

Communicating Toward Personhood

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ABSTRACT: Marshalling a mind-numbing array of data, Harvard political scientist Robert D. Putnam, in his book Bowling Alone, shows that on virtually every conceivable measure, civic participation, or what he refers to as “social capital,” is plummeting to levels not seen for almost 100 years. And we should care, Putnam argues, because connectivity is directly related to both individual and social wellbeing on a wide variety of measures. On the other hand, social capital of the “bonding kind” brings with it the ugly side effect of animosity toward outsiders. Given the increasing heterogeneity of our world, the goal therefore must be to enhance connectivity of the “bridging sort,” i.e., connecting across differences. This, in turn, requires that we first clarify what bridging communicative styles looks like. Examining communication as it might transpire (a) in Kant’s kingdom of ends, (b) through the perspective of Habermas’ “communicative action,” and (c) within the scientific community, offers a compelling suggestion that there is a way of communicating such that, if adopted, one would come to view others as if they were persons, i.e., that a bridging communicative style facilitates a kind of bonding that sees through differences toward the commonality of personhood. This paper will briefly explore how communicating toward personhood might be promoted.

The Need to Increase Social Capital.

In his dense and provocative book *Bowling Alone*—published at the opening of this new century,¹ Robert D. Putnam, Harvard political scientist and the Peter and Isabel Malkin Professor of Public Policy, argues that, with regard to social capital, i.e., those fundamental bonds that keep us connected to one another, we are on the verge of going bankrupt. Marshalling a mind-numbing array of data, Putnam shows that on virtually every conceivable measure, from political participation, to volunteering, to religious affiliation, to union membership, to participation in organized sport (hence the title), even to sharing dinner with friends, civic participation is plummeting to levels not seen for almost 100 years. And we should care, Putnam argues, because connectivity is, on the one hand, inversely related to crime, while, on the other, positively related with economic prosperity, physical health, overall sense of personal well-being and how well education works.

Those with “can-do” attitudes will immediately respond, “well, tell us the cause, and we’ll fix the problem”—and Putnam obliges by presenting a plethora of data that suggests that there are a number of factors that contribute to these dissipating social bonds, amongst them “time famine” caused by increasing commute times and the technological invasion of the home, as well as the fact that the prime mover of social bonding has left her post. But Putnam warns against this disease model of getting rid of the germs in order to get the patient back to health—or what he refers to as a “reactionary form of nostalgia.” He notes that just as those experiencing the social chaos of rapid urbanization in the 1890’s ought to have resisted the temptation to say that, “life was much nicer back in the village. Everybody back to the farm,” so we ought to resist the temptation to say “Life was much nicer back in the fifties. Would all women please report to the kitchen, and turn off the TV on the way.”² Well, no kidding. But let us not lose the essential point that is buried in the jest of this facetious comment, and that is that the onus lies with *us* to create unique ways of reconnecting with one another as we go forward into the twenty-first century.

Putnam does not leave us entirely without a compass, however. He notes that while what he refers to as “**bonding** social capital” has all the merits previously described, it brings with it its own poison, namely that, while reinforcing connection with those on the inside, it likewise tends to reinforce animosity toward those on the outside. As well, bonded groups, as we are all too well aware, can be far more effective in their capacity to execute nefarious ends than individuals in isolation. Indeed, it is surely not outside the realm of probability to suggest—though Putnam never actually mentions this—that at least one psychological factor contributing to the dramatic drop in social capital might very well be the revulsion of enlightened thinkers toward the inherent, often irrational, conformity and exclusivity that group membership entails.

One way to try to avoid the negative side effect of “bonding social capital” would be, instead, to focus on “**bridging** social capital.” Putnam explains the difference between these two kinds of social capital by pointing out that “bonding” social capital is like joining a “favor bank”—“I’ll do this for you now in expectation that you will return the favor.” “Bridging” social capital, by contrast, requires the adoption of the norm of “generalized reciprocity”: “I’ll do this for you without expecting anything specific from you, in the confident expectation that someone else will do something for me down the road.” Putnam goes on to liken the greater social efficacy of “bridging” over “bonding” by noting that “a society characterized by generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society, for the same reason that money is more efficient than barter.” And he says elsewhere that “bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue”—apparently meaning that people in relatively small groups get really stuck on one another, whereas “bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40” —presumably meaning that “bridging individuals” are more able to engage in relatively “squeak-free” interaction with a large variety of individuals.³

From a philosopher’s point of view, since Putnam’s research (presumably by necessity) focuses on bonded groups, the big question that he leaves untouched is what a bridging person would look like. What kind of communicative style would fuel such bridging social connectivity? How might we articulate its guiding principle?

