understanding of faith, as the medieval scholastics knew only too well.

A cursory glance at the debates that have raged unabated in the literature reveals that P4C is scarcely bereft of criticism. These criticisms are invariably advanced by outsiders with little, if any, commitment to—or knowledge of—P4C. Some critics appear to have taken the view that insiders, awash with faith in P4C, seldom subject P4C to critical scrutiny and that, in lieu, insiders assume the mantle of defenders of the faith who flay the blasphemous criticisms of the infidel outsiders. However, this is a

mendacious view; P4C protagonists the world over have constantly questioned and recalibrated P4C praxis, and, moreover, they have engaged with alacrity in academic discussions about P4C. It is true, though, that the protagonists are invariably the exception rather than the rule: It is imperative that all P4C teachers and trainers exercise self-criticality.

The detractors have dismissed P4C as unintellectual (e.g. Ecclestone & Hayes 2009), unphilosophical (e.g. White 1992; 2011), unsocratic (Smith 2011), undialogical (Vansieleghem 2006), imperialistic (e.g. Biesta 2011), and undemanding (e.g. Conroy 2008). The detractors are, with few exceptions, university-based academics with little, if any, experience of P4C in schools, either as practitioners or participants. In general, their attacks fail to engage earnestly with the theoretical literature on P4C, fail to take on board empirical (qualitative or quantitative) findings, and fail to consider the views of key stakeholders such as pupils. This renders the criticisms somewhat unedifying.

John White's (2011) recent paper serves as an exemplar of an untrustworthy foray into P4C. Indeed, he himself admits that his foray is 'impressionistic' (p. 1). He recalls how his earlier critique (White 1992) was based on a handful of American texts. He confesses that his knowledge-base is embarrassingly meagre. He read two P4C texts and the reports of one empirical study into P4C. He observed two enquiries and watched one publicity DVD. Therefore, it is unsurprising that he makes so many unsubstantiated claims, for example, that Religious Education teachers are (perhaps) using P4C to unwittingly trample over pupils' intellectual autonomy (White 2011, p. 8). He resorts to strawmanning P4C by focusing on the least experienced philosophy class featured on the DVD (White 2011, p. 1; see Gallions Primary School 2007).

The P4C fraternity, perceiving the objections as either threats or slights, have been swift in mounting counterattacks (e.g. Bramall 2009; Gregory 2009b; Haynes 2009; Murris 2009; Stone 2009; Williams 2009). Sometimes the faithful have been oversensitive if not downright paranoid. For instance, Steve Bramall (2009) wages a crusade against perceived criticism from Michael Hand (2008); however, a trawl through what Michael Hand actually writes uncloaks no overt intentional criticism. The precise same thing could be said of Maughn Gregory's (2009b) response to Judith Suissa (2008). Furthermore, the faithful have, overall, been unwilling to learn anything from the criticisms. My own reply (Stone 2009) to James Conroy's (2008) criticisms stands salient as an example. Rather than regarding his argument as an opportunity for reflection on the place of reading in P4C, I merely sought to show that his argument was misguided.

A consequence of the paranoia and the dogmatism is that the consuming passion for P4C that infuses and enthuses so many of its protagonists has been interpreted as evangelism (Winstanley 2007, p. 1) or zealotry (Standish 2011, p. ii). Another consequence is that, detrimentally, the chasm between the two camps has widened: There are 'staunch advocates' of P4C here and prominent 'sceptics' there (Standish 2011, p. ii), and never the twain shall meet.

Notwithstanding this, there have recently been attempts at conciliation. For example, the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, an academic society, organised a seminar on P4C in June 2010 in conjunction with supporters of P4C. A mutual understanding is emerging that the insider/outsider dichotomy must be transcended and that the debates must become cross-fertilising dialogues.

There are two convergent ways of bridging the chasm. One is for outsiders to get right up close to P4C, for example, by perusing its theoretical base, and only then to cast

down critical judgement. The other is for insiders to make the familiar unfamiliar: to take a critical distance, to 'distanciate' (Ricœur 1981), to turn the Socratic spirit of P4C inward on itself. Either approach will effect a more well-rounded critique.

I am in a position to take the latter approach. A robust critique would be timely, for P4C is in vogue, at least in academia. It is examined in a collection of over 60 articles by academics from 29 countries in the book *Children Philosophize Worldwide* (Marsal et al. 2009). It is the focus of the special issue of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* published in May 2011. A public debate hosted by the London School of Economics on 23 June 2011 attended to it. This all supplies an avalanche of new ideas; equally, it also reproduces some of those staid dogmas that stretch back to the very inception of P4C.

2.2. Historical context: P4C through the generations

From the 1970s, the late American philosopher Matthew Lipman forged a new pedagogy, P4C, which challenged many of the prevailing educational assumptions of the modern era. It is said that the impetus of Lipman's turn to pedagogy was his frustration with the sloppy thinking of putatively educated citizens (Pritchard 2009). The truth, however, is a bit more complicated. He was also influenced by the revolutionary zeitgeist of the Vietnam War era and by his dissatisfaction with his own schooling (Lipman 2008). Nonetheless, Lipman is explicit that the aim of P4C is to nurture thoughtful, reflective, considerate, reasonable, and judicious people (Lipman et al. 1980, p. 15), or, in my words, to 'enrich human being' (Stone 2009, p. 9). It is not surprising that Lipman should hit upon this aim of education, given that he was influenced by John Dewey (1916) who maintained that education was an ongoing process of growth.

Lipman's most daring thesis was that introducing children to philosophy (on the face of it, a most unlikely pairing) would foster their growth. He adduced psychological arguments to show that children *could* do philosophy. They were perfectly capable, not developmentally incapable, of abstract thought (Lipman 1981). He also adduced normative arguments to show that children *should* do philosophy. Philosophy, he contended, is the discipline par excellence for the cultivation of thinking and meaning-making (Lipman et al. 1980, p. xi; Lipman 1996, p. xv) and therefore has much to contribute to the cultivation of qualities such as thoughtfulness, reflectivity, and reasonableness. Moreover, unlike most other disciplines, philosophy is both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary and can therefore bring unity to a curriculum fragmented by often artificial disciplinary borders (Lipman et al. 1980, ch. 1). In other words, for him, philosophy provides a lens through which everything comes into focus.

Lipman therefore went about reconstructing philosophy to make it accessible to pupils (Lipman 1996, p. xv; Splitter & Sharp 1995, p. 99). Inspired by Socrates, he believed that dialogue, not writing, must predominate (Lipman et al. 1980). Following John Dewey, and like Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger (Stone 2008), he regarded philosophy primarily as a process of enquiry rather than a body of knowledge. He thus wrote dialogues, not didactic texts, for classroom use. In collaboration with the educator Ann Margaret Sharp, he developed a philosophy curriculum or programme. There was no reason to sequence this psychologically, given his rejection of Piagetian orthodoxies, so he sequenced it according to logical disciplinary divisions. The curriculum is marked by its emphasis on informal logic and reasoning skills (see Lipman et al. 1980, pp. 51-54).

Lipman's philosophy curriculum is, according to Nancy Vansieleghem and David Kennedy (2011, p. 172), rigid because he hoped that it would become a

compulsory school subject in the USA. The charge of rigidity, however, is unfair because Lipman was always amenable to different approaches to P4C. P4C has proliferated and is now featured in the curricula of over 4,000 schools in the USA and of schools in over 60 countries worldwide (Standish 2011, p. i). As it proliferated, it encountered new challenges and new contexts, and practitioners infused it with their own identities and philosophies (Murris 2008, p. 672). A panoply of exponents worldwide subjected it to extensive critique and challenged many of *its* assumptions, making P4C their own, and spawning a heterogeneity of praxes.

Although it therefore does some injustice to this heterogeneity, it is nevertheless helpful to speak of, as some scholars do (e.g. Reed & Johnson 1999), a second generation of P4C. Second-generation P4C is internally diverse but united by a two-fold motif: (i) a quietened emphasis on logic and reasoning and (ii) an amplified emphasis on reflection and dialogue (Vansieleghem & Kennedy 2011, pp. 177-178). The idea is that reason—reasoning, informal logic, thinking skills—is limited in its scope to help children find personal meaning or to unify a fragmented curriculum (van der Leeuw 2009, p. 111). Participants were still encouraged to reason, but not necessarily to reason to recognised, intellectual standards, which were seen as emotionally barren. Instead, the community laid out the standards, and participants discussed and reflected upon concepts from their lifeworlds that were meaningful to them. ‘Reason’, with a capital ‘R’, was replaced with ‘reason’, without the capital. Logic was replaced by narratives because narratives are essentially meanings and mirror how we think and live (e.g. Fisher 2008, ch. 4). Arguably, these substitutions diminished the academic rigour of P4C; however, advantageously, it meant that P4C was likely to be more enjoyable for participants (see Fisher 2008, p. 87) and more personally significant to them.

P4C did not migrate into the UK until the 1990s when Roger Sutcliffe, Karin Murris, and Chris Rowley founded what is now known as the Society for Advancing Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE) (Hannam & Echeverria 2009, p. 6). The fact that the 'R' stands for 'Reflection' instead of 'Reasoning' is a sign that SAPERE's vision of P4C is discernibly second generation. Hence, under the aegis of SAPERE, out went the Lipman curriculum, the written dialogues, and the 2000 pages or so of teacher notes. In came methods and structures that promoted reflection and dialogue. For instance, SAPERE now advocates the use of picture-books (Murris 1992), cultural stories, poetry, and narratives (e.g. Fisher 1996), art and music (Liptai 2005), and indeed 'almost anything' (SAPERE 2006, p. 21) to stimulate reflection and dialogue. Likewise, the two processes can be facilitated through responsive use by the teacher of lesson structures (e.g. Haynes 2008, pp. 36-38; SAPERE 2006, pp. 20-23), discussion plans (e.g. Fisher 2008, p. 23), and questioning taxonomies (e.g. Fisher 2008, p. 122).

It was estimated that in 2006, P4C was being taught in 200 secondary schools and 2,000 primary schools in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (Hand & Winstanley 2008, p. xiii). In 2010, SAPERE (2010a) reported that it had about 800 members and that it trains about 1000 teachers per year. Evidently, SAPERE has its work cut out in furthering the cause: There are over 5,000 secondary schools in England alone (Department for Education 2010); moreover, even in the schools that SAPERE has touched, it is unclear which pupils do P4C or how often they do it (one class? a few lessons per term? or does P4C saturate the entire curriculum?).

2.3. Politico-educational context: P4C enters a new dawn

P4C now faces a brave new world. Amidst a global economic crisis, a Conservative-dominated Coalition Government rose to power in the UK in May 2010, promising, rather nebulously, to ensure ‘robust standards’ in schools (Her Majesty’s Government 2010, p. 28). It is introducing a host of policies and reforms that reshape the educational landscape and herald a return to more traditional schooling.

One significant change is the introduction of a new school performance measure, the English Baccalaureate, that prioritises pupil attainment in some of the subjects deemed academically rigorous. Unlike the acclaimed International Baccalaureate, at the core of which is philosophy (epistemology), the English Baccalaureate excludes philosophy (ethics and the philosophy of religion are excluded, given the contentious exclusion of Religious Studies).

Nevertheless, some philosophers scent opportunity. Their reasoning goes something like this: If the Government craves academic rigour, then it may be sympathetic to calls for the introduction of philosophy into the school curriculum, for philosophy is nothing but the crowning jewel of academe. Hence, they have petitioned the Government, and they have written a rationale for school philosophy in which P4C figures prominently (The Philosophy Shop 2011). These philosophers cannot be overly worried that, in its shift from Reasoning to reasoning, British species of P4C may have lost their rigour, and they cannot be too worried that SAPERE neither endorses nor opposes calls for philosophy to be made compulsory (Sutcliffe 2011, p. 10).

Advocates of P4C, however, should be worried. If P4C is not rigorous, then it is unlikely to receive Government backing, and thereby unlikely to flourish. What is needed is a third wave of P4C that is not *either* rigorous *or* meaningful but *both* rigorous *and* meaningful. Similarly, the context demands that SAPERE sets forth a

resolute vision of how and where P4C is best situated in the school curriculum (for example, as a discrete subject?). SAPERE must then implement a pro-active strategy to execute that vision. The figures cited above suggest that, although SAPERE has enjoyed much success in advancing the cause of philosophy in education, P4C practice is hardly pervasive in English schools, and a more assertive strategy is needed; the non-committal, supine position of SAPERE does little to further the cause. At the very least, SAPERE must re-tailor the way it extrinsically justifies the inclusion of P4C in the curriculum. For instance, claims that it fosters emotional literacy are likely to fall on deaf ears as the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning agenda melts away.

