The Philosophical and Theoretical Background of an Educator Working with P4C: How Much Philosophy?

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Introduction

A common response from teachers when involved for the first time with theP4C program is related to their lack of background in philosophy. "How can I use philosophy in my classroom if I have studied so little of it?" A necessary assumption of the program, such as it was developed by Lipman and Sharp in the IAPC, at this point is that any teacher can learn to facilitate a philosophic discussion, with the help of the manuals and sufficient experience in workshop and ongoing seminars.

In the current use of the P4C educational approach, most, if not all teacher guides —those who offer training courses to other teachers in preparing them to facilitate philosophical inquiry in their classes—have a solid philosophical background. This is the case, of course, in Spain. However, this clearly does not apply to regular teachers who attend P4C workshops. Usually, a standard workshop focuses on methodological requirements, offers good examples of a philosophical dialogue in the context of a community of philosophical inquiry, and uses philosophical resources such as stories and teachers' manuals. Workshops also seek to awaken the philosophical ear of teachers. This is a good starting point, but we believe that it is not enough to sustain the implementation of philosophical inquiry at public schools or at any other educational settings in the long run.

The question of how much familiarity with philosophy is required of a teacher wanting to do philosophy with his/her students after the workshop has not been seriously addressed, although the design of the introductory sessions and the first workshops aim to foster some initial familiarity. We begin by describing the valuable philosophical skills and disposition that teachers receive in an introductory workshop, and we underline the skills that teacher guides need to introduce—step by step—to a novice teacher for leading philosophical inquiry. We then move on to offer some ideas to address the basic problem of weak philosophical background: follow-up seminars, workshops and guided philosophical reading to help them improve their philosophical background.

First Steps into the Area of Philosophy

Philosophy in Awareness Sessions

The first step in this process is an awareness session, which can be done in various ways. A short, comprehensive lecture about the program may be followed by a question and response session. Or much better: after a short presentation (no longer than 10 minutes), a modelling session may be done, followed again by questions and discussion. In either case, participants will be exposed to various philosophical ideas, which for many might be the first contact with philosophical inquiry in their lives. The main issue arising will be, "Why do philosophy?" To answer this question, the teacher guide must have a clear grasp of the philosophical assumptions behind the program itself. Should a model session be done, the guide will be called upon to highlight and follow up on responses from participants of a philosophical nature.

Philosophy in Workshops, Seminars and Modeling; the "Ear" for Philosophical Discussion

After more than thirty years conducting introductory P4C workshops according to the basic model of Lipman and Sharp, basic to the method of facilitating such a discussion is the ability to hear or notice statements and/or questions from participants laden with philosophical possibilities.[1] Although non-philosophers do not normally have familiarity with academic philosophy, they have had experience with "popular" philosophy. People are concerned about the meaning of their own life and of the world they are living in, and daily life offers them plenty of situations that require critical, creative and caring thinking. Thus, in the dialogue prompted by an initial didactic resource presented by the teacher guide, the guide must then model a philosophical discussion. For this, s/he must be skilled in philosophical inquiry. The ability to model the facilitation of philosophical inquiry is acquired from years of reading, discussing, and doing philosophy. While a knowledge of names, history and terminology is not vital, experience with the kind of inquiry and discourse native to philosophy is a must. They have to introduce new teachers into a certain approach to inquiry. This involves a delight in questioning accepted assumptions, a feeling of comfort (perhaps even exhilaration) with the perplexing, a demand for good reasons and clear and valid argument in trying to address such perplexity, a strong sense of curiosity and wonder, and a willingness to engage in dialogue (and all that that assumes, such as the willingness to call one's own beliefs into at least temporary question, willingness to doubt what seems indubitable, willingness to listen sympathetically to opposing viewpoints, etc.).

In modeling for teachers in their classes, the guide must display as many instances of opening up dialogue as possible. In sessions with teachers, the guide must be keenly alert to such opportunities. He or she should miss few openings and use these for development of discussion. There is rarely time to go into each possible area in depth, but each response or question from a teacher which is pregnant with philosophical possibility merits at least a follow up question or two. Few things are more effective in developing the teacher's philosophical "ear" than to have the guide follow up and elaborate on one of their

[1] Chirouter E., Gagnom M. et Michaudo O. : Editorial. Nº spécial symposium ACFAS. Dyotime, 95

statements or questions. In Plato´s dialogue Meno, Socrates is called the torpedo fish: he is always stunning to people with his following up and puzzling questions.[2] The teacher's guide builds a rigorous dialogue which is at the same time ironic and caring.[3] This requires a strong philosophical background on the part of the teacher guide.

Of course, teacher guides can face these demanding tasks thanks to their familiarity with academic philosophy, as well as to the fact that they are accustomed to reading philosophical literature and classic philosophers. In the study of philosophy, one learns to see the problematic aspects of knowledge claims in whatever discipline. Philosophy has a history of doing this, and in that history has developed a host of approaches to the long list of common problems. Thus, an extended study of philosophy not only equips a teacher guide with the various general tools of inquiry, but also with a sensitivity to philosophical questions as they arise in general discourse. One develops an "ear" to questions of potential philosophical depth combined with the philosophical "tools" useful in developing these questions through follow up questioning.