In order to avoid the treacly sweet, “kumbaya”⁴ “love thy neighbor sort” of admonition that tends to glue people together *against* those who are not their neighbors, let us begin with the more academic suggestion that bridging will be markedly facilitated if we *see* (as opposed to love) other humans as **persons** “like ourselves.” Let’s try to unpack what such a suggestion might entail.

Seeing Persons

Clearly, to see humans as persons requires a lot more than seeing humans as merely humans. When we see humans as humans only, what we see are animals of the species *homo sapiens*. To treat humans as *humans only* would be to treat them as *animals only* and thus, to echo Kant, would be to treat them as a *means only* (which is not in any sense, by the way, to condone the despicable way that we humans treat animals). What Kant would have humans do, rather, is to treat humans also always as “**ends**.” What precisely might this involve?

According to Kant, to treat others as ends-in-themselves is to treat others as primarily *self-conscious rational agents*. This admonition is harder to understand than may at first appear since self-conscious rationality is, from an “excluded spectator” point of view, completely invisible. This is so because an agent cannot see self-conscious rationality in another *unless* s/he is able to understand and *potentially linguistically interact* with that other. It is this language barrier that may explain why humans have such difficulty recognizing personhood as it functions outside of our species. There is, for instance, enormous evidence to suggest that whales are not only self-conscious, but as well, have a complex language of their own that differs not only across whale species, but even across pods, though we humans—no doubt because we cannot share their environment—have been unable to crack the code.

Since we cannot talk to whales we apparently feel relatively unencumbered by our practice of wantonly killing them, a practice that, to this day, is checked only by a concern for potential extinction, rather than for the moral health of humans who may very well be—indeed most probably are—committing mass murder.

“Feel free to kill those with whom you cannot communicate”: interesting dictum, which suggests that at least a necessary condition of seeing personhood is the propensity to dialogue with that other.

Dialoguing with a person, however, cannot mean just spitting out words, nor can it mean simply engaging in turn taking in an effort to persuade another. Using words as weapons in this way is simply to don a more sophisticated manipulatory mantle that is characteristic of the push and shove techniques that we think of as characterizing the animal kingdom. The question is, then, what sort of communicative style maximizes the possibility of seeing the personhood of one’s communicative partner.

Seeing Persons Through Communicative Interpersonal Visiting

Habermas, in his book, *A Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1*, takes viewing others as rational self-conscious agents seriously. He argues that you cannot judge the adequacy of an agent’s reasoned support of her assertions and/or actions—(an adequacy that can nonetheless be objectively measured⁵ according to how it stand up to such critical evaluation as coherence, prediction, etc.)—unless you first understand the invisible personal larger context—i.e., a person’s life-world (or *lebenswelt*)⁶—from which those assertions and/or actions make sense, i.e., seem rational, to that agent. Seeing another as a *unique* rational self-conscious agent thus appears to be a necessary condition for being able to judge the adequacy of what Habermas refers to as their criticizable validity claims.⁷ Another way of putting this point would be to say that engaging in communicative rationality of the Habermasian sort requires of participants that they render their personal boundaries highly **permeable**,⁸ i.e., that they each get comfortable both with welcoming foreigners and traveling to distant lands.⁹

While this “fusing of horizons”¹⁰ –as Gadamer would put it—seems precisely what the doctor ordered with regard to enhancing social capital, the question that now begs an answer is how to make such a goal attractive. That is, given the time and energy expenditures required, as well as the natural tendency to self-protect, the question that now seriously surfaces is whether, and if so how, it is possible to inspire ordinary individuals to engage in the strenuous work of attempting to hermeneutically analyze of the claims of others, while welcoming hermeneutic invasion of their own turf?

