

Consensus, Caring and Community: An Inquiry into Dialogue

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INTRODUCTION

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In a world of increasing change and instability, more responsibility is being placed on teachers to develop innovative practices, and on teacher educators and policy makers to develop innovative approaches to curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. A growing number of theorists and practitioners are turning to inquiry-based learning, and in particular to philosophical inquiry, as a way to facilitate student-learning in preparation for the challenges that students will encounter in the future.

An important figure in the history of philosophy in schools is Matthew Lipman.¹ According to Lipman, children have a natural propensity for wonder, whereas many adults have ceased to question or search for meaning in their experiences, and as a result they “eventually become examples of passive acceptance that children take to be models for their own conduct” (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan 1980, p.31). Contrary to Plato,² Lipman was certain that children could engage in genuine philosophical inquiry, provided that it was offered in a way that suited their own interests and abilities, and that they were given assistance and encouragement. Thus, in the late 1960’s Lipman commenced development on a series of curriculum materials for children, consisting of novels and accompanying teachers’ manuals, aimed at improving children’s thinking skills, which he argued “would improve the relationship between deliberative judgments and democratic decision-making” (Freakley & Burgh 2000, p.4).

Lipman (1988) argues that philosophical inquiry and ethics go hand in hand, and should not be devoid of one another. Philip Cam (1994) also notes that ethics comes under the umbrella of philosophy

(pp.19-21). However, it must also have its own application. Children must be concerned with moral issues throughout their inquiry. Engaging students in dialogue in what Lipman calls a philosophical community of inquiry offers them the opportunity to explore ethical issues collaboratively. Dialogue is important in nurturing imagination in students, helping them gain a sense of community, as well as an understanding that trust and respect are integral to being a part of such a community. Understood in this way, Lipman's approach to integrating curriculum, teaching and learning offers more than a thinking skills program. Splitter and Sharp (1995) recognise that by reducing the community of inquiry to thinking skills only, it "immediately marginalises the social, ethical, aesthetic, affective and political components that are as integral to the teaching of thinking as the skills themselves" (p.3).

Lipman was not the only advocate of inquiry-based learning. Another important figure in the history of philosophy in education is Leonard Nelson. Nelson developed a method referred to as Modern Socratic dialogue, or Socratic dialogue. Like John Dewey, who will be discussed later, Nelson's method emphasises "the individuality of the child, the importance of active learning, social skills and a sense of community" (Murriss & Haynes 2001, p.160). Nelson's Philosophisch-Politische Akademie, and experimental school, the Landeserziehungsheim Walkemuehle, strived to "encourage children to value truth and to build high self esteem amongst its students" (p.160). Fisher (1995a) notes that the explicit objective of Nelson's inquiry is, to help students find an answer to their questions but the implicit aim is to force participants, through dialogue to express their thoughts clearly, to systematize judgement and to test their own beliefs against the arguments and views of others. (p.26)

A major aim of Nelson's method is to achieve consensus through close examination of arguments, e.g., clarification and conceptual analysis. Nelson's theories impacted on education in Europe, and after his early death, his student Gustav Heckmann continued to develop the model of Socratic dialogue. Heckmann is responsible for not only widely distributing Socratic dialogue as a classroom pedagogy, but also for its popularity in philosophical counselling.

The need for innovative teaching methods has led to some practitioners integrating philosophical inquiry into their classroom practice. However, some critics find it difficult to understand how philosophical inquiry can be adapted to suit modern classrooms, especially in primary schools. There have been attempts by several theorists to develop practical guidelines, not all of them intended for educational settings. This dissertation looks at the similarities and differences between different forms of dialogue. My major concern is with philosophy as pedagogy for the classroom. Emphasis will, therefore, be on the community of inquiry and Socratic dialogue, as they are the two main contenders that have application to education. I start with a description of the community of inquiry, which owes its present incarnation to Lipman. As Lipman owes much to the pioneering work of Dewey, Charles Pierce, and Lev Vygotsky, a brief explanation of each will be given. In relation to Socratic dialogue, I look at how Dries Boele, and others who were influenced by Nelson's method, have incorporated it into their training programs. I argue that a major difference between these two forms of dialogue is the different emphasis each places on consensus and conceptual analysis, and on reaching full agreement. Whereas the chief concern of Socratic dialogue is on consensus to achieve conclusive definitions, in the community of inquiry it is not always important to aim for consensus. Proponents of philosophy for children have invariably argued that conflict of opinion drives the community of inquiry, or even that conflict should be celebrated as a means to understanding.

Linked to the question of what should drive inquiry is the assumption that successful inquiry requires the presence of certain virtues. Whereas a number of commentators stress that friendship is essential to successful inquiry,³ I argue that it does not adequately describe the relationship between participants in a community of inquiry. Friendship can, however, be used as a metaphor to describe the actions of members in a Socratic dialogue. I, therefore, analyse and evaluate a commonly held view in favour of friendship, and then argue that an ethic of care offers a better description of the relationship between participants engaged in genuine philosophical inquiry.

Part One

PHILOSOPHY AND DIALOGUE

Dialogue

What is dialogue? According to Lydia Amir, dialogue is “a joint communicative activity with the goal of discovering truth” (2001, p.239). When a person has a dialogue with him or herself, this is a monologue. According to Amir, monologue is a kind of dialogue in that it uses the same processes, with the difference being that the discussion is either with oneself, as in a monologue, or with others, as in dialogue. Even when we engage with others in dialogue we do not discontinue the monologue or “inner discourse”, as we continue to formulate the ideas that contribute to the dialogue. Charles Pierce also makes the connection between monologue and dialogue, and the advantages of collaborative inquiry. I will discuss his views on dialogue later when we re-visit Pierce.

Dialogue is not mere conversation

But what sets a dialogue and a mere conversation apart? According to Susan Gardner (1995), the search for truth motivates participants in a dialogue, and is the whole purpose of the community of inquiry, and I would argue, of philosophical inquiry in general. There is, as Gardner points out,

an obvious, although relatively superficial sense in which progress toward truth is vital to the practice of inquiry and that if such progress is not made, the term community of inquiry becomes a misnomer. Properly speaking, in order to “inquire”, one must not only inquire about something ... one must also make some progress – at least if such progress is possible. (p.38)

Gardner notes that if a dialogue is to be productive, then the participants must in fact produce something of substance, which, in turn, would make that dialogue substantive. This product is truth, and without the necessity of trying to reach it, a dialogue would have no direction and there would be no motivation for its participants. It should be reiterated that truth may not, in fact, result at the conclusion of the dialogue. However, as Gardner points out, having this as a goal gives the inquiry purpose.

What separates one group of people having a conversation from another group engaged in philosophical inquiry is that in philosophical inquiry the type of talk is dialogical. Lipman (1991) identifies

motivation for the talk itself as that which separates one from the other. A conversation, he argues, focuses on creating equilibrium between those engaged in it. A dialogue, however, aims at disequilibrium in order to bring new understanding to the topic under discussion, and perhaps at the conclusion of the dialogue equilibrium may again be restored (p.232). Moreover, Lipman sees conversation as being driven by a personal process of sharing information, whereas dialogue follows a logical thread (p.232), whereby the participants are interested in the comments of others to further the inquiry, and to reaffirm or disprove the strengths of their own argument.

Dialogue and debate

Another important distinction to consider is the difference between dialogue and debate. Debate, according to Socrates, is something that occurs between antagonists and adversaries, and its goal is to win an argument (Lindop 2002, p.36), or at least to persuade others. It is not uncommon for debates to be won on rhetoric or emotive arguments alone. Indeed, this is what Plato accused the Sophists of doing.⁴ Dialogue, on the other hand, focuses on the understanding that one gains from co-inquiring, and not on winning arguments.

There are many uses for which dialogue as a method of inquiry can be applied. In the West at least, dialogue took its shape from Socrates as recorded in Plato's dialogues. Socrates spent most of his life attempting to engage his fellow Athenians in the activity of philosophy: a method of critical inquiry that had no obvious methodology like geometry or physics. He encouraged the idea that philosophy should be a process of argument and analysis, but with emphasis on dialogue. By engaging people in dialogue, Socrates could show that the answers to life's questions were not so easily attainable. Anyone who engaged in discussion with Socrates nearly always found that their answers to philosophical questions were either inadequate or unacceptable. In the excerpt below, from Plato's Republic, Socrates and Cephalus are engaged in a dialogue over what it means to be just.

- Socrates: But let us consider this further point: Is not he who can best strike a blow in a boxing match or in any kind of fighting best able to ward off a blow?
- Cephalus: Certainly.
- Socrates: And he who is most skilful in preventing or escaping from a disease is best able to create one?
- Cephalus: True.
- Socrates: And he is the best guard of a camp who is best able to steal a march upon the enemy?
- Cephalus: Certainly.
- Socrates: Then he who is a good keeper of anything is also a good thief?
- Cephalus: That, I suppose, is to be inferred.
- Socrates: Then if the just man is good at keeping money, he is good at stealing it.
- Cephalus: That is implied in the argument.
- Socrates: Then after all, the just man has turned out to be a thief. And this is a lesson which I suspect you must have learnt out of Homer; for he, speaking of Autolycus, the maternal grandfather of Odysseus, who is a favourite of his, affirms that.
- Cephalus: "He was excellent above all men in theft and perjury."
- Socrates: And so, you and Homer and Simonides are agreed that justice is an art of theft; to be practiced, however, "for the good of friends and for the harm of enemies" – that was what you were saying?
- Cephalus: No, certainly not that, though I do not now know what I did say; but I still stand by the latter words. (Plato 2000)

You will note from this short excerpt that there are certain techniques that Socrates uses in his dialogue with Cephalus. Often referred to as the Socratic Method, the type of questions posed by Socrates usually always led to the realisation that answers to such questions are much more difficult than initially thought. Below is a summary of those techniques considered to be central to the Socratic Method.⁵

1. Socrates claims to have no knowledge to impart, and admitted ignorance at the end of discussions as strongly as he did at the outset.
2. In each step of the dialogue, Socrates poses a question to which his co-inquirers would supply answers, which in turn are met by further questions from Socrates. His clarifying questions lead to their answers nearly always being inadequate or unsuccessful.
3. Despite Socrates' admission of his own ignorance, he facilitates discussion in a subtle direction.