We would like to assume that the classroom teacher can develop this "ear" and these skills through sufficient exposure to modeling and experience in seminar sessions (as well as their own classroom experience). Yet we believe that that this does not occur as frequently as needed. The philosophical ear teachers discover in their first workshop provides only a first step for leading a very demanding activity, one that calls on people to maintain a sensitivity to the problematic aspects of reality, to pay careful attention to precision in the use of concepts and to rigor in formal and informal reasoning, and to accept doubt and amazement as permanent features of their daily lives. The classroom teacher may also have difficulty asking the provocative questions that follow up on their students' answers or statements. Meanwhile, they may not be able to discover the philosophical conundrums that lie beneath the surface of everyday problems or concerns.

In short, the training the teachers receive in the workshop is good, but not sufficient. These teachers do not need to reach the same philosophical level as their guide, but they do need more philosophical material than they receive in a 25-hour workshop, the normal initial workshop in Mendham, Madrid, Accuto, Ghent or Varna. It is the responsibility of those who oversee disseminating the program and training teachers to offer them the possibility to grow as philosophers, to reach some middle ground between popular and academic philosophy.

The best training model, from our own experience, is a workshop in a primary, secondary or high school, for a group of 20-25 teachers working in that school. Then, we organize specific sessions every two or three weeks, with the teachers' guide leading a session with a specific group from the school or with the teacher doing the session and the teachers' guide as an external observer. After the school day, at a meeting, all the teachers involved in the project share ideas, do's and don'ts. Of course, this is an ideal model, and it is not easy to get funding and support, but it is the "eutopic" model we should aim for.

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[2] García Moriyón, F. "Del rey filosofo al pez torpedo: metáforas sobre la enseñanza de la filosofía." *Cuestiones de filosofía.* Núm. 14 (2012).

[3] García Moriyón, F. "Ironía y pensamiento cuidadoso en fpn." *Childhood & Philosophy*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 21, maio 2021, pp. 1-22.

Philosophy in the Presentation of Theory

In workshops with teachers, the guide should include some elements of theoretical/philosophical explanation. In modeling for teachers in their classes, the guide must display as many instances of opening the dialogue as possible. In sessions with teachers, the guide must be keenly alert to such opportunities, those that come up with specific questions from the teachers. He or she should not miss few openings for the development of discussion. There is rarely time to go into each possible area in depth, but each response or question from a teacher which is pregnant with philosophical possibility merits at least more than one follow up question. Few things are more effective in developing the teacher's philosophical "ear" than to have the guide follow up and elaborate on one of their statements or questions. A teacher guide should not shrug off such a question. Nor should she lecture and dictate, or simply quote some philosopher. Yet when a question is directed at one's knowledge of philosophy, s/he has the responsibility to respond. Indeed, the best approach may be to open a discussion of the question to the whole class, helping them to get a better understanding of the topic by introducing some references to influential philosophers, classical or contemporary.

To be able to explore and clarify those questions, a background in philosophy is indispensable for the teacher guide. First and foremost, a certain clear understanding of Dewey's work is assumed. While this is necessary, it is not sufficient to ensure a clear ability to explain the program. A familiarity with the history of philosophical ideas about education ranging from Plato to Durkheim, from Kant to Rousseau to Mead is invaluable. When discussing in the community of inquiry, an acquaintance with Peirce is implied, while the educational value of dialogue is supported by readings from Plato and Augustine to Freire and Ricoeur (and hermeneutics).[4]

Thus, if at any moment teachers ask for an explanation of a particular issue which arises in the discussion, they may be curious for more background. Teachers may express that curiosity with questions.

Other Workshop Experiences that Illustrate How to Address the Need to Develop a Philosophical Background

We know that at present there are different approaches to the use of philosophical dialogue in formal and informal education. Of course, we develop this topic from the practical and theoretical tradition of the IAPC institution, and we take for granted that there are family resemblances between the "classical IAPC approach" and more recent styles.[5] In any case, there are other aspects in the running of a workshop with teachers which call for a degree of philosophical expertise. One of the most interesting, widely

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[4]Valuable bibliographies concerning P4C can be found in Lipman, Matthew, Sharp, Ann Margaret, and Oscanyan, Frederick (1980). *Philosophy in the Classroom*, Temple University Press, and Lipman's *Philosophy Goes to School*, Temple University Press, Phil., (1988); Gregory, M. (2014). *Etat's Unis d'Amérique: thirty years of philosophical and empirical research in philosophy for children: an overview*. Access as of 28/10/2020 on http://www.educ-revues.fr/DIOTIME/AffichageDocument.aspx?iddoc=32857&pos=8.