Genuine Inquiry Requires a Commitment to both Fallibility and Truth

The answer, it seems to me, is as simple as it is difficult to achieve. If the goal is to inspire individuals to communicatively visit one another’s personal spaces, then clearly a necessary condition for ramping up enthusiasm for such interpersonal travel is to instill in participants an unshakeable and abiding belief in their own **fallibility**¹¹. If interpersonal bridging is ever to become commonplace, in other words, the start point *must* begin not just with an acceptance, but with a *celebration*, of the fact that, regardless of the apparent adequacy of any belief, judgment, or opinion, there is always the possibility of a better answer around the corner, and that that corner may very well be within the rational self-conscious space of others.

It is Truth, then, with a capital T—or, more specifically, the belief that one is already in possession of the Truth—that forms the fault line that tends to preclude the possibility of interpersonal bridging. It is Truth-possession that blinds us to the personhood of others.

But how can this be, some may wonder. After all, it is the belief in the objectivity of Truth that fuels the impetus for interpersonal inquiry to begin with. Why else would I go to the trouble of attempting to estimate the adequacy of your criticizable validity claims if I did not believe, from the get-go, that there were legitimate means by which to judge whether those claims were more or less adequate than the my own.

We thus seem to have found ourselves in an interesting paradox. On the one hand, a belief that one has found the Truth thereafter tends to close off respectful communication with those who disagree, while on the other, belief in the objectivity of Truth is a necessary condition for respectful Habermasian communication to begin with.

Respectful communication needs Truth; Truth can destroy respectful communication. How do we get out of this devil's paradox?

Solving the "Truth Paradox"

Interestingly, this "Truth paradox" is anything but a problem for those most commonly credited with pursuing Truth. That is, rather than skirting it, this "Truth paradox" has been actively embraced by scientists who utilize it—much to our combined benefit—through the ingenious infusion of the **null hypothesis** at the core of the scientific method.

The null hypothesis is anchored in the recognition that one cannot *verify*¹², for example, that "this drug always works," and that hence, the approach must be reversed, i.e., that one must attempt to show, rather, that **it is not the case** the drug works. If, after a strenuous unbiased investigation, I fail to prove the null hypothesis, i.e., I fail to prove that the drug does not work, then I have *grounds for believing* that it is true that this drug works, but I *only* have grounds because, of course, the investigation itself may have been faulty. Thus, though it is evident, beyond doubt, that we can make progress toward Truth using the scientific method, it is built into the fact that the method employed is one of falsifiability,¹³ rather than verifiability, that it is *incapable* of revealing absolute, i.e., uncriticizable, or unrefineable, Truth.

Given the fact that scientists recognize that "the truth that survives falsification" is the only truth to which they have access but which is nonetheless a truth of which they can never be absolutely sure (i.e., this is truth with a small "t"¹⁴), scientists thus remain eagerly open to public discourse with the view to ensuring continuous vetting by further inquiry. That is, it is this *practical ideal* of "least faulty"—though metaphysically anchored in the *regulative ideal* of Truth with a capital T—that keeps the lines of genuine cooperative inquiry open and which invites creative contributions of colleagues.

This notion of "colleague," as used in the scientific community, is an interesting one in that it surreptitiously suggests that one of the **inevitable side effects** of engaging in **genuine inquiry** is that inquirers come to view those *who are likewise engaged* as allies, cohorts, associates, or collaborators in the pursuit of truth. None of which is to say, of course, that colleagues always agree, or even that they are always civil. But it is to say that, insofar as individuals are committed to **tracking truth while knowing that they will never get there**, they recognize that the enterprise is intrinsically intersubjective—that they have need of one another in this enterprise. It is the absolute conviction, on the one hand, that **progress towards Truth can be made**, accompanied, on the other hand, by the **absolute conviction that the truth-seeking process can never reach its end**, that keeps scientists communicatively interacting with one another as if they were persons and in so doing they instantiate their mutual personhood.

