

Tracing the Roots

Ronald F. Reed & Tony W. Johnson

Friendship and Moral Education:

Twin Pillars of Philosophy for Children

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reviewed by Sarah Davey

Friendship and Moral Education is not only an historical tour through the birth of Critical Inquiry to the growth of Philosophy for Children, it is also a practical guide for those interested in learning more about the roots of this teaching practice, and for those who wish to implement philosophy into their teaching. There is much debate over whether those who introduce philosophy into their teaching practices or integrate it into the curriculum require a philosophical or an education background. *Friendship and Moral Education* shows that both backgrounds are imperative to the success of integrating philosophy in education.

The book begins with an opening chapter on Matthew Lipman, the founder of what has become Philosophy for Children and the birth of *Harry Stottlemeir's Discovery*, one in a series of philosophical novels within the Philosophy for Children Curriculum published through IAPC. Included are the metaphors that Lipman presents at his conferences to describe a model of teaching that blends craft with art. He uses four images, depicting the teacher of philosophy as a captain of a ship, a conductor, a sculptor, and a 'gestalt' psychologist. The purpose of these images is to give teachers a glimpse of Lipman's view of the teacher as 'facilitator'. Further, the importance of the facilitator as following the interests of the group is well described and practical directions of how to put into practice Lipman's ideas are included here, where readers may get not only a historical background and explanation of Philosophy for Children, but also guidance on how to teach it.

Taking a step back, in Chapter 2, the authors discuss John Dewey's approach to democracy and education; the two elements that provided the foundation for Lipman's educational philosophy. Following from this introduction to Dewey is mention of William James. Readers might find that the coverage of James is somewhat disjointed and maybe even appearing of little relevance to Dewey and his influence over Lipman, apart from that he settles chronologically prior to Dewey.

Chapter 3 takes the reader back to the very roots of philosophy; to the natural philosophers or pre-Socratics and the emergence of the character Socrates as a way of understanding Philosophy for

Children. What follows in the next chapter is an important inclusion on Philosophy for Children in a social context. Following the civil unrest and uprisings of the 60's when Lipman was developing his curriculum for Philosophy, this chapter suggests why Lipman believed philosophy to be important in an educational environment where students had limited reasoning skills, particularly when faced with racial, sexual and class issues. He witnessed a generation of people who he considered had poor reasoning skills. Through this he realised that philosophy would need to be integrated into children's formative years and hence the creation of *Harry Stottlemeir's Discovery* for the middle years of schooling. To Lipman, he could give the gift of reasoning that could «help solve human problems» and hence illustrating the importance of critical thinking.

From a social context to an educational context, Reed and Johnson also show the importance of Philosophy for Children in the postmodern world. At a time when the New Rights message was to get 'Back to Basics', Lipman wanted to promote a move away from traditional methods of teaching. He argued that the method he employed could be applied across the curriculum. It is interesting to note that what Lipman faced back in the sixties and seventies still rings true today. There is still a misunderstanding among some teachers and educators of inquiry-based pedagogy, as well as a resistance towards educational innovations emphasizing critical inquiry rather than content.

As the title suggests, this book also deals with friendship and moral education. However, unlike the other chapters, which have a common thread of tracing the roots of Philosophy for Children and its emergence in the second half of the twentieth century, this chapter stands alone. Although the authors claim to «tease out how and why Philosophy for Children is grounded in the ideals of moral education and friendship,» their attempt is limited to the last chapter. The preceding chapters do little to make a connection with the promotion of friendship and moral education in schools through philosophical inquiry. Furthermore, Reed and Johnson make many assumptions about friendship and its relationship to Philosophy for Children. In claiming that children engaged in philosophical inquiry are «companions in inquiry,» and that the community of inquiry enables «the experience of friendship as [an] educative tool» is perhaps to gloss over the complexity of not just friendship, but in the interactions in the community of inquiry itself. A more apt title for the book might be *Philosophy for Children: A social and historical movement*, in which case the book is excellent for that reason.

Friendship and Moral Education puts into context the importance of philosophy in education. By understanding the development of Hairy and his friends, the history of philosophy for Children with its roots in Socratic dialogue, and Deweyian Pragmatism, this book casts light on how the pedagogy of the community of inquiry is integral to many of the educational innovations and educational reforms on current government agendas. By tracing the roots of Philosophy for Children and explaining how it emerged in the philosophical, social and educational contexts, people intending to introduce philosophy into the classroom, following Lipman's initiative, can get a greater understanding of the reasoning behind integrating curriculum, teaching, and learning through philosophy.

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