[5]García-Moriyón, F., Duthie, E. & Robles, R. (Ed.) (2018): *Parecidos de familia. Propuestas actuales en Filosofía para Niños / Family resemblances. Current proposals in Philosophy for Children*. Madrid. Anaya.

recognized, and an approach that provides strong criticisms of the environment of teachers familiar with P4C, is that of Oscar Brenifier.[6]

In fact, a session or two during a workshop reserved exclusively to questioning and explanation is valuable. In such a session (perhaps using a page or two from one of the bibliographies of the novels),[7] the philosophical kernels are isolated and expanded upon, illuminating the various elements of the issue, its origin and historical development. Such a discussion is important with teachers, who may tend to miss the philosophy in P4C if exposed only to model discussion sessions. This, of course, requires philosophical background on the part of the teacher guide. Other questions will address the teachers' interest in psychological aspects of child development and critical thinking. Exploring those topics with teachers would be very useful or may even be necessary to get a full understanding of the scope of the educational approach we are addressing.

At times in a workshop, the teacher guide will attempt to explain the structure of the program, i.e., the various emphases in each novel, how the issues recur with a highlight on certain aspects. In so doing, the guide will need some background in the philosophies of mind and language. There are certain assumptions about concept formation and language acquisition inspired by Vygotsky and Mead, especially to the programs for young children. Here is where a philosophical and psychological background merge in the explanation.

When running a workshop, one difficulty may emerge, especially in countries where all teachers receive at least a small amount of philosophy in their high school education. The problem becomes more complicated if primary school teachers with no philosophical training and secondary school teachers with philosophical training participate in the same workshop. These teachers take the discussion to a more abstract and technical level that is not understandable for primary school teachers.

A teacher guide does not want to stifle such an inquiry by demanding that things be kept "simple". On the other hand, s/he wants to avoid the separation that may take place, and the possible alienation which some of the teachers may experience when feeling "left out" of the inquiry.

An effective strategy in such a case is to bridge the gap between the participants. This can be accomplished in several ways. The guide can ask each participant to explain their ideas until all are satisfied that they understand the point being made. Or s/he can try to forge this link himself. By illuminating the connection between technical and abstract philosophical points and basic human questions, the teachers' guide can go a long way toward making the teacher without philosophical training aware of the program. So, we do not want to discourage those with training, but it is very important that their contributions reach people with less philosophical training. And this requires that the teacher guide has an acceptable philosophical background.

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[6] Brenifier, O. (2020): *The art of Philosophical*. Alcofibras https://www.academia.edu/56681360/The_art_of_philosophical_practice

[7] Interested guides should contact the IAPC for copies of these source bibliographies. Such a bibliography for *Harry* can be found in *Studies in Philosophy for Children*, Sharp and Reed, eds., Temple University Press, Phil., 1992.

Addressing Core Questions

In mentioning the connection between abstract, technical philosophy and basic human questions— between popular and academic philosophy—we have arrived at the heart of the matter in getting the "idea" of P4C across to teachers. Another area we want to mention related to the guide's philosophical background lies here. The guide should be able to converse easily around the following questions: What is a philosophical discussion? How does it differ from other types of discussions? What model, or definition of philosophy are we assuming in the program? What is the difference between teaching and doing philosophy?, and finally, a question of tremendous importance to the "inquiring" approach to education... Why question everything? (isn't this dangerous?). Of course, those are not questions that need a clear answer from the guide, but rather questions that should provoke a philosophical inquiry, to get a deeper understanding from the people involved.[8]

What is a Philosophical Discussion?

Let us look at these questions one at a time, though they are interrelated. A "philosophical" discussion is not an easy thing to isolate, though we are hinging everything on a teacher's ability to differentiate it from other types of discussions. It certainly is more than a discussion which does not converge with a definite answer. It is more than an endless list of questions. As this is such an important question, it deserves further analysis.[9]

While a descriptive account of a philosophical discussion will be subject to disagreement (for it itself is a philosophical question), we may hope to provide an outline and list of qualities of such a discussion. Such a list can be used not only by the practitioner, but more importantly in workshops or seminars after a model session. Participants can reflect on the discussion to see if these qualities were present, and in what way.[10]

Let us begin with the more general aspects. First, philosophy employs a kind of second order thinking. Although it must consider data offered by other disciplines, particularly empirical evidence from the sciences, it focuses on the way such data are offered and presented to us. It focuses on their meaning and relationship with other data, in the search for a global and coherent frame of reference with which to understand ourselves and the world.

A philosophical discussion attempts to do this using approaches to belief and knowledge claims which call them into question. Speaking broadly, a philosophical discussion goes in one or two directions, which we could label *regresses* or *progresses.* From one direction, we look underneath our base of knowledge, to the underlying assumptions

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[8] Rezniskaya, A. & Wilkinson (2015). "Professional Development in Dialogic Teaching: Helping Teachers Promote Argument Literacy in Their Classrooms." In *The SAGE Handbook of Learning Publisher*: Sage Publications, Eds., David Scott, Eleanore Hargreaves.

[9] More on this question can be found in Lipman, M., Margaret Sharp, A. & Oscanyan, F.S. (1980). *Philosophy in the Classroom* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), esp. Chap. 7. And, in Lipman, M. (2003). *Thinking in Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed.