The Government is also seeking to change arrangements for teacher education. It wants more teachers to be trained directly in schools rather than through university education departments. This may have specific implications for teacher education in P4C. Certainly, in this age of austerity, many schools lack the finances to send their teachers on expensive courses. John White (2011, p. 8) reports that a basic initiation into P4C at a SAPERE Level 1 course costs £295 per head. Attendance at SAPERE-approved courses may plummet as a consequence. In this context, SAPERE would benefit from rethinking its arrangements for teacher development, at least if it wishes P4C to thrive.

There is another educational reform that may work out well for P4C: the flagship Academies and Free Schools programme. On the one hand, this is a trend towards a mainly macro-level de-democratisation of schools: Academies and Free Schools are companies limited by guarantee with unelected trustees accountable only to the Secretary of State for Education, who is seeking far more central powers than any of his predecessors. On the other hand, the programme does bestow on schools (head teachers) considerable autonomy. It frees them from National Curriculum requirements,

and it releases them from control by the civil servants in local authorities. Schools must still ensure that pupils achieve well, especially in terms of attaining high-quality academic qualifications. They must ensure that parents are not so dissatisfied that they bring a complaint to the Secretary of State, and they must ensure that teachers are not so dissatisfied that staff turnover is unacceptably high. They must assure the English schools' inspectorate that they have high standards. And, of course, they must not contravene the law. Within this remit, schools are free to do as they please. Plenty of scope, then, for P4C to flourish in—or even drive—education in schools. I fleetingly return to this theme in Chapter 6.

At the end of their genealogy of P4C, Nancy Vansieleghem and David Kennedy (2011) offer a new hope: P4C is fixed neither by its past nor by its present. Indeed, the shifting sands of politics and education in England may entail that henceforth SAPERE in particular and the P4C fraternity in general modify their discourses, theories, and practices to ensure that P4C triumphs rather than flounders in this brave new world.

2.4. Conclusion

To sum up, P4C is the object of a theoretical debate that has become distinctively polarised. Roughly speaking, P4C has emerged from two stages of growth. Early P4C emphasised reasoning whereas later P4C emphasised dialogue and reflection. Today, P4C faces new challenges and opportunities, not least because state-controlled education in the UK is becoming more traditional. It is thus urgent that P4C enters into a third stage of growth. A critique of P4C is thus apposite.

Chapter 3. Conceptualising P4C

What is P4C? In this chapter, I unfurl an answer. I begin by arguing that the name P4C is a misnomer and that because alternative names do not fare much better, a new name is needed: ‘dialogical philosophy’. After defending the debated claim that P4C is philosophy, I gainsay a lynchpin of P4C theory: the concept of common, central, and contestable concepts. This leads to a revision of two other key elements of P4C theory: (i) the concept of critical, creative, caring, and collaborative thinking and (ii) the concept of the community of enquiry. I argue that these concepts should be reconfigured and substituted by the concepts ‘dialogical thinking’ and ‘dialogue’ respectively. These refinements, in fact, allow me to debunk the popular criticism that P4C is instrumental; I contend instead that P4C promotes freedom of speech, freedom of thought, and freedom of being. This lets me justify the claim that, politically, P4C is not a critical pedagogy but a democratic one. My overall conclusion is that P4C is an educative and democratic process of dialogical philosophy that fosters truth and freedom.

3.1. The name ‘P4C’

Let me begin, then, by showing that the name ‘Philosophy for Children’ is inappropriate. Names are important; they are linked to identity, and they can affect people’s beliefs and attitudes. Hence, focusing on the name ‘Philosophy for Children’ is no mere semantic enterprise. It is a desideratum that names are accurate, precise, and ethical.

The name ‘Philosophy for Children’ (with capital letters) and the abbreviation ‘P4C’ are invariably used to refer to both the original Lipman philosophy programme and the updated Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC)

version of that programme. The name (with or without capital letters) and the abbreviation can also be used to refer to derivative offshoots of the pedagogy.

Given the wide variety of derivative P4C pedagogies, it is to be expected that new names have emerged. Today, P4C suffers death by a thousand names; 'Philosophy with Children', 'Philosophy with Teenagers', 'Philosophy for Colleges', 'Philosophy for the Curriculum', 'Philosophy in Schools', 'Philosophy for Communities', 'Communities of Enquiry', 'Philosophical Enquiry', 'Communities of Philosophical Enquiry'.

The name P4C was coined by Lipman who takes delight in the provocative marriage of the words 'philosophy' and 'children' (Lipman 2008). The union, he thinks, conjures important questions about the nature of philosophy and the capacities of children. True to Lipman's values, the name itself invites philosophical enquiry. Regrettably, however, the name has sparked some rather fruitless scholarly debates (e.g. Fox 2001; Murris 2001; 2002; White 1992). The question, Can children do philosophy? is largely redundant: We know that children *can* do philosophy as conceived in P4C because thousands of children across the world actually *do* it; hence, the question boils down to whether P4C is philosophy, which we will look at momentarily.

None of these names is ideal. The abbreviation 'P4C' is poor English, and educators must surely promote high standards of English. Some proponents argue that the preposition 'for' in P4C implies, falsely, that children are passive recipients of philosophy rather than active participants in it (Vansieleghem & Kennedy 2011, p. 181), thereby reproducing asymmetrical power relations between the teacher and children. But the substitution of the preposition 'with' does not offer much succour, for it is not just children with whom P4C is done. Lipman himself visualised a philosophy curriculum for 5 to 19 year olds (Lipman et al. 1980, pp. 51-54), and succeeded in

actualising a curriculum for 4 to 16 year olds. P4C in the UK is a process in which virtually anyone—not exclusively children or teenagers—may engage. Similarly, P4C is not restricted to a particular place or institution, so all the names that imply that it is are inaccurate. P4C may be done by undergraduates in universities, prisoners in prison, or professors in cafés. The name 'Community of Enquiry' is imprecise because it does not specify what kind of enquiry P4C entails; the name 'Philosophical Enquiry' does specify the kind of enquiry entailed, but it is imprecise because it does not highlight that P4C is a collaborative endeavour. The unwieldy name 'Community of Philosophical Enquiry' is more precise; however, it does not underscore as precisely as it could that participants enquire primarily through the vehicle of discussion.

Therefore, I propose that P4C needs renaming. There are two candidates: (i) 'philosophical dialogue' and (ii) 'dialogical philosophy'. Neither candidate suggests that P4C is restricted to specific people or places, and neither suggests that P4C is a solitary pursuit or an unreflective, uncritical mode of enquiry. The former implies more strongly that P4C is a kind of discussion; the latter implies more strongly that P4C is a kind of enquiry. Both implications are accurate. But the name 'dialogical philosophy' has the added benefit of suggesting both that P4C encourages dialogue with the ideas of others in an abstract sense and that P4C is philosophy rather than merely philosophical. Thus, supposing that P4C is philosophy and that it does involve abstract dialogue, the name 'dialogical philosophy' wins hands down.

Admittedly, the name 'dialogical philosophy' is a bit cumbersome and might be alienating, intimidating, and obfuscating to most people, including most pupils. I should hence wish to reserve it for occasions that are technical or that need precision. In most contexts, it suffices to call P4C 'philosophy'. It is a simpler and less pretentious name; moreover, it is accurate: P4C is philosophy.

3.2. P4C is philosophy

If the correct name for P4C is ‘dialogical philosophy’, then P4C must be philosophy or, perhaps, a kind of philosophy. This begs the perennial intractable question, What is philosophy? The question of whether P4C is indeed philosophy is important. It goes to the heart of P4C’s identity. On the one hand, the term ‘philosophy’ lends the pedagogy a palpable sense of gravitas, tradition, and academic rigour. On the other hand, the term smacks of ethereality and otherworldliness: à la Descartes, the solitary philosopher in front of the fire with weighty imaginings, detached from reality and real life.

The question, What is philosophy? invites a *descriptive* answer. A typical answer runs something like this. The word ‘philosophy’ comes from two Greek words, ‘philia’ meaning love and ‘sophia’ meaning wisdom. This etymology suggests that philosophy involves passion for understanding: an accurate, if imprecise, definition. It also suggests that philosophy has origins in classical antiquity. Philosophy began with the early Greek philosophers and, substantively, with the Greek triumvirate of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. It is thereby principally a Western phenomenon. (Of course, there are non-Western philosophies which have affected and been affected by Western philosophy; Schopenhauer, for instance, drew from Buddhist philosophy.) Western philosophy is associated with a particular canon; the classic texts include Plato’s *Republic*, Rene Descartes’ *Meditations*, David Hume’s *Enquiries*, and Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Investigations*. These texts enshrine philosophical thoughts and philosophical ways of thinking. Some people isolate two broad traditions in philosophy. In analytic philosophy, by and large, abstract reason, objective truth, logic, propositional argumentation, processes of verification, and conceptual analysis are dominant, at least according to Morny Joy (2011 p. 1). The Continental tradition, in

contrast, again according to Morny Joy (2011, pp. 1-3), stresses self-reflexivity and an ethics of intersubjectivity seeking justice. Reason is seen as historically and culturally saturated, and the distinction between philosophy on the one hand and literature and other subject matter on the other is not emphatically demarcated. However, both the distinction and the definitions are problematic. Philosophy, unlike the sciences, is not empirical insofar as it does not adopt the experimental method. Philosophy is sometimes divided into four strands: logic, epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology. The history of philosophy might be deemed a fifth strand. But philosophy can be divided in other ways, for example, according to subject area; the philosophy of science, of maths, of theology, and of language, aesthetics, ethics, jurisprudence, political philosophy…

The above answer tends to describe philosophy as a body of knowledge or a subject. Anthony Grayling (2010, pp. 245-246) insists that philosophy, in addition to being a subject, is also *process* of 'reflective and critical enquiry'. For him, distinctively philosophical thought is 'questioning, probing, critical, reflective, exacting, restless' and accepting of the 'open texture' of enquiry.

The distinction between philosophy qua subject and philosophy qua process is a familiar one. The P4C theorist Robert Fisher (2008, p. 112), drawing from the work of George MacDonald Ross, expresses the distinction rather sharply. He writes that, in the academic tradition stemming from Plato, philosophy is seen as a 'learned body of teachings', whereas in the tradition stemming from Socrates, philosophy is seen as an 'active process'. Thus Platonic philosophy is 'dogmatic', 'deductive', 'conceptual', elitist, abstract, and 'written texts', whereas Socratic philosophy is critical, 'inductive', 'linguistic', egalitarian, meaningful, and 'dialogue (oral)'.

This distinction frames the whole debate about whether P4C is philosophy. For example, the critic John White (2011, p. 4; see also 1992, p. 75) objects that P4C is not

philosophy because it is insufficiently abstract. He argues that 'central' to philosophy is 'second-order thinking'. Second-order thinking is 'not simply using concepts like pleasure [sic]', but 'reflecting on interrelations between them and allied ideas, against the background of larger frameworks of ideas'.

Conversely, the apologists Karin Murris (2000, p. 276) and Roger Sutcliffe (2011, p. 14) both charge such academic philosophers with elitism. More substantively, Karin Murris (2000) contends that abstract, decontextualised thinking—as distinct from meta-thinking and meta-dialogue—trades only in pseudo-problems (pp. 266-267) and, moreover, has little if any relevance to the real world. She also argues that much of what passes as philosophy in universities, such as monological lectures, is notably unphilosophical because it does not foster reflective, critical enquiry.

Thus, the problem with distinguishing between philosophy qua process and philosophy qua subject is that it suggests that P4C and academic philosophy are dichotomous from and perhaps even at odds with one another. The solution to the problem rests in reframing the question. The question is not, What is philosophy? This question invites description, and it is not surprising that academic philosophers describe, or ostensively point towards, their own experience of philosophy and then treat this as definitive. Additionally, the question implies that philosophy is fixed and, to a large degree, determined by its history, culture, and currency.

A better question is, What ought philosophy to be? This question, usefully, presupposes that philosophy is unfixed, undetermined, and unmade. It suggests that philosophy may escape the trappings of its history, traditions, and currency. The question, with its palpable ethical dimension, presents a challenge to the hegemony of those academic philosophers who wish to remake philosophy in their own image, for ethically, academics do not have exclusive ownership of philosophy.

So, what ought philosophy to be? I suspect that most people would agree that philosophy ought to be (i) reflective, critical enquiry, (ii) engagement with the ideas of others, and (iii) concerned with the two 'great' (Grayling 2010, p. 245), imbricating questions, What is? and What is significant? (as well as the peep of questions which they hatch). These three features of philosophy, then, constitute three criteria according to which philosophicality can be judged.

