

PART I

The democratic nature of Philosophy for Children

Introduction

The community of philosophical inquiry (CoI) has developed as the signature pedagogy of Philosophy for Children and an expression of its democratic values. In theory, it offers a framework for collaborative exploration of significant questions, for freedom of thought and speech, for participatory dialogue, and for collaborative self-governance. In practice, P4C presents major challenges. This section of the *Handbook* asks: ‘What claims can be made for P4C in respect of education for democratic citizenship?’, ‘What are the conditions for, and obstacles to, participation in communities of philosophical enquiry?’, and ‘Is the CoI a community of talk or action?’ The chapters here are preoccupied, on the one hand, with the potential of P4C’s methods and educational project and, on the other hand, the limitations of the community of inquiry, its micro-politics, the ‘blind spots’ of facilitators, and the constraints of classrooms.

In ‘The community of philosophical inquiry: A pedagogical proposal for advancing democracy,’ Pat Hannam and Eugenio Echeverría draw on John Dewey’s explication of democracy as well as concepts of freedom, plurality and action in the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt. They argue that the community of philosophical inquiry is a model of educational praxis which can advance conditions necessary for democracy, because of its invitation to participants to think deeply and listen to each other in a form of open and intentional deliberation, understood as growing over time, and strengthening the possibility for good judgment. They illustrate this argument with accounts of P4C projects in the UK, in Mexico and in a number of Latin American countries: applications of CPI in schooling, youth and community contexts.

In “‘No go areas’: Racism and discomfort in the community of inquiry,’ Darren Chetty and Judith Suissa raise questions about the practice of Philosophy for Children from the experience of teaching philosophy in racially diverse school and university classrooms. Drawing on the critical philosophy of race, critical whiteness studies and social justice pedagogy they argue that, despite references to equality and diversity, there are significant omissions in P4C literature and practice related to questions of race and racism. They propose that engaging with, and staying with, the discomfort prompted by discussions around race and racism is vital to any serious reflection and/or action on the democratic and social justice values of P4C.

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Students' engagement with questions of racism and conflict is also a theme of Amber Makaiau's chapter, 'A citizen's education: The Philosophy for Children Hawai'i approach to deliberative pedagogy.' This chapter offers an account of the author's qualitative case study of her practice in Hawai'i, which was informed by Myles Horton and Paulo Freire's notion of a citizen's education. In working out the relationship between a high school citizenship curriculum developed through a CoI approach and wider issues of young people's participation in a democracy, Makaiau reflects on the relationships between social justice, classroom dialogue and a community of action.

In the final chapter of this section, 'Authority, democracy and philosophy: The nature and role of authority in a philosophical community of inquiry,' Olivier Michaud and Riku Vålitalo consider the paradox of educational authority in an approach such as P4C, purporting to be related to democratic education. They ask whether, by abandoning the traditional authoritative position in the classroom, the CoI facilitator is abandoning any form of authority or, rather, transforming authority into something else. They are concerned to discover the shape this takes and, following Dewey, propose a model of shared authority.

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THE COMMUNITY OF PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY (P4C)

A pedagogical proposal for advancing democracy

Eugenio Echeverria and Patricia Hannam

Introduction

This chapter aims to make a contribution to the educational debate about the democratic nature of the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CPI). It recognizes that there is disagreement theoretically and in practice about what this actually means and engages with two particular lines of argument. The authors support the proposal that the CPI is a model of educational praxis which can enable the conditions necessary for democracy to exist (see Sharp and Splitter 1995; Lipman 1998a). By this we mean that the CPI offers an important educative possibility for not only for advancing communicative rather than individualistic notions of autonomy (Code 2006), but also for advancing the conditions necessary for social justice and especially freedom (Arendt 1998) to be possible. Lipman's (for example 1998a) and Sharp's (for example 2009) view, which we support, was that philosophy, because of its capacity to enable people to think more deeply (Lipman 1998a: 7), would help to form the necessary social dispositions in children and young people that would enable them to improve their capacity to make good judgments (see Sharp 2007), and consequently the capacity for decision making necessary in a democracy.