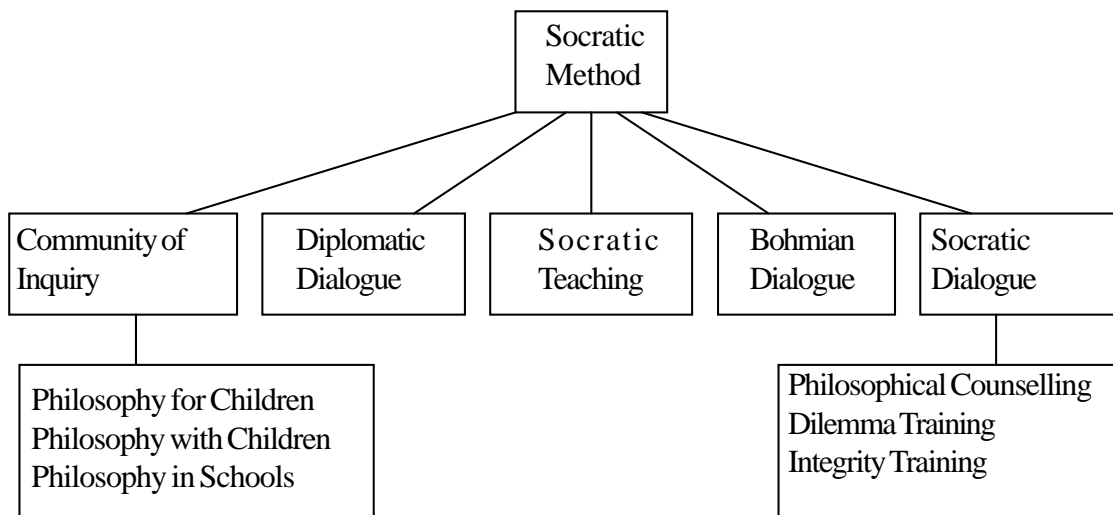


Diagram 1: Classifying different approaches to the Socratic Method

Curnow's categories

Trevor Curnow (2000) recognises three distinct forms of dialogue: (1) diplomatic dialogue, (2) Modern Socratic dialogue, and (3) Bohmian dialogue (see Diagram 1). I will return to the remaining categories in a moment. The purpose of diplomatic dialogue is to reach agreement. According to Curnow, diplomatic dialogue has a place in social and political decision-making. However, he advises against its use in educational settings, claiming that diplomacy poses problems with inculcation. Modern Socratic dialogue (or Socratic dialogue),⁶ on the other hand, has a focus on process, which, according to Nelson, must be followed rigorously if a dialogue is to be successful. Considerable emphasis is also placed on consensus as integral to the method itself. The role of consensus in Nelson's method will be the topic of discussion later in the dissertation. We now move onto Curnow's third category, namely Bohmian dialogue. The emphasis of Bohmian dialogue is not on reaching agreement or consensus, but on the contributions of those who participate together in dialogue with the aim of achieving understanding. Chiefly, the focus is on attention, with listening taking precedence over talking.

Curnow's categories go some way towards classifying the different ways in which the Socratic Method has been developed in different contexts. However, his categories are limited. Curnow's article explores what he refers to as a simple question, "What is the point of dialogue?" While he offers an explanation of how this question relates to different contexts, hence his three categories, he does not specify into which category Lipman's community of inquiry would fit.

This omission notwithstanding, Curnow is adamant that Bohmian dialogue presents a challenge to Lipman with respect to the development of critical thinking and reasonableness, citing Edward de Bono's concern that over-emphasis on critical thinking diminishes imagination in childhood. De Bono also had concerns that philosophical inquiry with children has the potential to become adversarial (Freakley & Burgh 2000). However, a number of writers disagree with this view.⁷ While the trap is certainly set for philosophical inquiry to turn into an adversarial model, the community of inquiry avoids such pitfalls (Field 1997). Indeed, doing philosophy in the sense that Lipman proposes "can incorporate generative and creative thinking" (Freakley & Burgh 2000, p.13). It could be said that de Bono concentrates on the metaphor of Socrates as an "electric ray". Dana Villa (1999) describes this view of Socrates as follows:

Through his own questioning, Socrates infects his listeners with his own perplexities, interrupting their everyday activities and paralyzing them with thought. Once drawn into the dissolvent current of thought, his conversational partners can no longer mechanically apply the general rules of conduct to particular cases, as they typically do in normal life. To ask not whether something is an instance of x, but what x is itself is, is to dissolve the taken-for-granted ground of action. (p.206)

While this is arguably one aspect of the Socratic Method, another is that of Socrates as midwife, who could "help others give birth to what they themselves thought anyhow, to find the truth in their doxa" (p.206). Lipman rejected the narrow conception of philosophy as necessarily adversarial, or exclusively analytical (i.e., concerned with conceptual analysis only). Broadly speaking, philosophy is a critical inquiry into things that matter; it encourages people to inquire and reason together about things of significance (Cam 1995, p. 2).

Two more categories

Like Curnow, Karen Murriss and Joanna Hayes (2001) also include Nelson's Socratic dialogue in their list of different forms of dialogue, although their preferred term is the Socratic Method. To avoid confusion, I will continue to use the term Socratic dialogue. However, they add to their list (1) philosophy with children, and (2) philosophical counselling. They suggest that the term Philosophy for Children should indeed be Philosophy with Children, in keeping with the nature of the inquiry that values the "doing" rather than the "doing for". Nevertheless, they agree that philosophy with/for children, with its emphasis on community of inquiry, values free inquiry. In their comparison of the community of inquiry with Socratic dialogue, they acknowledge that in a community of inquiry there is an interchange between consensus and "dissensus" (p.159), whereas in Socratic Dialogue consensus is central. For Lipman, conflict of opinion is the driving force behind the community of inquiry. What drives the Socratic dialogue is the achievement of full agreement. I will explore these differences further in Part

Two. Interestingly, Murriss and Hayes draw the conclusion that Socratic dialogue is central to the self-healing therapy or philosophical counselling described in Lou Marinoff's (1999) *Plato not Prozac*, and is used in integrity and dilemma training. According to Marinoff, philosophical counselling is "applying philosophical thinking to your own particular situations" (p.13). He uses the term philosophical practice to refer to "three types of philosophical activities: counseling individual clients, facilitating various kinds of groups, and consulting to various kinds of organizations" (p.13). Philosophical practice, he says, began with Gerd Archenbach in Germany and started to grow in North America in the 1990's. However, the first training sessions in America were facilitated by Dries Boele, who employed the Nelsonian method of Socratic dialogue. Boele's interpretation of Socratic dialogue will be discussed in more detail later.

Socratic Teaching

Socratic teaching⁸ also features in Diagram 1. Teachers using the Socratic teaching method take on the role of Socrates, e.g., asking clarifying questions, giving counter-arguments to encourage further thought, summarizing arguments for the class. This method is supposed to encourage students to think critically, but it is by-and-large teacher directed, rather than student focused.

I will not expand on any of the categories here, suffice it to say that they represent different views on what dialogue is, and what value it has. We cannot, as Curnow (2000) says, "choose between them but can derive benefit from each" (p.40). We can now move onto our next task, namely, to inquire into the differences, if any, between the community of inquiry and Socratic dialogue. Firstly, I will give an overview of the community of inquiry and Socratic dialogue, and then in Part Two, I will compare and contrast both.

The Community of Inquiry

As a result of current innovations and reforms in education, teachers are now required to adopt new approaches to teaching, with emphasis on curriculum integration and new pedagogies to facilitate student-learning. In connection with these reforms a growing number of theorists of education are advocating inquiry-based pedagogy to integrate curriculum, teaching and learning. This is in stark contrast to traditional or direct teaching methods, especially the didactic "talk-and-chalk" approach to learning. Of particular importance is the increasing acceptance of philosophical inquiry in classrooms in Australia and around the world.

Fisher (1995a) points out that "for Socrates, philosophy was something you do, rather than a set of philosophical truths to be learned" (p.25). According to this view, philosophy is an activity; something you do through participation with others. This goes to the heart of what proponents of philosophy in schools argue, i.e., children learn more thoroughly through participating in the construction of knowledge than they do through direct teaching. This approach is reflected by many educators today, as they find a medium between the "authoritative" approach, followed in direct teaching, and a "non-authoritative" approach where lessons are purely student controlled (Gardner 1995, p.38).

Lipman was certainly influenced by theorists who valued children as active constructors of knowledge. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that social constructivism underpins his theories on learning

and teaching.