Let us make some tentative suppositions about university philosophy. Suppose it fosters reflective, critical enquiry to established public intellectual standards, or perhaps, to the agreed standards of the community of scholars. Also suppose that it encourages students to engage with sophisticated ideas from the great philosophers, and that it has abstract conceptual frameworks for approaching metaphysical and axiological questions – frameworks that nourish rigorous understanding.

Likewise, let us also make some suppositions about P4C. Suppose that, especially with very young children, P4C fosters reflective, critical enquiry, though to communal standards. It encourages participants to engage with ideas from their peers, and it offers participants the opportunity to consider questions of reality and significance, questions rooted in their individual and communal lifeworld.

P4C, on these suppositions, is structurally the same as university philosophy. These suppositions are, of course, controversial. Take the first one. There is much diversity between and even within university philosophy departments. It is not inconceivable that some university-based philosophers might argue that philosophy's definitive task is to analyse and elucidate the meaning of words. This definition sets stringent limits on the role of critical reflection and engagement with the ideas of others. The root problem is that philosophy, by its nature, inexorably undermines and replaces itself, rendering futile any attempt at final definition.

However, if we trust that these suppositions are fair ones, we can conclude that P4C is philosophy because it is dialogical enquiry into questions of reality and significance. This definition, however, means that P4C is not rendered philosophical by its subject matter, which has ramifications for P4C theory.

3.3. Common, central, and contestable concepts

The concept of common, central, and contestable concepts (or, in shorthand, *philosophical concepts*) has attained cult-like status amongst P4C scholars, who sometimes interpret it, often defer to it, but rarely question it. The concept was first articulated by Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp (1995, p. 130). For them, a common concept is one that is part of most people's experience; a central concept is one that helps people make sense of their experience; and a contestable concept is one that is problematic and resists final resolution. The authors claim that philosophical concepts such as fairness, truth, and goodness are 'part of the spine of philosophy' and that the presence of such concepts in an enquiry is both an indicator and a touchstone of its philosophicality. P4C helps participants to clarify for themselves the meanings of philosophical concepts and to appreciate that others understand those concepts differently.

Since its inception, the concept has undergone little development. Maughn Rollins Gregory (2009b, p. 3), for instance, merely adds that a central concept is not trivial and that a common concept is not esoteric. According to him, philosophical concepts are 'foundational' to the arts and sciences. P4C sensitises participants to them 'wherever they arise'.

Similarly, after a searching analysis of the concept of concept itself, Nadia and David Kennedy (2011, p. 272) do little more than rehearse Laurance Splitter and Ann

Margaret Sharp's theory. They do elaborate three points: (i) that central concepts both frame and are framed by people's experience; (ii) that contestable concepts are always subject to reconstruction; and (iii) that philosophical concepts usually emerge as problematic in and from our lives. Later in their article, the authors make the arresting attestation that philosophical concepts pervade all of the academic disciplines (pp. 275-276).

One error is that Nadia and David Kennedy apply the idea of philosophical concepts incorrectly. They write, for example, that 'vehicle' is *not* a philosophical concept (p. 272), yet, surely, it satisfies the criteria: It is common (most people, I suggest, have a notion of, say, a machine for travelling); it is central (most humans travel using vehicles); and it is contestable (is a skateboard a vehicle?). Conversely, they write that 'infinity' *is* a philosophical concept. But it may only be common to those who have studied, say, mathematics; moreover, it is not obvious how the concept frames and is framed by people's experience. Finally, although infinity is a hotly contested concept, especially amongst mathematicians and philosophers of mathematics, it is often treated as wholly unproblematic, for example, when mathematicians are calculating with it.

The aforesaid error relates to the application of the idea rather than to the idea itself; the issue might be resolved merely by adducing better examples. Even so, there are problems with the idea itself, too.

Commonality is contextual and a matter of degree. It is not an absolute, and it depends on history and culture. For example, the concept dharma is rife in many Hindu communities, but scarce in most secular ones. Moreover, uncommon concepts can become common; for example, someone without the concept dharma can come to grasp it through experience and study.

Now take centrality. Note the irony in listing, as Nadia and David Kennedy do, example after example of so-called 'central' concepts. Also note that centrality is a matter of degree: A concept may be more or less catalytic in helping people make sense of their experience. The centrality of a concept, I suspect, varies between and, over time, in people. Even arguably esoteric concepts such as Buddhism's dukkha or Jean-François Lyotard's performativity surely have much potential to enable people to make better sense of their experience. Moreover, there is something imperialistic about the P4C fraternity predetermining what concepts are central in helping people understand their life. Who, apart from Nadia and David Kennedy (2011, p. 272), avows that the concepts of eating and sleep are peripheral to self-understanding?

In relation to contestability, any concept can, in theory, be problematised, irrespective of whether past philosophers have, in history, contested it. History does not exhaust the possibilities. Conversely, contestable concepts can be treated as unproblematic, both in theory and practice; indeed they usually are, even by professional philosophers. Additionally, contrary to the lifeblood of P4C, the word 'contestability' conveys a sense of a competitive battle rather than of a collaborative endeavour.

The concept of philosophical concepts comes with more general attendant dangers. It may tend to the neglect of concepts with which participants may be unfamiliar, but which may nevertheless provide participants with new ways of making sense of their experience. It may also lead to the false belief that a dialogue is philosophical—and of personal significance to participants—if concepts such as justice and truth are dissected in it. Finally, it may foster uncritical prejudice: Participants may be discouraged from questioning concepts that are not on the list approved by the

authorities. Perhaps some concepts that are not questioned and contested by philosophers ought to be.

If a dialogue is a ‘reflective and critical enquiry’, then the category of concepts which it traverses is irrelevant to its philosophicality. Philosophy is a *how* more than a *what*. What can be said is that a concept becomes or is rendered philosophical in and through dialogical philosophy. The upshot of this is that the concept of philosophical concepts must be jettisoned: It is how participants think about concepts, rather than what concepts they think about, that counts. There is a discord in adhering to a false thinking/thought dualism.

We can, however, take one further step back and posit that philosophy is more of a *why* than a *how*. That is to say, the *why* orientates and breathes the breath of philosophy into the *how* and the *what*. For someone can engage in reflective and critical enquiry and yet not be doing philosophy in the truest sense. The person might be observing the letter rather than the spirit of philosophy. Someone who does philosophy out of sheer bloody-mindedness, or for self-aggrandisement, or merely to attain academic qualifications, or for financial profit, or to publish articles or books, or because it is a compulsory subject, or perhaps even because they find it enjoyable and interesting, is not really doing philosophy, irrespective of how masterfully they do it. For such philosophy is spiritless. It is perfunctory and Pharisaic, a simulacrum. Philosophicality is determined by a deeper, more spiritual purpose: the metaphysical search for truth and meaning. What is at stake here is the purpose of human being itself. This purpose does not escape Lipman, who talks about a narrow quest for truth and a broader quest for meaning (Lipman 2003, p. 95), and who, as Maughn Rollins Gregory (2011, p. 201) perceives, never bisected the *how* from the ‘project of living a meaningful life’. Neither does it escape Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp

(1995), who talk persistently about meaning-making (albeit rather blandly). And it is what Anthony Grayling was getting at when he talked about the two great questions of philosophy.

The spiritual search for metaphysical solution cannot be done by others on our behalf: Meaning is personal; others cannot determine, create, or find meaning for us. Meaning differs between people. Conversely, the search cannot be done alone: Meaning is social; we cannot determine, create, or find meaning without others. Meanings overlap, sometimes to the point that, when we feel our meaning is understood by others, there is an evanescent sense of spiritual communion. For meaning is ultimately and irrevocably ineffable; it burrows beyond inert words and language into our very experience of life. This is one reason why I argued that philosophy is ultimately spiritual (Stone 2009). The idea that meaning is both (i) personal and social and (ii) neither personal nor social is best understood as the idea that meaning is relational or, more precisely, dialogical. The idea is encapsulated in the concept of dialogical thinking. To grasp this concept, we must analyse the concept of thinking, about which much is written in the P4C literature.

3.4. Dialogical thinking

P4C theory cannot be understood without an analysis of Lipman's theory, especially his theory about thinking. His principal early works are *Philosophy in the Classroom* (Lipman et al. 1980) (which he co-authored with Ann Margaret Sharp and Frederick Oscanyan), *Philosophy Goes to School* (Lipman 1988), and *Thinking in Education* (Lipman 1991). Naturally, his views on P4C evolved over time. Rather than chronicling this progression, I will concentrate mainly on his most seasoned exegesis, what Roger Sutcliffe (2011, p. 5) calls his 'chef d'oeuvre', namely, the second edition

of *Thinking in Education* (Lipman 2003), which constitutes the crystallisation of his thought. Lipman's theory in this text can be usefully divided into three: first, his ideas about the reflective paradigm; second, his ideas about thinking; and third, his ideas about discussion.

Lipman (2003, pp. 18-19) distinguishes the 'standard paradigm of normal educational practice' from the 'reflective paradigm of critical educational practice'. The standard paradigm assumes that knowledge is pristine, fixed, reducible to discrete disciplines, and a product to be transmitted by authoritative teachers to absorbent participants. The reflective paradigm, in contrast, assumes that knowledge is problematic and tentative and that disciplines overlap. Participants co-construct such knowledge by participating in an active process of enquiry supported by skilful but fallible teachers.

One might immediately accuse him of defining a false dichotomy here. Indeed, Robin Alexander (2008, ch. 4) has objected vehemently to pedagogical dualisms. Thus, a couple of prophylactic moves are prudent. First, it is worth noting that, qua pragmatist, Lipman is by breed averse to dichotomies. Pragmatists tend to hold that the truth of a dichotomy resides in its use, in whether it works in practice. Lipman (2003, p. 62) acknowledges that it is difficult to separate the thinking from the thinker. Second, even at his most rhetorical, he speaks of his pedagogy in terms of its emphasis or orientation (e.g. Lipman 1990). It is thus reasonable enough to contend that, rather than defining a false dichotomy, he is modestly attempting to redress an underemphasis on reflection and thinking in education.

He devotes much attention to the concepts of thinking and reflection. Regrettably, his comments are convoluted by a hotchpotch of superfluous terms. Thus,

in line with Ockham's Razor, his theory would benefit from simplification. Moreover, there appear to be some disharmonies in his account. Let me explain.

Lipman (2003) conflates reflective thinking with critical thinking, as indicated by the name '*reflective* paradigm of *critical* practice'. He defines both reflective thinking *and* critical thinking in terms of self-correction (p. 27). The conflation is probably the result of John Dewey's influence. For John Dewey (1910, p. 8) and Lipman (2003, p. 26), reflection involves self-cognisance of its own processes, assumptions, and implications, as and when it focuses upon its substantive subject matter. This definition is often taken to be a definition of critical thinking; indeed, some scholars proclaim John Dewey as the inaugurator of the critical thinking movement (e.g. A. Fisher 2001, p. 2).

Lipman's justification of the reflective paradigm (and of, what is the same thing, the normative proposition that education ought to foster reflective thinking) permeates his work. He sees reflective thinking as an excellent kind of thinking. Such thinking is valuable because it fosters human flourishing in myriad ways, for example, by weeding out erroneous and ill-founded beliefs. He maintains, unremarkably, that all humans, including children, can and do think and, only a little more remarkably, that all humans have the capacity to think reflectively. He posits that this capacity is often unfilled; the capacity must be cultivated through practice, that is, through disciplined, dialogical enquiry. This is where education in general and P4C in particular need to intercede.

In effect, he conceptualises reflective thinking as *multidimensional thinking*. Multidimensional thinking is an intimate interpenetrating fusion of critical thinking, creative thinking, and caring thinking. This triad loosely echoes the ancient Greek ideals of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness (Fisher 2008, p. 31).

Lipman (2003, p. 212) defines critical thinking concisely as ‘thinking that (1) facilitates judgement because it (2) relies on criteria, (3) is self-correcting, and (4) is sensitive to context’. This definition is a minor improvement on Robert Ennis’s (1996, p. xvii) definition (making ‘reasonable decisions about what to believe and what to do’) because it recognises that the product of critical thinking, namely judgement, is qualitatively different from the products of uncritical thinking, namely beliefs or decisions. Lipman’s definition is also a modest improvement on Harvey Siegel’s (1997, p. 2) definition (thinking that is ‘appropriately moved by reasons’) because it is less vague: Lipman specifies the kind of movement i.e. self-correction and the kind of reason i.e. criteria.

It is worth noting that Lipman (2003) needlessly complicates matters by introducing the concept of ‘reasonableness’. At times, he treats reasonable thinking as synonymous with critical thinking (e.g. p. 241). Unbridled rationality, mathematical precision, and scientific exactitude are impossible in the uncertain areas of life; instead, approximation and compromise are necessary, and equitable and sensible judgements are the best option. Hence, reasonableness is ‘rationality tempered by judgement’ (p. 11) and includes the employment of rational procedures judiciously and the readiness to reason and to be reasoned with (p. 97). But this sounds sneakingly like critical thinking: Rational procedures equate to criteria, judiciousness equates to contextual judgement, and the readiness to reason and to be reasoned with equates to the will to correction, including self-correction.

