

Common Ground

FRANCISCO GINER DE LOS RIOS, JOHN DEWEY
and MATTHEW LIPMAN

FERNANDO MARTINEZ

When in the autumn of 1991 I learned of the program in Philosophy for Children originated by Matthew Lipman, I discovered that it had a definite relationship with Francisco Giner de los Rios¹, a Spanish author with whom I was familiar. The same philosophic and pedagogic interests and the same goals could be observed in both Lipman and Giner. Searching for Giner's sources of inspiration, I found that American pedagogy occupied a very important place in his thoughts. The presence of "America's philosopher"², John Dewey, along with others, could be discerned in his writings. Dewey's contribution to the formation of a philosophy and a theory of American education, with its own character, makes it inevitable that every American philosopher has an important debt to him. Lipman's Philosophy for Children is no exception. Dewey is an author referred to and commented upon frequently in the Philosophy for Children literature, although some of his positions are criticized. He belongs, along with Socrates, Plato and Wittgenstein, to the main philosophic antecedents of Philosophy for Children.

This paper is a search for similarities and parallels among Giner, Dewey and Lipman. To me, the three appear like different musical instru-

ments that play the same symphony, in which the notes are the same educational ideals. In the present article we will try to clarify their commonalities.

HEGEL AS A REFERENCE POINT

The influence of the author of the *Phenomenology* is more evident in Dewey than in Giner or in Lipman. Hegel's influence spread rapidly in the American philosophic world of the nineteenth century, which had an idealist-theological-protestant character of pure "Hegelianism." For example, J. Ripley, an American theologian and reformer, beginning in 1838 edited works of Cousin, Schleiermacher, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. In 1867 the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* appeared in St. Louis, under the direction of W. T. Harris, who became Educational Commissioner of the United States in 1889. It is of interest to note that the annual reports of this magazine were collected and commented upon by Giner in Spain⁴. A group of philosophers having idealist intentions, called the "St. Louis Hegelians" was subsequently constituted. J. S. Morris, professor at the University of Michigan, belonged to this group. He was one of Dewey's teachers.

Dewey was strongly influenced by Hegel at the beginning of his philosophical career, as were Darwin, Spencer, Bergson and W. James. What was the nature of that influence? On the one

hand, Dewey adopted Hegel's overcoming of the classic philosophical dualisms: analytic-synthetic, a priori-a posteriori, reason-experience, theory-practice.⁵ He did this by emphasizing categories such as continuity, development and totality. Reality, society and education cannot be interpreted as states already given and complete. They have to be conquered from movement, from *devenir*, from active-participative interest. On the other hand, when Dewey explains the reflex arc notion, the basis of behavior, he talks about a coordinate action through a circuit, the stimulus itself being the resulting act of a sensory-motor coordination.⁶ He claims there are not pure stimuli or virgin responses: the unity of the process imposes itself over any particular aspect, and the interpretation of behavior is achieved in the structure of totality.

In the case of Giner, the closest source of inspiration does not come directly from Hegel, but from another German idealist philosopher, Krause.⁷ Thus "starting at the transcendental Kantian idealism, Krause reaches an Absolute, as Schelling and Hegel do."⁸ To be complete, education must include technical and humanistic aspects—play and work, intelligent action and practical action, dialogic interaction between teacher and student. There is no education that is not reciprocal between the educator and the educated.⁹

In *Philosophy for Children* the influence of Hegel is less direct, and it comes through the debt to Dewey. Lipman points out: "John Dewey's contribution, it must be acknowledged, dwarfs those of all the others, much as does his standing in the philosophy of education. For surely it was Dewey who, in modern times, foresaw that education had to be redefined as the fostering of thinking rather than as the transmission of knowledge."¹⁰

In any case, the Hegelian key is necessary in order to interpret American idealist thought, even though the latter was configured as a special form of idealism with its own characteristics.

