

METAPHORS OF THE CHILD'S MIND

Teaching Philosophy to Young Children

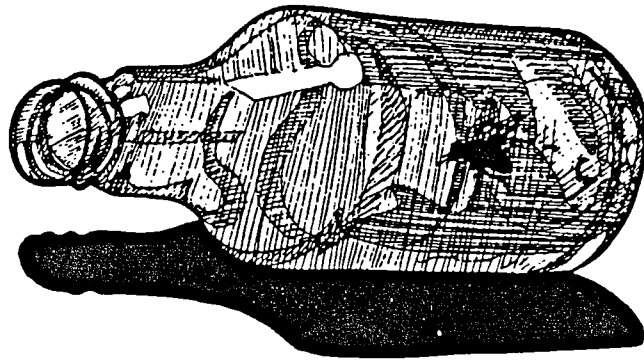
**being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD in Education
in the University of Hull**

by

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For Simon, without whom this thesis would never have been possible.



“What is the aim of philosophy? To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.”
Wittgenstein.

“But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.”
Aristotle.

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My approach to philosophy has been influenced most by Rob van Dijk, and the late Ian McFetridge. Rather than merely presenting students with the *products* of their own pre-digested thoughts, both thought together *with* their students, while teaching. I hope that my thesis satisfies their demands of rigour and ‘real’ thinking.

This piece of writing is very much the outcome of an ‘internal’ community of philosophical enquiry. The voices that influenced the outcomes of the many dialogues are diverse, and sometimes not easily identifiable. The ones I discern most are those of Simon Geschwindt, Jos Delnoy, my parents, and, at a later stage, Terry Home, but I am sure I have forgotten many while writing this.

The strongest voices throughout, have been those of children, of the child I was, and the child I still am.

PREFACE

What started off as an academic exercise soon turned into a very personal journey. Trained as an academic philosopher, first in the Netherlands (Leiden), and later in Britain (London), I was excited, but also puzzled about what 'real' philosophy could offer young children. To be chronologically correct, my affinity with children and their thinking came first. I qualified as a youth-librarian, specialising in children's literature, before embarking on my study of philosophy.

The possibility of combining the two – children and philosophy – presented itself when I was introduced to Matthew Lipman's *Philosophy for Children Programme* as part of a more general M.A. course in teaching philosophy in the Netherlands. Although intrigued, this interest was 'stored away' in the 'back' of my mind for at least five years. Then, at a *Cogito* conference for philosophy teachers, I met Patrick Costello, who confessed that one of his great passions was teaching philosophy to children. I decided there and then to do a PhD with him as my supervisor (until he left the University of Hull, and Mike Bottery took over my supervision).

To do a PhD in philosophy with children at a School of Education, rather than at a Philosophy Department, was deliberate. It forced my philosophical reflection to start with, and to continuously return to, the empirical data I had collected, and to take the practicality of everyday school life into account. In my view, such movement between the concrete and the theoretical is a precondition of all sound philosophical enquiry.

After reading the core literature on the subject, I managed to convince a local headteacher to try out the *Philosophy for Children Programme* on his pupils. It attracted a great deal of media interest. Impressed by an article about this in *The Guardian*, another local headteacher employed me to teach philosophy to all his pupils as part of a creative effort to deal with the school's disproportionate amount of pupils with severe behavioural problems and/or learning difficulties. Many of those children were 'poor readers', and the challenge I faced, was to create educational material that would excite them to enquire into philosophical ideas.

I speculated that material with a strong visual component would be most appropriate, and with the help of one of the parents, the director of US video production company, *Weston Woods*, and endless questions from and enquiries with the pupils, and using my knowledge of children's literature, I developed my teacher's manual (*Teaching Philosophy with Picture Books*).

Subsequently, I was partly funded to follow training in Philosophy for Children by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children in Mendham, New Jersey, USA. It did not change my views about the Philosophy for Children Programme itself, but my appreciation for the Philosophy for Children 'community of enquiry' method continued to grow. Its emancipatory character, its moral richness, its empowering effect, gradually filtered through, and changed me fundamentally as a person, and, therefore, as a teacher.

Also, my philosophical enquiries with the children had already convinced me that my material worked well, and I continued to use it. Although I knew that my approach was successful in *practice*, my delight was immeasurable when the theoretical foundation for the reasons *why* it worked became apparent after reading several books by Canadian educationalist, Kieran Egan.

My material seemed to trigger children's imagination, and, by interpreting the history of Western philosophical thought in a particular way, I found an explanation for why this was the case. This interpretation was grounded also through another major source of inspiration during that period of my research, and that was the book, *Metaphors We Live By*, by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.

My subsequent insight in the metaphorical structuring of our everyday language and its consequences for how we live our lives and think about (children's) thinking, changed my own thinking dramatically. It explained, among other things, the deep concern I felt for the way many teachers I worked with 'labelled' their pupils' thinking abilities. The metaphors 'slow', 'bright', 'quick', 'weird', 'immature', and 'strange' were frequently used to describe their pupils to me before I started working with them. These evaluations were based often on the teachers' verbal interaction with the children, and 'paper and pencil' tests. The same teachers observing those same children in communities of philosophical enquiry were often amazed by what their 'slow' or 'immature' pupils were capable of. I started to realise that teaching philosophy would be beneficial only in the long run, if teachers' conception of their pupils' potential would change.

Insight into the metaphorical structuring of our thinking also helped me to understand the hostility and scepticism surrounding the teaching of philosophy to young children. This is connected especially to our metaphorical use of 'talk' and 'argument'.

The reasons my research grew in significance for me over the years are twofold. The first is a sense of injustice about the way young children's thinking is often evaluated. This can be remedied by raising awareness about the metaphors people use when they think about children's thinking (as well as about thinking in general). Secondly, metaphorical awareness shows how educationally beneficial philosophical 'talk' can be. I believe all children have a moral right to the kind of education that thinks the highest of them as independent and unique thinkers.

My thesis has grown over the years into having three aims:

1. To give empirical evidence and theoretical justification for the claim that young children can do philosophy.
2. To justify the use of my own alternative to existing educational material for the teaching of philosophy to young children.
3. To theoretically justify that philosophical enquiry with children should be an integral part of the nursery and primary school curriculum.

Conflicting opinions give dialogue its life and energy. The 'stronger' the opposition, the better the results of philosophical enquiry – the justification of one's own beliefs becomes a real challenge. Therefore, to achieve my first aim, I have chosen the clearest critique of philosophy with children published so far, that of philosophers, John Wilson, Richard Kitchener, and John White.

To achieve my second aim, I have used the critique of proponents of the *Philosophy for Children Programme* against the use of other kinds of educational material for the teaching of philosophy to children,

My last aim logically follows in Chapter Eight, from the arguments and conclusions drawn in previous chapters.

In more detail, my line of argument is as follows: in order to decide whether young children can do philosophy, I start by examining what philosophy is (in Chapter One). Instead of giving a definition, I list characteristics of a philosophical 'form of life', and show the importance of philosophy for everyday life.

Before dealing with the question of whether *children* can have such a form of life, I address, in Chapter Two, the scepticism surrounding philosophy with children, by philosophically reflecting upon our everyday language. I focus, therefore, in particular on those metaphors that influence significantly how we think and talk about children's thinking, since understanding the benefits of

teaching philosophy to young children depends largely upon our beliefs about what it means to think. Being aware of the so-called objective, literal, scientific language of the educational community could dramatically change the claims made by that community.

My examination of metaphors is followed in Chapter Three, by addressing the question of whether young children – under the age of ten – are capable of *philosophical* thinking, especially, since philosophy is often associated with *deep*, *higher-order* thinking, or *meta-cognition*. I reject the objections by psychologists and philosophers to the possibility that children can do philosophy. I also reject, however, the empirical evidence in support of Gareth Matthews' claim that young children *can* do philosophy. I offer, instead, other criteria for what counts as empirical evidence.

In Chapter Five, I offer three complete transcripts of philosophical enquiries with whole classes of mixed-ability children, between the ages of four and eleven, as empirical evidence that those children were indeed engaged in *philosophical* enquiries. But first, I explain in Chapter Four what I mean by philosophy with children. I do this, by setting out what a philosophical life *ought* to be, the criteria of which I list at the beginning of Chapter Five.

I finish the empirical part of my research in Chapter Six, by focusing on the crucial role of the facilitator in safeguarding the *philosophical* dimension of communities of enquiry. I do this, by critically analysing a transcript of a philosophical enquiry with five year olds – generally regarded in the 'field' as exemplary for other practitioners – by focusing on the interventions made by the teacher. The possible benefits of doing philosophy with children is directly related to the skills and attitude of the facilitator. For this reason, I continue by examining the implications for evaluating philosophical enquiries with children, and the preparation of teachers for the teaching of philosophy to children. Further empirical evidence, for the claimed benefits of philosophy with children, will be given in the form of a summary of the outcome of a large-scale Welsh research project, a transcript of an interview with children, and pieces of writing by other children – evaluating their own philosophy lessons.

How beneficial (and, therefore, desirable) philosophy with children is, also depends on the kind of educational material used. In Chapter Seven, I evaluate the oldest, most extensive, and widely used specially written material – the *Philosophy For Children Programme*. I continue, by arguing for a better alternative: using existing children's literature (preferably in visual format).

However, my provision of empirical evidence and theoretical justifications for the claim that young children can indeed do philosophy, is in itself not sufficient. It could still be argued that, although children *can* do philosophy, it is not *desirable* for them to do it. I, therefore, give a theoretical overview in the last chapter, of the philosophical, educational, political, social, and moral reasons for the need of philosophy as a separate subject in the nursery and primary school. How desirable one regards philosophical enquiry with children depends upon one's epistemological presuppositions, in particular one's beliefs about the relation between language and reality, and how it is connected to the role of human understanding.

In order to assist young children in the deconstruction of the metaphors that keep the 'fly in the fly-bottle', and to create a school curriculum that relates to their *needs*, rather than to the demands of, for example, Britain's National Curriculum, one particular philosophical position – that of second-order non-realism – seems most promising for 'scaffolding' children's construction of new metaphors to think with and live by. I believe it could well be *the* philosophical means of showing the 'fly the way out of the fly-bottle'.

This does, however, leave a major philosophical question – where would the 'fly' escape to? Could it ever transcend the limitations of a linguistic framework; or would it be doomed to end up in yet another 'fly-bottle'? That will have to be the subject of further research.