Donald Hatcher (2000, p. 3) attacks the ‘notion’ of ‘relying on criteria’ as ‘vague’. This attack, however, is ill thought. The concept of criteria (or standards) is a central component of other influential visions of critical thinking (e.g. Ennis 1996; Paul & Elder 2006). Lipman (2003) defines criteria as reliable reasons and notes that they

encompass the fallacies and validities of formal and informal logic (pp. 236-237, 240). He draws a distinction between 'mega-criteria' and 'meta-criteria'. Mega-criteria include truth, goodness, and beauty; meta-criteria include reliability, strength, relevance, coherence, precision, and consistency (p. 215). Hence, Donald Hatcher's argument mistakes an abstract conceptualisation for a vague notion.

Lipman holds that criticism and criteria are an indispensible element of judgement. It is natural enough to put criticism and judgement asunder: Criticism attacks, destroys, and negates; judgement defends, creates, and affirms. But this is a little simplistic. Criticism involves creating arguments and devising reasons, and it involves identifying the positives as well as the negatives; that is, criticism involves some degree of judgement. Conversely, judgements can be negative as well as affirmative. Lipman has a markedly Aristotelian conception of judgement. For him, a judgement is a reflected opinion, a determination of one of myriad possible relationships, for example, cause-effect, similarities-differences, and part-whole relationships (pp. 22-23). It is usually the outcome of reflection, enquiry, reasoning, and deliberation, which fosters autonomy (pp. 25-26) and renders it backward-looking. (Though, according to him, the value of a judgement lies in its efficacy in shaping future action.) Thus, judgement usually involves some degree of criticism.

Judgement can be construed as the inseparable, creative face of multidimensional thinking. This explains why Lipman's efforts to distinguish the creative from the critical are unconvincing. For instance, he dithers over whether it is critical thinking or creative thinking which is inherently sceptical (see pp. 47, 254). Also, he notes that creative thinking is often critical: It involves reasoning and evaluation (p. 244). Furthermore, his chief insights into creative thinking apply equally to critical thinking: It is not just creative thinking that can take myriad forms (pp. 245-

251), that can only be assessed in retrospect (p. 245), and that can reconfigure or reshape what is already given (p. 257).

But Lipman does not adopt the rather awkward sounding term ‘critico-creative thinking’, perhaps because it excludes the ethical and emotional strands of excellent, reflective thinking. He thus sets forth the concept of caring thinking (pp. 264-71). Caring thinking is not so much thinking *about* values, ideals, feelings, and emotions; rather, it is thinking that *is* (i.e. enshrines) such things. For instance, caring thinkers are solicitous in and passionate about fair, open, and impartial enquiry. They investigate things about which they are passionate, with a respectful concern for fellow enquirers and other people.

The contention that excellent thinking is ethical is not unique. For example, Richard Paul and Linda Elder (2006) maintain that critical thinking is fair-minded and sociocentric. However, the contention that excellent thinking is emotional is more controversial. For, since Descartes, there has been a marked tendency to regard thinking as something distinct from the body: Emotions inhibit the pursuit of knowledge and so must be minimised or, ideally, eliminated.

Bizarrely, Lipman (2003) himself falls foul of the tendency to dichotomise mind and body when he reproduces the popular distinction between thinking skills and thinking dispositions. He sets out four main varieties of thinking skills: enquiry skills, reasoning skills, conceptualisation skills, and translation skills (p. 164). He also distinguishes thirteen main thinking dispositions (p. 164). Thus, there is ultimately little difference between the aforementioned definitions of critical thinking by Robert Ennis, Harvey Siegel, and Lipman because all of the definitions are underpinned by Cartesian dualisms (see Garrison 1999). It is puzzling and certainly incongruent that Lipman does not at least frame his ideas about skills and dispositions in terms of his

conceptualisation of multidimensional thinking. Moreover, it is incongruent to marry in one place the thinker to the thinking, and then, elsewhere, to assume that they are divorced. The distinction between skills and dispositions is unhelpful and out of kilter with his Deweyan epistemology; therefore, it should be discarded.

A further problem is that Lipman's conceptualisation of thinking is complicated by its bloated vocabulary. Excellent thinking is at once reflective, critical, creative, caring, multidimensional, reasonable, and judicious. He also sometimes speaks of procedural, substantive, and complex thinking (Lipman 1991, p. 24). What he should have done is conceptualised excellent thinking as 'dialogical thinking', for four main reasons. First, dialogical thinking is the core concept that emerges from P4C practice on the ground (Stone 2010): It is realistic. Second, Lipman (2003, p. 258) himself points to the concept when he says that 'thinking for ourselves is, then, dialogical'. Third, to defer to Ockham's Razor, conceptualising dialogical thinking would make his ideas about thinking as simple as possible but not simpler. Fourth, dialogical thinking reverberates with another core strand of P4C theory: that excellent thinking is best cultivated through excellent discussion or, what is the same thing, through dialogue.

3.5. Thoughtful dialogue

Dialogue is, in P4C, thus excellent, reflective discussion. Following the social constructivist Lev Vygotsky, Lipman (2003) contends that thinking is the internalisation or introjection of the process of speech (p. 21). This presupposition has two significant implications. First, it means that thinking is social and linguistic/symbolic, a kind of 'inner speech', because speech is necessarily linguistic/symbolic. Second, it means that the quality of thinking in which someone can engage is contingent upon and

circumscribed by the quality of discussions and other forms of interpersonal communication in which that person has engaged.

Lipman does not always use the term ‘dialogue’ to refer to high quality discussions; sometimes, like Michael Oakeshott, he uses it in a more abstract sense to refer to a reflective engagement with others and their ideas (e.g. Lipman 2003, p. 259). He employs two terms in his exposition of the nature of dialogue in this abstract sense: ‘community’ and ‘enquiry’. Thus, the terms ‘dialogue’, ‘communal enquiry’ and ‘dialogical enquiry’ are, for him, tautological terms. He regards the compound concept of the ‘community of enquiry’ as the ‘master educational paradigm’ (p. 83), borrowing and adapting the notion from Charles Sanders Peirce and, to a lesser extent, George Herbert Mead (pp. 20, 84).

Lipman’s conceptualisation of the ‘community of enquiry’ is perhaps best understood against the backdrop of his division between the critical, the creative, and the caring, though he does not lay it out exactly in this form. A critical community is one wherein people disagree with one another, build upon and challenge one another’s ideas, and assist each other in unlocking assumptions and in teasing out implications (p. 20). A creative community is one wherein people are free and equal individuals who think for themselves and who make autonomous judgements. Finally, a caring community is one characterised by values such as solidarity, respect, sharing, and mutualism. In a community of enquiry, participants share ideas and learn from one another’s experiences (pp. 93-94).

Lipman presents an agreeable analysis of the concept of enquiry. He posits that enquiry is the investigation and exploration of the unknown. It is prompted by wonder, puzzlement, or curiosity (p. 247). Questions are posed, and answers sought; problems are identified, and resolutions ferreted out. Problems invite enquiry, and enquiry

demands problems and dialectically raises new ones. Answers or resolutions are judgements of truth or meaning (p. 95). These judgements remain provisional and subject to revision.

One of Lipman's principal insights is that enquiry is in essence dialogical (in the abstract sense). He contends that enquiry is communal because 'it rests on a foundation of language…of symbolic systems, of measurements and so on, all of which are uncompromisingly social' (p. 83). Moreover, he says enquiry aims for judgement, moves in the direction of the argument, and is governed by logic (pp. 84, 92). By 'logic' he certainly means '*dia*logic'. For, in his view, enquiry does progress, not in a prespecifiable, rational manner, but in an unpredictable, jerky manner (p. 87), 'like a boat tacking in the wind' (p. 20). That is, one move in an enquiry calls for another move, and this move calls for yet another, and so on as the enquiry unfurls (p. 93). An enquiry can be multithreaded: It can contain at once several lines of enquiry (p. 100).

What Lipman presents here is an enquiry-centred epistemology. The aforementioned reflective paradigm is essentially a distillation of the pedagogical implications of this epistemology. The main further implication of this is that people must be disciplined into enquiry, not by learning *about* it, but by participating *in* it. Consequently, knowledge must be presented to participants as problematic. Moreover, enquiry furnishes an experience upon which participants can reflect, and participants can bring past experience and personal knowledge to bear in enquiries. Lastly, the direction of enquiries cannot be restricted by disciplinary boundaries.

A weakness of Lipman's analysis is that it is ill-equipped to distinguish between different kinds of enquiry. The concept of communal enquiry is sufficiently abstract to cover all genuine kinds of enquiry. Similarly, he regards philosophical enquiry as a 'prototype' of enquiry per se, and he explicitly suggests that enquiry in other disciplines

is only enquiry to the extent that it is philosophical (p. 101). The upshot of this is that, for him, all enquiry is ultimately dialogical and philosophical.

It is, of course, possible to identify different kinds of enquiry. What distinguishes them from one another is their distinctive methods (Cam 2009). Scientific enquiry, for instance, uses experimental methods, coronial enquiry uses post-mortem examination, and criminal enquiry uses, say, witness statements and interviews. Philip Cam (2009, p. 127) would have it that different enquiries have different overarching aims or guiding ideals; scientific enquiry, he claims, aims for knowledge, coronial inquest aims for truth, enquiry in legal contexts aim for justice. It is, however, more plausible to maintain that *all* kinds of enquiry aim for truth. Scientists seek to discover truth about the natural world as much as lawyers seek to discover the truth of allegations. Perhaps what Philip Cam means is that truth can be defined in different ways, for example, as knowledge or justice. Perhaps what he means is that there are different criteria for truth in different fields, even if in these fields the same basic definition of truth is held. Or perhaps what he means is that enquiry, the pursuit of truth, is itself subordinate to and orientated by broader human aims; for example, the lawyer's pursuit of truth is underpinned by his or her broader quest for justice. Thus, Philip Cam's argument that the aim of enquiry in P4C is freedom does not necessarily mean that such enquiry does not also aim for truth (p. 132).

Enquiry in P4C is characterised by the distinctive method, dialogue. Dialogues are kinds of discussions; but dialogues are different from rows, debates, chats, interviews, interrogations, conversations. According to David Walton (1998, in IAPC 2008, p. 19; see also Gregory 2009a) there are six kinds of dialogue: information-seeking dialogue, negotiation dialogue, persuasion dialogue, deliberation dialogue, enquiry dialogue, and eristic dialogue. He maintains that each kind is characterised by a

different aim; for example, information-seeking dialogue strives for facts to satisfy the seeker, whereas deliberation dialogue focuses upon practical problems in order to find practical solutions. 'Inquiry dialogue' aims 'to discover truth', that is, to establish 'what is the most reasonable' or, in my words, to come to a 'justified conclusion' (Stone 2010, p. 48). Presumably, David Walton is not denying that other kinds of discussion and dialogue can or do aim for truth. An interrogation seeks to extract the truth. Information-seeking dialogue seeks information that is true. Jurors aim for justified conclusions. Rather, he is asserting that enquiry dialogue aims for a particular kind of truth: a judgement about conceptual relationships that is the outcome of reasoned thought. Truth, in P4C, is not an opination.

The contention that truth is the aim of dialogical enquiry has entertained currency since Susan Gardner's (1995) article was published, and it thus surprising that P4C has fallen foul to the accusation of naïve relativism: In P4C, unreasoned opinions are eschewed. However, P4C is not absolutist in its epistemology; truth is generally seen as intra/intersubjective. There is no known, certain, authoritative Truth. P4C therefore fosters freedom of thought. This conclusion, however, has been questioned.

3.6. Dialogical thinking, dialogical thinkers

P4C, then, is, in theory, a process of dialogical philosophy. This theory is substantiated resoundingly by data gathered from pupils who participate in P4C: Dialogue—thoughtful discussion—emerged as the core category in a grounded theory study of P4C (Stone 2010, p. 39).