[10] García Moriyón, F. "Philosophical Inquiry in Education." In: Peters M. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Springer, Singapore 2016 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-532-7_162-1.

which form the foundation on which our structure of beliefs is based. We seek to find the things we take for granted, which normally go unquestioned, and discover if after careful scrutiny we still have strong cause to accept these assumptions. Since this process can conceivably create on infinite regress of questioning, we can call it *regresses*. It need not, of course, lead to infinite regress, but only to the point at which we can reasonably accept certain assumptions. Philosophy doesn't seek to erode all foundations for belief and accepted knowledge. Rather, it works to make us more realistic and confident in what we claim to know.

In the other direction, philosophy seeks to speculate on where our stated beliefs may lead us; when we state something, what does this claim commit us to accepting as its consequence? In other words, what do our claims imply? This process also can go on, progressing through possible inference, infinitely. Such progress, though, is also limited to reasonable stopping points.[11]

Thus, philosophy can be unsettling, but done with integrity in a community of inquiry and can clearly improve the quality of one's thinking. We can become unsettled when confronted with the realization of faulty underlying assumptions which had been supporting important beliefs. We also may not like to realize the consequential positions a certain claim can commit us to. But either way, as Socrates told Meno, we are better off if we are spurred by these reflections and findings to want to know more, to want to engage in further inquiry.[12]

A philosophical discussion, then, may deal with what we already claim to fully know, to possibly discover that we were mistaken. Here we expose a problematic wherein some may not even recognize there is a problem—something children do often in an act which is usually written off by adults as due to ignorance. We may show ambiguities where there appeared to be concrete meaning or show vagueness where clarity was initially apparent. Or we may take an issue apparently simple and show that it is more complicated than meets the eye.

From another viewpoint, we may discuss what is generally agreed to being a vague, uncertain, "grey area". Here, our philosophical attempt will be to clarify, make it more understandable, more worthy of acceptance as knowledge. Thus, in a philosophical discussion, we may pry apart a settled area or converge towards meaning where vagueness is present.

A philosophical discussion is difficult to characterize in terms of content, for virtually any content, when treated in a certain way, can be philosophy. The philosophical frame of reference is very wide; even when focusing, the perspective remains broad. Yet this terrain has shown itself to commonly fall into one of several categories, such as, for example, the nature of reality, truth, goodness, beauty, meaning and right. Various subdivisions of these categories are space and time, the mind-body relationship, personal identity, society, nature,

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[11] Golding, Clinton (2013). "We Made Progress: Collective Epistemic Progress in Dialogue without Consensus." In *Journal of Philosophy of Education, Vol. 47, No. 3.*

[12] Morris, K (2008). "Philosophy with Children, The Stingray and the Educative Value of Disequilibrium." In: *Special Issue of Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2008; Brenifier, O. (2008) *Caring thinking about caring thinking.* Access in http://www.buf.no/en/read/txt/?page=ob-ct00.

culture, what is a person, experience, reason, freedom, justice, rights, language and mind, etc. While to the non-philosopher these terms may sound specialized, in fact they describe areas for questioning which arise commonly when people reflect openly about their life, the world, and the relationship between the two. An important part of knowing what comprises a "philosophical" discussion lies in the ability to perceive instances of these examples in "everyday" language.

Since philosophy deals with obviously open, perplexing and troubling areas of our experience, or tends to create these qualities if they were not perceived before, it is very concerned with language, with clarity of expression. Not content with an easy acceptance of possibly ambiguous or vague terms, a philosophical discussion consistently seeks clarification. Just as the navigator wants a reliable, well working, easy-to-read compass when traversing an unknown, foggy or stormy area, so the participants in a philosophical discussion want clearly understood language. They simply cannot afford the loss of meaning due to unclear language. Such concern over word use is one of the qualities of a philosophical discussion which translates into thinking skills. Language acquisition and concept formation are inextricably linked. Laboring over verbal points makes us more aware of the words we use; indeed, helps us to acquire a stronger command over language. As we do this, our concept formation skills are also sharpened. Important for all of us, this is especially vital for children. A teacher guide would do well to emphasize this essential point to teachers.

To push the earlier metaphor one step further, a careful navigator is always alert to the condition of his equipment. In the same way, participants in a philosophical discussion must be vigilant as to how they are thinking. In a philosophical discussion, reflection on the thinking process is a constant.

Boiled down, although we could add some more philosophical characteristics, we believe that the short list of behaviors attributed to George Ghanatakos[13] captures well the common behaviors found in a philosophical discussion. Such a discussion should include:

— calls for clarification

— reasons offered in support of claims made

— assumptions revealed or probed

— inferences or implications recognized or pursued

— questions of truth or claims raised.

— examples given

— counter examples given

With the above in mind, we have another example of the necessity of a philosophical background for the teacher guide. For while the "answer" to the question of what a philosophical discussion is can be slippery and vague, one is qualified to *lead* a discussion

[13] Jackson, Tom, "Teacher Training, the Preferred Format," *Analytic Teaching*, Vol. 10, No. 2, May 1990.

around it or to explain the question, only after substantial *experience* with such discussions (in reading, research, writing and dialogue).