Chapter One

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

STRUCTURE

- 1. Introduction.**
- 2. Philosophy as a Form of Life.**
- 3. An Historical Perspective.**
- 4. Philosophy as Question-raising.**
- 5. Philosophy as Conceptual Analysis.**
- 6. Summary and Conclusion.**

1. Introduction

The debate as to whether philosophy is a suitable subject for children is an ancient one. Philosophers since as long ago as Plato have had plenty to say on the subject – most of it negative. The debate continues unabated, but is often complicated by the confusion between ‘doing’ philosophy as a subject – i.e., studying the ideas of the world’s great thinkers since the Greeks – and ‘philosophising’, thinking about any question in a philosophical way. The debate is complicated further in an even more fundamental way by disagreement over what the term ‘philosophy’ actually means.

British philosopher John Wilson, for example, has argued that the ‘Philosophy for Children’ (P4C) movement suffers from educational ideology. The ideology he refers to is the assumption that philosophy is something like: a focus on questioning, enquiry, and being critical (Wilson, 1992, p. 17). Wilson criticises the P4C movement for not being entirely clear about what exactly is understood by philosophy.

Wilson, pleading for a clear definition, argues that it is essential to answer at least the following questions:

- What exactly is *philosophical* thinking?
- What counts as a *philosophical* question?
- What counts as a *philosophical* truth?
- How do we know we have got something *right* when doing philosophy?

(Wilson, 1992, p. 17)

These questions have to be answered, Wilson argues, before we can even consider which teaching method ought to be used. I do agree, and I would also add that being clear about what we mean by philosophy is essential for deciding which teaching materials are appropriate. But there are also reasons other than pedagogical ones.

Being clear about what we mean by ‘philosophy’ is essential also for the following reasons:

- to be able to distinguish philosophy from other thinking skills programmes;
- to be able to *decide* whether children can do philosophy;
- to discover the particular philosophical tradition in which a philosophy teacher has been educated.

Wilson himself defines philosophy as “something like: ‘the investigation of concepts, categories and distinctions via the meaning of words’” (Wilson, 1992, p. 18). He adds that admittedly this kind of definition is a typically ‘Oxford’ definition. It is not surprising he admires the P4C programme’s emphasis on concepts and meaning (Wilson, 1992, p. 18). It is the kind of philosophy which is taught in the Anglo-American tradition, with its emphasis on logic and concept-analysis.

Not surprisingly, there has been criticism that P4C in developing countries amounts to cultural imperialism (Lardner 1992). For example, the introduction in Guatemala of *Harry Stottlemeier* – a philosophical novel of the P4C programme written for 10 to 12 year olds (Lipman, 1982) – has been recently criticised on those grounds (Raitz, 1992). *Harry Stottlemeier* introduces children extensively to Aristotelian logic, and its “...mission [is]...to help lay the groundwork for democracy”.²

With recent growing awareness within philosophy itself that there are no universal underlying structures of discourse, the introduction of just one such a discourse – that of Anglo-American

As Karl Jaspers has pointed out, an important feature of doing philosophy is that no one can do it for someone else: "...individuals must do philosophy for themselves" (Jaspers in *Growing Up With Philosophy*, p. 38). German philosopher Immanuel Kant told his pupils: "You will not learn from me philosophy, but how to philosophise, not thoughts to repeat, but how to think. Think for yourselves, enquire for yourselves, stand on your own feet" (Kant quoted in Emmet, 1968, p. 19).

My third criticism of Kitchener's description of a philosophical way of life is that it begs the question about what philosophy is. In his summing up of the (above mentioned) points which constitute 'philosophy', he does not offer criteria for saying what exactly it *is* that makes those activities *philosophical*. In other words, he does not stipulate what it is that makes an issue, or question philosophical, nor does he explain what the criteria could be for distinguishing between 'great philosophers', 'less-great philosophers', and other people.

I conclude that the notion of philosophy as a 'form of life' cannot be used to argue against the possibility of children being able to do philosophy. The argument begs the question – what philosophy is – by already presupposing this in the description. For example, Clyde Evans, reporting on a procedure he used when teaching ethics to primary schoolchildren, argues that these sessions can be justifiably called 'philosophy', despite the fact that the children were *not* discussing Wittgenstein, Descartes, or Plato; they were *not* discussing typical philosophical topics, such as free will, mind/body dualism; they were *not* studying "the development and evolution of philosophical thought on a particular issue"; and, they were *not* discussing the limits of philosophy (Evans, 1978, pp. 160-162). However, the children *were* doing philosophy, according to Evans, because they were *committed* to certain procedural principles that make philosophical enquiry possible (Evans, 1978, p. 162).

So, although the Wittgensteinian notion of a 'form of life' might be useful to clarify and develop our notion of what philosophy is, in itself it does not constitute a criterion for deciding what can justifiably be called philosophy and what cannot. A mere description of the existing state-of-affairs, for example, in existing philosophy departments, is not sufficient in itself. Reasons have to be given in support of the claim that this is also how philosophy *ought* to be practised.

What still remains is the need to further explore what we mean by 'philosophy'. Also, the notion of 'philosophy as a way of life' needs clarification. A more detailed description of what it is that *philosophers* do (and not what philosophy *students* do when they learn the history of philosophical ideas) is needed. So, when we look at Kitchener's list above, what exactly is it that makes an issue philosophical, and how should we go about thinking about these issues? What is it that makes questions philosophical and how should we read the great philosophers? How should we engage in conversations about philosophy, and, if true, why is it that philosophers are not able to stop philosophising?

3. An Historical Perspective

The term 'philosophy', from '*philosophia*' (Greek), is a combination of the two Greek words '*phileo*', which means 'love', and '*sophia*', 'wisdom'. Hence, a philosopher is someone who loves wisdom (Kuypers, 1977, p. 648).

In Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus* an analogy is made between passion for enquiry and falling in love. For Socrates, love for somebody starts with the desire for the visible and the physical, but quickly moves 'beyond' the appearances to the 'real' person behind it. This search is similar to that of intellectual enquiry: "...the feeling that there is something behind or beyond them that is really worth getting at, something to establish a relationship with" (Bitting & Southworth, 1992, p. 15).

Implicit in the word 'love' is the bodily, sensual element. This is the reason why we use the expression 'Platonic love' to refer to love only of the mind or spirit. We think *through* our body, not *with* our body (e.g., brain, or mind) – as if they were two separate entities.⁹ In contemporary philosophy the dichotomy between mind/body – or, in psychological jargon, cognition/emotion – is increasingly challenged. According to Israel Scheffler in an article called *In Praise of the Cognitive Emotions*, one reason for this challenge is that it "mechanises science" and it "sentimentalises art", and in education it leads to "unfeeling knowledge" and "mindless arousal" (Scheffler, 1983, pp. 16, 17).

Scheffler tries to show how cognitive functioning employs and incorporates diverse emotional elements, because, as he puts it, "Emotion without cognition is blind and ... cognition without emotions is vacuous". Examples of what he calls "rational passions" are a lust for truth, a contempt of lying, and a concern for accuracy in observation and inference.

Therefore, philosophy is not just a cognitive affair - philosophers *feel* puzzled about philosophical problems. All emotions are alert when engaged in a philosophical dialogue: excitement, anger, frustration, delight, etc. Philosophers have a drive, a passion to answer the sort of questions that they feel are important. In that sense, philosophical puzzlement is an *emotion*. British psychologist Margaret Donaldson argues that emotions are "value feelings", that is, they "...mark importance. We experience emotion only in regard to *that which matters*" (Donaldson, 1993, p. 12). Without inspiration and curiosity, and excitement over intriguing problems, there could be no enquiry, Scheffler points out (Scheffler, 1983, p. 18).

Philosophy is a constant search for wisdom, rather than factual knowledge. What 'facts' are, but also what 'wisdom' is, are philosophical questions too (see Section 4). They do not admit quick, easy answers - the sort of answers everyone unanimously would agree with. Whatever is meant by 'wisdom', many philosophers agree that in contrast to knowledge of facts, wisdom cannot be communicated or taught. Philosophising, or philosophy *practised*, one can do only for oneself. Wisdom does not consist of memorising answers given by others. The connections between abstract philosophical concepts and concrete experiences are necessarily tied to the person who has had those concrete experiences, and who is connecting thinking with actions.

A similar view of wisdom is expressed in the following quote, which describes wisdom as "truth humanised":

"It is the source of human freedom, wherein we are no longer the victims of the flux of sensation, nor separated from life by abstract truths, but brought into cognizance of life through a humanized relationship with truth/imaginative ideals" (Bitting & Southworth, 1992, p. 15).

There is another possible feature of philosophy – a characteristic relevant particularly in the context of evaluating philosophical practice in the classroom – there is no *purpose* to philosophy, at least according to Aristotle:

“And a man who is puzzled and wonders, thinks himself ignorant ...therefore since they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science [i.e., philosophy as science of the first causes and principles] in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end. And this is confirmed by the facts; for it is when almost all the necessities of life and things that make for comfort and recreation had been secured, that such knowledge began to be sought. Evidently then we do not seek it for the sake of any other advantage; but as the man is free, we say, who exists for his own sake and not for another’s, so we pursue this as the only free science, for it alone exists for its own sake” *Metaphysics, Bk I: Ch. 2, 982b 13-28 (McKeon, 1973, pp. 281, 282).*

One has to be careful, though, when quoting from Greek philosophers. In Ancient Greece, the term ‘philosophy’ was much broader and more comprehensive than it is today. At that time philosophy included almost all fields of knowledge. For example, Greek philosopher Aristotle (born 384/3 BC) wrote not only about, what we would now call, typically philosophical subjects, such as metaphysics, ethics, and logic, but about physics, psychology, biology, politics, poetics, and rhetoric (McKeon, 1973).

This gradually changed when more and more subjects became independent in their own right as a result of the development of more organised and systematic methods of enquiry. What remained under the heading of philosophy was a cluster of unsolved problems (Russell, 1982, p. 90). About this change in the method of enquiry, E R Emmet says:

“To some extent it would be true to say that each subject broke away as its problems were seen to be matters for going and seeing rather than sitting and thinking; for investigation rather than speculation” (Emmet, 1991, p. 14).