Building the argument for the CPI from Lipman and Sharp and their view that it should be understood as democratic praxis, by drawing on Dewey and Arendt, this chapter concludes that the CPI can make significant difference to the life of a plural democracy. Through examples, we demonstrate that the CPI can equip children and young people with the tools to become more critical and to develop a more social and global consciousness (Hannam and Echeverria 2009), thus enabling them to enter the world of adults to take an active role in 'the shaping of a democratic society' (Sharp 1993: 343)

In what ways is the Community of Philosophical Inquiry democratic?

An investigation of the literature (for example Thompson and Echeverria 1987; Kohan 2002, 2011; Vansieleghem 2005; Biesta 2011) reveals two broad areas of disagreement regarding the

democratic nature of the CPI. The first is about the possibilities of philosophy in education and whether it has the capacity to ‘produce an individual with certain qualities and skills’ (Biesta 2011: 317; see also Kohan 2002: 11). The second area of disagreement is educational and around the ‘instrumentalist tendencies in the educational use of philosophy’ (Biesta 2011: 317), or as Vansieleghem (2005) expresses it a possible ‘instrumentalized nature’ (p. 19) of the CPI. Murriss (2008: 675) considers Lipman to have shared this concern. Although it is not possible in the confines of this chapter to enter into the full discussion here, the problem turns in part around whether the CPI should be understood in instrumentalist terms. This is because of concern that an instrumentalized view, where outcomes are pre-determined and thus possibly linked with coercive tendencies, cannot be congruent with an educative process aiming to advance democratic ways of being.

This chapter argues that the CPI, in the Lipman/Sharp tradition (see for example Lipman 1988, 1993a, 1998a, 2003; and Sharp 1993, 2007), sometimes known as ‘Philosophy for Children’ or ‘P4C,’ is best understood as an educative praxis with democratic purposes. By praxis we mean an intervention that intentionally opens up the conditions for change, and the deliberate change intended is to enable children and young people to exist in the world as an integral part of a well-informed democratic citizenry. Our point is that the process at work in the CPI, especially the extended dialogue inquiring into a philosophical question, can contribute to the cultivation of a well-informed democratic citizenry. This is because of its capacity to engage people of all ages in conceptual controversy, through clear thinking in dialogue with others, and ultimately it is because philosophy is a ‘horn of plenty’ (see Lipman 1998a: 6) with these kinds of facets. The authors understand citizenship as a way of existing in a plural democracy, rather than something to be possessed in a phenomenological sense. Democratic living is therefore understood as a way of living that connects individuals to each other and their society, and to an awareness of the need for social reconstruction. The authors share Lipman’s (see for example Lipman 1998a, 2003) and Sharp’s intention for the CPI to be understood as democratic education and not only as education for democracy. We understand education for democracy as something with a presupposed and agreed set of values, beliefs, morals and perceptions to be talked about and learnt in school (see Burgh 2010). The CPI we understand rather as an opportunity for people to live and experiment with deliberative democracy, bringing it into existence in a range of ways within and beyond the school walls. Indeed, Lipman (1998a) cites Dewey’s notion of deliberation as an ‘imaginative rehearsal for future activities’ (p. 7) and this idea strongly informs the argument in this chapter.

Lipman drew on Dewey and we also highlight his position in developing our argument here. For Dewey (see for example 1966) democracy was more than a form of government, ‘it is a mode of associated living, of conjoint, communicated experience’ (quoted in Lipman 2003). When Dewey talks about a strong democracy, what he means is a process of community formation founded on deliberative communication. This is very similar to what we see happening in schools that include the CPI within their pedagogical project. The intention (see for example Lipman 1998b) of the dialogical discussions is to build together, to try to understand each other and in cases when views are opposed to try to reach a position where all benefit from the outcome in the end. The concern is not only for participation but also the quality of participation: to recognize possibilities for the range of voices both within and beyond the community. What is often found in situations where the CPI is at work, is development of dispositions necessary to live well in a democracy such as a willingness to listen, to be open to alternatives and a readiness to reason as a means to confront and resolve complex issues.