Teaching and/or Doing Philosophy

In discussing the difference between teaching and doing philosophy, light is shed on the definition of philosophy we are employing in P4C. What is it to *do*, rather than teach philosophy? To do philosophy is to think and discuss in the ways referred to many times in this paper. Our assumption is that almost everyone can do this, including, obviously, young children. To teach philosophy, in the sense in which many people may perceive it, is to present a history of ideas and complex terminology to be mastered (or learned) by the students. The two are quite different. A teacher being guided into the program must be able to perceive this well, or s/he will feel inadequate in working with the program.

A note of caution here. We compare the terms "teach" and "do" in relation to philosophy not to suggest yet another dichotomy. In fact, to teach philosophy well *is*, in a sense, to do philosophy. Our intention is not to disparage the word "teach." We are concerned with what may be a common conception of teaching, which is to "tell about." Facilitating inquiry with children is not about talking to them about philosophical ideas. It is to leave behind the banking approach to education denounced by Pablo Freire.[14] It is rather to guide them in probing open-ended and puzzling questions. As much as possible, it should be the students who explain, question, and challenge each other's ideas.[15] The teacher's job with children is simply to guide them in these areas of inquiry, hint at problematic aspects, and help them move forward in their investigation when they have reached an impasse or an oversimplified answer. In a certain sense, children are philosophers.[16]

When working with older, high school age students, such guidance may include opportunities to enrich the inquiry with some traditional philosophical background. If such a background is continuous with the direction of the inquiry as established in the group and does not stand out as something separate and isolated, it is indeed consistent with the overall approach. Teacher guides who work with teachers having philosophical backgrounds do not want to discourage such teachers from employing this background properly in their facilitation. When working with Philosophy for Children, we are still philosophy "teachers," committed to a different style of teaching.

Yet the guide must be clear to distinguish when the use of such background deviates from the desired approach. If, for example, the teacher plans a lecture on Kantian ethics and uses *Lisa* solely as a springboard for that lecture, then the goals of the program are not being pursued. However, should the students' inquiry lead them into a discussion of how

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[14] Kohan, Walter: *Paulo Freire más que nunca: una biografía filosófica* / Walter Kohan. - 1ª ed. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2020.

[15] Kizel, A. (2021). "The facilitator as self-liberator and enabler: ethical responsibility in communities of philosophical inquiry," *Childhood & Philosophy*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 17, fev., pp. 1- 20.

[16] Gopnik, A. (2009). *The Philosophical Baby: What Children's Minds Tell Us About Truth, Love, and the Meaning of Life.* New York. Farrar, Strau and Giroux.

reason should guide our actions, and/or how this might be done, then touching on Kant's formulations might be appropriate.

In any case, many teachers being introduced to the program will be unfamiliar with such things. The point here is that a guide must help them to feel confident and secure in facilitating philosophical discussions, although they may not have the background to provide such enrichment. If children can philosophize, teachers can guide such philosophical inquiries. As Gareth Mathews writes, teachers need patience and willingness to think about the questions children want to explore.[17] The teacher guide's job is to present what we mean by philosophy in such a way as the teachers can realize this point. We need not throw away the word "teach" to do this.

To recapitulate, contrasting teaching with doing philosophy can be valuable in the attempt to illuminate what we mean by bringing philosophy to elementary and middle school classrooms. This does not preclude, however, the introduction of philosophical ideas by the teacher in proper areas. In fact, within a high school philosophy course, a combination of traditional and P4C approaches may be desirable. That is the case, for example, in Spain[18], Canada, France, Mexico… and many other countries where philosophy is present in the official high school curriculum. In such philosophy courses, which have a more traditional set of aims in terms of presenting philosophy as a discipline, the P4C program is employed in a way somewhat different than that being described. In addition to creating a community of inquiry and the dispositions therein implied, as well as helping to develop various critical and creative thinking skills, philosophy teachers at the high school level should introduce —if needed to go deeper into the philosophical dialogue— some "academic" philosophical material. In this context, philosophy teachers need to bring philosophical issues closer to the lives of the students and lead them into a philosophical dialogue rather than a mute note-taking approach to the discipline. In such situations, a more thorough knowledge of philosophy on the part of the teacher is assumed, as well as more use of classical texts in the classroom. Nevertheless, this is not content to be memorized by students, but rather is part of the philosophical dialogue. Students do philosophy through learning philosophical content and learn that content by doing philosophy.[19]

One last point should be made. The above discussion relates differently to different kinds of teachers. Teachers who have a philosophical background may tend to push the discussion with children into typical philosophical areas, bypassing real life issues every day. They may be too strong handed, missing connections with the students' actual experience. Such teachers may need to be guided away from typical philosophical presentation. On the other hand, teachers with little to no philosophical background may tend to bypass the everyday philosophical issues for discussion. Such teachers will need to be led in the opposite direction towards a more philosophical orientation. In this regard, the guide can

[17] Matthews, Gareth, B., (1980). *Philosophy and the Young Child,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., pp. 84-85.