Since around the beginning of the 20th century a shift of emphasis has taken place within philosophy itself. An awareness emerged that, between what we think and what we think *about* (what people call ‘reality’), there is language, which needs first and foremost our attention, and which previously had been taken for granted. This change in method can be characterised by almost an exclusive concern with the handling of concepts. Concepts are analysed in terms of words, and by studying language we will gain insight into them (see: Section 5). This move towards linguistic analysis has very much been influenced by Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, generally referred to as ‘the Later Wittgenstein’.¹⁰

At the same time, there were philosophers mainly from the Continental tradition (phenomenologists), who started to focus on the underlying philosophical presuppositions to be found in our everyday language. This language, of course, is used not only by adults, but also by children. Lipman claims that unwittingly this focus within philosophy on ordinary language has “...lent substance and credibility to the idea... [of philosophy for children]” (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, pp. 4 & 5). He does hasten to add that, not only a redefinition of philosophy by philosophers themselves explains the possibility and popularity of P4C, but that also a redefinition of education has taken place (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p. 6).

The importance of this shift towards ordinary language is highlighted by Richard Bernstein, when he argues that philosophy’s inherited, technical jargon gives people the false impression that philosophy does not concern everybody. Instead, he refers to American philosopher John Dewey, who at the beginning of this century pointed out that it is time for philosophers to turn themselves to

the problems of everyone, rather than the problems of philosophers. Philosophy should be about the problems that confront us in our daily lives (Bernstein, 1991, p. 3).

Sure enough, philosophy has increasingly become an intricate part of people's everyday personal or professional lives. Philosophy is not only increasingly practised in nursery, primary, and secondary schools, but also in counselling situations¹¹, health care and businesses. Philosophy's role in health care and businesses, for example, is to examine the assumptions that either explicitly or implicitly are taken for granted. One example from business ethics would be the question of whether disloyalty to one's employer or colleagues is necessarily wrong, if some greater 'good' would result.

Philosophy can be applied also to other academic disciplines, such as science, history, or mathematics. In that case philosophy aims to investigate the conceptual foundations of these subjects. For example, by asking "Is 'causality' more than the perception of two, perhaps, unconnected events?", or, "Are 'numbers' human constructs or do they have ontological status?", or, "Is there more to a 'fact' than the description of it?"

Now, if the term 'philosophy' used to be much broader and more comprehensive, then what is it exactly that still falls under its heading? Although there are substantial differences between countries, philosophy can be roughly sub-divided into the following categories:

- **Metaphysics.** This deals with issues that go 'beyond' the empirical 'physics', and seeks to answer the most fundamental and ultimate philosophical questions, such as "What is Being?", "What is space?"¹²
- **Epistemology or Theory of Knowledge.** This focuses on what it *is* to know, in contrast to psychology, which focuses on *how* we know. For example, epistemology deals with questions about the difference between 'belief' and 'knowledge'. Another example of an epistemological question is "What is involved in knowing that I am me?" ('personal identity').
- **Philosophy of mind.** As the name suggests, this branch of philosophy seeks to answer questions that have to do with the mind. For example, by comparing the human mind with computers. A popular question in philosophy of mind is "Can computers think?" ('artificial intelligence').
- **Ethics.** The study of how to live the good life, but also what the good life *is*. It includes examining concepts such as 'good' and 'bad'. Examples of ethical questions are "What do right and wrong mean?", "How many bad things do I have to do in order to be a bad person?", and "Do we punish actions only, or also thoughts?"
- **Aesthetics.** This more recent branch within philosophy seeks to answer questions about beauty and art. Examples of aesthetic questions are "Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?", and "Is there a difference between noise and music?"
- **Logic and Linguistic analysis.** The prescriptive study of how people should think (and not a description of how people actually think) in order to make their thinking more logically valid. It is also concerned with the relationship between language and reality. Questions could come up such as "If I use the proper noun 'God' does that mean that God exists?", "Do concepts exist independently of us, humans?"

As pointed out in Section 2, what philosophy as a form of life means depends upon the way philosophers are doing things, and this in turn depends very much on the particular culture in which philosophy is done. This section has shown how the recent notion of philosophy differs from that of

Ancient Greece. Twentieth century philosophers' way of life in the Western world consists to a large extent of linguistic analysis. This helps determine what 'philosophy' means *now*.

However, in our effort to define concepts, which too often consists of a search for universal, immutable meanings, the historicity of concepts is not sufficiently appreciated. Karel van der Leeuw says that in the Middle Ages the 'meaning of life' was perceived to be different from how it might be perceived now. The same holds for what was meant by 'happiness', 'good' and 'bad'. If the meanings of concepts are constantly changing and never fixed, then each generation has to do the thinking for itself. Therefore, it is pointless to learn philosophical answers to philosophical questions by heart (Leeuw, 1991, p. 9).

In other words, students of philosophy should focus, *not* on the answers given to philosophical questions by others, but on trying to find answers to those questions for themselves. In order to do that students in philosophy have to turn their attention to the questions rather than the answers. This is another feature of philosophy as *practised*. Philosophy as the activity of asking questions is sharply distinguished from philosophy as a collection of knowledge, i.e., the answers given to those questions by famous philosophers.

I will now continue to describe in more detail those questions which fall under the heading of 'philosophical questions', and what is involved in answering them.

4. Philosophy as Question-raising

The characteristic of practised philosophy is its approach and procedure, and not its particular content or subject matter. It is the procedure of asking questions rather than giving answers, and on focusing on problems rather than solutions. As mentioned above, the former is 'philosophising', the latter is 'philosophy as a body of knowledge'. In other words, the difference between 'philosophising' and 'philosophy' - understood as the study of a whole set of systems of beliefs - is that philosophising focuses on the raising of questions, rather than on the study of answers given by others.

If philosophy's procedure is to ask questions, what are the *right* questions to ask when we do philosophy. As John Wilson puts it: "What counts as a philosophical question?" (p. 1), Emmet acknowledges the difficulty here. In order to decide what counts as a philosophical question, other questions have to be answered first (Emmet, 1968, p. 85).

Such questions could include:

- a. What is it we want to know?
- b. What sort of enquiries make sense?

A closer look at a. and b. will reveal, however, that questions cannot be studied in isolation in an effort to decide whether a particular question is a philosophical one. So, it can be misleading that philosophers emphasise the importance of asking questions. Asking the right philosophical questions, already includes having thoughts about how to go about answering them. I would, therefore, also add the following questions that need to be answered, in order to decide whether a question is philosophical or not:

- c. What is the intention of the questioner; and what are the circumstances, or what is the context in which the question has been asked?

a. What is it we want to know?

People ask questions, they wonder, and they speculate, because they want to find out about the world around them and their place in it. Philosophical questioning is the linguistic expression of a wondering about ourselves, the world, and other people.

Aristotle wrote that philosophy begins in wonder. He says:

"...it is owing to their [the earliest philosophers] wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophise..." Metaphysics, Bk 1: Ch. 2. 982b13-15 (McKeon, 1973, p. 281).

This passage is often referred to in PwC literature (e.g., Matthews, 1980, p. 2; Lipman, 1980, p. 31), but philosophers cannot claim sole rights to wonder. Science starts in wonder too, and to this broader meaning of philosophy (to include sciences) is what Aristotle almost certainly was referring to (see: Section 3). If we refer to the narrower 20th century sense of the term 'philosophy', it becomes much harder to point at wonder as a distinctive feature of philosophy.

So, how can we distinguish philosophical wonder from scientific wonder? In order to clarify the distinction between scientific and philosophical wonder I will refer to an anecdotal example philosopher Stephen Toulmin gives from his own childhood. He, himself, believes that not all wonder is philosophical.

First of all, Toulmin gives some examples of – what he calls “reflective” questions, the sort of questions that he asked when he was about nine or ten years old (Toulmin, 1978, p. 78). He was perplexed by the fact that the colour of the curtains in his sisters bedroom looked different dependent upon whether he was looking only through his left eye, or only through his right eye. He writes:

“If those two natural allies - my two eyes - gave such different testimony, I just did not know what to believe. What colour did the curtains have, really and truly? Forty years later I am still not wholly clear about the answer to that question, or even whether the question has any straightforward answer at all... [The reflective questions it gives rise to are for example]...: ‘What is involved in recognizing the colours of things?’ ‘How does the way things look tie up with the way they really are?...’” (Toulmin, 1978, p. 78).

According to Toulmin, it is with questions like these that “...we can look (so to say) into a mirror that shows us the workings of our own mind. And to do that is to do *philosophy*”. So reflection on these questions gives us a better understanding of ourselves and of the world around us. But surely the question: “What is the real colour of the curtains?” can be answered factually and scientifically, for example, by reprographic analysis? Toulmin claims that this would still not resolve “...the deeper part of the question – the part I found truly perplexing: namely, what the shade of color I saw with my left eye alone had to do with the shade I saw with my right eye alone, and what either of these had to do with the curtains themselves” (Toulmin, 1978, p. 79). This initial perplexity could not be resolved by scientific analysis, because the criteria for deciding what is the ‘real’ colour are not clear.

The difference between these “reflective”, or philosophical questions, and other straightforward more factual questions is that there is no simple, clearly established procedure by which those questions can be answered. The difficulty lies in the fact that we cannot tell from the structure of a question whether it is philosophical or not. Necessarily involved in deciding whether or not a question is philosophical, is how we go about answering the question.

According to philosopher, Isaiah Berlin, the surest symptoms of a philosophical problem is that we do not know where to look for the answer (Jahanbegloo, 1993, pp. 25-30). With philosophical questions it is difficult to even start answering the question raised. Wittgenstein points out that:

*“A philosophical problem has the form ‘I don’t know my way about’”
(Wittgenstein, 1971, par 123).¹³*

This initial bewilderment with philosophical questions can be explained, according to Kant, by the fact that philosophical questions deal with “...deeper aspects of human life and experience, which are entirely *general* yet often *mysterious*” (Toulmin, 1978, p. 84; my emphasis). Perhaps, the term ‘reverence’ would cover better what we mean by philosophical wonder, because as Paul Bitting and Cheryl Southworth argue:

*“Reverence goes beyond wonder and awe in that it carries within it the qualities of a deep and abiding sense of relatedness, caring and respect for the subject of inquiry as an integral identity as well as a respect for oneself as an inquirer”
(Bitting & Southworth. 1992, p. 14).*

This description of ‘reverence’ points at a crucial feature of what it is that makes questions philosophical, i.e., the intention and the attitude of the questioner (an issue that will be further addressed in this section, point c). I will use this term from here onwards, instead of ‘wonder’ to describe what sets philosophical wonder apart.