Thus, probably the most absurd objection levelled against P4C in recent times is the objection by Nancy Vansieleghem (2006) that P4C is undialogical. Her strategy is to assess the philosophicality of P4C against Bakhtinian dialogism; Steve Williams (2009),

however, has since shown that P4C is perfectly reconcilable with Mikhail Bakhtin's theory. Even if he had not, all that Nancy Vansieleghem would have succeeded in showing is that P4C is absonant with a technical concept of dialogue. She worries that P4C drowns out the true voice of the child because it expects them to express themselves in the voice of abstract reason. However, although pupils themselves do say that P4C demands abstract thought (Stone 2010, pp. 45-48), they also say that this thought is deep, creative, receptive, and holistic – and undoubtedly still theirs. Nancy Vansieleghem's third main concern is that P4C cannot be dialogical because it drives at consensus. No doubt some ill-conceived practices, such as Paul Cleghorn and Stephanie Baudet's do: These authors equate thinking with praying (2002a, p. iii) and with sermonising (e.g. 2002b, p. 24). Naturally, P4C is a social endeavour: There are basic rules, expectations, and values (which may be implicit or explicit) into which everyone must buy (Kennedy & Kennedy 2011, p. 266). For example, everyone is urged to be respectful to one another. However, the truth is that participants are expected to draw their own conclusions, irrespective of whether this results in a consensus.

This criticism that P4C is undialogical is allied to the criticism, levelled by Nancy Vansieleghem and others, that P4C is instrumentalist and thereby inimical to participant freedom (e.g. Biesta 2011; Vansieleghem 2005). The essence of the criticism is that P4C is concerned to manufacture a particular kind of human: a democratic citizen, someone who is reasonable, thoughtful, considerate, reflective, and judicious. P4C is thereby humanistic: It humanises participants. One might vouch that this is a good thing. However, Gert Biesta writes, quoting the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, that humanism is not sufficiently human, and that P4C limits human potentiality, creativity, and freedom by precasting humanity itself.

There are two main, interrelated ways of responding to the charge of instrumentalism. The first way is to defend the humanistic ambitions of P4C; after all, it is, on the face of it, noble and reinvigorating to help pupils become more reasonable and more thoughtful, especially amidst a society where, at the exact time of writing, there are riots on the city streets. Similarly, a focus on thinking and reasoning is a welcome relief from the fixation with assessment, examination results, school inspections, and league tables. Finally, a counterattack against the post-humanist alternatives to P4C, where they exist, is likely to seize victory; for instance, Nancy Vansieleghem's (2011, pp. 323-327) experiment of taking pupils on walks to desolate places and later asking them to draw self-portraits singularly lacks any trace of intellectual challenge.

The second way is to show that P4C is conducive to freedom. The two ways are interrelated because the main qualities that P4C seeks to cultivate—reasonableness, etc.—all enshrine some sense of freedom and autonomy. It is helpful to recalibrate a little the language that is used to frame the debate. I will avoid the language of production because it twists the debate a little to the purposes of the critics. Conversely, I will appropriate some of the language of the critics to show how P4C might dovetail with that language. Rather than talking about 'reasonable, thoughtful, considerate, reflective, and judicious thinkers', I will talk of 'dialogical thinkers' because, as my arguments above convey, this is more accurate.

Let me proceed by giving an account of dialogical philosophy. Participants are expected to listen to one another. Some of the ideas they hear may be minimally different from their own, whereas other ideas may be very different. Participants are pressed to reflect on and question the ideas and values of others and, in the process, to reflect on and question their own ideas and values. This dialogue plays itself out both communally and internally. Its direction cannot be specified in advance; rather, it can

only be judged in retrospect because it is by nature creative, unpredictable, and new (see Murris 2008b, p. 675). Participants may change their mind, or counterargue, or adduce new reasons, or adjust old ones…Thus, in exposing participants to a plurality of ideas and values, participants experience interruption and hesitation and thus, through the enacting of freedom, create something unique. Engagement in dialogical thinking nourishes, over time, dialogical thinkers: The values of P4C imbue both its means and its ends. In one sense, a dialogical thinker is a thinker borne of freedom: someone whose ideas and values are freely chosen. In another sense, a dialogical thinker is a free thinker who is predisposed to think dialogically, i.e. to reflect on and challenge ideas. This explains why Philip Cam (2009, p. 132) contends that P4C is a ‘community of liberation’ where freedom occurs only ‘in abundant association with others’ (p. 131). For one could not think dialogically without others.

Therefore, pace Gert Biesta, Nancy Vansieleghem, and other critics, I conclude that P4C potentiates human freedom. It potentiates freedom of speech through dialogue, freedom of thought through dialogical thinking, and—to coin a neat term—freedom of being through nourishing dialogical thinkers.

3.7. P4C as democratic pedagogy

The paramountcy of freedom in P4C gives the educative process of dialogical philosophy a conspicuously *political* edge. As an educative process, P4C is best characterised as a pedagogy; as a political process, P4C is best characterised as democratic. In other words, P4C is a democratic pedagogy, as I now show.

A pedagogy is a fully-fledged approach to teaching, learning, and education. Thus, a pedagogy involves practice: a set of techniques, methods, tasks, structures, and activities. But a pedagogy is more than educative practice. It comes with an ‘attendant

discourse' of theory (Alexander 2008, p. 47). Thus, it also involves a system of educational values, aims, purposes, principles, and concepts. But a pedagogy is more than an amalgam of practice and teaching, that is, more than a praxis. For it depends on its context (p. 48). Hence, praxis varies in different places, times, and situations. Note that practice, theory, and context are intimately bound together, so it is difficult to separate them.

The educational definition of P4C as a pedagogy requires defence. For not everyone defines it in that way. For instance, John White (2011, p. 3) defines P4C as a school subject. According to Roger Sutcliffe (2011, p. 2), P4C is usually defined as a practice. One reason that P4C is correctly defined as a pedagogy is that Lipman (2003, pp. 3, 5) sometimes defined or spoke of it in that way. Another reason is that P4C satisfies the criteria of a pedagogy: P4C is an educative process of dialogical philosophy. It includes practices: teaching and learning methods and structures. There are plenty of texts jam-packed with ideas for teachers (e.g. IAPC 2008; SAPERE 2006). However, these practices are not purely technical. They are underpinned, as we have seen, by substantive theory, aims, and values. Praxis in P4C varies not only internationally but also in the UK; for instance, there are significant differences between the approaches of Catherine McCall, Paul Cleghorn, Joanna Haynes, and Sara Liptai.

Defining P4C as a pedagogy has implications for what P4C is *not*. P4C is not a philosophy curriculum, a school subject, a thinking skills programme, a reading recovery scheme, or a course of therapy. I am not denying that P4C may involve the study of philosophical ideas, nor that P4C may help to improve the thinking skills, literacy and oracy, and emotional literacy of participants. I am denying that P4C is reducible to such things. Arguments which presuppose that P4C is so reducible are therefore at best imprecise and at worst flawed. Thus, Philip Cam (2009, p. 128)

suspects that plans to roll out P4C as a compulsory school subject are based on a category mistake. Consistent with this, SAPERE in the UK has not endorsed any such plans (Sutcliffe 2011, p. 2).

If P4C is a pedagogy, what kind of pedagogy is it? The best answer is, a dialogical pedagogy. A dialogical pedagogy is, according to Robin Alexander (2008, p. 92), a pedagogy of the ‘spoken word’. P4C promotes high-quality, intellectually demanding discussion. Categorising P4C as a dialogical pedagogy still couches it in mainly educational terms.

A more political answer is that P4C is a democratic pedagogy. Lipman was influenced by John Dewey’s (1916) vision of participative democracy. Unlike representative democracy, where members vote for representatives and then let the elected representatives make the decisions, participative democracy regards democracy as a way of life. Members must actively participate to create or negotiate social and regulatory values and to make decisions. The premise is that stakeholders in a social institution should have a hand in shaping it.

In most varieties of P4C in schools at present, pupils not only vote for questions but also set the substantive agenda by formulating the questions. They are often involved in decisions about the procedure. In P4C, pupils have freedom of speech: They can say what they want so long as it is not offensive or disrespectful to others. All participants, subject to practical constraints, have an equal opportunity to express themselves. Also, as we have seen, P4C champions freedom of thought and freedom of being. Pupils are thus rendered powerful and accountable and regarded as political agents with inalienable rights (Haynes 2008; Haynes & Murris 2011). Of course, although significant predefined power asymmetries remain between the teacher and pupils, and although pupils are often compelled to do P4C, it arguably remains more

democratic than most school practices. Empirical evidence from my own P4C practice shows that pupils think that P4C is one of the few torch-bearers of democracy in schools, but that P4C does little to change the broader school structures or practices that make them feel deep-seatedly disenfranchised (Stone 2010). Given carte blanche, many protagonists of P4C would surely transform entire educational institutions into participatory democracies.

Some scholars think that P4C is a democratic Trojan horse in a basically undemocratic educational world. P4C is something radical, something revolutionary, the Pedagogue Spring. For example, the Brazilian P4C protagonist Walter Kohan (2011, p. 344) rejects wholesale the educational ideal of formation of the reasonable citizen, in favour of the educational ideal of thinking differently, of thinking otherwise (see Haynes 2008, p. 41). For him, much human thought is conditioned by cultural forces: popular culture, the media, the political, academic or therapeutic elites, the market, capital, educational institutions (Kohan 2011, pp. 348-349). There is only freedom of conditioned thought, which is, in reality, no freedom at all. Conditioned thinking needs to be unlearnt; it needs to be recognised, neutralised, and repudiated (p. 349). Freeing human thought from these and similar oppressive shackles requires new ways of thinking. Enter P4C.

Like Walter Kohan, Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris (2011, p. 286) construe P4C as a critical pedagogy. Pointing to the work of influential educationists Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux, they rightly define critical pedagogy as any pedagogy that challenges social inequalities (p. 300). In other words, critical pedagogy is pedagogy for social justice; it strives to critique and thereby transform education and society. It challenges the prevailing, dominant discourses.

There are dimensions of P4C that make it appear to be a critical pedagogy. The fact that it conceives of thinking and dialogue as holistic and penetrated with emotions, as opposed to something cognitive and disembodied, goes some way to ensuring that females are included, though other practical strategies may also be needed (Leckey 2009). Indeed, the extent to which P4C is inclusive of other minority voices has not been established empirically. Similarly, the fact that it impels participants to create their own philosophies—to come to their own set of judgements—as communities and individuals goes some way to ensuring that anyone can be included. Another dimension is that P4C offers a different discourse from the dominant one. It offers a vocabulary of community, dialogue, thinking, questioning, listening, respecting, truth, judgement, and so on, that is different in hue from the vocabulary of objectives, targets, grades, levels, examinations, controlled-assessments, assessment for learning, league tables, progress, and standards. Moreover, it offers reconceptualisations of the key concepts of education: education, knowledge, learning, disciplines, child, and teaching. In doing so, it inevitably contests the prevailing understandings of the concepts.

But solicitude is needed in defining P4C as a critical pedagogy. P4C and critical pedagogy come from different traditions: P4C is rooted in pragmatism, whereas critical theory, which constitutes the theoretical backdrop to work in critical pedagogy by educators such as Paulo Freire, is neo-Marxist. Hence, Maughn Gregory (2011) splits them, and their epistemologies differ. As mentioned above, truth in P4C is generally seen as intra/inter-subjective: Participants co-construct their own individual and communal philosophies, their own micro-narratives, their own truths. In contrast, truth in many versions of critical pedagogy is construed as objective. On this account, social reality, like the natural world, is seen as having constant and fixed structures. Critical pedagogues seek to transform those structures according to a neo-Marxist meta-

narrative; they focus on heightening people's critical consciousness (conscientização) – people's cognisance that the aims, purposes, and values of educational institutions are demonstrably unjust or untruthful. It engages people in rational analysis, ideology critique, and ultimately liberatory action to overcome irrationality, false consciousness, and social injustice. In P4C, participants are helped to create their own view of the world, whereas, in critical pedagogy, participants are exhorted to see the world as (critical pedagogues believe) it really is and then to liberate themselves from its oppression.

It is not clear that Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris are even aware of this epistemological dissonance, let alone that they have the resources to resolve it. Now, although there is indubitably scope in P4C for different epistemological commitments (Rollins 1995), and although there is no necessary reason to straightjacket critical pedagogy by restricting it to neo-Marxist epistemologies, cogent arguments are exigent to reconcile or synthesise P4C with critical pedagogy.

Worryingly, casting P4C as a critical pedagogy mars its democratic integrity. The final aim of critical pedagogues, despite their rhetoric, is, some people argue, to radicalise pupils (Searle 1990): to raise truculent little neo-Marxists (or feminists, or anti-racists…). The critical pedagogue, despite aspiring to dialogue *with* the dispossessed, takes the lofty position of the liberator who owns the truth; pupils, take the lowly position of the deceived victim of oppression. This power asymmetry is reflected in Karin Murris's (2008b) metaphor of the stingray: It is the teacher, not the pupil, who has the power to paralyse pupils and her/himself and to bring about disequilibrium.