Enhancing Bridging Communicative Styles

The answer with regard to how we might enhance bridging communicative styles so as to increase social capital, as Putnam would have us do, is thus already within our midst and, indeed, has already been suggested by American Pragmatists Charles S. Peirce¹⁵ and John Dewey.¹⁶ That is, if all of us undertook to employ the scientific method in the pursuit of answers to everyday practical questions¹⁷ (which I refer to elsewhere as "scientific ethicism"¹⁸), the happy result ought to be, on the one hand, the production of better solutions to human problems, while on the other, the enhancement of the human capacity to see co-inquirers as persons. It is **inquiry in the pursuit of Truth that one knows can nonetheless never be fully grasped**, in other words, that creates the

“in-between”—in Martin Buber’s¹⁹ words—where persons can meet in the middle, and in so doing, perceive one another as “Thous” rather than merely as “its.” It is inquiry in the pursuit of always illusive, always unattainable, Truth with regard to everyday practical and ethical issues, whether they be private or public, or of incidental or of historical significance, in still other words, that persons will come to view others *who are likewise engaged* as colleagues of importance in pursuit of a worthwhile endeavor.

Ramping up Inquiry in “Philosophy for Children”

Since the educational program, Philosophy for Children (P4C), incorporates as its fundamental pedagogical tool the *Community of Inquiry* in which participants cooperatively inquire about *any* topic that is of interest and importance to them, it is in a unique position to enhance the kind of general **inquiring communicative style** that can be expected to feed directly into the bridging tendencies of its students. Indeed, given the overwhelming *manipulative communicative styles* employed in traditional education, i.e., communication in order to persuade, one wonders how else our youngsters are going to learn bridging tendencies except through years of experience in communities of genuine inquiry that form the base of P4C.

Nonetheless, if enhancing the general inquiring communicative tendencies is to become one of the official goals of P4C, there are a number of fault lines in the present program that need to be addressed. Thus, in the name of the procedure that gives value to this enterprise, i.e., falsifying towards truth, I will end by focusing on three flaws, or obstacles, that P4C would do well to rework in order that it may offer to the world a more perfect package.

Obstacles 1: clarity with regards to its goal(s).

Philip Cam, in a recent challenging article entitled *Philosophy and Freedom*,²⁰ says courageously—and, I think, correctly—that advocates of P4C cannot claim to know what they are doing if they are unclear about the larger purpose, i.e., if they are unclear about what P4C is most fundamentally trying to achieve. Cam goes on to argue that the guiding ideal of the Community of Inquiry ought to be freedom (in the Deweyan sense of flourishing), rather than truth (citing an earlier article of mine²¹). In light of the fact that I have recently written a critical thinking text entitled “Thinking Your Way to Freedom,”²² it is clear that there are many ways in which Cam and I converge. However, there seems to remain one point of divergence and that is my belief that one of the most pernicious obstacles in making the case for the value of learning to “generally inquire” is the refusal of many in the P4C camp to embrace the notion of truth²³. **If there is no truth, how can there possibly be any point to inquiring?** Thus, it seems to me that, though reticence about truth is understandable since its misrepresentation, as has just been pointed out, can do more harm than good, nonetheless P4C needs to courageously promulgate the nuanced *practical ideal*²⁴ that the *point of inquiry* is to ferret out *the least worst option* that survives a stringent impartial multi-dimensional and on-going falsification process.²⁵ In contrast to the “product” notion of truth that kills inquiry, this “process” notion of truth depends upon it. It is truth with a small “t” that legitimizes the commitment to bridging communication.

Thus, though Cam is no doubt on the right track by making the claim that the **ultimate payoff** of mutual interpersonal inquiry is personal autonomy and mutual well being, along with flourishing personhood and an increase social capital, we must be absolutely clear that the **immediate goal** that makes the ultimate payoff possible is a universal commitment to *fallibility* in the face of the always open possibility of discovering claims that are “*truthier*” than those to which one presently adheres.

Obstacle 2: advocating respect for the ideas of others.