So, it is partly the *generality* of the questions that explains our bewilderment, and at the same time this generality sets philosophical questions apart from, say, psychological questions. Toulmin gives as an example a psychologist, who could wonder about the question: Why does *this* kind of music make people happy and *that* kind make them sad? In contrast, the philosopher has "...a different and deeper preoccupation". The philosophical question is: how *any* music whatever comes to have any such effect on people? (Toulmin, 1978, p. 84).

There is also generality in *mathematical* questions, but mathematical problems can be settled through argument or deduction, like any other rule-governed game or procedure. Philosophical problems cannot be settled through deduction, because there are no fixed rules, or procedures.

Take, for example, the question "what is a human being?" Is it a philosophical question? In order to decide this, we have to look at the appropriate matter of investigation. For example, the meaning of the question depends on who is asking, and what they are trying to achieve in asking it. An infant might ask this question when he learns that there is a difference between animals and human beings. This question could be answered *empirically* – that is by go-and-see, or look-and-see. Human beings have certain physical characteristics animals do not have. Descriptions of the differences in appearance between animals and human beings, and observations of differences (and similarities) in behaviour, may bring the questioning to a halt. In that case the question is understood as a *scientific* question, which can be answered by observation, measurement or experiment.

The answer could also depend on how we scientifically classify animals and human beings. We might refer to textbooks, encyclopaedia, or dictionaries. This again, often halts the questioning, but how can we decide whether those books are correct, complete, or out-of-date?

Philosophical problems cannot be solved by looking into dictionaries, encyclopaedias or by using empirical or mathematical reasoning. According to Berlin this is because philosophy deals with conflicting ideas and different ways of speech expressing those ideas. Life is constantly changing, therefore the ideas, and the conflicts change too. He claims that philosophical problems are often not solved, but simply "...die away, because life changes" (Jahanbegloo, 1993, pp. 25-30).

If there are no clear guidelines or generally agreed methods for philosophers to use, then answering the *philosophical* question "What is a human being?" becomes much more difficult. Not investigation, but speculation is what a philosopher uses. Not 'going and seeing', but 'sitting and thinking', a view expressed in British philosopher Thomas Hobbes' comment that "Leisure is the mother of philosophy..." (Emmet, 1991, pp. 11, 12).

Emmet admits that the identification of science with investigation – going and seeing – and philosophy with speculation – sitting and thinking – is an over-simplification. Philosophers also need empirical data (e.g., everyday language use) for their reflections; scientists also need to theorise, for example, formulate hypothesis or interpret empirical results (Emmet, 1991, p. 12). Despite this over-simplification it is true that, for science, the emphasis is on investigation, and for philosophy it is on speculation. Although it is important to set philosophical questioning apart from, say, scientific questioning, it is not easy to draw the line. As an example, Toulmin gives a question that scientists might ask themselves: "What things can dolphins in fact do?" At the same time these scientists will not be able to avoid the related question, which is "How far do these things *count* as 'thinking', 'problem solving', 'using language', etc?"

Toulmin argues, that:

"These latter questions – being once again questions about the criteria for calling something, say, thinking – are as much reflective and philosophical as they are exploratory and scientific" (Toulmin, 1978, p. 84, footnote 2).

Perhaps, one could say that in contrast to scientific questions, philosophical questions *always* open up an enquiry – other questions will necessarily arise. When a philosopher asks, “What is a human being?”, she tries to formulate *criteria* for distinguishing between animals and human beings. All sorts of questions arise as a result. “Are human beings the only creatures with rationality?”, “Are we rational when we solve problems?” “If so, are not animals rational to a certain *degree*, because they show problem-solving skills too?” “Do animals have self-consciousness, and what sort of criteria do we use to answer this question?”

Some questions philosophers ask do not make sense according to other philosophers. Philosophical questions do not have generally agreed answers. So, the problem is how to distinguish between philosophical questions and non-sensical questions if there are no generally agreed answers to philosophical questions?

b. What sort of enquiries make sense?

One might wonder whether some philosophical questions have any meaning at all – whether they are completely empty of content. Philosophers differ as to what extent questions – especially metaphysical ones¹⁴ – are non-sensical.

Philosopher D. J. O'Connor's position is as follows:

“...the possibility of a very serious and dangerous kind of philosophical mistake, [is] the making of statements or the asking of questions that have the outward appearance of genuine statements or questions but which, on examination, do not satisfy the criterion that their genuine counterparts must satisfy – namely, possessing a possible range of evidence that, were it obtainable, would verify the statement or answer the question” (O'Connor, 1971, p. 34).

One of the examples he gives is the question “When did time begin?” This is a non-sensical question, he claims, because the question already “...presupposes time in the sense of the existence of a convention for temporal measurement and that it makes no sense to ask such a question about time itself”.

But how can a question in and by itself presuppose anything? I argue that it is impossible to know what was presupposed, unless we know the context in which the question was asked, and unless we are familiar with the intention of the questioner. In other words, to decide whether a question is philosophical or non-sensical is impossible without taking into account how one would go about answering the question. In this example, this would involve a philosophical enquiry into what we mean by the concept ‘time’.

Perhaps, there are some questions which are impossible to answer. But as Toulmin argues, “Yet even that doubt is philosophical.” It will start off an enquiry into the sort of criteria that are sufficient and necessary for deciding what does or does not have a ‘genuine’ meaning (Toulmin, 1978, p. 82). It is often typical of philosophical questions that in trying to answer them, we realise that other questions have to be answered first. For example, if we ask the question “When did the universe begin?”, answering it already assumes that everything has a beginning.

The same holds for questions that, according to Emmet, are “logically unanswerable”, like the question “how does one answer an unanswerable question?”, but he admits that in less clear-cut cases, such as the metaphysical question “what is Reality really?”, the intention of the questioner and the context in which the question was asked is crucial to decide whether or not the question is logically unanswerable (Emmet, 1991, pp. 102, 103).

Another distinction Emmet makes is that between philosophical questions and ‘mere verbal’ questions. The latter he defines as follows:

“To describe a question or a dispute as merely verbal is a reasonable thing to do only when it can be seen that we are asking what name to attach to a certain thing or idea or course of action, and that no further consequences follow from attaching or not attaching the name; when it really does not matter which we call it” (Emmet, 1991, p. 91).

An example of a philosophical question would be to ask if someone is sane. To ask about the same person if he is bald would be an example of a verbal question, Emmet argues. As a reason he gives:

“...[W]hen [a man] stands in front of us and there is no doubt about how much hair he has, is to make an enquiry about how the normally loose word ‘bald’ is to be used, and provided that there are no further implications or consequences, that it is not, for example, illegal for bald men to bathe in the sea on the Sabbath, it would be reasonable to describe it as a merely verbal question and it is desirable that it should be seen as such” (Emmet, 1991, p. 91).

I am not so sure that this distinction is as clear-cut as Emmet makes it out to be. When exactly do we indeed call someone ‘bald’? How many hairs does someone have to have left, before we call him/her ‘bald’? The philosophical problem is analogous to the problem of identity over time. Exactly when do we stop calling a ship the *same* ship, when we gradually replace every part of the ship? (see: Chapter Three.) Similarly, when *exactly* in this (usually) very gradual balding process, do we say that someone is bald? Then there is the philosophical question it raises about personal identity: am I still the same person when bald? Is there something essential about my hair that makes me the person I am? When you cut off bits of my hair, do you cut off bits of me?

Another objection I have against Emmet’s definition is the fact that the label ‘bald’ would have no (in this example, legal) consequences, but I think it could have all sorts of (including legal) consequences. Imagine if at the age of twenty, I apply for a job with no hair at all on my head. Suspicion will probably be aroused about my general health (e.g., I might have undergone chemotherapy), or my political affiliations (e.g., I might be a ‘skinhead’), or my odd appearance might scare clients away. Difficult to prove, but in this not at all unrealistic scenario, I will be less likely to get the job, than my non-bald competitor.

The problems I have most with the definition are the following crucial two parts in it: “there is no doubt about how much hair he has”; and “the normally loose word ‘bald’ is to be used”. Above I have argued that there is indeed doubt about how many hairs there have to be left before we call someone bald. As far as the latter is concerned, the sort of thing philosophers do is precisely an enquiry into the sorts of concepts that we “normally” use in a “loose” way, such as ‘time’, ‘love’, ‘friendship’, ‘space’, ‘life’, ‘death’.

Instead of Emmet’s proposal, I would like to argue that what is necessary in deciding whether or not something is a philosophical question is to what extent the criteria we apply to determine whether something is such and such are clear or generally agreed.¹⁵ In the case of being bald there are no generally agreed criteria for saying that it is only with so many hairs that we can call someone bald or not bald. Hence, the question “Is Mr Coot bald?” *could* be a philosophical question, but it depends on the intention of the questioner.

c. What is the intention of the questioner and what is the context in which the question has been asked?

I have argued that it is a mistake to consider philosophical questions in isolation. Philosophical questions are thought-provoking. They open up enquiry, rather than closing it down with a single answer. Instead of an answer, more questions will arise. However, whether a question provokes enquiry depends upon the intention of the speaker, and how one goes about answering the question. Before we ask a question, we have to think about possible answers. That is, we have to think about how we would go about answering this particular question. It is not easy to determine what good philosophical questions are. It very much depends on the intention of the questioner, on the context and the circumstances. This is crucial to finding out when questions are philosophical, and to decide whether *children’s* questions are philosophical (See Chapter Three).

Philosophical questions are often called ‘open’ questions. ‘Closed’ questions, on the other hand, are the sorts of questions that have a definite answer. It might require a great deal of knowledge to answer the question, but we know more or less where to look for the answer, and how to go about

answering it (Leeuw, 1991, pp. 7, 8). Put that way, most questions teachers ask could be categorised as 'closed'. They themselves already know the answers to the questions they ask their pupils. The process of answering the question is often the game of guessing-what-is-in-the-teacher's-head.