To be sure, in asserting that the ‘community of inquiry constitutes a *praxis*’, Sharp (1993: 342) indicates she regards the ‘reflective communal action’ itself as a ‘means of personal and moral

transformation' (ibid.) leading to a growth in the emotional maturity (Sharp 2007) necessary for democratic living. It is clear, however, that Lipman also saw the CPI as representing 'education of the future as a form of life that has not yet been realized and as a kind of praxis' (1988: 17). Nevertheless, the question remains as to whether this is an intentional outcome of CPIs. For if this outcome is in some way contrived, there remains a risk of the accusation of coercion and this being education for a fixed idea of democracy rather than democratic education. At this point we look to Arendt to see whether her work on speech and action can help us explain how the inquiry itself is enabling 'political' action (Arendt 1998). Arendt develops an argument distinguishing action from work or labour. Work and labour, although necessary for life, are not enough since it is 'men and not Man' (p. 7) who live on the earth; it is *action* that enables each of our uniqueness to exist. For 'if men were endlessly reproducible repetitions of the same model, whose nature or essence was the same for all and as predictable as the nature or essence of any other thing' we would be replicas and not human beings. So it is that she insists that '(p)lurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live' (p. 8). It is precisely this plurality that is found in the CPI and because of this action is possible.

Nevertheless, as Lipman (1993b) explains, the practicality of the CPI owes very much to Dewey. According to Dewey an idea must be tested and final judgment withheld until it has been applied to the situation or state of affairs for which it was intended. Furthermore, 'no inquirer can keep what he finds to himself or turn it into a merely private account' (Dewey 1999: 75). Thus there is an interesting consequence of bringing Dewey's thinking together with Arendt. It becomes possible to conceptualize the testing of ideas through speech in the dialogue, by the unique people comprising the plurality which is the CPI, and understood in Arendtian terms as action. Further, since it is action in the condition of plurality that makes the political space possible, the CPI can itself be understood as part of the public or political sphere.

The philosophical position of the Community of Philosophical Inquiry

There is broad consensus that the CPI is a proposal which has a particular philosophical position in relation to education (for example Lipman 1988, 1991, 1993a; Rojas (in press)). This means it has a position not only regarding philosophy, drawing heavily but not exclusively on pragmatism, but also and importantly, regarding the purpose of education, enabling the CPI to bridge both worlds without compromising either. Our position is that philosophy, understood as a discipline that comes out of the need to wonder about and question reality, means our ways of understanding and knowing and existing in that reality such as 'reflection, deliberation and action' (De la Garza 1995: 65) are central. Also that the CPI not only has a philosophical position on education theoretically, but also in relation to educational practice; that is, what actually happens in school and beyond. Taken together the CPI has the potential to be both an epistemic and a curriculum trigger, whereby the adults interacting with the children in their CPIs bring children to attend, reflect and deliberate together on and about questions that matter to them. Here deliberation is understood as related to action in Arendtian terms (see for example Arendt 1961, 1998), and will result in personal and political transformation (Sharp 1993) as discussed above (Sharp 2007).

This form of deliberation needs to be understood as growing over time between those who participate in the enquiry. An important part of the epistemic nature of the CPI is fallibilism, which in practice looks like a willingness to be humble (see for example Gregory 2011: 207), a kind of doubt and openness to new ideas. Theoretically fallibilism is an important part of

the epistemological theory known as pragmatism, and it underpinned Lipman's (1998b) and Sharp's work as they formulated Philosophy for Children. In the environment of the CPI in a school, this entails an ongoing process of reflexion and self-correction in the dialogue of the CPI. Furthermore it also makes possible consideration of how a range of solutions could be applied outside the school. It requires those involved in any particular inquiry, or sequence of CPIs to become increasingly prepared to live with uncertainty. Were an outcome certain there could be no possibility for new ideas to come into the dialogue. An important consequence of this openness to new ideas is that a conclusion is never forgone or decided at the outset. In other words, the CPI does have democratic educative intentions since the precise outcomes are never pre-determined.

Ann Sharp (2009) recognized the contribution Arendt's understanding of plurality brought to the CPI; this is significant in a number of ways. It is significant first in the way it enables the CPI to be understood as the public sphere as already discussed, and second in its introduction of a particular conceptualization of freedom. Arendt (1961, 1998) understands freedom in relation to plurality rather than sovereignty. Freedom is not understood as something to be possessed but as something that can exist in the world under certain conditions: *the* critical condition necessary for freedom's existence in the world is speech and action in plurality (Arendt 1998). This makes an important difference to the way the individual child or young person is understood in the CPI and, through reference to Arendt's idea of action, enables us to give an account of why the work that philosophy does in the CPI is deliberate in its intentions but not coercive in its outcomes. Each unique child in the CPI is understood as an irreplaceable human being who in the company of their peers can make their beginnings in the world of others, that is, the public sphere. The assertion we make here is that the CPI can be a democratic educative space, be it a school or some other place. Furthermore it is a place where freedom can come to exist in the world because unique human beings are able to speak and act together in the condition of plurality.