TOWARD THE SAME EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Giner, Dewey and Lipman share the same views when defining what education means, and how a new spirit must be built into the old prevailing pedagogic system. On several occasions Giner criticizes the traditional method by which data or information is transmitted. He describes the traditional methodology as *stamping*, through which the teacher furiously fights with the child until the latter is able to repeat mechanically a few more or less inexact notions. This methodology seems to be addressed to nullifying the child's in-

telligence and not to protecting his gradual development.¹¹ Traditional education is characterized by being almost exclusively passive, assimilative, and instructive — limiting itself to inculcating in the student the things that have been verified and are considered worthy to know. It does not educate in a wider sense of the term — looking for the development of the intellectual faculties, their spontaneity, originality, creativity.¹²

In a similar way, Dewey says "... that passivity is the opposite of thought; that it is not only a sign of failure to call out judgment and personal understanding, but that it also dulls curiosity, generates mind-wandering, and causes learning to be a task instead of a delight. ... The mind is not a piece of blotting paper that absorbs and retains automatically."¹³

In the seminars for graduate students of *Philosophy for Children*, to which I was generously invited, the students were stimulated to think and to wonder about the crucial issues, not in a directed artificial manner but rather in a free and critical way. They were not tied to the "tyranny of right and wrong answers"¹⁴, which is very common in traditional classrooms.

The pedagogic tools commonly employed, such as textbooks, memorization, tests, exams, must be removed from every educational program that seeks for active dialogic relationships between teacher and students. Otherwise, inquiry and the open mind are nullified. An illness — the routine — sneaks into the system. As Dewey says so well: "Plasticity or the power to learn from experience means the formation of habits", and these "are opposed to routine which marks an arrest of growth."¹⁵ We must direct our steps towards an "education built without rules, contests, tests, text books, exams; without gowns, mortarboards and other solemn symbols."¹⁶ And, in order to do that, the Socratic method is the best antidote to the way of education that promotes monologue instead of creativity and dialogue.

This is recognized by Giner, Dewey and Lipman, who follow the spirit of Pestalozzi and Froebel.¹⁷ Education is related to, is part of, life, so it cannot be presented as the negation of life itself which is play, spontaneity, development, imagination, movement. Giner points out that the teacher whose work consists of delivering lectures in a row could as well be isolated from his auditorium. He could just talk to himself and devote himself to thoughts that grasp his own attention. In *laboratory* teaching, which is familiar, cooperative, Socratic, that isolation is impossible.¹⁸

According to Lipman, the text book and teacher's manual must be set aside in favor of mechanisms and strategic proposals which encourage dialogue and discussion.¹⁹ It is more important that

children learn how to think for themselves than how to repeat mechanically a boring, misunderstood lesson which lacks creativity. A series of novels in *Philosophy for Children*, adapted to the different educational levels, has been created, to the end that students may learn how to find in them problems they consider relevant to their concerns and ideas. Put differently, they will learn how to think while developing **thinking skills** in the process.

The fundamental objective that all learning processes must achieve is pointed out, in these words of Giner, Dewey and Lipman, in which once again we discover similarities.

To Giner, education is a living function, personal and flexible; otherwise it is useless.²⁰ To know does not mean to know how to respond to a program.²¹ Dewey says, "While books and conversation can do much, these agencies are usually relied upon too exclusively. Schools require for their full efficiency more opportunity for conjoint activities in which those instructed take part, so that they may acquire a social sense of their own powers and of the materials and appliances used."²² We must teach how to ask, teach the students how to keep alive the spirit of doubt and discussion.²³ In Lipman's words, "Questioning and finding answers are among the rhythms of living, like working and resting."²⁴ A community of inquiry attempts to follow the inquiry where it leads rather than being penned in by the boundary lines of existing disciplines. A dialogue that tries to conform to logic, it moves forward indirectly like a boat tacking into the wind, but in the process its progress comes to resemble that of thinking itself.²⁵

These texts are clear and do not require additional comment. However, it is interesting to recall that they are talking about the same educational model — what is usually called "educational community". That is, a group of people sharing educational interests in a dialogic and personal way, wishing not to lose their capacity for astonishment and curiosity, aiming to develop their creativity, questioning one another about different subjects. Was this not the Socratic dialogue?