However, the distinction between 'open' and 'closed' questions is more problematic than at first sight. As P4C proponents L Splitter and A Sharp have pointed out, a teacher might believe that she knows the answer, but still treat a closed question as an open one. They give the following example:

"A teacher might ask: "When did the Second World War end?", with one specific answer firmly in mind. But...the students' responses might reveal that they are thinking along different lines. They might ask "What do you mean by 'end' – the last battle or the signing of a peace treaty?" – and so a genuine inquiry might begin, provided that the teacher is prepared to open up the lesson in this way" (Splitter & Sharp, in press).

Their example emphasises the importance of the intention of the questioner when deciding whether questions are 'open' or 'closed'. It is possible for a teacher to ask a traditional philosophical question, such as "What is time?", "Who am I?", or "What is the good life?", claiming that he is doing philosophy, but at the same time believing that he knows the *right* answer. Questions are 'open' only when the questioner has an attitude of *open-mindedness*, and feels puzzled about the question. And this attitude of open-mindedness can turn obviously closed questions such as "When did the Second World War begin" into an open question.

An open-minded attitude is one that never takes anything for granted. Everything we read in books and newspapers, or hear from 'authorities' such as priests, doctors, professors, or teachers, and what we see on television needs to be critically examined. The information coming from these sources is understood as *beliefs*, and the reasons for those beliefs need to be examined, for example, by comparing different sources. Referring to 'authorities', such as The Bible, or someone's social status, are in and by themselves not sufficient justification for a particular belief. Those beliefs can be made our 'own', that is, really understood, only by connecting them to our own experiences through *reasoning*. And we feel really puzzled by a question, and judge it to be significant, only when we have made the question our *own* question.¹⁶

Therefore, in a sense philosophy can help us to guard ourselves against the thoughtless acceptance of tradition, authority, and fashion. This does not mean that philosophers have no beliefs themselves, but those beliefs are 'temporary resting-places'. An attitude of open-mindedness does not imply never making up one's mind, never having any beliefs ('anything goes'), but a willingness to change one's beliefs in the light of further evidence. The critical mind is open to the possibility that other reasons might necessitate the change of beliefs one holds at present.

It is tempting to assume that because philosophy *starts* with doubt, philosophical enquiry necessarily ends that way. Although in philosophy the emphasis is on the process, rather the product of the enquiry, Lipman points out that this does not mean that there is no aim to the process. There is a product, however partial or tentative this may be (Lipman, 1991, p. 229). In other words, philosophical questions do have answers, but they are always temporary. It is exactly when you think you have the *final* answer, that it becomes clear that other questions need to be asked in the light of further evidence, or counter-examples given. Lipman also adds that this process has a sense of direction: it moves where the argument takes it (Lipman, 1991, p. 229).

But if this product is always 'partial' or 'tentative', and there are no final answers or truths, how do we ever *know* anything and act upon it? Historically speaking there is a growing awareness among 20th century philosophers that there are no final answers or universal solutions to philosophical problems. Instead of 'truth', we are left with 'a justification of beliefs'. What many call 'truth', is

what American philosopher Richard Rorty calls “final vocabularies”, “to describe the words we all use to justify our beliefs and actions and lives” (Bernstein, 1991, p. 3).

Bernstein identifies the problem:

“A common opinion of our age is that for any problem an answer exists, and for any answer there exists an expert who can supply it... As the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer has said, ‘modern society expects [the expert] to provide a substitute for past moral and political orientations.’ The result is that practical wisdom and life experience are pushed aside by technical controls” (Bernstein, 1991, p. 3).

Like Lipman, Bernstein urges us not to focus on results, but to realise that philosophy’s significance lies in the process of philosophical enquiry itself, despite the fact that there are no final answers. Van der Leeuw offers as an explanation for the fact that there are no final answers, that philosophical questions are about reality as a whole and our thinking about it, and because reality is itself open, those questions cannot have final answers (Van der Leeuw, 1991, p. 9).

So, it is the process of asking and answering philosophical questions that influences how and what we think, or even directly results into action. For example, asking myself the question “What is the difference between animals and human beings?”, and all the possible questions that could arise in an attempt to answer this question could have *practical* consequences, not only for how I treat animals in the future, but also for my attitude towards, for example, embryos and foetuses, and the possible termination of pregnancies. I will have thought, for example, about the belief that embryos are not human beings yet, but foetuses are, and therefore have the same rights as (other) human beings.¹⁷ This kind of thinking about distinctions and connections that are often taken for granted is what philosophers often do. For example, the difference between animals and human beings as an *absolute* difference has been taken for granted for many centuries.

I conclude, that with philosophical questions there are no established, or prescribed procedures for how we go about answering them. There is bewilderment and puzzlement, and initially the philosopher will focus on the question itself, *as* a means to answer the question, which includes establishing what the questioner wants to know. Usually this involves clarifying certain concepts in the question. One of the examples Van der Leeuw gives is a question children often ask: “Why do I live?” He explains that we have to know more about the possible answers to this question in order to clarify the concepts involved. For example, what do I ask when I ask why I live? Do I ask for the purpose of life? Do I ask about the cause? Do I ask about the meaning of life? Thus it is essential to question the question itself first in order to know exactly what we are asking (Leeuw, 1991, p. 8). Apart from the concept “live”, answering the question would also involve exploring what is meant by “I”. Philosophising involves conceptual analysis.

5. Philosophy as conceptual analysis

Twentieth century philosophers have turned themselves to the study of ordinary language, generally speaking, but more in particular to the study and analysis of concepts – the sorts of concepts we communicate and think with. The term ‘concept’ is in a sense philosophical jargon for what people in ordinary language call ‘idea’ or ‘notion’. The sorts of concepts philosophers are interested in are *abstract* – they cannot be clearly defined, they do not stand for a clear-cut class of material objects that can be defined ostensively, that is, by pointing at them (Emmet, 1991, pp. 71-74). At the same time, these general and abstract concepts are the sorts of concepts “...by means of which we *structure reality*” (Leeuw, 1993, p. 36; my emphasis).

As mentioned above, Ludwig Wittgenstein has played a major role in this linguistic turn within philosophy. As a result, modern philosophers cannot claim to have a special subject or even a specific set of problems to solve. German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) has also criticised the starting point for philosophical reflection. In his most famous work *Sein und Zeit*, he argues that since Ancient Greece, philosophers’ starting point for reflection has been ‘beings’ – *things that are* (“*Seiendes*”), and that they have forgotten to ask the more fundamental question about what all beings have in common that is, that they *are* (“*Seinsfrage*”). What Heidegger and Wittgenstein have in common is their criticism of the history of Western philosophical ideas as a whole, and the need to formulate a new start.

What is left is the activity of ‘philosophising’, or what Heidegger prefers to call ‘thinking’. Philosophy as a handling of concepts is a constant fight in what Wittgenstein calls: “...a battle against the bewitchment of our understanding through language” (Wittgenstein, 1971, par 109).¹⁸

The focus of philosophising as an activity is twofold. First, the object of philosophical enquiry is *ordinary language*, because although we do not always realise it, our mother tongue often deceives us. On the surface, everyday language seems to clarify our thinking about issues, but it is only when examining it in more detail we realise that many ‘habits of thought’ have their roots in ordinary language. An example of such a ‘habit of thought’ is the way we misleadingly talk and think about the mind as if it were a physical object. This issue will be dealt with in more depth in Chapter Two.

Secondly, philosophers also focus on philosophical jargon – the subject (‘body of knowledge’) they have created themselves. Wittgenstein claims that in the past, philosophers have *created* their own problems by developing their own technical jargon, which consists of concepts that have been taken out of everyday language context and given a specific meaning within a particular philosophical framework. In a sense philosophers have been building this ‘house of cards’ since its beginning. An example of such a concept is ‘substance’ (meaning: ‘what stands on its own’) which taken out of everyday context and put in a philosophical framework has had long-term influence on how we, for example, perceive the relationship between mind and body. (See Chapter Two). It left French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) with the philosophical problem how mind and body could interact, if both are entirely different entities that ‘stand on their own’. By introducing mind and body as two substances, he created this philosophical problem himself. Or as Irish philosopher George Berkeley (1685-1753) remarked:

“Upon the whole, I am inclined to think that the far greater part, if not all, of those difficulties which have hitherto amused philosophers, and blocked up the way to knowledge, are entirely owing to ourselves – that we have first raised a dust and then complain we cannot see” (Berkeley, 1977, p. 46).

So apart from the fact that in philosophy there is no agreement about procedures, there is also no agreement about its subject matter (Scolnicov, 1978, p. 392).

What is clear though, is that philosophising is the activity of concept-analysis. What are the implications for the philosophers' 'form of life'? Philosophers analyse a concept by examining the context and circumstances in which it is used, and by connecting and distinguishing it from similar concepts. For example, an analysis of 'dreaming' will include an exploration of what is meant by 'daydreaming', and 'imagining'. So, when examining the meaning of concept 'x', other concepts need to be examined in order to find out what the distinguishing criteria are to call something 'x'. Therefore, the question "What is it that makes 'x', 'x'?" is an overriding question in any philosophical enquiry.

Because we always need other concepts to clarify the concept under examination, it is impossible to have a final answer, or exact conclusion to the philosophical investigation. A second reason for this, is that abstract concepts do not refer to clear-cut concrete entities. Therefore, the subject is intrinsically "fuzzy and blurred". This does not point to philosophy's methodological shortcomings. As Emmet succinctly puts it: "The sands are shifting because it is in the nature of sands to shift" (Emmet, 1991, pp. 78, 79), a view reinforced by Lipman, who claims that a philosopher's job is *inherently* Sisyphean: the problematic is inexhaustible and reasserts itself remorselessly, whatever our efforts" (Lipman, 1988, p. 33).

Philosophical "sands are always shifting", because philosophical concepts, such as truth, justice, beauty, personhood, and goodness are not only so generic that often other disciplines are not equipped to deal with them, but those concepts are also "essentially contestable" (Lipman, 1988, pp. 33, 91). Philosophical concepts are always contestable, because they touch upon the "...difficulties that lurk in the cracks and in the interstices of our conceptual schemes" (Lipman, 1988, p. 33). It is this aspect that clearly sets the philosophical approach apart. Lipman refers here to British philosopher R G Collingwood who has argued that there is a crucial distinction between philosophy's approach to classification and that of other disciplines.

Lipman writes:

"In other disciplines, the object of classificatory inquiry is the establishment of a taxonomy made up of non-overlapping classes, which together comprise completely the domain under investigation. Simply put, the classes are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive of the domain. The philosophical approach, however, is to keep open the possibility that classes are over-lapping" (Lipman, 1988, pp. 32, 33).