Philosophical education and constructivism

So far we have concentrated mainly on Lipman's contributions to the community of inquiry, but Lipman was largely influenced by John Dewey and his work on community and learning. Dewey came from the American pragmatist tradition; an approach to philosophy that rejected the Platonic notion of objective and absolute truth. To Dewey knowledge is not something to be discovered "out there" in the world, but rather it emerges from within a community. Although philosophy provided a basis for Dewey's ideas, including his ideas on pedagogy, it was education that held the focus of most of his work. He was convinced that children needed to work together in collaboration in order to learn more effectively. He subsequently pioneered a progressive school – the renowned "Laboratory School".⁹ Recognizing the importance of dialogue and interaction, he valued the classroom not only as a place to prepare students for a democratic society, but also as a place for them to reflect upon the democratic practices of the wider community, and to question the values of the community of which they are a part. Schooling, he argued, should resemble and be integrated into the larger society. Dewey tapped into the idea that children had a propensity for curiosity, and thus saw problem-solving as a natural way for children to make sense of the world around them. He believed that if students engage together in classroom dialogue on issues that are significant to them, then this would have an impact on the way they make decisions in the wider community. Put another way, Dewey shaped his pedagogy around problem-solving and inquiry that dealt with real world issues.

Dewey was not the first to develop the notion of a community of inquirers. In fact, it originated with Charles Pierce. Pierce, as mentioned earlier, made a connection between monologue and dialogue, and the construction of knowledge. His focus on dialogue as an intersubjective process is central to philosophy for children. Pierce's initial concern was with the relationship between philosophical inquiry and scientific inquiry. He ascertained that scientific knowledge claims are vulnerable, and that unmediated knowledge is unattainable. Philosophical inquiry can make progress toward truth, but progress is reliant on the collaborative abilities and self-correction of the inquirers themselves. We cannot reasonably hope to attain individually,

the ultimate philosophy which we pursue: we can only seek it; [in] the *community* of philosophers. Hence, if disciplined and candid minds carefully examine a theory and refuse to accept it, this ought to create doubts in the mind of the author of the theory himself. (Pierce 2000)

In sum, it is because there are no assurances regarding the certainty of scientific knowledge, through collaborating together in communities of inquiry we can engage with our own ideas collaboratively with others.

Another important figure in the history of inquiry-based learning is Lev Vygotsky. A proponent of social constructivism, Vygotsky's theories align with that of Dewey's and Pierce's. His zone of proximal development is a space in which children's natural capabilities can be furthered through their interaction with others. In what Vygotsky termed scaffolding, through both interaction with members of the wider community and with classroom peers, children's individual achievements can be enhanced (Berk 2000, pp.259-69). Sprod (2001) argues that this "conceptual and reasoning space [is a space in

which] children can operate with help from a group, but are not capable of operating in on their own” (p.148). This is reflective of Pierce’s view on collaborative inquiry, mentioned earlier. Vygotsky coined the term “Community of Learners”, which describes how different members of the wider community can contribute to student-learning (Berk 2000, pp.259-69). If the contributions are from a diverse range of people, then learning can be broadened, in much the same way as the community of inquiry uses different ideas and views to shape the dialogue, in order to achieve better outcomes than inquiring alone would produce.

Vygotsky, like Dewey, also supported the view that learning can be enhanced through problem-solving. He argued that the process of finding solutions to problems in groups allowed children to learn more effectively than if they were to go through the thought processing independently. Such a view, as I have already noted, goes hand-in-hand with Lipman’s notion of the community of inquiry. If learning together produces better results than individual endeavours or direct teaching, then we can identify philosophical inquiry as an appropriate model for education in a democracy.

The process of the community of inquiry

Philosophical inquiry can be adapted to a variety of classroom and educational settings; as a lesson in itself, and across subject areas in order to integrate curriculum, teaching and learning. The starting point for a community of inquiry is the introduction of stimulus material. The type of stimulus used depends largely on the age of students in the class, the subject matter taught, the purpose of the activity, and other factors that teachers will usually be concerned with when developing lessons. Teachers may wish to introduce a purpose-written story wherein the philosophy is embedded within the story, or they may use existing children’s literature, or any other stimulus materials, e.g., newspapers headlines, magazine articles, or movies which lend themselves to philosophical questioning, to initiate dialogue from the group.¹⁰ For example, Sue Wilks (1995), a proponent of community of inquiry, shows how fairy tales can be used to elicit dialogue about what it means to be good. Once the students have engaged with the stimulus, it is normal practice to give them time to digest the material. The teacher then asks students if they have any questions they would like to raise. This is a very important part of the process, as the interest must come from the students themselves. The questions that the students volunteer will determine the type of inquiry that will ensue.

Looking at Wilks’ example of some questions that may result from exploring fairy tales, we have: (1) What makes a character good?, (2) What actions do characters perform that are good?, and (3) What actions do characters perform that are bad? (p.83). From the list of questions raised by the group, students then decide on a question, or group of related or interconnected questions to focus on during classroom discussion. For example, the question selected may be, “What makes a character good?” The students’ questions set the agenda, and are vital for stimulating further discussion. Discussion may or may not stay on the original question, e.g., “What makes a character good?”, and can flow onto an array of issues. This is not necessarily a problem, provided that the inquiry focuses on an idea or issue, and the discussion builds around it. Under the guidance of the teacher, students will discover that discussion is more than simply expressing opinions, or eliciting a range of responses. They may be asked to give reasons for their views, and since reasons “may pull in different directions, and some are likely to be stronger than others, the [students] will find themselves in need of criteria by which to judge the outcome” (Cam 1995, p.42). The teacher’s role is vital to successful inquiry. Whilst it is important that the student’s questions set the agenda, the teacher must help students develop the habit of exploring

disagreement, and to be mindful of the progress of the discussion. Divergent opinions must be explored, e.g., through considering alternatives, appealing to criteria, making appropriate distinctions, seeing implications, and giving reasons (pp.41-54).

The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and co-inquirer. This is paramount to the community of inquiry, as the teacher must model the procedures of inquiry in order for students to engage collaboratively and to “follow the inquiry where it leads” (Sharp 1993, p.59). It would be detrimental to inquiry if the teacher were seen as an expert or imparter of knowledge, as he or she is responsible for the form of discussion and not the content (Freakley & Burgh 2000, p.7). The teacher has the task of monitoring the discussion and to ensure that the rules of inquiry are followed. The most notable of these is that every participant must be self-reflective (Splitter & Sharp 1995, p.16). Being self-reflective means that participants should be willing to modify and adapt their arguments if they cannot hold up against an opposing argument or alternative perspective. This should not be seen as a competition! However, if a participant in a group has firmly held beliefs on a particular issue, then he or she should be allowed time to process and articulate a counter-argument before agreeing with another argument (Thomas 1997, pp.42-8). The rules, which are the procedures of inquiry, must be adhered to, in order to stop the dialogue straying from philosophical inquiry into unfocused discussion or anecdotes.

Inquiry can be both procedural and substantive. Diagram 2 sets out a schema which shows the connections between different aspects of inquiry. Note that these categories are not exhaustive, they are intended to act as a model to illustrate my next point. Thus, the categories can be extended to include further sub-categories. For example, under inductive reasoning we can include causal reasoning, generalizations and analogous reasoning.

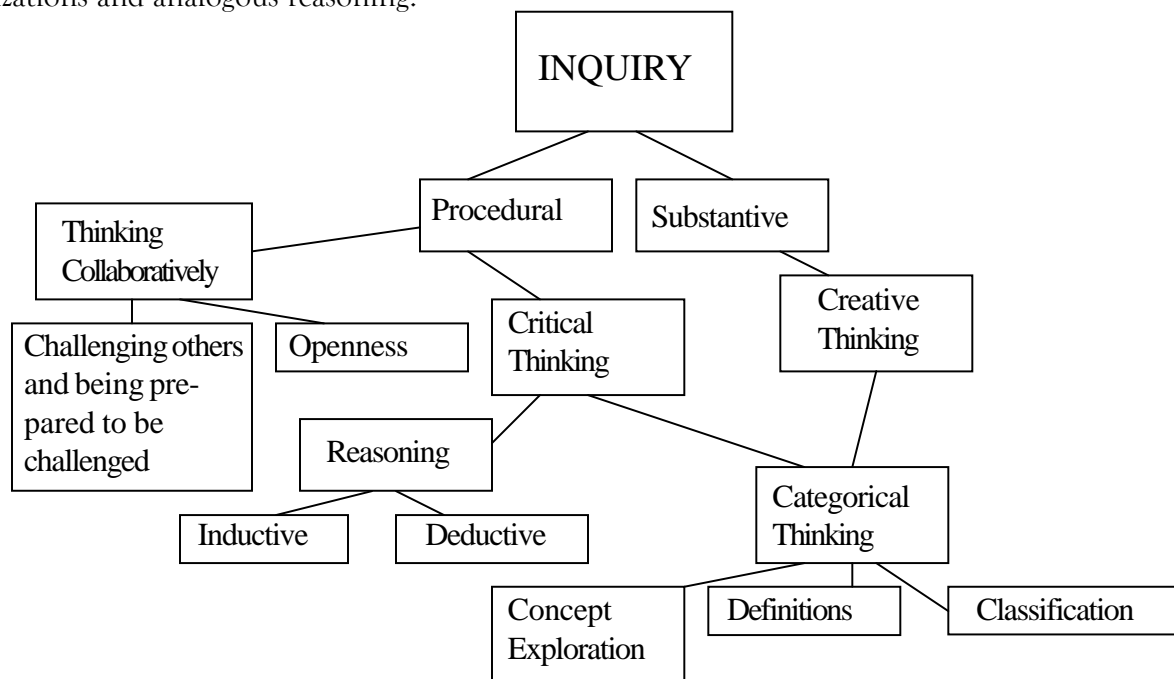


Diagram 2: Procedural and Substantive Inquiry

The procedural aspect of inquiry, otherwise known as the process of inquiry, guides both the way in which the community interacts collaboratively, and the progress of the discussion. For example, the characteristics of an inquiring community include listening attentively to others, responding to ideas

and not the person, openness to consider alternatives, being prepared to challenge ideas and have ideas challenged, as well as asking questions, exploring disagreements and making links between ideas. These characteristics refer to how the participants in an inquiry engage with each other as a community. Another way in which participants engage with each other is critically. The critical elements of inquiry include being able to reason critically and think conceptually. For example, participants can engage in self correction, identify weakness in premises, fallacious reasoning, and unwarranted generalization, as well as develop the skills of categorization, concept exploration, finding definitions, and classification. Critical thinking is integral to philosophical inquiry, as participants must learn the rules and skills of inquiry. These rules and skills aid in making the discussion a dialogue, and not a mere conversation.