Thinking into practice

In this section we discuss four examples to illustrate some of the points thus far made regarding the CPI as an intentional place of democratic education and of both educational and philosophical concern (Hannam and Echeverria 2009; Echeverria and De la Garza 2013). We do this in part to respond also to criticisms made of the CPI regarding the lack of practical testing of political or social transformation, in lived experience outside the dialogue circle. Although we cannot enter into the discussion in full here, we do want to acknowledge it as an important area of discussion in the area of meaning making. (For a full exploration of this point see Gregory 2005.)

The first example is in Britain, which has become increasingly secularized during the second half of the twentieth century, alongside the development of an increasingly complex local and international religious horizon. During this time, every major educational reform through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century in England has maintained a special position of religious education as a compulsory subject in the curriculum of all maintained schools in England for children aged 5–18 years of age. It is to be 'broadly Christian' in nature but not distinctive of any particular Christian denomination. Religious education in a plural democracy lends itself to an inquiring and philosophical approach because of the way it can open dialogue about matters that are important to people, but about which they do not agree. Democratic education, in a world where truth of all kinds is contestable, needs to enable young people to dialogue, discern and engage confidently with different points of view. Religious education

in non-religious contexts conducted through inquiry can help young people develop their own sense of belonging and worldview. Indeed work in the county of Hampshire, UK (see Hannam 2012; Hampshire County Council 2011; Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Isle of Wight County Councils 2016) has embedded this into its practice in all public schools.

The second example is in the context of ‘The Beast’, the train that goes from the border of Guatemala to the border with the United States. Every year more and more children take this journey. Most of them don’t make it to the USA, falling prey to criminals for drug trafficking or the sex trade. The trigger for democratic education through the CPI with these children was a documentary film by Rebecca Camisa called *Which Way Home* (2009). The educational centre Tanesque and CELAFIN developed a manual with discussion plans and exercises in the Lipman/Sharp tradition to be used after watching the documentary film. The project was supported by the Sertull Foundation in México, the Ford Foundation and DIF (a government agency for children and the family) linking closely with a range of people engaged in social action directly and indirectly linked with the care for the safety of child migrants. Adults were trained in facilitating the CPI in 15 different regions of México where unaccompanied minors are at risk. There was also work in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua, all countries known to have a high risk of children and young people migrating, due to lack of opportunities in their region. The objective was to work with as many at-risk children and adolescents as possible. Through engaging in the CPI the intention was to ensure these children and young people were better equipped to make choices in their lives, see alternatives and predict the consequences of those choices.¹ Evaluation of this and similar projects is ongoing.

The third example is of a British Council² funded project in 2001, which brought 20 schools from Mexico City together with 20 schools in the UK through the themes of citizenship, democracy and human rights. Out of the 20 initial projects only two survived more than two years; however one exceptional project lasted eight years. This project linked a school in the county of Cumbria in the north of England together with a school in Itztapalapa, one of the poorest areas of Mexico City. It was distinctive in the way it embedded philosophy for children into the democratic vision of the project. Although not tested empirically, the longevity of this particular school linking project is thought to have related directly to the shared democratic vision which emerged through embedding the CPI since it was the main distinguishing feature likely to have impacted in this way (Hannam 2009). Teachers and students in both the Mexican and UK schools in this linking were concerned to develop a process that would enable the young people involved to explore the issues of democracy through the medium of both Spanish and English and agreed upon the CPI. Teachers in Mexico accessed the Diploma training offered by the Mexican Federation of Philosophy for Children, and teachers in UK were trained through the UK organization SAPERE.³ During the eight years of the project students and teachers from both schools had opportunities to meet in either Mexico or the UK. During each visit, time was set aside for philosophical enquiries in two languages, developing the themes of the linking. The effectiveness of the linking was monitored by the British Council, who funded continuing work in the linking through the DFID⁴ Global Schools Partnerships, based at the time in Scotland. Teachers working in the linking found students to have been changed by these experiences, to become more confident and self-reflective. Some have been able to move on and become involved in a connected project of the International Youth Congress, which is discussed next.