This implies that philosophy is the only discipline to accept the fact that the difference between many concepts is often one of *degree*, rather than *kind*, that concepts are often "essentially contestable", and that they are often "fuzzy and blurred" at the edges. For example, when exactly is a certain collection of water molecules, a 'puddle', a 'pond', a 'lake', or a 'sea'?, or, how few hairs do I have to have left in order to be justifiably called 'bald'?

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have taken up John Wilson's challenge to clarify what is meant by 'philosophy'. This clarification is crucial when we want to argue that we can and should teach philosophy to young children. Therefore, one of the first questions that needs to be answered is, what exactly it is that we are teaching? Although Wilson's questions have been indirectly addressed in the different sections of this chapter, I will now look at each question in more detail, which at the same time will partly serve as a way to summarise this chapter.

First of all, what is *philosophical* thinking? Philosophical thinking is thinking about problematic, but significant, abstract concepts. These are the sorts of concepts we use to think and communicate with, and we also use them as a basis for our actions. We use them in everyday life. They are central and common.¹⁹ All of us use those concepts to make sense of the world we live in, or, put differently, to structure reality with. This is the reason philosophers are not able to stop philosophising, because these concepts we think about and use all the time. Examples of such concepts are: 'time', 'space', 'fairness', 'justice', 'death', 'causality', 'person'. We all have our own views on these matters. Sometimes they are just more explicit than at other times.

Let me give an example. When I step in my car, I assume that my opening the door will give me access to my car (I firmly believe in this causal chain of events). I also know this car belongs to *me*, and, therefore, I have the *right* to use it. I start the engine which uses unleaded petrol (I care about the environment), and I drive to the Family Planning Clinic, where my eight weeks old foetus will be aborted, which is legally possible, but I also believe it to be morally justifiable, since this creature is not a person yet.

Another concept philosophers think about is 'thinking'. They are puzzled about what it means to think. In contrast to psychologists who are interested in *how* we think, philosophers enquire about what thinking *is*. Also, philosophers strive for autonomous thinking, that is, thinking without so-called 'epistemological authorities' – the sort of authorities, such as priests, professors, scientific evidence, encyclopaedias, that people use to justify their beliefs without further questioning. This is possible because of an attitude of open-mindedness. An open-minded attitude is one that never takes anything for granted.

Secondly, what counts as a *philosophical* question? I support Wilson's insistence that philosophy teachers should be clear about what it is that makes questions philosophical, in order to know what the 'right' questions are to ask, but also in order to encourage students to ask the 'right' questions.

The surest symptom of a philosophical question is that we do not know how to go about answering it – there are no clear guidelines or generally agreed methods for philosophers to use. Philosophical questions are general and mysterious, which explains our initial bewilderment. I have argued that instead of wonder as the starting point for philosophical enquiry, the term 'reverence' is more suitable, because of its pointing at a crucial feature of what it is that makes questions philosophical, that is, the intention and the attitude of the questioner, and, most importantly, an attitude of open-mindedness. Furthermore, there are two other criteria for deciding whether a question is philosophical – the question should not be 'closed', that is, mere information-seeking; and the enquiry has to make sense.

It follows from this that it is impossible to decide whether a question is philosophical by looking at the question alone. Implicit in those criteria is the necessity to make an initial attempt to answer the question, because it is only then that we can, for example, say that the question makes sense, or that we can find out the intention of the questioner. Also, we have to focus on the question itself to clarify the question and to find out what the questioner wants to know. Usually this involves clarifying certain concepts that have been used in the question.

Thirdly, what counts as a *philosophical* truth? And how do we know we have got something *right* when doing philosophy? Philosophy is a particular way of doing things – a ‘form of life’. Built into this notion is relativism, there is no paradigm ‘form of life’. For example, what we mean by philosophy nowadays is quite different from what it was in Ancient Greece. What ‘truth’ is, or what is the ‘right’ way of doing things, has been established within the framework of a particular form of life.

Also, we cannot say that we have got it ‘right’ in philosophy by finding the ‘right’ or ‘true’ definition. Philosophical concepts are always contestable, because other concepts are always needed to clarify the concept under examination. It is, therefore, impossible to have a final answer, or exact conclusion to any philosophical investigation. A second reason for this, is that abstract concepts do not refer to clear-cut concrete entities, therefore, the subject is intrinsically ‘fuzzy and blurred’.

Historically speaking there is growing awareness among 20th century philosophers that there are no final answers or universal solutions to philosophical problems. ‘Truth’ is what Rorty calls “final vocabularies”, that is, the language we use to justify our beliefs. It does not follow, however, that there is no aim to the process of philosophical enquiry. There is a product, albeit partial and tentative.

I analysed Kitchener’s use of the Wittgensteinian notion of philosophy as a ‘form of life’ in order to show that academic philosophy in itself and without further argument cannot be used as a paradigm for judging whether other practices of philosophy can genuinely be called philosophy. Philosophy as practised with children is a criticism of the way philosophy is usually taught in academic settings. This coincides with a 20th century critique from philosophers within academic philosophy itself. Ludwig Wittgenstein was one of them. His philosophical critique amounted to the fact that there was no specific subject left reserved for philosophers only. What already has been referred to as the philosophical ‘body of knowledge’, that is, the specific subject studied by academic philosophers and students in philosophy, consists of: concepts taken out of ordinary language but given specific meaning in philosophical frameworks (e.g. ‘substance’, ‘matter’); and the systematised answers given to philosophical questions by famous philosophers.

Many philosophers nowadays prefer to focus on philosophising – the activity of *doing* philosophy. I argue that *students* in philosophy, *ought* to be doing what all philosophers do when they do philosophy, that is, ask philosophical questions and analyse concepts with an attitude of open-mindedness, because without those activities there would never have been philosophy (whatever defined) in the first place. The former activities are a *necessary* condition for the latter. In fact the activity of questioning and concept-analyses is the very heart of the philosophical enterprise, and not the written response to or memorising the answers given by the great philosophers.

Etymologically ‘philosophy’ means ‘love of wisdom’, and what we *can* say about wisdom is that it does not consist of memorising answers given by others. One cannot be wise for somebody else. The paradigm for ‘doing philosophy’, which is not the same as ‘applied’ philosophy, but philosophy *practised* as a form of life, is Socrates. He has shown that philosophical concepts can be clarified only by each person for herself connecting abstract philosophical concepts to concrete experiences. Philosophising is an activity no one can do for somebody else.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter One

- ¹ The abbreviation 'PwC' is used throughout this work to refer to the practitioners of philosophy with children. The term 'P4C' is used as an abbreviation for the proponents of the 'Philosophy for Children' programme developed by Matthew Lipman and colleagues from the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) in the USA. 'PwC' stands for a larger group of people than 'P4C' because not all children's philosophy teachers believe the IAPC material is the best educational material with which to introduce young children to philosophy.
- ² As I will argue in Chapters 2 and 6, the P4C programme does indeed ignore the wider structural context in which thinking occurs. Examination of the everyday language we use, reveals a rich array of assumptions we generally take for granted. But these display a typically Western, analytic way of thinking, not only about the world, but also about our own thinking. For example, our thinking about thinking as a biological phenomenon taking place in the brain, with its division of right and left hemisphere is just one such an example. The language we use to talk and think about our thinking is metaphorical. This has far reaching consequences for how we evaluate the quality of children's thinking, and how and what we should teach. This will be further explored in coming chapters.
- ³ No brochure published by the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) defines what is meant by 'philosophy'. It mentions only that "conceptual analysis plays a major role" in the P4C programme, and the kind of thinking that is involved is "not just any kind of thinking", but "...thinking that is skilful and deliberate, thinking that employs relevant criteria, is self-correcting, and is sensitive to context...it is *critical thinking*." (IAPC brochure, 1996, pp. 1, 2.)
- ⁴ Of interest is the idea that "...different philosophers tend to have different conceptions as to the nature of their chosen discipline". The consequences for education would be that we might end up with a large variety of educational materials with which to teach our children in schools. What would coincide with one philosopher's definition of philosophy, would be rejected by another philosopher. The possibility of just one particular programme developed by a single philosopher covering all definitions would seem highly unlikely.
- ⁵ This is my translation from the German: "*So sagst du also, dass die Uebereinstimmung der Menschen entscheide, was richtig und was falsch ist? - Richtig und falsch ist, was Menschen sagen; und in der Sprache stimmen die Menschen überein. Dies ist keine Uebereinstimmung der Meinungen, sondern der Lebensform.*"
- ⁶ This is my translation from the German: "*Was die menschen als Rechtfertigung gelten lassen, - zeigt, wie sie denken und leben.*"
- ⁷ This is my translation from: "*Was ist dein Ziel in der Philosophie? - Der Fliege den Ausweg aus dem Fliegenglas zeigen.*" This is highly relevant when thinking about the reasons why children should have the opportunity to philosophise (Chapter 8); and the pedagogy of philosophy with children (Chapter 4).
- ⁸ It is sometimes said that what philosophy is, is that which is practised in philosophy departments. But it is not that simple. For example, which department should be taken as a paradigm? There are substantial differences between different departments even in the

same country, let alone in different parts of the world. For example, the philosophies of Karl Marx and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are hardly taught at all in England, but do belong to the philosophical ‘body of knowledge’ in, for example, the Netherlands. Another example is the feminist critique of departments that focus solely on male philosophers.

⁹ This issue will be further addressed in Chapter Two.

¹⁰ In contrast to the ‘Early Wittgenstein’, which refers to his completely different picture/correspondence theory of language expressed in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

¹¹ ‘Philosophical counselling’ can refer to at least three things:

- When I use the term here, I am referring mainly to the brainchild of German philosopher, Gerd Achenbach. A typical session aims, not to solve problems, but to clarify and revitalise the thinking that may have become rigid. The counsellor and the client reflect systematically upon a problem. Questioning is central to the process, the answers are less important. See: Gerd B Achenbach, *Philosophische Praxis, Schriftenreihe zur Philosophischen Praxis*. Bd I. Köln, Jürgen Dinter, 1987. Ad Hoogendijk, *Spreekuur bij een Filosoof*. Utrecht, Veen, 1988.
- Those connected with PwC tend to regard it as transferring its typical pedagogy to a counselling situation, e.g., building a community of philosophical enquiry where those taking part explore open-ended questions together. This could be useful in group therapy sessions.
- London-based Philadelphia Association emphasises philosophical enquiry and its relationship to psychotherapy. Their courses include the phenomenologist’s critique of psychotherapy. See: Cooper, Robin. *Thresholds between Philosophy and Psychoanalysis: papers from the Philadelphia Association*. London, Free Association Books, 1989.