So as to not make the same mistake as de Bono did in marginalizing philosophical inquiry into critical thinking only, I have also included creative thinking in Diagram Two. As noted at the beginning of Part One, for dialogue to be productive, it must produce something, which is what makes a dialogue substantive. Creative thinking makes an important contribution. Through engaging with ideas, such as exploring alternatives or building on the ideas of others, students gain a deeper understanding of what is being inquired into. Burgh and O'Brien (2002) argue that asking appropriate substantive questions can act as an impetus for engaging in substantive dialogue. They point out that "substantive questions are used to elicit deeper responses initially elicited by procedural questions" (p.48). Substantive questioning is open questioning in which students can use creative thinking strategies to come to conclusions. Burgh and O'Brien recognise that it is through this type of questioning that students are able to apply the knowledge that they may have on a topic, but they may also contribute new ideas (p.48).

Aside from the methodology of the community of inquiry, the intended outcomes of the dialogue itself play a part in differentiating it from other dialogue forms. Lipman (1977) notes that the aim of the community of inquiry is "not to turn children into philosophers or decision-makers, but to help them become more thoughtful, more reflective, more considerate, more reasonable individuals" (pp.69-70). By developing these dispositions, Lipman thought that students would be better equipped to think ethically, and consequently to become reflective and engaged citizens in a democracy. By being self-reflective, we are able to make informed decisions regarding our interactions with others, and with the environment. By taking time to think about how to approach a situation, we can reflect on how we should act at any given moment. Perhaps reflection is at the root of living a good life. According to Cam (1994), Lipman argues that being reflective is in fact what being moral is all about; that "the alternative to moral instruction lies in developing children's reflective moral judgement" (p.23).

What participants make in the discussion is an "intersubjective connection", insofar as the process of inquiring and reflecting together can help participants gain a greater understanding of the topic at hand. By asserting and justifying one's own opinions, as well as taking on board or rejecting other opinions, a participant may arrive at a perspective that has been shaped by having the group as a sounding board (Thomas 1997, p.44). It is through this type of inquiry that participants are likely to achieve more than an individual working alone could possibly achieve.

Intersubjectivity is the process by which participants develop understanding and create meaning through the exploration of ideas in collaboration with others. Splitter and Sharp (1995) use the following analogy to explain the connection between individual perspectives and the construction of knowl-

edge.

Just as in physics we learn that the things we observe are affected by our observations, so the person who thinks for herself understands that the subject matter of her inquiry can never be completely severed from herself as an inquirer. This is not an argument in favour of subjectivism or relativism, but an acknowledgement of the power of individual perspectives. It is precisely for this reason that the person who thinks for herself is committed to the inquiry process, a process which involves self-correction and a coming together of different perspectives. (p.16, emphasis mine)

In terms of ethical education, I think that Splitter's and Sharp's notion of committing oneself personally to the inquiry is central to developing a greater understanding of the relationship between individual values and collective decision-making. If the inquiry is applicable to all individuals engaged in dialogue together, and they are each committed to the process of inquiry, it is more than likely that they will develop their own perspectives of world-views. As Lipman (1977) puts it, "every child should be encouraged to develop and articulate his or her own way of looking at things" (p.62). This goes to the heart of the community of inquiry, which Lipman (1988) says is exemplar of democracy in action.

The idea of democracy is central to the community of inquiry and to ethical education (Vicuna Navarro 1998, pp.23-26). As Dewey's theories are at the base of the community of inquiry, it is not surprising that his views on democratic processes mirror the processes of inquiry itself. Democracy, in the case of the community of inquiry, allows all participants the opportunity to voice their opinion. Lipman (1988), inspired by Dewey's notions of education in preparation for democracy, based his program around these values.¹ He draws the following conclusion:

An educational system that does not encourage children to reflect – to think thoroughly and systematically about matters of importance to them – fails to prepare them to satisfy one criterion that must be satisfied if one is to be merely a citizen of society, but a good citizen of democracy (p.113).

The community of inquiry aims to satisfy such requirements. The dialogue that ensues from such values is in itself democratic, and thus creates the potential to promote or foster democratic dispositions and behaviour. According to Lipman, the community of inquiry is an effective method not only for civics and citizenship education, but generally, for ethics education, and is more reflective of Socrates' attitude. The notion of following the argument to where it leads "has been a perplexing one ever since Socrates announced it as the guiding maxim of his own philosophical practice" (p.230), and hence is central to the question of "what is a good life?"

In the next section, we will look at another approach to inquiry, the Socratic dialogue, which seems to place less emphasis on the process of following the argument where it leads and more on

reaching full agreement through conceptual analysis and consensus.

Socratic Dialogue

As mentioned earlier, Socratic dialogue is the product of Leonard Nelson. Nelson and his student Heckmann developed the method of dialogue that uses personal experience as the primary building block for understanding issues. Achieving consensus through dialogue has become its defining feature, and as Nelson and Heckmann both argue, it is this element that deepens inquiry. By being forced to examine every argument in order to reach consensus, this process requires members to be self-reflective so that they are able to gain a deeper understanding of the topic.

In “What Results Can We Promise?” Dries Boele (1998) gives a detailed account of Socratic dialogue.¹² Socratic dialogue, says Boele, is like sport. Every sport has rules of play, which act as guidelines for the players, and helps spectators to understand how the game is played. Socratic dialogue also has rules, such as striving for consensus, postponing one’s judgment and trusting one’s doubts. However, Boele notes that in order to follow these rules participants must have certain attitudes toward dialogue. These are more like dispositions than rules or guidelines, which he describes as “Socratic Virtues” (p.52). If we take a closer look at Boele’s analogy, we can also infer that while rules act as guidelines for both players and spectators, they also define a game as a particular kind of game, which ultimately sets one sport aside from another. The so-called rules of dialogue that Boele talks about also separate Socratic dialogue from other forms of dialogue or inquiry. In Part Two I argue that the defining feature of Socratic dialogue is its emphasis on consensus, and that it is this feature which separates Socratic dialogue from the community of inquiry.

Socratic dialogue values collective agreement in which the group journeys together through the dialogue to reach, at the conclusion of the inquiry, a consensus, and hence, a group understanding of the topic under discussion. This is the common view held by proponents of Socratic dialogue. The group reaches this conclusion through a series of steps. There are seven steps in the Socratic dialogue method: (1) choose an appropriate question, (2) choose a personal experience to apply to the question, (3) find a core statement, (4) identify the experience in the core statement, (5) formulate a definition, (6) test the validity of the core statement, and (7) find counter-examples. These steps must be followed rigorously in order to finish the dialogue. However, if there is not enough time to complete all of the steps then no conclusion can be reached. It must be acknowledged at this point that there are various interpretations of Nelson’s Socratic dialogue. Therefore, the explanation that follows describes what is common to most models of Socratic dialogue.

To commence a Socratic dialogue session, members of the group must first be able to commit to the session for a substantial period of time, generally two or more days. It is this factor which makes this method of inquiry difficult to implement in an educational setting. However, a variation of the original model developed by Nelson has been used in the classroom. Sometimes called a short Socratic dialogue, it has been adapted for classroom purposes, and for other time-restricted occupations, and has been considered by some practitioners as an appropriate method of inquiry in education. However, as Murriss and Haynes (2001) point out, both Nelson’s and Heckmann’s ideas are not suitable for educational settings; “because of the rigour involved in this kind of dialogue this is possible only when children are

engaged on a voluntary basis, and therefore it is not suitable for mainstream education” (p.162). As this is the only difference between the short version and Nelson’s original Socratic dialogue, we will not explore this point further. Disagreements over the length of Socratic dialogues notwithstanding, once an allocated time has been agreed upon, dialogue may get under way.

The role of the facilitator in Socratic dialogue is more directive than participatory. While the facilitator in the inquiry is “well acquainted with the finer points of the subject under discussion, [he or she] remain[s] completely outside the argument itself” (Murriss & Haynes 2001, p.161). The facilitator’s task is not that of co-inquirer, rather, he or she has the responsibility of ensuring that the discussion remains focused and that the steps are followed until consensus is reached. Because the method of inquiry is rule-bound, the facilitation is integral to successful discussion.

The question that the members of the group are to pursue for the coming days is the first step in the Socratic dialogue. For our purposes let us assume that this question is an ethical one. After putting forth suggestions, one question is chosen, whether this be an amalgamation of more than one question or a contribution from one member only. All other questions must be put aside to focus on the one at hand. These questions can be filed away for another session at a later date. This is the first instance in the process where consensus features. Again, we can use the earlier questions from Wilks’ book as examples. The original question, “What makes a character good?” can be reformulated to, “What do we mean by good?” so that the concept of “good” can be defined. Finding a conclusive definition is fundamental to reaching agreement over the question, i.e., “What do we mean by good?” It should be noted that it is not always the case that the members choose the question. It is also common practice for the facilitator to select a question, in which case he or she must follow criteria for selecting a question to make it appropriate for inquiry. The question has to be a “real” question and not theoretical, it should always be connected with “one’s own experiences”, and it must not lead to moral condemnation of anyone in the group (Kessels in Murriss & Haynes 2001, p.162).