Though it is common among P4C advocates to argue that we ought to always “respect the ideas of others,”²⁶ only a little reflection will show that, within the context of genuine inquiry, this notion is incomprehensible. If Mary makes a point that is not backed by reason or evidence, or if John manipulates the reasons and/or evidence in order to support the conclusion that he wishes to be true, it is not at all clear why we should respect either of their ideas, just as it would not be at all clear what it would mean to respect the ideas of a scientist who had

cooked the books. On other hand, it is nonetheless true, as Mill so eloquently pointed out in “On Liberty,”²⁷ that even poor reasoning can sometimes serve as fodder for truth insofar as it requires good reasoners to figure out why they think what they think, and why other alternatives are not equally good. Thus, while it is no doubt appropriate that we advocate an attitude of appreciation of all who *genuinely attempt* to contribute to the inquiry at hand, nonetheless, it seems equally important that players recognize that “bringing down poorly reasoned positions” is the name of the game. How else are we going to help individuals think well and, importantly, to maintain *personal permeability* within the context of disagreement if they have never had the experience of having their illegitimate ideas publicly, though presumably, kindly shredded? How else can Communities of Inquiry be saved from sinking into a mere exchange of ideas, if most inquiry time is subverted by the efforts of “inquirers”—in the name of “respect”—to molly coddle one another?

Thus, though Habermas is adamant in his claim that understanding requires that one enter the other’s lifeworld and, hence, to that extent, becomes the other’s “neighbor,”²⁸ he is also at pains to point out that such understanding in no way implies acceptance or agreement²⁹. Thus, I may understand why, for instance, you are intent on seeking the demise of all Israelis or Palestinians, or all Hutus or Tutsis, or all Christians or Muslims (or whatever) because you are enraged by some past injustice, nonetheless my job is to issue the summons³⁰ that challenges you to justify your intended actions in light of a much wider horizon. And if you fail to open the door to the possibility that your position may be faulty, my job surely is to keep on knocking.

Obstacle 3: advocating feelings.

Not unrelated to the above, there have been a number of recent attempts to incorporate “caring thinking” as the third pinnacle to accompany critical and creative thinking goals of P4C.³¹ It seems to me that this is even more dangerous to the P4C movement (as I have argued strenuously elsewhere³²) than advocating that we must all respect the viewpoints of others. The strength of the P4C movement lies in the fact that, unlike education with a substantive agenda, P4C implicitly recognizes the dignity of potentially autonomous persons by **not** dictating to participants what they ought to think and feel, but rather focuses instead on the perfection of the **procedures** used to **inquire**. And while “caring” may seem like a laudable goal, it may very well produce the kind of bonding that is too sticky for outsiders to penetrate. Besides, as has already been discussed, insofar as all who are engaged in dialogue are committed to genuine inquiry, there will, as a result of individuals attempting to understand and judge the merits of various justificatory positions, emerge a sense of collegiality, i.e., a recognition that we all become more of who we are in “the in-between.”

The moral of the story is that we cannot aim directly at personhood. We need, rather, to aim toward truth, and to the degree that others aim similarly, and to the degree that we all recognize that our own *fallibility* dictates the constant need of the perspective-taking capacity of others, personhood will follow. That is, to the degree that participants in a Community of Inquiry internalize the inquiry process, they can be expected to adopt a generalized “respect for persons” **in the sense** that they will feel obliged to **reasonably defend** their positions and **to be open to the reasons** offered by those who think differently. Battersby and Bailin, in their article *Reason Appreciation*³³, echo this point that inquiry itself breeds respect when they say that “reasoning is the least manipulative and most respectful way to motivate change in belief and behaviour. To give reasons rather than threats, to reason with, rather than cajole or manipulate, is . . . to respect the autonomy of the other person.”