¹² For a more extensive description of ‘metaphysics’, see Footnote 14.

¹³ This is my translation of: “*Ein philosophisches Problem hat die Form: Ich kenne mich nicht aus.*”

¹⁴ According to many philosophers the term ‘metaphysics’ refers to the *place* of Aristotle’s ‘first philosophy’ in the edition of *Andronicus of Rhodes* - simply “the books that come after the books on physics” = “*ta meta ta physika*”. From: *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. by Richard Mc Keon. 2nd ed. Chicago, Univ of Chicago Press, p. 268. In this work Aristotle examines ‘Being as Being’. Ever since the Ancient Greeks, there has been a tendency for this kind of dualistic thinking: the distinction between, on the one hand, the ‘real’, but invisible metaphysical reality, empirically inaccessible, and, on the other hand, the accessible world of appearances – i.e., the world as it *appears* to us, but not *really* is (the physical world). Metaphysics has negative connotations in present day post-modern thinking, which has a tendency to rid philosophy of dualistic presuppositions. Beautifully expressed in the following metaphor from Robert Pirsig in: *Lila; an Inquiry into Morals*. 1991. p. 66: “Metaphysics is not reality. Metaphysics is *names* about reality. Metaphysics is a restaurant where they give you a thirty thousand page menu and no food.”

¹⁵ These criteria are not *sufficient* for calling a question philosophical. There can be “generally agreed” criteria that have implicit assumptions built into them. In that case they would deserve philosophical enquiry.

¹⁶ In philosophy, cognition and emotion are *interdependent*. The cognitive element consists of asking philosophical questions and reasoning about the possible answers. However, such

questions are not 'open', which is, a necessary condition for questions to be called philosophical, if the questioner does not *feel* puzzled about these questions. Philosophical questions also have the characteristic of causing 'initial bewilderment', because we do not know how to start answering the question. Philosophers *feel* bewildered, and judge the questions to be so important, that they continue to attempt to answer, sometimes the same question, for years. For example, Margaret Donaldson reports on the question that puzzled Einstein for 10 years: "If I were to travel with a ray of light, what would I see?". From her book: *Human Minds; An Exploration*. London, Penguin, 1993, pp. 9, 10.

¹⁷ In medical terms, an 'embryo' is called a 'foetus' (meaning 'young one') at the eighth week of pregnancy. From: Elizabeth Fenwick. *The Complete Johnson & Johnson Book of Mother & Baby Care*. London, Dorling Kindersley, 1990, p. 15.

¹⁸ This is my translation of: "*Die Philosophie ist ein Kampf gegen die Verhexung unsres Verstandes durch die Mittel unserer Sprache.*"

¹⁹ The 'three Cs' of philosophical concepts - that they are 'central', 'common' and 'contestable' - I have taken from Australian philosopher and PwC proponent, Laurance Splitter.

Chapter Two

WHAT IS 'THINKING'?

STRUCTURE

1. Introduction.
2. Beetle-in-the-box; post-modern critique of dualism.
3. Metaphors we think with.
4. Metaphors of the child's mind.
 - a. the mind-as-an-eye metaphor;
 - b. the growth metaphor;
 - c. the conduit metaphor.
5. Summary and Conclusion.

1. Introduction

Philosophy with Children remains misunderstood, maligned even. Richard Miller, for example, discusses the resistance he has encountered in convincing the so-called 'sceptics', that real philosophising is possible with young children (Miller, 1986). Even reading transcripts or watching a videotape of a good philosophy class does not shake the sceptics' belief that the discussion cannot be called philosophical. The disbelief is expressed in remarks like 'They were just talking, just wasting time'.

Miller argues that this negative attitude must be a result of prejudice or a lack of philosophical training. By prejudice he means the subjectivity with which teachers focus on children's low-quality remarks. But this barely scratches the surface of the problem. Understanding the benefits of teaching philosophy to young children depends largely upon our understanding of what it means to 'think'.

As I will argue in this chapter, I believe scepticism surrounding philosophy with children (PwC) stems from a deeper reason, found in the history of ideas itself. There is indeed prejudice – not the superficial kind fed by ignorance, but that which is imbedded in the everyday language we all use. The current meanings of concepts in language arise from the historical development of ideas. It is this which gives language its meaning. Philosophical training aids recognition of these presuppositions, but is by itself not sufficient to convince the sceptics, among which there are even trained academic philosophers.¹

The language people use when they think is the same language used to criticise PwC. In other words, to criticise PwC, a language is being used which is already saturated with philosophical ideas and presuppositions. Therefore, the best defence against sceptics of PwC is what I would call a 'philosophical striptease', to reveal the presupposed meanings of concepts such as 'thinking', 'mind', 'inner states', etc.

Why focus on these concepts in particular? This is best explained by giving an example of one of the criticisms I have come across as a teacher of philosophy in primary schools. When teaching a group of seven and eight year olds, their 'usual' teacher – hostile to the idea of teaching children philosophy – presented me with the following, as she called it, "reservation": "In a philosophical discussion children are only expressing what they already think."

It seems implicit in her (not unusual) belief that thoughts are stored in a sort of warehouse of ideas, out of which they pick the appropriate ones to engage in a philosophical discussion. It is already 'there', and needs only to be expressed. Therefore, in PwC, no learning (in the sense that nothing new is added) takes place, except perhaps a practice in formulating one's thoughts in public. For this reason, many teachers judge philosophical enquiry with children to be a good exercise in speaking and listening. But no more than that.

If the sceptics are correct, and thinking does happen in this way, then philosophical enquiry is just one more input among others, with the sole advantage of offering a kind of input which is of a philosophical kind. But this does not help us much, because the value of philosophical input is not easily seen by non-philosophers (Miller, 1986, p. 47). Sceptics take the view that discussing such topics as 'what it means to think', or 'whether it is possible to think without a brain', has no connection with imagining, for example, what it is like to be a computer, a rock, a cat, or a jellyfish.
² Given the fact that most teachers do not see the relationship between everyday issues and philosophy; and given what I believe is their presupposition of what it means to think, it is understandable if their attitude towards philosophy is hostile.

To demonstrate the variety of benefits PwC has to offer, the philosopher's task is first to show the importance of philosophy for everyday life, and, secondly, to emphasise the need to invalidate prejudices about what it means to think. In Chapter One, I have already argued that philosophical concepts are central and common to everyday living, a point that will be taken up again in Chapter Five. In this chapter, however, I will focus on the metaphors we use when we think about (children's) thinking, and when we think and talk about 'the mind'.

This might prove to be less easy than it might seem. As J. Glenn Gray points out in her introduction to Martin Heidegger's *What is called thinking*: "There is always a struggle to advance a new way of seeing things because customary ways and preconceptions about it stand in the way. The situation is similar to learning a foreign language: forgetting our mother tongue is the chief difficulty" (Heidegger, 1968). Or, as contemporary French philosopher, Jean-François Lyotard, puts it: "We have to unlearn what we have learned" (Lyotard, 1992, p. 117).

In this chapter I will challenge the belief that children do not learn much in a philosophical discussion for the simple reason that thoughts already have to be 'there'. This belief presupposes a certain conception of the mind (or perhaps the brain) as the seat of our thoughts. Much of our everyday language is metaphorically structured, and it is this language that dichotomises our thinking about thinking, and our thinking about the mind. At the same time it underlies much of modern – as opposed to post-modern – educational practice.

In Section 3, and especially Section 4, I will elaborate on the metaphors we judge children's thinking with. But first of all, in Section 2, I will explain what I mean by post-modernism. Ludwig Wittgenstein's ideas expressed in his influential book *Philosophische Untersuchungen* have been one of the main inspirations for the emergence of post-modern thought. I will elaborate on one particular argument in this milestone of twentieth century thinking, to show how he rejects body-mind dualism, because it is this dualism that is assumed by the sceptic; the dualistic belief that children do not learn much through structured talking, because thoughts are created in the privacy of the 'inner' self.

2. Beetle-in-the-box; post-modern critique of dualism

Fernando Leal and Patricia Shipley claim that many people including scientists are sometimes, even unknowingly, Cartesian dualists. They offer as a psychological explanation the tendency in human beings to "...make an unbreachable gap between themselves and everything else, particularly other people; in abstract, and somewhat psychoanalytic, language, a split between self and not self" (Leal & Shipley, 1992, p. 34).

American philosopher Richard Rorty explains this urge to divide the world up into the mental and the physical by referring to intuition and common-sense, which is *metaphysical*, because "...it involves a method of knowing about the world prior to and untouchable by empirical science" (Rorty, 1980, p. 18).

Linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson, on the other hand, explain the need for dualism by referring to what they describe as one of human beings' basis instincts: *territoriality*. They explain:

"We are physical beings, bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins, and we experience the rest of the world as outside us. Each of us is a container with a bounding surface, an in-out orientation. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects...[but we also]...impose this orientation on our natural environment" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 29).