The fact is that there is no evidence that P4C teachers (mis)use P4C to nurture truculent little neo-Marxists any more than they use P4C to nurture, pace John White

(2011, p. 5), good little Christians. Lipman (2008, p. 148) makes it clear that the pedagogy of P4C was forged quite independently of the work of Paulo Freire; hence, any affinities between first-generation P4C and critical pedagogy are a coincidence. It is better to fall back on the softer position that P4C is a moderate, democratic pedagogy. Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris (2011, p. 286) depict schools as undemocratic institutions, which is somewhat of caricature, just as it is a caricature to represent traditional education as hostile to reflection. P4C is as much an attempt to make schools more democratic as it is an attempt to make education more reflective. P4C is, therefore, a democratic pedagogy.

3.8. Conclusion

I therefore conclude that P4C should be renamed ‘dialogical philosophy’, that P4C is philosophy, that the concept of common, central, and contestable concepts should be abandoned, that P4C fosters meaning through dialogical thinking and dialogical discussion, that P4C upholds truth and freedom, and that P4C is a dialogical, democratic pedagogy.

Chapter 4. Investigating P4C

This chapter lays out a methodology for deepening understanding of P4C. I first argue in favour of a participatory action research approach that focuses on raising the standard of P4C. There is a real lack of research of this kind. I then clarify that the approach must be philosophical in nature. Finally, I spell out how the approach might be used to transform teacher education in P4C. This involves an evaluation of SAPERE's expert-novice model of teacher education.

4.1. Empirically researching P4C

P4C has been the object of considerable empirical research. Esther Cebas and Felix García Moriyón (no date) enumerate over 100 studies up until 2003. There have been plenty since then, too.

Perhaps the most significant study was conducted when P4C was in embryo. This study, overseen by an independent psychologist, is summarised in an appendix in *Philosophy in the Classroom* (Lipman et al. 1980, p. 217). A quasi-experimental design was adopted. Two groups, a control group and an intervention group, were randomised. Two standardised tests were administered pre-intervention and post-intervention. The study found statistically-significant gains in reasoning and reading.

The study is significant, but not by dint of its findings. In fact, because the circumstances were so unusual—a philosophy professor cum pedagogue testing out his pet idea—generalisations drawn from those circumstances are unlikely to be reliable (Trickey & Topping 2004, p. 371). The study is significant because it sets the tone for later studies. SAPERE (2006, pp. 11-12) summarises several studies from the USA which had similar methodologies and similar positive outcomes. P4C, the studies show,

leads to gains in mathematics, reading, reasoning, and creativity (ideational productivity, fluency, and flexibility).

These studies focused on first-generation P4C; however, studies in the UK of second-generation P4C mirrored the findings of the earlier American studies. One particular empirical study of P4C in the UK, by independent psychologists Keith Topping and Steve Trickey (2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Trickey 2007; Trickey & Topping 2004; 2006; 2007), is deferred to almost ad infinitum by critics (e.g. White 2011, p. 3) and apologists alike (e.g. Haynes & Murris 2011, p. 286), presumably because of its hard quantitative methodology and methods: The study included a systematic review of controlled-outcome studies, a quasi-experimental design, intervention groups and control groups, standardised tests administered pre-intervention and post-intervention, random sampling, structured observations with inter-rater reliability measures, and parametric statistical analysis.

The study found that P4C has cognitive, affective, and social benefits for pupils. P4C leads to statistically-significant gains in pupils' (i) verbal, numerical, and geometrical reasoning and (ii) academic self-concept; moreover, it enables pupils to speak for longer and to adduce more reasons. Qualitative data collected from pupils, teachers, and head teachers indicated that, overall, P4C is enjoyable and enhances pupils' cognitive ability, emotional intelligence, and social intelligence.[1]

It is a mistake to defer so readily to this study, for several reasons. First, the study investigates Paul Cleghorn and Stephanie Baudet's somewhat idiosyncratic P4C practice that is more moralising than moral philosophy (Murris 2008b, p. 677). It is not clear, therefore, that the findings apply to more typical P4C pedagogies. Second, some

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[1] This paragraph is taken verbatim from my auxiliary essay, *Review of Topping and Trickey's research into Philosophy for Children*, 29/06/2010.

of the methods deployed by the researchers distort P4C. For example, teachers were expected to ask pupils a sequence of prescripted questions, irrespective of how pupils actually answered. This is hardly dialogical and consequently has negative implications for the generalisability of the findings. Indeed, the research largely betrays the belief in P4C that pupils are active participants and political subjects: Although pupils were asked for their perceptions of P4C, they had their responses statistically screened to verify that the responses were not random. Third, the study assesses P4C against some incontrovertibly extrinsic criteria. Establishing that P4C boosts pupils' ability to intellectually manipulate geometrical shapes is interesting and no doubt contributes to pragmatic, external justifications of P4C's inclusion in the curriculum. However, it sheds no light on whether P4C realises its ambition to cultivate dialogical thinking and dialogical thinkers.

That said, I am not arguing that the study is not insightful; I am arguing that the study is not as significant as is commonly supposed. Multiple methodologies and methods are needed to engender a rich, thick understanding of a pedagogy as sophisticated as P4C (Tock Keng Lim 2009). As an aside, I would wish to caution researchers against sullying the integrity of their objects and subjects.

Researchers have expended much energy in showing that P4C raises standards of education. Tock Keng Lim (2009, pp. 453-455), for instance, dedicated three years to developing new evaluation instruments that are consonant with the spirit of P4C. His 'Community of Enquiry Exercises' are oral rather than written, and pupils are actively involved in ascribing both quantitative and qualitative ratings. Similarly, Marie-France Daniel (2006) developed an approach rooted in social constructivism and therefore reconcilable with P4C theory. Using transcripts of real enquiries conducted at different

times of the school year, she showed that discussions tend to move from the anecdotal and the monological to the dialogical and the critical dialogical.

However, researchers have expended too little energy in ascertaining how the standard of P4C *in* education might be raised. May Leckey (2009) is a noteworthy exception. Her case study captured the uniqueness of one P4C practice over the course of a year. It was undergirded by a social constructivist epistemology, squaring it with P4C's epistemology. Its emergent design paralleled the dictum, deified in P4C, 'follow the enquiry wheresoever it leads'. The methods of pupil questionnaires and pupil semi-structured interviews created room for pupils to actively participate. Indeed, the P4C method of philosophy journal writing was used a research method, blurring the distinction between P4C qua pedagogy and P4C qua research methodology. A collaborative dyadic partnership between researcher and teacher meant that the research was always jointly planned. Post-lesson discussions encouraged the teacher to reflect, take on board feedback from pupils, and modify his practice accordingly. This evaluative feedback loop ultimately improved pupils' experience of P4C, facilitated teacher praxis and philosophicality, and led to illuminative insights for other P4C educators in relatable contexts.

May Leckey's (2009) research methodology was consistent with P4C pedagogy and was, to a noticeable extent, constructed *along the lines* of P4C. However she might have gone further. Pupils might have explored P4C, not just in their philosophy journals, but in their actual P4C lessons. There is no need for any research methodology external to P4C: P4C constitutes a mechanism robust enough to examine itself; after all, P4C is a form of enquiry: dialogical enquiry.

It emasculates P4C to sequester teaching from researching/enquiring; these things are symbiotically interdependent. Teachers must reflect on their praxis to enrich

their practices and to deepen their own theories and philosophies of education. Unphilosophical teachers make poor (philosophy) teachers. It is preferable that research by the teacher is carried out to high, academic standards and in collaboration with other teachers and academics. The researcher also benefits from acquaintance with the academic literature, especially the literature that reports on other teachers' action research enquiries.

It is vital that teachers carry out research into P4C in collaboration with pupils. Pupils are in a strong position to furnish unique insights into P4C (Fielding 2004). Dialogue with pupils affords them space to construct their own philosophies of education. Moreover, qua democratic pedagogy, P4C is a potent participatory mechanism (Barrow 2010): P4C provides scope to involve pupils as actors in decision-making processes. It is ironic that the self-styled critical pedagogues, Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris (2011), who regard P4C as radically democratic, neglect this participatory dimension in their proposal relating to 'philosophical practitioner action research' (p. 297) in teacher education.

4.2. Philosophically critiquing P4C

Before turning to issues of teacher education in P4C, let me dwell for a moment on the *methodology* of philosophical enquiry into P4C. I have already dealt with the substance of many of the critiques of P4C expounded by professional and academic philosophers; I now want to delve into the ways in which these philosophers have carried out their critiques.

To generalise, the modus operandi of the detractors is to select extracts from the P4C literature that suit their prefabricated purposes: They use these extracts to premise what they were going to say about P4C anyway. Richard Smith (2011, pp. 221, 231),

for example, selects quotations from Karin Murris, Lipman, and Robert Fisher to justify his certainty that 'Socratic dialectic [is] a model for philosophy for children'. However, it is clear that P4C does not seek to reproduce Socratic dialectic and that Plato's Socrates is conceived as a source of inspiration: 'We shall resemble him most not by imitating him…but in thinking for ourselves' (Lipman et al. 1980, pp. xv). Indeed, Philip Cam makes it clear that some of Plato's Socrates' practices were antithetical to the spirit of P4C; therefore Philip Cam refuses to 'suggest that we should be engaging students in Socratic dialogue' (Cam 2006, p. 1).

Another common dimension of the critics' methodology is to appropriate concepts from disciplinary philosophy and then to apply these concepts to P4C. This methodology is, on paper, powerful: The concepts from philosophy create a vista from which P4C can be viewed afresh, from a new angle. However, the top-down, Platonic methodology carries its dangers. One danger is that it leads to esoteric insights unrecognisable to people on the ground. This, it seems to me, is the net result of Nancy Vansieleghem and David Kennedy's (2011, pp. 179-180) application of concepts such as biopolitical power, altermodernity, and hyper-representation. Another danger is that it leads to conclusions that are ungrounded in reality. For instance, Nancy Vansieleghem's (2005) conclusion that P4C is undialogical, premised on concepts furnished by Mikhail Bakhtin, flies in the face of empirical evidence (e.g. Stone 2010), as we have seen.

What lessons can we glean from the detractors' methodologies? One rather obvious lesson is that critique must be grounded in sound understanding. P4C scholars, teachers, and participants need to formulate and articulate arguments that are realistic i.e. grounded in the empirical world. This in turn obviates the criticism that P4C is in any way naively relativistic, and it undermines the philosophical/empirical dichotomy.

Another lesson is that enquirers might through P4C be familiarised with the more technical concepts of philosophy because these, at least potentially, provide a powerful framework that facilitates criticism and critique. The question is not whether but when and how these concepts might be acquired by or introduced to participants (*and* teachers). Enquirers must be ready for them, and enquiry must furnish them. As enquirers encounter them, the concepts take on new meanings and themselves are subject to critical scrutiny. Thus, via P4C, they can be reconfigured and transformed.

Enjoining pupils and teachers to enquire philosophically into P4C will inevitably unearth questions, not just about philosophy education, but about wider school and cultural practices and values. The outcomes of such thought are creative and unpredictable and so may vary amongst schools, teachers, communities, participants, and enquiries. It is thus impossible to stipulate that P4C is an inherently revolutionary, progressive, or conservative force. All we can say is that enquirers' beliefs about the wider school and cultural practices will necessarily be enriched by the new perspectives upon which they reflect and with which they dialogue.

4.3. Teacher education in P4C

This portrait of a philosopher-teacher who critically investigates and develops his or her own praxis in collaboration with pupils and others is, in essence, a portrait of P4C as a flexible pedagogy built upon the core, contestable concept/process of dialogical philosophy that different teachers and communities take into new, uncharted territories. This portrait is similar to the one painted by SAPERE.

SAPERE, however, prefers the vocabulary of 'training' teachers (e.g. SAPERE 2010b; Sutcliffe 2011). The word 'training' carries the unfortunate connotation that P4C is a set of teaching techniques that teachers who attend registered courses can master.

The obsolescent phrase ‘teacher education’ implies, correctly, that becoming a P4C teacher is a holistic, continual process of growth.

SAPERE’s teacher training programme is best understood as an attempt to remedy the deficiencies in the teacher development programme devised by Lipman and his associates. The latter programme was didactic and prescriptive, a fact substantiated by its hefty accompanying teacher manuals. SAPERE noted the performative contradiction in preaching about dialogue in education whilst practising didacticism. In its courses, in stark contrast, teachers are trained in P4C *through* P4C: Attendees actively participate in P4C enquiries, facilitated by the trainer(s), focusing on P4C practice and theory. In the two advanced courses, pre-course reading is the object of enquiry, and post-course written assignments demand enquiry. Trainers are expected to develop their own approach and course materials (SAPERE 2006, p. 4). The accompanying SAPERE handbooks entreat teachers to experiment; its lesson structures, it says, are for guidance only and are not prescriptive (SAPERE 2006, p. 28). Thus, the imputation that P4C is ‘overly directive’ (Standish 2011, p. ii) deserves short shrift, though, admittedly, some rather poor teachers may approach P4C too inflexibly. It is to be expected that the practical literature on P4C is suffused with a cornucopia of ideas.