Conclusion

We need to take seriously Putnam’s warning that we ignore our dramatically decreasing social capital to our detriment. And we ought also to heed his advise that in our multi-cultural global village, the sort of social capital that we try to resurrect should be of the less sticky sort, i.e., “bridging” rather than “bonding.” The collegiality inherently fostered by scientific inquiry that is based on the *assumption of fallibility* and that requires *continuous public input in the cooperative effort to falsify towards Truth*, suggests that adopting *this inquiring communicative style* toward those pressing philosophical questions of how we ought to live, will not only give us better answers

but, in the process, will make our common personhood more visibly valuable. As an educational program that explicitly promotes extensive participation in Communities of Inquiry about issues of practical importance, **Philosophy for Children can be a landmark educational movement that will promote “bridging attitudes”** at the very time that we most need them. And for its value to be legitimate and to be recognized as such, advocates will have to continue their time-honored engagement in self-reflective cooperative inquiry so as to perfect its potential impact. It is in that light that I suggest: (1) that we be more courageous in precisely clarifying the goals—which, in my view, ought to be the entrenchment of inquiring attitudes securely anchored by the *certainty* that *better* answers are the inevitable result when *fallible* inquirers work cooperatively within the stringent demands of tracking-truth. This goal, in turn, suggests (2) that we avoid advocating respect for opinions unless they are worthy of respect, and (3) that we beware of promulgating “caring thinking” as the stickiness of such emotional bonding may impede the bridging force of genuine inquiry.

And so, my friends, let us go forward together confident that the educational endeavor to which we have committed so much energy and effort is one of extraordinary value in that, on the one hand, it insists that students actually *talk with* (rather than at) one another (which seems to be a *necessary* condition for seeing personhood) while, on the other, if done well, fosters genuine inquiring attitudes (which ought to be *sufficient* for bridging toward personhood). It is within this context, then, it seems to me, that P4Cers can, with some legitimacy, adopt as our mantra a slight twist of the words of Robert Browning: “*Inquire* along with me. The best is yet to be³⁴.”

Endnotes

1. Putman, R. D. Bowling Alone. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.
2. Ibid. 401.
3. Ibid. 23.
4. Ibid. 21.
5. Habermas, J. The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society. Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992. (German text: 1981.) 22, 25.
6. “Meanings . . . can be made accessible only *from the inside*. Symbolically prestructured reality forms a universe that is hermetically sealed to the view of observers incapable of . . . becoming at least potential members of [that other’s lifeworld]. Habermas. Ibid., 112.
7. Ibid., x.
8. In his book A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose (New York: Plume Printing, 2006), Eckhart Tolle echoes a similar theme when he argues that attaching too rigidly to beliefs systems jeopardize one’s well being as the “most rigid structures will collapse first.” 19.
9. I am grateful to Dr. Barbara Weber for pointing out to me, in a personal communication, that the word “person” in Greek is “per-sonne.” “Per” means “through,” while “sonne” refers to “sounds.” A person was a human in a theatre play with a mask through which one could hear a voice. This, interestingly, suggests that to “seeing a person” requires that “we hear what is behind the mask.”
10. Gadamer, HG. Truth and Method, 40-41, quoted by Habermas. Ibid. p. 134.
11. Peirce, C.S. “The Scientific Attitude and Fallibilism.” Philosophical Writings of Peirce. Ed. Justus Buchler. New York: Dover Publications, 1955. 42-59.
12. There is a long a distinguished philosophical discussion about verifiability, particularly in the logical positivist camp. See, e.g., A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (1936, revised in 1946), and his comments on the criterion of falsifiability in The Central Questions of Philosophy. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1973. 27-29.
13. For a discussion on the importance of falsifiability in science see Popper, K. Conjectures and Refutations: the Growth of Scientific Knowledge. London, 1963. See also Gardner, S.T. “Truth in Ethics (and Elsewhere).” Analytic Teaching, Vol. 19, No. 2, April, 1998. 55-62.
14. Gardner, Ibid.
15. “. . . Sentiments in their development will be very greatly determined by accidental causes. . . . To satisfy our

doubts, therefore, it is necessary that a method should be found by which our beliefs may be determined by nothing human, but by some external permanency—by something upon which our thinking has no effect. . . . Such is the method of science (18). Peirce, C.S. “The Fixation of Belief.” Philosophical Writings of Peirce. Ed. Justus Buchler. New York: Dover Publications, 1955. 5-22.