Personal experience plays a major role in the Socratic dialogue, and is at the core of the second step in the proceedings. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the story that a member of the group volunteers can be unpacked and used to illustrate or show the inadequacy of the definition of the concept that the group is exploring. Secondly, it helps not only the bearer of the experience but also all of the members to relate to the experience in order to better articulate their perspectives or feelings in regard to the topic at hand. The experience must meet certain criteria: (1) it must be the bearer’s own experience, (2) it must be an event, which has concluded prior to the commencement of the dialogue, and (3) it must be one in which the member volunteering the information is willing to extend and share all facets of the story for investigation (Prawda, 2000).

The third step entails deciding on a core statement. Once the experience has been chosen, based on its relevance to the topic and the relatedness to many of the lives of the members, it “is then retold in much more detail and the group poses any clarifying questions they have” (Marinoff 1999, p.263). Once the experience has been broken into details, a core statement can be formed that integrates both the experience and the topic on which the group has decided to focus (Boele 1998, p.50). If we turn again to our example, then the experience would be applied to the question “What do we mean by

good?”

In the fourth step, the group must identify precisely at what point the topic under discussion (i.e., in our example, the concept “good”) occurs in the experience. As Marinoff states “once everyone agrees on where ‘X’ occurs, you can begin to decide what “X” is” (p.263). In the excerpt from Republic in Part One, Socrates demonstrates this when he inadvertently says, “if you can give me an example of justice, then you must tacitly know what justice is”. This illustrates why personal experience is so important in Socratic dialogue. Members can relate to the experience, but must also use the example to help formulate a concise definition of the concept being discussed. Boele (1998) argues that the experience is the “touchstone” in the dialogue (p.56). Because members can relate to this experience, it becomes central to reaching consensus. In our example the members formulate a concise definition of the term “good”. Boele says “without something comparable, there will be no mutual understanding and no consensus” (p.60).

The fifth step in the process of Socratic dialogue is arguably the most difficult because of the extensive emphasis on consensus; more than in any of the other steps. The group must decide on a definition to describe the topic, using the experience as an example. This is done using conceptual analysis, especially clarifying terms, in order to gain understanding. Boele describes this as regressive abstraction, whereby the concrete example is used to analyse the topic, and the process of defining the term and applying it to the experience continues until consensus is reached (p.51)

Reaching consensus or full agreement over definitions is at the root of Socratic dialogue. Socrates also strived for consensus over definitions, but not as an end in itself. Rather, it was a way of achieving greater understanding of certain terms used in the discussion (Lindop 2002. p.37). Because a word may carry with it different meanings, conceptual analysis for Socrates played an important role in defining or clarifying terms. For example, in Plato’s Protagoras, Socrates shows the interchangeability of meaning when referring to the term “beauty”. After engaging in dialogue with a fellow Athenian, Socrates determines that beauty may not necessarily refer to “physical attributes”, but also to “mental attributes” (pp.36-7). The purpose of this example is to illustrate that words can be ambiguous, and hence, that it is imperative to be clear about what we mean when using terms. By finding examples and using personal experiences we can define our terms. This process, if done rigorously, will bring about a conclusive definition, which is what Socratic dialogue sets out to achieve.

Although the experiences of the other members may have been put aside, in the sixth step of the dialogue these may be recovered and examined. The definition or core statement that has been agreed upon by the members in step three must then be applied to each of the other experiences to test the validity of the core statement (Prawda, 2000). If all experiences are applicable to the core statement, then the group can move onto the next and final stage of the dialogue. However, if an experience refutes the accuracy of the definition, then members must regroup and review their definition until it can no longer be contested. After this is done, the group is ready for the final stage of the Socratic dialogue.

All prior experiences that have been volunteered in the process of dialogue have been restricted to all of the member’s own experiences. In the seventh step, however, members must think of other situations, hypothetical or real, which can act as counter-examples outside of those already presented in order to refute the definition that has been established (Marinoff 1999, p.264). If the definition is again proven incapable of accommodating these counter-examples, then the members must go back to one of the previous steps. It is the task of the facilitator to ensure that this happens, and that the group is brought back to the appropriate steps. Once the group can find no more counter-examples, and a conclusive

Part Two

DIALOGUE AND CONSENSUS

Comparing Community of Inquiry and Socratic Dialogue

It is often assumed that philosophical inquiry with children refers to the method of inquiry which has its roots in Lipman's Philosophy for Children program. However, the Nelsonian tradition of Socratic dialogue originated in the beginning of the twentieth century and was a "radical attempt to change education at a time of many other educational pioneers for mainly primary education" (Murriss & Haynes 2001, p.160), which included John Dewey and Maria Montessori. Both Lipman's and Nelson's methods were inspired by, and have their roots in, the Socratic Method, but there are distinct differences between the two, which have implications for classroom practice.

However, before we explore the fundamental differences between these two pedagogies, it should be noted that comparisons can also be made. Boele identifies certain virtues in relation to Socratic dialogue, and these are echoed by Lipman in his description of the characteristics of the community of inquiry. According to Boele (1998), "[t]o listen, to be susceptible to other arguments, to take into account different points of view, to be reflective, to take the time to investigate a difficult problem (instead of looking for immediate solutions) is imperative in philosophical dialogue" (p.55). These characteristics are integral to successful inquiry, but not limited to classroom inquiry alone. They also have application to ethical inquiry, and thus civics and citizenship education, as well as to the wider community.

Of particular importance is the notion of self-examination, particularly in relation to ethical inquiry. Lipman (1988), as noted earlier, stresses the importance of participants to be self-reflective. Similarly, Boele (1998) acknowledges that a basic requirement of Socratic dialogue is that, "we must consult ourselves repeatedly" (p.55). By reflecting upon our own arguments and assertions, and our interactions with others, these habits can continue in our daily lives outside of the classroom. In sum, by being aware of their own behaviour and attitudes, participants are able to reflect on their thinking, which will impact on the way they approach decision-making in the course of their daily lives.

Similarities aside, there are some distinct differences between the two forms of dialogue. The community of inquiry has found much success as a classroom pedagogy, although it has been adapted for use in a wider context, such as in ethics education and training, in leadership and management, and professional development for teachers. On the other hand, Nelson's Socratic dialogue has been used in dilemma training and integrity training¹³ in both the public and private sector working environments. To be practiced by professionals with specific training in Socratic dialogue, it is now being widely pursued as an educational tool, yet still primarily with tertiary level students.¹⁴

Robert Fisher (1995a), in his article "Socratic Education", and subsequent conference papers dealing with dialogue, compares Socratic dialogue with Lipman's Philosophy for Children. He identifies as

one of the major differences between the two forms of dialogue the emphasis on a starting stimulus for discussion. Whereas participants in the community of inquiry “generate their own questions for discussion after shared reading of an episode in the story”, in Socratic dialogue, “no special educational materials need be used” (p.27).

Lipman uses purpose-written stories, or what he calls narratives, and stresses the importance of students being able to identify with the characters in the stories, and especially with their experiences. The initial stimulus material is a preparatory element to elicit questions from students which sets the agenda for discussion. The question to start the inquiry is usually chosen democratically. It becomes a catalyst for focused discussion, and can raise related issues or bring about deeper philosophical discussion than the initial stimulus had intended, or at least the direction in which the teacher may have intended. In other words, it is possible that a dialogue could ensue which is far removed from the planned lesson, yet is still focused on the task at hand. It is the responsibility of the teacher to keep track of the main issue. Disagreements over the use of concepts may lead to a discussion that requires a narrower focus, such as focusing on a definition, but once a connection has been made discussion can move on. As Cam (1995) says, “[t]he main thing is to keep to the topic, so long as it remains of interest, and to keep trying to move the discussion forward” (p.53). While focus is important, in a community of inquiry there is a level of freedom for participants to explore their ideas.

Socratic dialogue also explores disagreements. However, there is less room for the exploration of ideas, and consequently, less room for members to set their own agenda. Fisher (1995a) notes that Socratic dialogue begins with a question or issue that is the motivation for the ensuing dialogue between members (p.26). A substantial amount of time is spent deciding on the most appropriate question to begin discussion. The original question is then placed under further scrutiny. This part of the dialogue can, of course, be avoided if the facilitator has chosen the question. Afterwards, the focus of discussion is on reaching agreement about definitions, using the experiences as exemplars of concepts under question. The purpose of discussion is to find conclusive definitions. Unlike the community of inquiry, which allows its participants to explore issues that arise during the discussion uninterrupted, Socratic dialogue must keep a direct focus on the immediate task. Bernard Roy (2001) uses the following metaphor to describe the process:

The graphic representation of an hourglass is often used to represent the structure of these [Socratic] dialogues: through various stages of consent and dissent, as many individual stories as there are participants are condensed and funneled down to a core statement, the comprehension of which is expanded so as to yield as close to a universal definition as it is possible to reach. (p.232)

It is highly questionable whether or not Socrates would have condoned the rigorous conceptual analysis, used in the Socratic dialogue, in his discussions with others, albeit Plato may have at times made Socrates out to be that way in order to press a point he himself was trying to make. Plato believed that knowledge lay in finding out conclusive definitions. As we will see later, Boele also thinks that this is the case, hence his wanting to make a connection between consensus and truth. Nevertheless, it is in the spirit of Socrates that we should follow the argument to where it leads.