The words of our three philosophers are similar with respect to what to reach for, and what to abandon. But it would be advisable to be more precise, and to ask ourselves, how can this education take place? At which educational levels can thinking become part of the curriculum?

Agreement between Giner and Lipman at this point is complete: both put forward the thesis, which we also share, that we must begin at the lower levels, rather than towards the top. There is a continuity between primary and secondary education and the best way to achieve critical and re-

sponsible thought at the later levels is to develop it during childhood. Secondary education, Giner asserts, belongs, along with primary, to the same cultural period, the general one, beyond which there is none other than the sphere of the professional or specialist.²⁶ On the other hand, he insists, we should stress the community spirit of the primary school, where it is rarely encouraged but often sprouts naturally, and continue it from there to the secondary school, to special and professional schools, to the university, in sum, to every level and sphere.²⁷ In almost identical terms, Lipman says: "Education must necessarily proceed from lower-level to higher-level functions"²⁸, although in *Philosophy for Children* the way from higher-level to lower-level is underlined as well. As cognitive psychology of development has demonstrated, the spontaneity and inquisitive disposition of children make them more receptive to dialogue and conjoint learning. It is easier for them to form what Lipman calls the *community of inquiry*.²⁹

Another characteristic shared by our authors is their anthropological-pedagogic optimism: education improves the individual and makes him more free and democratic. It is a necessity for life in society. From the point of view of Spencer and Darwin, Dewey says: "... life is a self-renewing process. What nutrition and reproduction are to physiological life, education is to social life."³⁰ Giner also says that according to the philosophers, the human being is from every point of view a true organism, in which all the functions are implicated and mutually related. When teaching is only intellectual, it becomes incapable *ipso facto* of satisfying the intellectual goal.³¹ Societies improve when individuals are educated to expand their experiences far beyond their own personal interests, when education develops the habits and manners and democratic behaviors, when individuals build a creative community of exchange and dialogue, and most especially when a critical and alert spirit is not banished. Once these goals are achieved, then there are social guarantees enough that the community is alive and healthy. According to Lipman in a democratic society it is necessary to prepare children with criteria for reasoning and evaluation in such a way that they learn to use their minds logically and legitimately.³² Otherwise, the society would be allowing the introduction of manipulative mechanisms, which would be self-destructive to a democratic society.

Play as an activity that encourages creativity and favors learning must be part of every educational system. "So when children play horse, play store, play house or making calls, they are subordinating the physically present to the ideally signified. In this way, a world of meanings, a store of concepts (so fundamental to all intellectual

achievement), is defined and built up."³³ Dewey's words here coincide with those of Giner, who says that the use of play makes the instructor's educational task easier, because the child will never be as natural, open and free as when playing, where he sees his teacher not as a demanding supervisor but as protector of his happiness, his friend, the counselor and comrade of his amusements.³⁴ The Philosophy for Children program follows Wittgenstein's thesis that differing language-games (*Sprach-Spiel*) are like games with their own particular rules and characteristic activities. This highlights the necessity of educating through play. "We have endeavored to suggest various kinds of creative play activities: games, dramatizations, puppetry and other art forms, all of which, directly or indirectly contribute to children's ability to express their experience and to explore the consequences and meanings of such expressions"³⁵. Because the development of creativity is one of the fundamental aims of Lipman's work, the best way to develop it is by fostering imagination, fantasy, creative play activities, and so on. The purpose is not to decrease or over-simplify the educational process, but on the contrary, to present the pedagogic contents as activities which encourage and enrich the personality of individuals in a genuinely effective way. Unfortunately what occurs in many cases is that study and work are defined as "serious" chores, the opposite of play, which is characterized pejoratively as the "anarchic relaxation" of our animal instincts. We should not forget that play is a natural activity among children. This tendency should be encouraged, in an optimum educational system, and through the games may be introduced a new spirit, teaching children how to think in a more logical and critical way. In traditional education, however, we often find children who have spontaneity, happiness, ingenuity, inquisitiveness, curiosity, and dialogue hidden in the most arcane corners of their being because they attempt, through such repression, to acquire the characteristics of the "good student". Giner de los Rios cites by heart a sentence of Jules Simon, a French expert in pedagogics, which expresses, perhaps with some exaggeration but essentially correctly, what we have been saying: All children are intelligent until the teacher and the parents make them stupid.³⁶