[18] García Moriyón, F., Miranda Alonso, T. and Sainz Benítez de Lugo, L. (2014) *Filosofía 1º* Madrid. SM.

[19] García Moriyón, F. (2006). *Pregunto, dialogo, aprendo. Como hacer filosofía en el aula.* Madrid, Ediciones de la Torre.

suggest more philosophical enrichment for such teachers (always, or course, linked to the classroom work).

Justifying Philosophy

To non-philosophers, such inquiry as we are suggesting may often sound dangerous, or simply an exercise in silliness. "Why question everything" is a common question from teachers and parents together, with little to no philosophical background. In the first place, such teachers make the assumption that calling into question apparently settled ideas or beliefs leads inevitably to a runaway skepticism and a groundless relativism. If philosophy is not seen as a danger for children, it may be seen as a waste of time. Why spend precious class time talking about silly questions that have no answer instead of learning more “useful” disciplines,[20] or which have no answer acceptable enough for children (which can be provided quickly by the teacher)? Worse still, philosophy is a very abstract discipline that cannot be approached before the end of adolescence.

A teacher guide must be able to answer such questions, for they are good questions and reach the heart of the program. The guide must be prepared to explain that philosophical inquiry, when done properly, does not lead to a rejection of beliefs which have a solid foundation of reasons. It does not lead to empty skepticism, but to a healthy and wise one. Family beliefs are not rejected so much as investigated and strengthened. Children do not conclude that there is no truth, or that no one can be believed, but rather that ideas and beliefs are stronger and weaker depending on evidence and strong argument. They are led to see that, although many of the topics of inquiry may not conclude with a definite answer, there are better and worse "answers." In fact, the world apart from school rarely boasts of certainty, and when students become accustomed to uncertainty, they are wiser for it. When this is understood, one can see that philosophical inquiry is anything but silly or unnecessary. Consequently, classroom teachers, after the workshop, will be able to properly deal with the same resistance and criticism at their schools.

Since the time of Socrates, many have been resistant or simply hostile to philosophical inquiry. They fear its effect on the belief systems of those who engage in it, and further, on the systems of belief that are seen to hold together social institutions. A different fear is concerned with the effects such inquiry can have on one's happiness and mental stability. If not, like Meno, made numb by the sting of philosophy, they may, like the Athenian assembly, be made angry and vindictive by it. Irony and other rhetorical resources used to provoke cognitive disequilibrium are very important in philosophical dialogue, if applied properly and carefully.[21] However, for many people, even for philosophy teachers, it can become a dangerous tool that harms those attending the Socratic dialogue, much more so if they are children, when the teacher becomes too caustic and does not care enough about their students' state of mind.[22] These are not phenomena reserved to ancient Greece but have their manifestations in contemporary society. If they are not so evident, it is because of the insignificant place philosophy has taken in modern times. However, when

[20] Nussbaum, M. (2010). *Not for profit. Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton. Princeton Univ. Press.

[21] Reznitskaya, A. *The Emperor Has No Clothes: The Pedagogical Failure of Oscar Brenifier's Act*. (In press).

[22] Garcia Moriyon, F. “Ironía y pensamiento cuidadoso en fpn.” *Childhood & Philosophy*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 21, maio 2021, pp. 1 – 22.

bringing philosophy to communities, a teacher guide or classroom teacher may be confronted with reactions from students, parents, or the larger concerned public.

Parents and/or teachers may worry about children falling into an empty relativism, uncontrolled skepticism, or despairing nihilism directed at the values the community wishes to see continued into the next generation. We cannot ignore these claims, assuming them to be the ravings of intolerant and unenlightened dogmatists. There is a certain validity to this criticism. When one becomes involved in philosophical discussion, the shadow of doubt spreads over almost everything, even the deepest and most important beliefs. If this process of thinking is triggered, it can snowball. Commonly, people involved for the first time in this kind of dialogue realize that the assumptions and consequences of their ideas really matter, while at the same time discovering how dogmatic or relativistic they may be (along with the consequences of this). The more you introduce yourself to philosophical procedures, the more you may feel that you must change your most deeply held ideas and beliefs.

Obviously, we are not intending such things for children. We intend, as stated above, to open a world of wonder that was not apparent before (or to preserve the one held by children already). We intend to increase the meaning apparent in the students' experience. We intend to make the beliefs of the children and the community more secure, thanks to reflection on previous assumptions and implications. We also want to foster in children what the word philosophy literally means: a strong love of truth, a personal and communitarian commitment to the search for truth and meaning, guided by critical, creative and careful thinking. What we must keep in mind is that the fruit of our work could conceivably go either way.