However, although SAPERE’s teacher training strategy is patently superior to the original strategy, SAPERE would be ill-advised to rest on its laurels, for its own strategy contains worrying flaws. The most entrenched problem, which it refuses to acknowledge (see Sutcliffe 2011, p. 15), is that it has not done enough to combat the commodification of P4C: It has, in a literal sense, allowed people to *capitalise* on P4C (White 2011, p. 8). It could easily and openly publish electronic versions of its teacher handbooks on its website; however, in some way or another, one has to pay for them. Similarly, it could easily thrash out a teacher education strategy that involves minimal if

any cost to teachers. For example, I offered an introductory programme, co-led with Year 6, Year 8, and Year 10 pupils, at a local authority event. Instead, under SAPERE's aegis, trainers can charge the high prices mentioned above.

Under the veneer of quality control, SAPERE controls who is authorised to train teachers. Becoming a certified teacher trainer is a fairly arduous, fairly expensive process requiring attendance at the three levels of teacher training coupled with a period of mentored practice and induction. Only the elite are authorised to lead the more advanced SAPERE teacher training courses. This has contributed to the creation of a community, or cartel, of experts in P4C, many of whom, despite their ostensible espousal of dialogue with pupils, have largely deserted life with pupils in the classroom. Moreover, it fuels the mistaken notion that one becomes an expert in P4C if one has attended the occasional course, done the paperwork, and undergone mentoring for a short period. These things are not even necessary let alone sufficient conditions for expertise in P4C.

According to Karel van der Leeuw (2009, p. 114), teacher expertise in P4C comprises three elements: experience of dialoguing, training in dialogue, and a background in philosophy. SAPERE does insist that teachers accrue experience of facilitating P4C enquiries; its training courses offer a training of sorts in dialogue; and it does expect reflection on practice. However, it does not require that its teacher trainers have an academic background in philosophy, and it does not require that teachers demonstrate philosophical reflection to academic standards to progress through its training pathway. Yet, as Karel van der Leeuw (2009, p. 114) clarifies, 'only a person well versed in philosophy can recognise the moves in a philosophical discussion and act accordingly'. It is unhelpful here, as John White (2011) does, to state that there are two kinds of P4C teacher: those with undergraduate degrees in philosophy and those without

such degrees, although in this case, ceteris paribus, having an undergraduate philosophy degree is preferable to not having one. What is important is that P4C teachers attend searchingly to their *own* philosophy education, their own ongoing metaphysical solution. What is equally important is that SAPERE, the custodian of quality in P4C, establishes a minimum qualification of philosophy education for P4C teachers and teacher educators, a standard which may vary across phases (Reception teachers hardly need a doctorate in philosophy). To repeat, poor philosophers make for poor philosophy teachers.

SAPERE has not asked critical questions of its expert-novice teacher training strategy; rather, it has sought to propagate it. Does the strategy divert attention from ongoing teacher reflection? For it emphasises attendance at occasional courses. Does the strategy gloss over the reality of school life? For the courses tend to exclude pupils, to take place outside of the classroom, and to be led by non-teachers. Does the strategy inhibit open dialogue? For it presupposes an asymmetrical power relation between expert and teacher. Does the strategy stifle the creation of the philosopher-teacher? For it is predicated on authority. It expects authorised experts to cascade their expertise. Does the strategy encourage people to pursue or lead training in P4C for the right reasons? For it is conducive to more selfish motives such as career progression and profiteering. Lastly, is the strategy an outmoded legacy of a bygone era? For P4C is no longer a newcomer to our shores, and, as I argued in Chapter 2, it faces a new set of challenges.

My own experience of the SAPERE training courses was, on the whole, very positive, but an alternative—or at least supplementary—approach is urgently needed. My own nascent approach to teacher education (of myself and of others) takes place in the school environment itself. It involves collaboration with pupils; indeed, suitably

experienced pupils lead teacher education. It involves collaboration with fellow teachers. Teachers and pupils meet with teachers and pupils from other schools to dialogue and share ideas freely – and for free. I envisage teachers working as equal and critical partners, perhaps in dyads or triads, who, amidst a culture of disciplined experimentation, regularly observe one another, co-facilitate enquiries, and meet to discuss. A library of P4C and philosophy texts, both practical and theoretical in orientation, might be compiled, so that teachers and pupils can dip into them. Teachers extend their own philosophy education through further academic study, for example, by sitting an Advanced Level qualification in philosophy. Overall, such an approach hardwires teacher reflection and dialogue into practice.

4.4. Conclusion

I therefore conclude that P4C needs to be investigated through the methodology of dialogical philosophy itself.

Chapter 5. Enhancing P4C

This chapter considers a few means by which P4C practice can be strengthened. I start by outlining some of the issues relating to speaking and listening. Strategies that ensure participants are more involved in enquiry are suggested. I then attack the speaking/writing dualism and contend that writing should therefore be foregrounded. Next, I argue that there is a role for both standard and philosophical literature in P4C; philosophical literature, however, advantageously engages participants with the substance and procedure of philosophical thought. Finally, I reject the ideal of a philosophy curriculum prestructured by concept or skill; concepts and skills develop holistically and organically through dialogue.

5.1. Speaking and listening in P4C

The most obvious way of enhancing P4C is to take measures to ensure the inclusion and pro-activity of all participants. Quite simply, if no one speaks, or if no one listens, then there is no dialogue, no open discussion, no participatory micro democracy. Some exponents of P4C espouse the use of meditative practices or short moments of reflection (e.g. Haynes 2008, ch. 8). These activities may be useful in cultivating a classroom climate or milieu conducive to dialogue; however, there is little reason to think that they actively foster dialogue (Stone 2010, p. 47). In P4C, it is typical practice to encourage with gentleness all participants to contribute to whole-community dialogue (Murris 2008a, p. 106), but not to force participants to contribute: Everyone is granted the right to pass and not speak. The idea is that, over time, all participants will summon of their own volition the courage to speak to and in front of the community (Murris & Haynes 2000).

Yet this grants licence for diffident, reticent, indolent, or apathetic people not to contribute to the community. They may be happy to let confident, attention-seeking, loquacious, or domineering participants monopolise the discussion. It is plausible to think that in an open discussion, the quiet and shy are likely to acquiesce to the loud and brash.

In the context of P4C, all participants have a right and a responsibility to hear each other's ideas and to be heard by others. It is impossible to talk of a right to non-participation unless participation ab initio is voluntary, as is the case, to a significant degree, if P4C is run through a co-curricular club or if participants themselves opt to do it within the curriculum. Skilful and imaginative facilitation clearly has a pivotal role to play in nurturing in participants a sense of responsibility for speaking and listening. The facilitator must strive to change the attitude and mindset of the indolent, the domineering, and so on. Encouraging the diffident to speak in public is inadequate; other, safer avenues for participation must be emplaced, for example, by making opportunities for small group discussions (Leckey 2009, p. 466).

An underlying problem is that P4C stacks the odds too heavily in favour of listening against speaking. In a one hour enquiry with thirty participants, each participant can only speak on average for two minutes, without facilitator interventions. How different is listening to peers speaking for fifty-eight minutes from listening to a one hour lecture or reading? There are implications here for how the teacher facilitates. For example, just four minutes of participant dyadic dialogue doubles the average speaking time of each participant. There are also implications for the ideal community size. Halving the size doubles average speaking time; reducing it by two-thirds trebles the time. If the size is reduced too drastically, then the overall pool of ideas is impoverished.

In addition to increasing participation, the facilitator must help deepen the quality of dialogue. Pace John White (2011, p. 1), this means that the teacher must make substantive contributions to the dialogue, for example, through questioning and feedback. Note, however, that the facilitator, like other participants, is admonished from perverting the course of dialogue or from casting himself or herself as an authority. The facilitator must embed a language of philosophical discourse. This language enables participants to express their ideas more cogently. Pace Nancy Vansieleghem (2005, 2006), far from distorting their authentic voice, it gives them voice. For it is in the main a natural language, e.g. 'I disagree with Laura because…' This language must be modelled and made explicit. Over time, the language must become increasingly sophisticated. In this sense, P4C promotes philosophical oracy. Does it promote philosophical literacy?

5.2. Writing in P4C

Theorists say little about the role of writing in P4C, perhaps because they inadvertently embrace an oral-textual dualism. The principal theory is laid out by Lipman (1988, pp. 123-124), who speculates that pupils 'who study philosophy may be better prepared to write effectively than those who do not'. He maintains that writing demands and nourishes thinking. It affords space for pupils to express and explore ideas. Writing is intimately connected to talking and reading. Talking is foundational and more natural, and so writing must, for pre-literate participants, be conversational in style. For him, the stylistic, grammatical, and syntactical conventions of expository writing are not only burdensome but may also stunt thinking (though the reverse is probably also true: Conventions can enable more precise, more nuanced thinking). He therefore champions the use of creative writing in P4C. He is especially keen to

promote poetry writing because poems, like philosophy, require concision and concern meaning. Finally, he embraces the precise and careful use in writing of language familiar to pupils[2].

The key question, so far as P4C is concerned, is how (assuming that it can) writing can potentiate, extend, and deepen dialogical philosophy. Writing, on this account, is subservient to dialogical philosophy rather than an end in itself. Contra Lipman, it is not immediately clear that writing stories and poems facilitates philosophical dialogue; even if it does, it is not clear that it especially effective in doing so. Evidence is needed.

There are two main ways of embedding writing in the P4C process. The first is to use it *during* oral dialogue. For instance, Philip Cam (2006, pp. 82-84) suggests that participants write discussion maps or transcripts. Certainly, pupils might make a note of their own thoughts and the thoughts of others. The second is to use writing *before* or *after* oral dialogue. Robert Fisher (2004), for example, proposes that participants write 'think books': learning journals in which reflections, including reflections on the ideas of others, are recorded and explored.

My own research (Stone 2010, p. 52) shows that writing in think books promotes self-expression, thinking, and exploration of different viewpoints; however, a think book 'does not write back' and there is therefore scope for the 'dialogisation' of writing. It is important, not solely that participants incorporate different viewpoints into their writing, but that participants' writing itself is part of an ongoing dialogue. This dialogisation might be accomplished through teacher or peer response, which creates or furthers the dialogue. Alternatively, instead of writing think books, pupils might

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[2] This paragraph draws from my unexecuted research proposal, *The impact of 'Philosophy for Children' on pupil writing in secondary Religious Education*, 14/09/2009.

contribute to a communal electronic discussion board. Participants enter their ideas, and participants respond to the entries of others.

Extrapolating from aforementioned research of Marie-France Daniel (2006), one would expect these kinds of writing in P4C to become, over time, decreasingly anecdotal and monological and increasingly dialogical and critical. In other words, writing in P4C strengthens the philosophicality of pupil writing.

What is not entirely clear is the effect that P4C, especially writing in P4C, has on the general quality of pupil writing. Writing in P4C involves strategies that *resemble* some of the strategies found to be effective in improving writing such as ‘pre-writing’ and ‘inquiry activities’ (see Graham & Perin 2007, pp. 18-19). However, the resemblance is not sufficiently close for us to be confident that P4C has a positive impact on pupil writing. What is entirely unclear is how writing in P4C might form part of a coherent strategy to improve pupil writing per se. Assuming they should, how might P4C teachers set about accomplishing this different but surely complementary aim of education? How does the P4C teacher help improve pupil spelling, punctuation, grammar, and vocabulary? To clarify both issues, empirical research is needed.

5.3. Reading in P4C

Traditionally, reading has played a key role in P4C. Lipman initiated P4C by writing the philosophy novel, *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery* (Lipman, 1974). This novel, like his other ones, depicts youngsters engaging in dialogue and reflection. The theory is that readers who discuss such novels might internalise the moves made by the fictional characters (Lipman 1996, p. 10; 2003, p. 101). His novels are sprinkled with ideas (including Aristotelian logic) from the philosophical tradition, creating space for readers to dialogue with these ideas. He believes that narratives, in contrast to text

books, spark reflection and present knowledge as raw rather than as a system of predigested, unproblematic answers (Kennedy & Kennedy 2011, p. 273). He also believes that narratives should not include images because it is the reader who should be doing the imagining. This last belief is a little misplaced because images can spark reflection and aid imagination.

Therefore, some writers from the second generation, such as Karin Murris (2008a), advocate the use of picture-books in P4C. Picture-books provide concrete examples of philosophical concepts from which pupils can abstract (p. 109); moreover, there is a fecund interplay between the text and the images that provides a deeper 'ecosystem' of meaning (p. 108). A suitable picture-book is unpatronising, unmoralising, non-didactic, and interrogative; it problematises and challenges common assumptions, and thereby evokes a response (pp. 108-109). She cites *Frog in Love* by Max Velthuijs as an example.