Theory as an interpretation of reality should not be divorced from practice, from life. It should not represent an idealized reality. When we consider educational manners and methods, we ought not leave them as intentions, but put them into practice. This practical approach is the direction that Giner, Dewey, and Lipman have all undertaken. Giner founded several pedagogic institutions in which his ideas about education were put

into practice, although he received no official support.³⁷ Dewey's experimental schools in Chicago constituted an attempt to renovate the American educational system. Finally Lipman's Philosophy for Children project is a contemporary effort to move education in an innovative direction. From its origin and center, the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (I.A.P.C.) at Montclair State College in New Jersey, the project has spread to many parts of the world.

THE ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY

Giner, Dewey and Lipman all maintain that philosophy has a significant function in education: it is no accident all three of them are philosophers. However, in Philosophy for Children, philosophy is not simply a separate subject in itself but is placed into new territory. It is seen as a branch of knowledge that helps people to think in all disciplines. While Giner claims that everyone should study philosophy to raise the intellectual level of their activities, and Dewey speaks of "philosophy of education" as the discipline that belongs in the vanguard of the "science of education", Philosophy for Children is the project that most emphasizes the use of philosophy in the development of thinking skills.

"If children's chief contribution to the educational process is their inquisitiveness, and if philosophy is characteristically a question-raising discipline, then philosophy and children would seem to be natural allies."³⁸ Philosophy, which proposes metaphysical, epistemological, aesthetic, ethical, and logical problems, is the only field of knowledge from which all other disciplines can be viewed. That is why we have a political philosophy, a social philosophy, a philosophy of science, a philosophy of language, and so on. Further, since "philosophy is the discipline that best prepares us to think in terms of the other disciplines, it must be assigned a central role in the early (as well as in the late) stages of the educational process."³⁹ "Philosophy encourages thinking among the disciplines in order to forestall the provincialism that often accompanies professional specialization. The overspecialized mind is the bane of the academic life."⁴⁰ So it is vital that philosophy be introduced in the first years of the educational process, where children with innocence and with awe ask about any issue, from "whether the world has a roof" to "whether the numbers are things".

We must familiarize children with the philosophic point of view through which they may better comprehend their diverse studies. It is not a matter of adding yet another discipline, philosophy, to the already long list of subjects assigned to

elementary education. Rather, philosophy can be the source of the creative thinking necessary to achieve meaning in the many areas of knowledge. Lipman says it clearly: "The better physicists, historians, and teachers of English are not merely concerned with injecting their knowledge into their students. The better historian is not simply concerned with producing students educated in history but with producing educated students who think historically as a part of that education, and neither the historian qua historian nor the educationist qua educationist is equipped to transcend his or her specialties and spell out the aims of education."⁴¹ The philosopher is the one called to transcend individual points of view, questioning himself critically, unceasingly, on fundamental problems. On the other hand, the philosophic methodology supplies the logical tools necessary to avoid defective reasoning and insure valid argument. So in Lipman's novel Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery, several areas of logic are exemplified in the discussions of the school-age characters.