Because it is a requirement of Socratic dialogue that the dialogue is complete only when consensus is reached between members, the facilitator’s role is somewhat different to that of the community of

inquiry. Throughout this process the facilitator also endeavours to keep the group focused on the topic at hand, and his or her role is critical to the success of the dialogue. As members are required to come to consensus at each step of the process, the facilitator's role needs to be directive. Under no circumstance should the facilitator ask philosophical questions because "if he does, he may for the moment temper their impatience, but only at the cost of nipping in the bud the philosophical impatience we seek to awaken" (Nelson 1993, p440). The facilitator's role is more procedural and less flexible than that of the community of inquiry. It requires summarizing and keeping records of the discussion as well as demanding clarity and rigour. As previously mentioned, in the community of inquiry the role of the teacher is that of facilitator and co-inquirer, or as Lipman (1991) puts it, the teacher may be seen as the "captain of the ship". As participants become more experienced, facilitation in the community of inquiry is shared amongst all.

Another difference that separates the two forms of dialogue is the time allocated for inquiry. The community of inquiry is flexible in its requirements, insofar as the method can be integrated across the school curriculum, or introduced as a separate subject, and teachers can adapt its use to a variety of educational settings, so the time of inquiry may vary. The Socratic dialogue, on the other hand, is much more demanding on time, making it less suitable for inclusion into school lessons. Because the process requires that the group goes through a series of steps to reach consensus, in practice sessions can last from approximately one and a half to two days. Moreover, because dialogue is finished only once consensus is reached, reaching the final step has in some cases taken up to six days. Undoubtedly, Socratic dialogue is more suited to tertiary settings, which is what Heckmann had intended when he commenced development of Nelson's original ideas.

As well as the time allocated for inquiry, in order to have a successful inquiry, there are restrictions on the number of participants. In the community of inquiry it is possible to have large group discussion, or what is often referred to in the literature as whole class discussion. Ideally, the number of students would not exceed thirty-five. Although, notably, smaller groups provide for a richer discussion, it is not absolutely imperative that this is maintained. For example, the use of small group discussion,¹⁵ or collaborative learning groups¹⁶ can be supplementary to, or part of, larger group or whole class discussions. This is not so for Socratic dialogue. In order for consensus to be obtainable, it is recommended that groups must be kept below ten people. We will talk about the importance of consensus in much more detail in the next section. Suffice it to say that striving for consensus is at the heart of Socratic dialogue.

Another central feature that is found in Socratic dialogue, but not in the community of inquiry, is to the requirement of members to formulate universal definitions. Attention to the clarification of concepts in the community of inquiry is important, but only insofar as it provides students with a way to engage in the substantive aspect of inquiry. The exercises and discussion plans found in Lipman's teaching manuals¹⁷ can be used to help students articulate their understanding of concepts, clarify meaning, and define terms, so that they may be mindful of the discussion's progress as "a well-connected, integrated whole" (Cam 1995, p. 52). That is to say, conceptual analysis becomes one of the many tools in the philosopher's tool kit to help focus discussion, and to move it forward. It is not the sole purpose of the inquiry.

Contrary to Lipman, Nelson emphasized the striving for universal definitions. Answering fundamental questions through the use of examples and experiences of the members is central to the method itself. This is where the facilitator needs to be more directive than in the community of inquiry. It is the

facilitator's role to keep the "student's attention focused on the aspect of the problem currently under discussion" and to "bring them back to it again and again" (Murriss & Haynes 2001, p.161). The facilitator must aim for consensus; in each step of the dialogue the onus is on the facilitator to ensure that all members of the group reach a shared understanding. The experiences of the members, therefore, become very important, as they inform the progress towards universal concepts. While it is important that terms are defined in the community of inquiry, as already noted, they are not central to the dialogue.

Consensus and Difference

This now brings me to my main point, namely, the role that consensus plays in the two pedagogies. As noted before, Socratic dialogue requires that all members must reach consensus at each stage of inquiry which means that they cannot conclude the inquiry until all are in agreement. This is not so with the community of inquiry, mainly because it does not place an emphasis on the reaching of consensus. Instead, it emphasises mutual respect and differences of opinion.

John Thomas (1997) states that "[t]he idea of the community of inquiry in which people come together for the common purpose of thinking rationally together has the potential to bridge the difference between individuals such that a deeper understanding of their differences and mutual respect for them can happen" (p.42). What Thomas is acknowledging is that participants should be able to have differences of opinion without the necessity of reaching consensus, insofar as coming to a common view. Whereas the "deeper understanding" to which Thomas refers is the acceptance of difference of opinion between participants, Boele (1998) seems to think that understanding is the basis of consensus. Boele argues that if members find conclusive definitions, then they will all have come to agreement based on a common understanding. It seems to me that Boele, at the very least, is claiming that reaching consensus is enough to claim the discovery of something objectively true, or at the very most, to claim, like Plato did, that real knowledge lies in the finding of conclusive definitions.

Thomas (1997) talks of differences being "transcended and yet retained" in the community set up (p.43). Understanding, which I believe is imperative to any inquiry, is seen by Thomas as being the key to having a tolerance, or acceptance of differences of opinion. Boele (1998), to the contrary, argues that understanding is actually at the root of consensus; the reason that members are able to agree. In other words, if members have a full understanding based on reason alone, then they cannot avoid coming to the same conclusions. To summarise, Thomas argues that understanding helps participants accept differences of opinion, whereas Boele insists that understanding is the basis of consensus. This has repercussions for democratic theory and practice.

Ana Vicuna Navarro (1998) promotes the use of the community of inquiry in Chile. She is particularly interested in democratic educational practices and is drawn to philosophical inquiry because of its reflection of democratic practice. In "Ethical Education Through Philosophical Discussion", Navarro argues that through philosophical inquiry, children in Chile will be able to continue to value democracy. By enabling children to volunteer their beliefs and values, and opinions on issues (in particular ethical ones), in the environment of a community of inquiry they learn to transfer this respect for others and have confidence in their own perspectives (pp.23-6). This is in line with the pragmatist view

of intersubjectivity, insofar as the contributions of others and our own perspectives are valued.

Intersubjectivity implies a collective process in which all participants volunteer, and contribute to, arguments about an issue. The emphasis is placed on the community of inquirers to move towards a unified conclusion that has been reached through the contributions of all participants. Now, this does not necessarily mean that there has been no disagreement during the inquiry, as disagreement is inevitable, especially when dealing with matters of ethical concern, but instead paints a picture that, as a community, they move together towards a common goal of truth. When an individual reflects on his or her own argument, that contains his or her perspective as well as the views of others, it becomes clear that this perspective has been shaped by all members of the inquiry. There may still be disagreement amongst the community members, but if, after reflection, the group decides to accept the different opinions, they have come to this conclusion collectively. Cam (1994) reinforces this:

The community of inquiry is also seen as a means by which children can learn to steer between the Scylla of unquestioning submission to existing social values and the Charbydes of rugged individualism. In a community of inquiry, children learn to think for themselves and through this process they become more capable of arriving at an objective appraisal of established social values and of available alternatives. (p.22)

But what does this mean for Nelson's Socratic dialogue which promotes consensus? Let us look again at democracy. Citizens in a democracy, usually through their representatives, must at sometime or another come to agreement on matters of public concern (e.g., recently world leaders had to decide on the advent of war in Iraq). Boele (1998) claims that Socratic dialogue is democratic. He reasons that this is because all members of the inquiry are given equal opportunity to volunteer any perspectives on an issue. While this is correct, insofar as all opinions are heard, if emphasis is on striving for consensus, it seems unlikely that this can occur (especially when opinions are diverse) without any appeal to compromise. In relation to democracy in a multicultural society, consensus seems even more remote, and compromise seems to be the only road to a solution. Put another way, while all members may have the opportunity to be heard, not all of these contributions will make it to the conclusion.

Boele argues that consensus can be reached without members necessarily having to compromise. He argues on the basis that truth is objective; not only does it transcend culture, but is also held in the same regard by all rational beings. Any rational agent committed to exploring the truth would come to the same conclusion, regardless of the situation. For example, the claim that "killing is wrong" would be true for all rational agents across space and time, if this was indeed a truth claim.

In "Ethical Disagreement and Objective Truth", Carl Wellman (1975) argues in favour of objective truth. His main concern is with truth in ethical inquiry. He argues that if communities inquire together, they will only come to one conclusion. The truth, as Wellman supposes, is something that all rational people engaging in dialogue should arrive at after inquiring together. Gary Overald (1973) concurs that the only truly rational end point would be the same for all involved, and this would be the only conclusion that could be reached. Both Wellman's and Overald's view is in line with that of Boele's. Boele (1998) adds, however, that because truth is essentially the same to all rational inquirers who set out to find it, that there is no such thing as compromise because all those involved in the inquiry would be in agreement at the conclusion. While there may initially be some differences among members, they

would all reach consensus, free of will, and without compromise at the end of the inquiry.

The notion of compromise raises many questions for consensus. Can we have consensus without compromise? If so, what do we mean by compromise? The issue of consensus is a complicated one that goes beyond the limits of this dissertation. Certainly, in a democracy, where difference and diversity prevails, compromise seems inevitable. On the other hand, if one considers truth to be objective, then we can agree with Boele and others as to why consensus does not mean compromise. This still leaves open the question as to whether or not objectivity is possible. However, this would demand further inquiry into the nature of knowledge itself. Again, this is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, we will need to scratch the surface just enough to see if there is a relation between truth and consensus.

Truth and Consensus

In “Disagreement over Agreement and Consensus”, Button and Sharrock (1993) discuss consensus in relation to science, and make the link between philosophy and scientific inquiry. The problem with consensus is that scientists forget the importance of scientific achievement, but instead strive for agreement and consensus, thus taking away the purpose of inquiry. It can be argued that by making consensus a requirement of philosophical inquiry, like in science, those participating in the dialogue may forget the value of the discussion itself, but instead place importance on the end result i.e., on reaching agreement. Consensus then turns into the achievement, as in Socratic dialogue, and not on the achievements gained in the dialogue, as in the community of inquiry.