We claim that P4C will tend to strengthen, rather than erode beliefs which have a sound foundation. What can we say about beliefs which would not pass such a test? Or about prejudices and deeply rooted cognitive biases? Suppose, for example, that the program was being used in a community with a large white supremacist population, or with a significant number of families on the extreme right of the political spectrum. Such a belief system is founded on some very shaky assumptions, and often blind to the implications of these assumptions. In situations like this, philosophical inquiry stands a good chance of eroding such beliefs. The question is, does it have this potential towards beliefs which are not so obviously destructive? We claim that it will not, but we must be ready to back this up.

The most apparent conflict is between religious faith and research, but perhaps it does not have to be a conflict, except in some specific cases of fundamentalist religious faith. We can see our beliefs as resting points, as Peirce described them, in our overall inquiry, accepted not out of prejudice or unquestioned authority.[23] Rather, we stop at certain points for good reasons. After philosophical inquiry, we believe reasonably, as opposed to blindly, or dogmatically. There may still appear to be a conflict with faith, however, as the very meaning of faith seems to be unquestioned belief.

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[23] See Peirce, Charles, S., (1958). "The Fixation of Belief", and "How to Make Our Ideas Clear", in *Selected Writings*, Dover Publications, NY, NY.

We avoid the destructive potential of philosophical inquiry when we keep these things in mind. We do not doubt for the sake of doubting or showing others wrong. We doubt in a careful manner, starting with ideas we are supporting, critically appraising the beliefs that underlie and sustain them, and arriving at a point where we can feel more reasonably secure about those ideas (even if, in the face of strong argument and evidence, we must revise them). All through this reasoning we expect to arrive at a clearer and sounder, more dependable body of ideas and beliefs.

Finally, this ongoing process, while healthy as opposed to dangerous for individuals, holds the same for society. A society that stops asking and wondering about things destroys itself (or as Dewey says, stops growing, and can no longer uphold the term "civilized").[24] If we aim towards a democratic society in the complete meaning of that term, it becomes compulsory to prepare the population with the ability to ask, wonder and think for themselves.[25] Teacher guides as much as schoolteachers should have a clear understanding of the commitment of the program with democracy. They would do well to have the social aims of the program ready for explication and discussion at any time. They are a great motivating factor in working with P4C.

Truth and Meaning in P4C

We have employed above the term's "truth" and "clearer and sounder ideas" and underlined philosophical commitment to the search for truth. The word "truth" is both powerful and ambiguous. It must be employed with great care. Philosophers are well versed in the various assumptions behind the word, whether those of a correspondence, coherence, pragmatic, linguistic or postmodern variety. Those with less experience in the workings of philosophy, as, for example, most elementary school teachers, are not.

We mentioned that both faith and inquiry have a commitment to truth. By this we mean that both strive towards a body of ideas which provide reliable bases for action as well as providing meaning to our experience. In any case, we are not talking about an absolute truth. Rather, we use the word "truth" in the pragmatic and referential sense, that of warranted assertability. A claim merits the label "true" based on its being in accordance with the best available evidence of the time, as arrived at by the community of reasonable surveyors.

The danger, however, lies not in relativism, which can be buffered by a sense of history and community, but rather in subjectivism. When each individual can lay claim to his or her truth, when their assertions are accepted as warranted based solely on their own independent justifications, and when such a practice is accepted as valid community-wide, *then* truth has succumbed to subjectivism, and as Dostoyevsky's character said, "everything is legal." In a community of inquiry, such subjectivism is curtailed. While every participant in the community is accorded the utmost respect, no matter how divergent his or her idea

[24]Dewey's views on static societies and their form of education can be found, for example, in *Democracy and Education*, Macmillan Co., NY, 1916.

[25]Burgh, G. (2014). Commentary on 'Democratic pedagogy.' *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* 1(1), pp.22-44.

may be, each idea must meet the rigorous criteria *as established by the community in practice* before it can lay claim to be warranted.

Due to the dangerous ambiguity of the word "truth", some suggest that we replace it with a "quest for meaning": a quest for a richer and more clearly perceived set of relationships in our experience. Such a way of putting things avoids the ambiguities discussed above. In addition, it provides a distinct and easily presentable link to the critical thinking skills aspects of the program. From *Elfie* to *Harry*, skills such as distinction making and connection making are emphasized. However, to the layman, such a use of "meaning" may be no less confusing or vague. "Truth" remains a word in common parlance. For these reasons we do not want to abandon the word "truth" when discussing our aims and feel that the effort to overcome its ambiguity is well worth it within the context of Philosophy for Children.

We must keep this in mind when having to justify the use of the program in a school or community. Of course, these justifications won't work in communities that are not interested in such social aims as we are supporting. Notwithstanding, such social aims are normative in all international and national educational institutions and administrations.

The Continuous Training of Philosophy Teachers

It is clear that the philosophical dimensions of the program need to be highlighted from the very beginning of teacher training. It is crucial that the initial workshop (around twenty-five hours long) wakes up the philosophical ear of teachers. They need to clearly understand that we are inviting them to join a philosophical endeavor that requires dialogue, active teaching, project-based learning, etc., but with a specific emphasis on philosophical dialogue. We are inviting them to do philosophy with children and adolescents in formal education, and also with adults and elderly people in non-formal and informal educational settings.