CONCLUSION

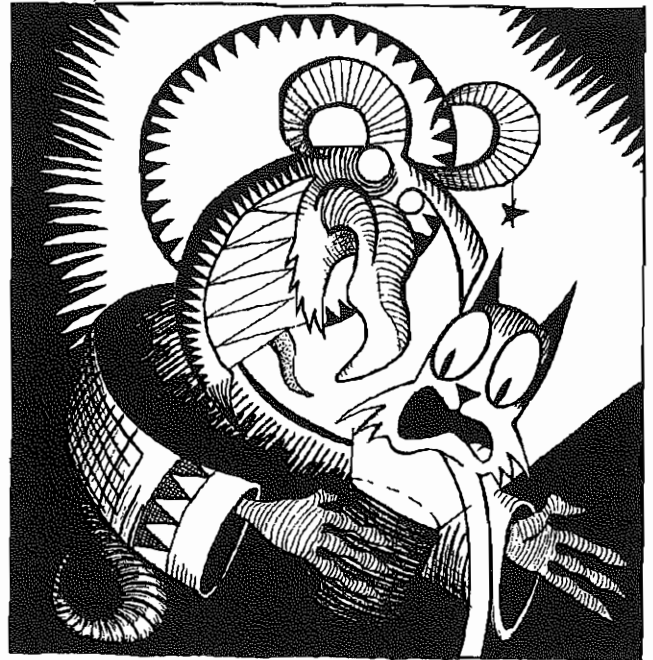
We have reviewed the pedagogical systems of Giner, Dewey and Lipman to emphasize their shared characteristics: stimulation of creativity through dialogue; rejection of teaching which is centered on the classical textbook; use of play as a means to comprehension through group interaction. They emphasize that education is a continuous, dynamic, and flexible process. As has been mentioned, though Philosophy for Children develops from the same tradition, it is differentiated by its conception of the function of philosophy in the educative process.

Philosophy develops the mind and helps us to think with greater comprehension in the various disciplines. It engages us in the difficult art of "knowing how to ask", of ourselves and of the world around us. If questioning is natural during childhood, and philosophy develops the ability to inquire about everything, would it not be ideal to introduce philosophy into early education? Thus we may prevent the loss of the children's natural curiosity, and keep it awake and lively as they grow. This is the purpose of the Philosophy for Children program. We can only agree heartily that it opens new avenues for both philosophy and pedagogy.

NOTES

1. Spanish philosopher and expert in pedagogics born in Ronda (Málaga) in 1839 and died in Madrid 1915. He was a disciple of Julián Sanz del Río (1814-1869), who introduced in Spain the philosophy of Krause (1771-1832). Giner founded the "Institución Libre de Enseñanza" (I.L.E.) as an educative center that would try to project new ideas on the poor Spanish pedagogics. This center was inoperative from 1936. "The I.L.E. can be considered as a Spanish copy of Yverdon experience by Pestalozzi or the Froebelian Kindergarten; in all three freedom and spontaneity are basic pedagogic criteria." (Abellan, J. L., *Historia crítica del pensamiento español*, vol. VI, Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 1989, p. 158.
2. "The philosophies of Royce, James and Dewey, in their American setting", in *International Journal of Ethics*, 1930, p. 23 l.
3. Born in Vermont in 1859 and died in New York City in 1952. He is considered the "American Ortega y Gasset". His philosophical, pedagogic and political ideas reached the European continent. Giner de los Ríos mentioned Dewey in his books.
4. Cfr., *Obras completas*, Madrid, 1922, vol. 18. In this issue Giner collects the report of the Bureau of Education of Washington, referring to the year 1897-1898. Vol. 19, referring to the years 1898-1899 and 1900-1901. Also Vol. 7, p. 219 and next pages, where an article of Dr. Harris about morality is commented.
5. Cfr., Perez de Tudela, J., *El pragmatismo americano: acción racional y reconstrucción del sentido*, Cincel, Madrid, 1988, pp. 163-166.
6. Cfr., Dewey, J., *Philosophy and Civilization*, Minton, Balch, New York, 1931, pp. 233-243.
7. Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1771-1832), German idealist philosopher like Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, who also interpreted Kant's writings. Schelling was his teacher but caused him a lot of trouble, as did the Masonic organization which accused him of revealing a masonry secret. His philosophy was not very well known in Germany but it was spread by his foreign disciples: H. Ahrens in Belgium, G. Tiberghien in Holland, and Julián Sanz del Río in Spain when he returned from Germany in 1843.
8. Abellan, J. L., *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 415.
9. Giner, F., *Obras completas*, ed. cit., vol. 12, p. 86.
10. *Philosophy goes to School*, Temple University, Philadelphia, 1988, p. 4.
11. Giner, F., *op. cit.*, vol. 7, p. 7.
12. Giner, F., *op. cit.*, vol. 7, p. 6.
13. *How we think*, D. C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1933, p. 261.
14. "Tyranny of right and wrong answers." (Lipman, M., *op. cit.*, p. 25)
15. *Democracy and Education*, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1916, p. 62.
16. Giner, F., *op. cit.*, vol. 7, p. 10.