If reaching consensus is somewhat equated with having arrived at truth through finding conclusive definitions, this implies that there is no more to truth than examining examples of concepts that are under question, and testing them by using criteria. In some cases this means formulating the problem as a choice between two alternatives. The option that withstands the scrutiny of analytic rigour is privileged over the other that does not. Lipman himself found this a problem, in particular when he expressed his concern over dilemma training programs in which a problem is brought down to an either/or decision or to a neat solution of win or lose (Splitter & Sharp 1995). Truth, if viewed in this way, is problematic as it alludes to a universal truth through conceptual analysis alone. There is no room for review in this view of truth.

This raises a further question, “Can consensus stand the test of time?” Thomas Kuhn’s notion of a paradigm shift in relation to scientific knowledge offers an explanation. According to Kuhn, when consensus over scientific claims changes and a particular paradigm is swept away in favour of a new paradigm, a new era of scientific knowledge is ushered in (in Button and Sharrock 1993, pp.1-25). Kuhn’s claim not only has repercussions for the philosophy of science, it also poses problems for philosophy itself, at least in relation to knowledge claims. With regards to Socratic dialogue, the notion of consensus as an indicator of truth becomes difficult to defend. Moreover, access to some sort of universal truth by rational deliberators seems even more remote, especially if the only means by which such knowledge can be known is through consensus. Pierce’s insight into the interrelated role of the self and community, and therefore, the intersubjective nature of truth itself, offers a better model of how knowledge is constructed, and how we make sense of our world. The community of inquiry offers a collaborative space to engage in self-correction with others, thereby allowing participants to share their

experiences about what is of interest to them without the requirement of consensus.

As a final point, my intention is not to discredit the use of consensus as an important tool for use in many situations. Stan van Hooft (1995) has applied Socratic dialogue to many professional development and training models, e.g., nursing, business, and tertiary education. In *Plato: Not Prozac*, Marinoff (1999) shows how philosophical inquiry through Socratic dialogue can be applied to different situations, in particular the workplace. Subsequently, his training sessions have become popular amongst business professionals wishing to incorporate philosophy into the workplace.

We now turn to another important aspect of inquiry, namely, friendship. In what follows, I argue that consensus has implications for both friendship and inquiry. An analysis of friendship reveals a connection to consensus, i.e., both friendship and consensus are based on the need for common ground. I propose that we substitute friendship with care, as it offers a better description of the relationship between participants engaged in philosophical inquiry.

Part Three

FRIENDSHIP AND CARE

Comparing Friendship and Care in Inquiry

To recap what has been covered so far, the road to consensus requires finding commonalities between ideas shared within a group. Another concept often referred to in the literature on philosophy for children that is concerned with commonalities is friendship. Some writers have even argued that friendship is necessary for successful inquiry.¹⁸ I contend, however, that while friendship is an important aspect in children's lives, it has minimal impact, if any, on the success of philosophical inquiry. Indeed, in some cases it may have a negative impact. I therefore propose that what is necessary for philosophical inquiry is the virtue of care.

Friendship and commonality

Ron Reed and Tony Johnson (1999) trace the history of the role of friendship in philosophy from Aristotle to C.S. Lewis. The most notable of these examples is Lewis's imagery of two friends sitting side by side, looking out in the same direction. This image reflects Lewis's definition of friendship; of two people with common views finding the same point upon which to fix their gaze. Reed and Johnson use Lewis's imagery to compare friends with lovers.

The lover simply delights in the other, while the friend, it may be said, delights in the delight the other takes in the shared activity, delights in the way the other "cares for the same truth". In Lewis's telling image, - "we picture lovers face to face but friends side by side; their eyes look ahead". (p.169)

Lewis's friends have in common something substantive; they are friends because they have common interests. Lewis was not the first to make such connections. The ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, claimed common interest to be the basis of friendship, albeit he recognised the volatility of friendship. Immanuel Kant also was "aware of the fragility of relationships given the difficulties between individuals and the potential for conflict which difference entails" (in Lynch, 2002, p.9). We must, therefore, consider the impact of such difficulties on a dialogue in which difference is imminent.

Reed and Johnson (1999) give an example of the Dodgers baseball team - a group of men from different cultures, of different race and socio-economic status placed in a team as an experiment to see what would ensue. Sharing a love of baseball resulted in these individuals being friends, and subsequently, becoming a very successful baseball team. No doubt, friendship was important in this case, but it was a consequence of the team mates having an interest in common, i.e., the love of baseball. Philosophical inquiry, on the other hand, is a different ballgame altogether! Genuine dialogue requires a commitment to the process of inquiry. Common interest may, therefore, not be enough to sustain such an inquiry. Friends may avoid voicing different opinions that could cause disagreement, and this could disrupt the natural dialogue. Disagreement should instead be seen as a catalyst for strengthening dia-

logue through the sharing of different points of view. The dialogue engages people in critical inquiry, whereby the ideas, and not the people who express the ideas, are open to criticism. This does not, of course, discount the possibility of a friendship founded on a common interest or commitment to critical inquiry. But as I shall argue later, such a relationship may be better described as a caring one.

Snyder and Smith (1986) suggest that friendship can be either shallow or deep. By shallow they mean that a person enjoys the company of another, and has a fondness or liking for the other person. This is a social relationship that is not necessarily based on anything substantial between the friends except that they share common experiences together. Could this be what Lewis meant by lovers simply delighting in each other? Lewis's lovers face each other, which connotes a fondness between them. I suggest that the image of Lewis's lovers facing each other is synonymous with Snyder's and Smith's description of shallow friendship, albeit that linking the two broadens Lewis's description to incorporate both lovers and friends. But this need not be a problem if a defining feature of (shallow) friendship and of being lovers is having a fondness for one another. A deep friendship, on the other hand, is one in which two or more people share the same attitudes and values (p.69). This is an important difference, as it is not the feelings that friends have for one another that defines the friendship, but that they have attitudes and values in common. Snyder's and Smith's deep friendship echoes Aristotle's, Kant's, and Lewis's definition of friendship as that of sharing common interests. In the case of the Dodgers, they shared a deep friendship based on their attitudes and values with regards to baseball.

Plato's definition of friendship is somewhat different. He defined a "true" friendship as being the common search for knowledge; to get to the truth. David Allman (1988) describes the Platonic view of friendship as "two people sharing the experience of contemplating the universal quality of truth" (pp.113-26). Note that the quest for universal truth is what defines Platonic friends. Turning again to Lewis's imagery, we might want to say that Plato's definition of friendship qualifies as deep friendship. However, it is also something more. The point at which Platonic friends are gazing is unchangeable, beyond the material world. Deep friendship, as characterized by Snyder and Smith, is far less demanding. Having a common interest, such as an interest in baseball, or a concern for ecological sustainability, is enough to qualify for a deep friendship. The friends need not be concerned over any progress toward truth, or the process of dialogue, let alone the quest for universal truth. On the Platonic account of friendship, these are necessary requirements. It is possible to also interpret Reed's and Johnson's view of friendship in this way especially if we concentrate on their words in relation to a friend who "cares for the same truth" (although the Dodgers analogy suggests otherwise). However, if this is the case, it is not an appropriate metaphor for the community of inquiry. The quest for truth in a community of inquiry is not for universal truth as described by Plato, but in the valuing of, or being motivated by, the progress toward truth (I use the term as attributed to Gardner earlier).

The question that we need to ask is whether or not the literature devoted to the importance of friendship in inquiry uses the term in the same way as Plato did in his dialogues. Reed and Johnson acknowledge the significance of the qualities that Plato tried to capture in his view of friendship, but, as we have seen, their use of the term is somewhat ambiguous to say the least. To avoid confusion between the Platonic view of friendship and Snyder's and Smith's deep friendship, I suggest that a fundamental quality of Platonic friendship is "caring" as described by Nel Noddings (1984) in her influential book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. To put it another way, philosophical inquiry requires a caring for progress toward truth, rather than friendship as Reed and Johnson, and

others claim. However, in the case of Platonic friends, their quest is for universal truth.

Caring in the classroom

How can we define the term care in relation to a classroom community of inquiry, where participants share a common interest of caring for progress toward truth? Hutt (1979) uses the term pedagogical caring (pp.237-43). Pedagogical caring should not be mistaken with the common-sense definition of care, namely, to have an emotional attachment to someone or something. Rather, when we use the term caring in an educational setting, we mean that students are provided with opportunities to receive the best possible education. In his article, "I teach you not love you", teacher Michael Blumenthal (2001) stresses that practicing teachers should place importance on caring about the education that is being provided to the student, which is different from any personal caring for individual students. If we incorporate Hutt's term to Blumenthal's claims about teaching, we can state that pedagogical caring is necessary to student-learning, and should not be mistaken for personal caring in relation to friendship, which, as I will argue later, has the potential to be an obstacle to productive inquiry. While we will not explore further the notion of pedagogical caring in teacher-student relations, the type of relationship amongst participants in the community of inquiry can be described in this way. If what participants feel towards other in the inquiry is pedagogical caring, this goes some way to explaining the relationship that should be adopted in the community of inquiry, whereby each participant cares for the learning of others.

I will now explore further the notion of care. Noddings (1984) describes caring as having a regard for the views and interests of others (p.9). Moreover, it also requires reciprocity. For caring to be fulfilled, the "one-caring" must receive some sort of validation from the "cared-for", in order for the act of caring to be complete. Caring, argues Noddings, "must somehow be completed in the other if the relationship is to be described as caring" (p.4). Lipman's community of inquiry also requires reciprocity, as well as a regard for the views and interests of others, which entails trust, tolerance, and fairmindedness.¹⁹ Opinions or points of view can be truly received only when others engage with those opinions or points of view.