The fourth example is the International Youth congress in Chiapas, Mexico, which brought young people together each year from the UK and meso-America between 2006 and 2012 for a two-week shared experience around the themes of peace, justice and sustainability. The original Lipman approach was adapted to ‘read’ experiences of the congress as a text. Daily

life formed the starting point for inquiries. Whether we were in our base at CELAFIN,⁵ San Cristóbal de Las Casas, or staying in an indigenous community or in the rain forest, each evening we would gather in a circle to explore questions emerging from the day's experiences. For example, at the ecological centre where we stayed in the Lacandon rain forest, there was an open-sided space which lent itself to our evening explorations while the sound of the summer rains on the tin roof overtook the continuing noise from the river. The philosophical questions coming from our visits to abandoned Mayan sites of Yaxchilan and Bonampac contrasted with an afternoon visiting a Lacandon community Milpa.⁶ Invariably questions emerged about the survival of unsustainable civilizations, or what kind of human social organization should be adopted now in the face of globalization. The CPI was an educative space where contemporary philosophical concerns of a social, political and environmental nature were explored. By working in community, 'doing philosophy' together, sharing and inquiring, participants reflected deeply and rigorously about the experience of and future for human kind. The international and intercultural nature of the summer Youth Congress, where the focus issues were frequently those most pressing to the well-being of people and the planet in different parts of the world, gave unique opportunities for participants to share democratic visions across boundaries of continental perception, formulating considered positions on crucial matters. Vicky, who attended the congress in 2007 and was part of the school linking project, explains this well: 'as I have heard other people's experiences and ideas, these have in turn shaped my own and allowed me to consider questions from many different points of view, and I have found this a very important part of the person I am today' (quoted in Hannam 2009).

Conclusion: What this means for democratic education

This chapter has sought to present a case for the CPI understood as a democratic educative space that can exist in many contexts, and is capable of advancing the conditions for democratic ways of living. We have substantiated Lipman and Sharp's assertion that the CPI is a form of praxis; that is to say it *intentionally* aims to bring about change. We make two interconnected points in concluding this chapter. One is in relation to the relationship between education and democracy in terms of freedom and action, arguing against instrumentalist critique of P4C; the second is to do with the implications this has for the role of the teacher in the CPI, placing attention upon teacher:child relationships rather than skills to be learnt.

The CPI is a space where the clear intention of the teacher is to ensure those participating have the opportunity to speak and where the plurality of the group is taken seriously. The idea is for each child to make their beginnings in the world of others and to do this in such a way that freedom can come into existence in the public space. This point makes a difference to how the role of the teacher is understood in the CPI. The teacher is a co-inquirer and has particular responsibilities. At least in the beginning the teacher models how to hold the inquiry space as a place where all those participating can speak and act in practice, understood in Arendtian terms. In so doing those participating become interested in others who are different from themselves, and democratic living becomes possible.

These two points make a difference to how the relationship between the CPI and democracy is understood. The relationship is necessary, entailed by the action of the community, and not accidental. This enables us to conclude by reasserting the point made initially. The CPI is an educative space that intends to bring about democratic ways of living. The examples provided in this chapter illustrate these intentions. The philosophical underpinning of the CPI ensures it is a space of praxis, needing constant renewal and never exactly complete, necessarily related to a democratic hope for the present and future of the world (see Lipman 1998a).

Notes

- 1 The community of philosophical enquiry has been used in a wide range of similar contexts in the UK with vulnerable children, including street work and in pupil referral units for students whose behaviour makes it impossible for them to remain in mainstream education.
- 2 The British Council is a branch of the Foreign Office of the British Government.
- 3 SAPERE is the Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education and is the organization that accredits training in the CPI in the UK.
- 4 DFID is the UK Government Department For International Development which funded school international linking projects at the time through the British Council.
- 5 CELAFIN is the Latin American Centre for Philosophy for Children, and the base for the Summer Youth Congress whilst in San Cristóbal de las Casas.
- 6 A 'Milpa' is a traditional sustainable system of companion-planting agriculture, where areas of forest are cut in rotation, planted for a few years and then left to rest and regenerate. This happens in a cycle that ensures continuing fertility of the land as well as quality environment for other wildlife. Regeneration of trees is rapid due to the climatic conditions.

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