16. “The attainment of a unified method means that the fundamental unity of the structure of inquiry in common sense and science be recognized, their difference being one in the problems which they are directly concerned, not in their respective logics. . . (81). Dewey, J. Logic: The Theory of Inquiry. New York: Henry Holt, 1938.
17. In my critical thinking text, entitled Thinking Your Way to Freedom: A Guide to Owning Your Own Practical Reasoning (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), students are asked to focus their newly acquired falsifiability-based thinking skills on issues that are of real personal relevance, such as whether or not it is OK to get blind drunk every week-end, or whether casual sex is OK, rather than focusing on such academic issues as whether capital punishment should be legal.
18. In a paper entitled, “Beyond Universalizability” presented in July 2008 at the XXII World Congress in Philosophy in Seoul, I make a plea for leaving behind universalizability as a moral test, since a fanatic can easily pass the test simply by being mindlessly wedded to his own biases, e.g., a Nazi imaginatively consenting to be killed if she were a Jew. If we adopted instead a more scientific approach to ethical questions, the Nazi first of all would have to give reasons for his point of view, e.g., that all Jews are vermin, and then that reasoning would be subject to the test of falsifiability.
19. Buber, M. I and Thou. 2nd ed. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958.
20. Cam P. “Philosophy and Freedom.” Children Philosophize Worldwide: Theoretical and Practical Concepts. Eds. Eva Marsal, Takara Dobashi, Barbara Weber. Frankfurt am Main: Lang (Hodos Edition), 2008.
21. “Inquiry is No Mere Conversation: It is Hard Work.” Published in Analytic Teaching, April 1996, Vol. 16, no. 2, 41 – 50, as well as The Australian Journal for Critical and Creative Thinking, Vol. 3, No. 2, October, 1995, 38-49.
22. Thinking Your Way to Freedom: A Guide to Owning Your Own Practical Reasoning. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008.
23. With the notable exception of Burgh, G., T. Field, and M. Freakley in their recent book Ethics and the Community of Inquiry: Education for Deliberative Democracy. Melbourne, Australia: Thompson, 2006, who argue strenuously for “the objectivity of genuine inquiry.” See, in particular, Chapter 3.
24. “So, the disposition of inquirers to pursue a particular epistemic aim involves a *practical commitment to truth*, that is, a commitment expressed by certain kinds of actions –those directed at discovery and justification (i.e., Deweyan ‘proof’). Ibid., 53.
25. I have talked of this notion of truth in several places including my article “Truth in Ethics (and Elsewhere).” Analytic Teaching, Vol. 19, No. 2, April, 1998.55-62. I have also detailed the process of truth seeking in practical reasoning in my critical thinking text entitled Thinking Your Way to Freedom: A Guide to Owning Your Own Practical Reasoning. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008.
26. Burgh, G., T. Field & M. Freakley in their Ethics and the Community of Inquiry: Education for Deliberative Democracy (Melbourne, Australia: Thompson, 2006) say, for instance, that “these aspects of *caring thinking* are captured under the heading of being aware of the context in which discussion takes place, sharing discussion, welcoming and **respecting each other’s views**, and engaging in self-correction” (112)—emphasis added.
27. Mill, J.S. On Liberty. (1859) New York: Penguin, 1974.
28. Habermas, J. Op. Cit. 112.
29. Ibid. 136.
30. Weber, B. “With Habermas against Habermas: A Phenomenological Critique of Communicative Rationality.” Paper delivered at the University of Victoria, February 15, 2008.
31. Sharp, A M. “Caring Thinking and the Education of the Emotions.” Children Philosophize Worldwide: Theoretical and Practical Concepts. Eds. Eva Marsal, Takara Dobashi, Barbara Weber. Frankfurt am Main: Lang (Hodos Edition), 2008.
32. Gardner, S.T. “Love they neighbor? Maybe Not.” Children Philosophize Worldwide: Theoretical and Practi-

cal Concepts. Eds. Eva Marsal, Takara Dobashi, Barbara Weber. Frankfurt am Main: Lang (Hodos Edition), 2008.

33. Battersby, Mark and Sharon Bailin. *Reason Appreciation. Reason Reclaimed.* Eds. H.V. Hansen and R. Pinto. Newport, VA: Vale Press, 2007.

34. The actual line is “Grow old along with me. The best is yet to be,” from Browning’s poem “Rabbi Ben Ezra.”

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