The use of standard literature, including picture-books, is contested within P4C. Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp (1995, pp. 106-109), for instance, distinguish philosophical enquiry, which focuses on concepts, from literary enquiry, which focuses on plot and character (and presumably setting, too). Plot, character, and setting block access to the underlying concepts (p. 107). Similarly, literature does not usually furnish examples of philosophical thinking, precluding the discussion of examples of such thinking (p. 107), or of relatable characters from which readers might introject. Accompanying images, if used, must stimulate rather than answer questions (p. 108). A final worry is that the use of literature, as distinct from the sequenced novels by Lipman, may mean that philosophy is done in an 'ad hoc and unstructured' manner (p. 108).

There are three important questions at play here. One is, How can reading be used to promote dialogical philosophy? From the debates above, we can distil two reasons for reading in P4C: to stimulate dialogue, reflection, and enquiry, and to facilitate encounter with philosophical thinking (encompassing both substantive ideas and procedural moves). If the former, stimulating dialogue, is all that matters, then the nature of the text is inconsequential. A telephone directory might ignite philosophical questions about identity or numbers; an instruction manual might spark questions about technology or following orders; and a joke book might trigger questions about humour or language. Naturally, some texts may invite dialogue, reflection, and enquiry more than others. A text wherein P says, 'I think justice is x' and wherein Q says, 'I disagree because justice is y' is more likely to spark philosophical questions about justice than a list of statutes. What is of consequence is that participants approach the text, including philosophical texts, philosophically.

If the latter, facilitating encounter with textual philosophical thinking, is significant, then the nature of the text is crucial, for not all texts enshrine philosophical ways of thinking. Telephone directories, instruction manuals, and joke books do not. But Lipman's novels do, and so do modern works of children's and popular philosophy by authors such as Stephen Law, Jostein Gaarder, Julian Baggini, and Peter Worley. Canonical texts do, and, notably, so do participants' *own* writings from philosophy.

It is important to bring participants into encounter with textual philosophy. It nourishes dialogue and reflection because it supplies participants with new ideas with which to dialogue. It issues examples of good philosophical writing for participants to emulate (as distinct from aping it), thereby strengthening participants' philosophical writing. It potentially renders writing in P4C more meaningful because participants

know that their philosophical texts will be subjected to critical examination by others. Ultimately, it helps bridge the gap between P4C and academic philosophy.

However, it is premature to stipulate a choice between either literary text or philosophical text, and not merely because some canonical texts such as Plato's *Republic* challenge the dichotomy. Reading philosophy and reading literature philosophically are both activities that accord with dialogical philosophy. Why not *Frog in Love* and *Harry Stottlemeier*? Why not Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* and David Hume's *Enquiries*? Variety adds philosophical spice.

There is a dearth of ideas about the mechanics of using texts in P4C. Marie-France Daniel (2006, p. 5) recommends that participants read one sentence or paragraph of a text in turn because this actively engages them in the community. Lipman (2003, p. 98) adds that this approach is ethical because it involves sharing. For him, it assists participants in appropriating meaning, it allows monotonous reading to be enlivened, and it encourages attentive listening. However, there is no obvious reason why participants cannot read the text aloud simultaneously or why participants cannot read silently for themselves. Such practices are perfectly ethical and inclusive ways of engaging participants with the ideas of others. Moreover, there is no obvious reason to limit reading, as P4C protagonists tend to do, to the status of stimulant to dialogue and reflection. It can surely be used to *extend* these things. For example, if a dialogue dealt with the concept of justice, then participants might read a philosophical text on justice; if participants drew a distinction, they might read a text that includes this move, making it more explicit. Finally, it would seem right to use more advanced literary and philosophical texts as participants become more literate and more philosophical. Research is needed to put these ideas to the test.

Another important question is, How can P4C itself be used to improve pupil reading? After all, improving reading is, like writing, a vital and complementary aim of education. Research shows that P4C improves reading if the Lipman novels are used (e.g. Williams 1993). Similarly, anecdotal evidence suggests that P4C improves reading if picture-books are used (e.g. Murris 1997, p. 217). What is not known, however, is whether P4C improves literacy (reading or writing) primarily because it boosts oracy or because it involves meaningful reading (or writing), what Lipman (2003, p. 98) tags 'deep reading': reading for implicit meanings and the appreciation of values. Would a P4C practice with minimal reading and minimal writing still lead to gains in literacy? Research is needed.

5.4. Structuring P4C

The third important question is, How, if at all, should P4C be done in a structured and sequenced manner? There is something rather disquieting about striving to structure dialogical philosophy, for structure strikes of control and rigidity, whereas dialogue strikes of freedom and creativity. Dialogue in P4C leads the dialoguers as much as it is led by them; thus, the aforesaid dictum, 'Follow the enquiry wheresoever it leads'. Every dialogue is unique and contains within it potentially infinite possibilities. No one knows in advance where dialogue will take them, if indeed it will take them anywhere (Kennedy 1999). Therefore, knowledge in P4C cannot be prespecified; it can only be assessed in retrospect. And even then, outcomes defy assessment and measurement: a subtle shift of perspective here, a new insight there. Participants themselves may not even be conscious of the changes, let alone be able to articulate them.

What we can say is that P4C can effect gradual, imperceptible changes over time. These changes can only be spoken of in the most general, unspecific terms. Participants can become more philosophical thinkers, dialoguers, readers, and writers; they will sculpt richer, stronger judgements, concepts, and understandings. These changes are profound. They affect the way we experience, make sense of, and exist in the world. Progress in P4C is unlikely to manifest itself after a single enquiry or two. Time is needed.

The point is that the teacher cannot control authentic dialogue or its outcomes; rather, these things must be facilitated. This is why I have followed the convention of using the terms ‘teacher’ and ‘facilitator’ interchangeably (SAPERE 2006, p. 23). The practical literature is replete with frameworks, activities and strategies that can be used to facilitate dialogue. Their use is a matter of judgement, and their efficacy will no doubt vary according to context. Investigations of the sort outlined in Chapter 5 will strengthen judgements about their future use.

Facilitation needs to account for the fact that conceptualisation in P4C is certainly not a linear process. A concept may be revisited several times within a dialogue or over the course of several dialogues. Sometimes, the concept may only be lightly touched upon en passant; at other times, the concept may be dealt with more explicitly and expressly. Each visit is unique and takes place in a new context, thereby refreshing and enriching understanding. Therefore, Michael Lacewing (2007) is wrong to assert that each P4C enquiry starts from scratch. Conceptualisation is sometimes described as a spiral process (Lipman et al. 1980, p. 82); however, the metaphor of the spiral probably does not adequately capture its erraticism, unpredictability, and creativity.

This has implications for how P4C facilitators approach skill development because concepts are irrevocably tied with human action (White 2002, ch. 2) and skills are irredeemably conceptual: Knowing how to ask a philosophical question is coterminous with understanding what constitutes a philosophical question. We must reject any insidious process/content dualism here. Therefore, in P4C, skills are developed in precisely the same way as concepts are developed.

Concepts and skills must be developed responsively, as and when they arise or need to be used in an enquiry. The facilitator must help make explicit the concepts and skills that are usually only implicit in discussions (Cam 2006), thereby heightening participants' cognisance of the skills and concepts, and therefore promoting a more self-conscious, thoughtful handling of them. Participants must be exposed to a range of examples of usages that get progressively more sophisticated and less superficial, and participants must seek to practise the skills and use the concepts in later enquiries. Skills and concepts, furthermore, must both be subject to ongoing dialogue.

If concepts and skills are developed responsively, according to the needs of the dialogue, then it is wrong to structure and sequence P4C according to prespecified concepts and skills. In lieu, sensitive, judicious teaching is called for. Such teaching is also needed to improve pupil participation in dialogue. Therefore, contra Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp (1995), P4C cannot be structured logically; rather, it must be structured *dialogically*.

5.5. Conclusion

The P4C facilitator, therefore, has a crucial role in enhancing P4C by maximising inclusion, fostering participant self-expression, integrating writing,

promoting the reading of texts including philosophy texts, and helping participants to develop concepts and skills dialogically.

Chapter 6. Reintroducing P4C

This chapter concludes the dissertation by spelling out the implications of the thesis and by indicating how the thesis can be developed further.

6.1. Implications of the thesis

Let me distil many of the key implications of my thesis:

● Philosophical critiques of P4C are unreliable if they are not planted firmly in theory and practice.

● P4C practice must be critical and non-dogmatic. It is essential that practitioners make P4C both meaningful to participants and intellectually rigorous.

● SAPERE must articulate more lucidly the reasons why P4C should be used in the curriculum.

● It is best in technical contexts to call P4C 'dialogical philosophy'.

● P4C and university philosophy ought not to be divorced from one another because they share (or, rather, ought to share) the same underpinning structures.

● The concept of common, central, and contestable concepts can be safely abandoned because it is predicated on a false dualism.

● The theory about thinking in P4C needs simplification. The concepts of reflection, critical thinking, creative thinking, caring thinking, collaborative thinking, complex thinking, multidimensional thinking, reasonableness, and judiciousness can be substituted with the holistic concept 'dialogical thinking'.

● The theory about discussion in P4C also needs simplification. The rich concept 'dialogue' readily encapsulates all of the vital ideas.

● The argument that P4C inhibits freedom can be safely dismissed; the opposite is true.

● P4C is well characterised as a democratic pedagogy, but not as a critical one. It is incumbent on those who maintain that P4C is a critical pedagogy to devise new theory and to indicate how P4C is similar to and different from other forms of critical pedagogy.

● Empirical research has concentrated on assessing the efficacy of P4C; P4C has not been found wanting. However, there is a gaping absence of research that explores ways of raising the standard of P4C.

● Philosophical enquiry into P4C must be grounded in both practice and theory. It must be a collaborative enterprise including participants and the facilitator(s).

● SAPERE's present expert-novice model of teacher education must be augmented or decentred by a philosopher-teacher model wherein P4C teachers investigate their own practice with participants, with colleagues, and with reference to the literature. Also, teachers must broaden and deepen their own knowledge of disciplinary philosophy.

● Steps must be taken to maximise the inclusion of participants; space must be created for all participants to take part.

● Writing can be incorporated into the P4C process to promote dialogical philosophy. Conversely, there is scope to improve writing through P4C.

● Overt philosophy texts ought to be used in P4C. Research is needed to show how reading literary and philosophy texts might best be embedded into practice.

● Knowledge (language, skills, concepts) must be continually developed, not psychologically or logically, but dialogically. Participants must encounter examples and

models of such knowledge. Language, skills, and concepts must be made explicit and subjected to ongoing dialogue to enrich and deepen them.

6.2. Beyond the thesis

I conclude the dissertation by identifying some areas for development.

One emergent theoretical idea that merits further attention is the idea that skills, concepts, language, meanings, and narratives overlap, interpenetrate, and develop in the same way.

There was insufficient space herein to consider the place of P4C in the curriculum. There are several options, some of which I have touched upon elsewhere (Stone 2010, pp. 14-17). P4C might be allocated discrete curriculum space, or it might occupy curriculum space allocated to philosophy more broadly. It might usurp the curriculum space of other subjects such as Citizenship on the ground that it helps to achieve their aims. It might pervade a subject-based curriculum, so that participants ‘do’ philosophy across the spectrum of content areas. Most ambitiously, it might propel an interdisciplinary curriculum (Sutcliffe 2011, p. 14). This list is not exhaustive. Further investigation is needed to establish which option is best for participants and the most feasible for schools.

Nor was there enough space to consider how P4C might be used, if at all, to prepare pupils for academic examinations in philosophy. The dissertation has, however, prepared the ground for such consideration: It articulates how P4C can develop concepts, skills, language, and philosophical writing and reading. Such things are surely sine qua nons of academic success in philosophy. Again, further investigation is needed.

In a more profound sense, my thesis is necessarily incomplete. Nadia and David Kennedy (2011, p. 269) express this point beautifully. In relation to concepts that have

been dissected in P4C, they contend that a concept must re-enter human life, where it will be ‘challenged by context and experience to justify the new understanding of it’; in turn, because it is inherently futuristic, the concept must eventually ‘re-enter the space of philosophical dialogue…where the work of reconstruction is taken up yet again’. My thesis, constructed in a holiday, is a prelude to action. It will be lived out in the classroom with pupils when school resumes, setting my practice on a fresh trajectory. This practice will not only furnish a concrete, detailed example of living dialogical philosophy; it will give rise to new questions, new problems, and new ideas, which, in turn, will demand that the thesis is deconstructed and reconstructed.

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