17. Creators of a new pedagogy based on play (creation of Froebel's Kindergarten) and a new way of understanding education, involving comprehension and dialogue and not just transmission of knowledge.
18. Giner, F., *op. cit.*, vol. 12, p. 85.
19. Lipman, M., *op. cit.*, p. 6: "... the traditional teacher's manual is a compendium of wearisome drills and exercises with answers."
20. Giner, F., *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 87.
21. Giner, F., *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 94.
22. Dewey, J., *Democracy and Education*, ed. cit., p. 48.
23. Cfr., Lipman, M., *Philosophy goes to School*, ed. cit., p. 24.
24. Lipman, M., Sharp, A.M. And Oscanyan, F. S., *Philosophy in the Classroom*, I.A.P.C., Montclair, 1977, p. 77.
25. Lipman, M., *Thinking in Education*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1991, p. 16.
26. Giner, F., *op. cit.*, vol. 17, p. 162.
27. *Ensayos*, summary by J. López-Morillas, A. Editorial, Madrid, 1969, p. 93.
28. *Philosophy goes to School*, ed. cit., p. 4.
29. Cfr., Lipman, M., *Thinking in Education*, ed. cit., pp. 229-257.
30. *Democracy and Education*, ed. cit., p. 11.
31. *Obras completas*, ed. cit., vol. 7, p. 89.
32. Cfr., *Philosophy goes to School*, ed. cit., p. 22.
33. Dewey, J., *How we think*, ed. cit., p. 209.
34. *Obras completas*, ed. cit., vol. 16, p. 281.
35. Lipman, M., Sharp, A.M. and Oscanyan, F. S., *op. cit.*, p. 41.
36. *Obras completas*, ed. cit., vol. 7, p. 9.
37. Besides the creation of I.L.E., several other institutions were founded: the *Residencia de señoritas* in 1915, headed by María de Maeztu, that received the support of the National Institute of Boston, the *Junta para la ampliación de estudios*, which gave a complete education in the most prestigious European centers, *Escuelas de verano*, *Excursiones al aire libre*, *Asociaciones para la enseñanza de la mujer*, *Escuela de institutrices*, *Ateneo artístico y literario de señoras*, etc.
38. Lipman, M., Sharp, A.M. and Oscanyan, F.S., *op. cit.*, p. 7.
39. Lipman, M., *Philosophy goes to School*, ed. cit., p. 18.
40. Lipman, M., *Thinking and Education*, ed. cit., p. 264.
41. Lipman, M., *Philosophy goes to School*, ed. cit., p. 36.



Address correspondence to:

Fernando Martínez
 c/o IACP
 Montclair State College
 Upper Montclair, NJ 07043
 USA