The entire P4C project calls for much more than a very good initial workshop. To begin with, the ideal situation is that any initial workshop be organized by a specific association of people involved in the dissemination and practice of the P4C educational program. That association takes care of the training of teachers wanting to implement the community of philosophical inquiries in their school, or just in their class. These associations also take care of the prior preparation and background of those who are qualified guides of new teachers. Spain, for example, has established the following requirements to be a qualified teacher guide: a) having completed two in-depth, 50-hour courses, b) having applied the program in different educational contexts and in primary and secondary schools; c) having a philosophical background; and d) having carried out a training course with the support of an accredited trainer.

In the previous sections, we talked about the guides and especially about their role in the initial workshop. After that initial workshop, the ideal situation would be to organize a seminar with the people who decide to implement the program to monitor the

implementation of the program and to deepen its pedagogical and philosophical aspects. This seminar, which would meet every three to four weeks, offers new teachers the opportunity to get a better understanding of the program. If possible, the teacher guide should attend one of the teacher's classroom sessions, in order to observe how the teacher conducts the session and provide some feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their practice. It would also be very useful to offer a collection of short articles by experts in the program to explore specific topics.

Sooner or later, classroom teachers will discover the need to improve their weak initial background in philosophy. Even more, teacher guides should stimulate this longing for more philosophy. Then it will be necessary to offer specific philosophy courses for them. There are many possibilities, but we think that three of them are fundamental:

a) A standard introduction to philosophy course. Instead of the classical stories used at primary and secondary levels, the use of a typical introduction to philosophy text is necessary. Of course, as mentioned above, the session should follow the style of the community of philosophical inquiries. In Spain, we have published such a manual, where we combine the P4C style of teaching with the philosophical topics of an introduction to philosophy.[26] And we have organized a workshop for those teachers who want to improve their philosophical background. There are some very interesting experiences like this one in other countries, for example, the workshop 'Thinking moves,' focusing on reasoning skills.[27]

b) An introduction to the history of, primarily western philosophy, but enriched with contributions from other cultural areas. Again, in Spain, we have a narrative introduction to the history of philosophy, together with a manual for educators teaching the history of philosophy in the last year of secondary school.[28] The teachers' manual is very similar to the IAPC curriculum teachers' manuals.

c) Specific courses in ethics, focusing on the resolution of moral dilemmas and problems. This project is still in the initial phase of design and development. We can adapt, for example, the two stories and manuals of the IAPC curriculum, *Nous* and *Lisa*, or develop a new proposal out of the materials that we are developing in Niaiá, a research group working on the resolution of moral problems.

Conclusion and Discussion

We return to the main question. How much philosophical background is required of a teacher guide and a classroom teacher working with P4C?[29] While this question may

[26] García Moriyón, F., Miranda Alonso, T. y Sainz Benítez de Lugo, L. (2014). *Filosofía 1º* Madrid. SM.

[27] These courses are part of the training program offered by *Dialogue Works*: https://dialogueworks.co.uk/training/

[28] García Moriyón, F., García González, M., Pedrero Sancho, I. (2002): *Luces y sombras. El sueño de la razón en Occidente*. Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre. 2ª ed.; García Moriyón, F., García González, M., Pedrero Sancho, I. (1995). *Investigación histórica*. Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre.

[29] Byalistok, L. (2017). "Philosophy across the Curriculum and the Question of Teacher Capacity; Or What Is Philosophy and Who Can Teach It"? *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 51, No. 4, 2017.

not be answered easily with a fixed formula, it may be addressed by the following question: is the person's philosophical background sufficient for the demands outlined above? Of course, the answer is different if we are talking of teacher guides, who need a deeper background like that of a university degree in philosophy, or classroom teachers, who don't need to go that far.

There will be educators with an interest in working in the program who honestly may have to answer in the negative. In what way may they be satisfactorily prepared? We believe that a program like that employed by the IAPC and ICPIC for the last forty years is a useful guide: Intensive work with the materials of the program (with children and with peers) combined with an intensive study of philosophy (many short research papers covering a wide variety of philosophical readings) of philosophy is a good start. Such a program, augmented by other philosophical coursework, could prepare an educator to effectively work with teachers, in substantially less time than a standard university study of the subject.

Finally, the whole process should be based on the activity of the teaching guides. Only if they are strong enough in their philosophical background and in their skills to guide the process of training classroom teachers will these teachers be able to transform their classes into communities of philosophical inquiry.

To summarize the areas where the philosophical/theoretical foundations of teacher guides are important, we provide the following list. A teacher guide should be able to: A) lead a philosophical discussion with teachers, which especially implies the ability to 1) recognize questions and statements of possible philosophical depth; 2) develop them with appropriate follow-up questions and bridge the gap between an abstract/technical philosophical statement or question and common experience. It is also important that they can B) explain the philosophical/theoretical basis of the program and provide its social, educational and political justification. Finally, they should be able to C) show how a philosophical inquiry can be guided in any given educational context.

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