It is clear from the discussion so far that regardless of disagreement, if the relationship is a caring one, then a commitment to the process of inquiry becomes paramount. Caring is, as Noddings says, integral to the success of the dialogue, as it is this element that helps participants to accept different views.

Through such a dialectic, we are led beyond the intense, and particular feelings accompanying our deeply held values and beyond the particular beliefs to which these feelings are attached to a realization that the other who feels intensely about that which I do not believe is still to be received. (p.186, emphasis my own)

In sum, caring helps participants value and accept different points of view. This, too, is somewhat different to Snyder's and Smith's deep friendship which seeks to find commonalities. Instead of placing importance on common interests, caring accommodates for differences. In an inquiry where participants may not share the same beliefs or values, they can still follow the dialogue from their own perspective and from the perspectives of others. In such cases, while participants acknowledge disagreement, they also are learning that the beliefs and values of the participants must be given equal respect and

attention.

Being accepted for having different beliefs or values is integral to Noddings' notion of caring. Through acceptance of difference, participants in the inquiry will have confidence that even if their views differ from the views of others, these views are valuable to the dialogue. This is at the centre of trust; knowing that others have respect for any opinion that may be offered enables participants to trust one another with each other's thoughts. An environment of trust is one where participants may be comfortable that their opinions can be accepted by all members in the inquiry. Thus, trust can be considered central to both caring and inquiry. Arguably, trust may also be an important component of friendship, but the trust to which I am referring is of a different kind. In friendship, while it is important to trust others with certain things (e.g., a concern for your friend's health or welfare, or keeping promises), it may be more difficult to trust that a friend will be accepting of significant beliefs or values that may differ from their own. As friendships are based on commonality, disagreements over important issues may seriously affect some relationships, especially if the disagreements are based on beliefs or values not shared by friends. With the emphasis on caring rather than on friendship, participants can trust one another to respect each other's views with confidence that this will not affect personal relationships. In sum, a caring relationship recognizes the possibility of disagreement and respects difference.

Friendship or caring in philosophical dialogue?

Reed and Johnson (1999) acknowledge the problem that friendship poses for inquiry. If people are closely aligned, they have the power to sabotage inquiry, e.g., through exclusion or by bullying others. If friends shut themselves off from the rest of the group, then they cannot be fully immersed in group dialogue. They may be in agreement with each other based on their relationship as friends, but not on reflecting upon their own beliefs and values. It may be more difficult for individuals to express their views, especially if their beliefs and values differ to that of their friend or friends. This may also be intimidating to others in the dialogue. As for the whole group being friends, this may well prove to be impossible in a community of inquiry. It would be unlikely that all members would agree with each other on all aspects of a particular issue of concern.

Friendship may well be detrimental to the success of philosophical inquiry. However, if the focus is not on friendship in inquiry, but on caring, then this trap may be avoided. Even if friendship between some members does develop in the course of inquiry, which may well be inevitable, if the dialogue is founded on care, then the care that each participant has for the outcome of the inquiry would not allow groups or individuals to hinder the course of dialogue.

If a defining feature of friendship is the sharing of common interests, then difference, conflict, and change may pose difficulties for such a relationship. Would a friend necessarily be honest about a difference of opinion if it is likely to cause considerable problems with the friendship? This, of course, is a matter for empirical investigation. However, I maintain that an inquiry based on care ensures that at least all beliefs and values are respected equally. Reed and Johnson argue that in a community of inquiry, "we create an environment in which children become friends in virtue. Those virtues include respect for truth, respect for evidence, respect for other persons and so on" (p.193). Again, I question Reed and Johnson's use of the term friendship. Children do not necessarily become friends based on

these virtues. Indeed, it is more likely that childhood friendships are based on common interests or interpersonal qualities, or what the children themselves may describe as a “liking for each other”. What Reed and Johnson define as friendship based on virtues can only be described as what I have referred to as care, provided friendship in this case is defined as having a common interest in the quest for truth. Otherwise, it is no more than Snyder’s and Smith’s deep friendship, like the friendship shared by the players in the Dodgers. Noddings’ use of the term care is more precise in this case, as friendship may act as a barrier to these virtues – something that Reed and Johnson also acknowledge, however, this does not seem to change their view of friendship in inquiry. If we only have respect for others out of friendship, then respect may well be given to a friend in a community of inquiry, but may not be given to others.

An analysis of friendship and caring can help to understand better the sort of relationship required, in order for progress to occur in a community of inquiry, especially in relation to ethics education. According to Noddings (1984) “we want to be moral in order to remain in the caring relation and to enhance the ideal of ourselves as one-caring” (p.5). If ethics is ultimately about how we ought to live, then caring for the outcome of inquiry will determine how we live our lives. To act ethically in a situation requires us to consider and maintain our caring relations with others in our ethical deliberations.

Friendship, on the other hand, has no room in ethical deliberation, especially in social and political decision-making. If ethical deliberation comes only through friendship, unless we deem someone a friend, we would not necessarily be compelled or motivated to act ethically towards them. We cannot be friends with everybody, based on Snyder’s and Smith’s definition of friendship based on commonality. Care for the progress of discussion may, indeed, give us this motivation. Noddings is, I think, correct to say that to be caring is to be ethical. It is for this reason that philosophical inquiry, and in particular, ethical inquiry, must have a focus on caring, in order to foster the dispositions required for active citizenship.

Reflections on Friendship

Before I conclude, I would like to re-visit Lewis’s imagery of lovers and friends. Lewis, you may recall, spoke of two people sitting next to each other, looking in the same direction. Recall also that I pointed to Snyder’s and Smith’s shallow and deep versions of friendship. There certainly are common elements between what they call deep friendship and those elements that are integral to the Socratic dialogue. The most important element of Socratic dialogue is to strive for consensus. Dialogue is used to examine examples of concepts under question in order to find common characteristics, or in Boele’s case, conclusive definitions. This could be regarded as coming to a common view. Although consensus is achieved through disagreement, the sole aim of Socratic dialogue is to align the views of all of the members in the group in much the same way as deep friendship requires the people in the friendship to have interests in common based on shared attitudes and values.

I would like to add another category to Lewis’s imagery that can be described as neither friend nor lover, at least not necessarily so. The community of inquiry is comprised of co-inquirers, which is a form of partnership. Unlike the friends looking outward, these partners-in-dialogue face each other in much the same way as the lovers do, but not necessarily because they are fond of each other. Rather, they care for the relationship they share together, which is to “follow the inquiry where it leads and collaboratively

engage in self-correction” (Sharp 1993, p.59). Instead of looking outward, the participants in a community of inquiry face each other, not as lovers, but as partners so they may engage with one another in progress towards truth. This is in stark contrast to traditional approaches to teaching in which students “sit side by side, their eyes looking ahead”, with their gaze fixed upon the teacher. The metaphor of partners represents more precisely the relationship required in the community of inquiry. It is one based on care, rather than on friendship.

Endnotes

¹ I use the terms *philosophy in schools* and *philosophy for children* interchangeably to refer to a sub-discipline of philosophy with its own history and traditions, and its own particular pedagogy called the *community of inquiry*.

² Plato thought that philosophy made younger people excessively contentious.

³ See Reed & Johnson (1999); Splitter & Sharp (1995), pp.187-91.

⁴ Sophists were rhetoricians who were skilled in rational argument. They taught people their craft for pay and this earned them the scorn of Socrates and Plato. See Rohmann (2000).

⁵ For a more detailed account of the Socratic Method, see Murris & Hayes (2001); Freakley & Burgh (2000).

⁶ I shall from here on in refer to Modern Socratic Dialogue or any dialogue attributed to Nelson as Socratic dialogue.

⁷ See MacColl (1994); Splitter (1991); Moulton (1983).

⁸ For more information on Socratic Teaching, see Lessing (1993); Fisher (1995, 1996); Pekarsky (1994); Portelli (1990).

⁹ For more on Dewey’s Laboratory School, see Tanner (1997).

¹⁰ Lipman developed a series of purpose-written novels with accompanying manuals. Since then other authors have developed materials ranging from children’s stories, videos, and manuals to accompany existing children’s stories. See de Haan *et al* (1995); Sprod (1993); Wilks (1995); Abbott & Wilks (1997); Cam (1993, 1994, 1997).

¹¹ Burgh (2003a,b) makes an important distinction between education for democracy and democratic education. I will not explore this further here, suffice it to say that the distinction cannot be ignored when it comes to the implementation of education reforms, e.g., the New Basics in Queensland.

¹² Original documents written about Socratic dialogue are mostly in German. Boele’s article offers a more detailed account than others written in English, and is commonly referred to in the literature on Socratic dialogue.

¹³ For an example of the dilemma and integrity training model, see van Lwijk (1996).

¹⁴ For more on Socratic dialogue in tertiary education, see Heckmann (1989)

¹⁵ See Splitter & Sharp (1995).

¹⁶ See Burgh & Freakley (2000).

¹⁷ Lipman uses exercises and discussion plans extensively in all of his accompanying teacher manuals, some of which are intended to prompt conceptual analysis. Others who have developed materials have relied on them less extensively than Lipman. See also Cam (1993, 1994, 1997); Golding (2002); de Haan *et al* (1995), Wilks (1995).

¹⁸ For example, see Reed & Johnson (1999); Badhar (1993); Roumer (1994).

¹⁹ See Lipman (1988); Cam (1995).

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