Whatever our reasons are for holding this dualism, Leal and Shipley claim, it is very clear in our inner dialogue, and they call it therefore "deep dualism" (Leal & Shipley, 1992, p. 34), for it is not a mere theoretical stance, but it has *practical* consequences for how we treat people, and is therefore not merely a harmless doctrine.³

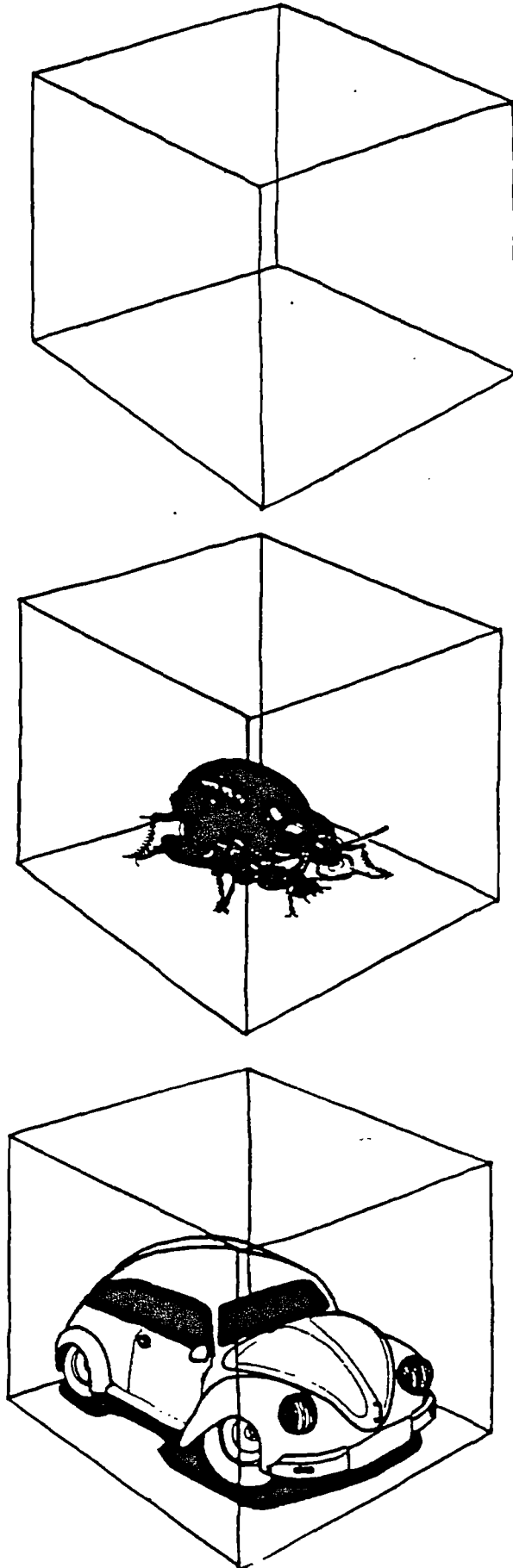
What is meant exactly by the *Cartesian dualism*, Leal and Shipley are referring to? The term refers to French philosopher René Descartes, who is often called 'the Father of Modern Philosophy'. He lived in the seventeenth century and settled the notion of the mind – as a separate entity, located in 'inner space' – firmly in Western philosophical tradition, that is, the mind as a *substance* in which mental processes occur. To quote one of Descartes' most famous passages:

"I am a thinking thing, or a substance whose whole essence or nature consists in thinking. And although...I have a body to which I am very closely united, nevertheless... it is certain that I, that is to say, my mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it" (Descartes, 1968, p. 156).

Descartes had borrowed the notion of 'substance' from Aristotle, as one of the categories with which we structure reality. Anything that has independent existence, or can 'stand on its own', such as stones, chairs and trees, is a substance, as opposed to skills, emotions or colours. As Leal and Shipley point out, problems arise when we want to categorise very small objects, such as molecules or atoms, or very large objects such as the earth or the universe (Leal & Shipley, 1992, p. 35). Despite this difficulty, for most people the way in which material objects exist is the paradigm for deciding whether something exists (is real) or not.

So, according to Descartes the world consists of two different kind of substances: *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. The latter is "...the normal Aristotelian kind, the material object", whilst the former is "...consciousness or mind – in Kant's celebrated phrase, "this I or he (or she) or it which thinks" (Leal & Shipley, 1992, p. 35). This transcendental self ' is what people often refer to as their 'fundamental "me"', their 'core', their 'I', the 'whatever-it-is that makes them the person they are'.

Figure 1.
(Illustrations by Meg Jones.)



This powerful metaphor can be applied to mind-body dualism. If we substitute 'mind' for 'beetle' and 'body' for 'box', it makes clearer the relevance of the beetle-in-the-box argument for showing that the mind can no longer be understood as a container of thoughts out of which those thoughts have to be 'excavated', because we use the word 'beetle' meaningfully (i.e., I am understanding other people) independent of the fact that there *is* a beetle or not in the box. Whether there *is* a mind or not, becomes irrelevant for what it means to think. We are first of all analysing a concept, 'thinking', and not a phenomenon, that is, a thought. If we look at the circumstances in which people use words such as 'mind' and 'thinking', we find that the context in which those words are used reveal their meaning without involving metaphysical dichotomies.

In other words, a concept like 'substance' is *linguistically* useful, but it does not tell us anything about what 'things are like in the world'. Or, as Bertrand Russell puts it:

"'Substance', in one word, is a metaphysical mistake due to the transference to the world's structure of the structure of sentences, composed of a subject and predicate" (Russell, 1970, pp. 196, 197).

What he is saying is that, for example, the structure of the sentence "My mind is blank" makes us believe that there is this thing (mind) in the world that has a quality (blankness), and that this quality exists apart from the substance (mind). Wittgenstein would agree: we call some mental state 'hope', 'love', 'expectation', 'feeling' or 'thought' because of the context in which it is used. It is the *context* that gives words their meaning: "A smiling mouth *smiles* only in a human face."

But, surely, we have privileged access to our own thinking? We can lie about our thoughts, or conceal them – have secrets. We believe the thoughts we have are not identical with what we bodily express, e.g., the stories we write, the things we say, or our facial expressions.

Wittgenstein acknowledges that we *do* have privileged access to our own thinking, but he denies the possible *ontological* implications – the mind as a substance, as *res cogitans*. We are the authority as far as *knowing* about our thoughts is concerned, but this authority is epistemological (about how we know) and not ontological (about the material that we know). Hence, the mind is not an entity in this world, although the concept 'mind' has meaning in our language.

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Richard Rorty shows how Heidegger adds a historical dimension to this Wittgensteinian deconstruction of Cartesian dualism on which I will elaborate in Section 5 below. This historical dimension enables us to distance ourselves from "outworn vocabularies and attitudes," says Rorty (Rorty, 1980, p. 12).

Heidegger also argues that 'thinking' cannot be *defined*, since asking the question, "what does it mean to think?" can only be answered by thinking (Heidegger, 1968, p. xii). *We are* thinking. Not this subject (mind) imprisoned in this object (body) is thinking *about* the world, but we are always already "there", that is, *in* the world. "*Dasein*", translated as "Being-there" 'replaces' the subject (mind) (Heidegger, 1979, par. 2).

Since *Dasein* is always thinking about its own thinking – an *activity* rather than a thing – it cannot take a detached (subject-object) view of itself (that would mean regarding itself as a thing). It is for this reason that thinking does not need external justification: it is not a means to other ends. Thinking is always *underway* ("*Unterwegs*"). It is for this reason that Heidegger believes the teacher-student relationship should be like that between master and apprentice in the medieval guilds – to let "learning occur" (Heidegger, 1968, p. vi).

Both Wittgenstein and Heidegger reject virtually all dualistic vocabularies: subject and object, self and world, self and other, mind and body. Wittgenstein offers us a new theory of meaning, with far-reaching consequences for how to understand concepts. In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger forcefully shows how the metaphysical and epistemological tradition since Plato has infiltrated our language, and has resulted in the dualistic image we have of ourselves, other people, and our relation to the world.

To give an example: I know how to use the word processor I'm working on right now, perhaps even before I knew it was *called* a 'word processor'. It is only after, say a power cut, that I sit back and examine the thing, the computer becomes a distinct object with certain visible properties and physical measurements.

I conclude that to have an idea of what it means to think, we can quite well do without any entity called 'mind'. 'Body' and 'mind' are first of all words in the English language, and not these entities in the world, and the meaning of these concepts does not depend upon their correspondence to an 'outside' world. The mind can no longer be understood as a container of thoughts out of which thoughts have to be 'excavated'. Instead of thinking of mind and body as distinct entities in the 'world', the language we use to describe the mind is increasingly seen as *metaphorical*.

Wittgenstein shows us the *social* component of our thinking; it is a community of language-users that teaches us the concepts we use in thinking. Heidegger adds the *historical* dimension: we have to distance ourselves from a language that presupposes that people can be 'carved up' into those separate entities 'body' and 'mind'. It is time to understand people as thinking, whole persons, being already *in* the world, and not thinking *about* the world. We should not dichotomise the thinker, and what the thinker is thinking about, as if they were separate ontological entities.

3. Metaphors we think with

One feature of modern dualism is *linguistic* dualism (Leal & Shipley, 1992, p. 38). But as I have argued in the last section, the mind is not thinking *about* the world, but is always already 'there', *in* the world, which highlights the non-dualistic, dynamic, interactive character of our understanding and of meaning more generally (Heidegger, 1979).

If the mind cannot separate itself from the world it lives in, then meaning cannot be understood as a fixed relation between words and sentences and what they refer to in the 'outside' world, because this already assumes the possibility of the mind to step outside the mind/world relationship. This is the assumption behind the mind-as-mirror metaphor (Rorty, 1980) – the mind as distinct from and at the same time mirroring nature. As opposed to the idea that the mind is always already 'there'. Grasping meaning is not *passive*, but *active* – it is an *event* of understanding (Johnson, 1987, p. 175).

What we mean by 'mind'¹⁰, 'thinking', 'consciousness' is based on habits of thought engrained in our everyday language. People talk about thinking by using metaphors and similes, because of the difficulty, or perhaps impossibility, to describe it in other words. At the same time we can learn much about people's presuppositions by examining the metaphors they use, because metaphors are – using psychologist Jerome Bruner's words – the "...crutches to help us get up the abstract mountain" (Bruner, 1986, p. 48). And as soon as we are 'up', Bruner points out, we hide the crutches or throw them away by replacing them for formal, logically consistent theories expressed preferably in mathematical terms.

The implications are far-reaching, because metaphors are not just models in our heads, on the contrary: "they keep us moving in a certain direction" (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 11). They are conceptual systems which in term structure our perceptions and actions. Metaphors are what Frank Smith calls "the legs of language" (Smith quoted in Kirby and Kuykendall, 1991, p. 11). Metaphors structure what we perceive, determine how we relate to other people, and the world around us (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3).

In the following, I will use the term 'metaphor' to mean the use of one kind of entity or experience to describe another entity or experience, because of some kind of similarity between them (an adaptation of the definitions given by Jaynes, 1990, p. 48, and Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 178).

Psychologist Julian Jaynes introduces the useful distinction in every metaphor between:

- a. **metaphrand**, that is, the thing to be described (less known).
- b. **metaphier**, that is, the thing or relation used to elucidate it (known) (Jaynes, 1990, pp. 48, 49).

For example, in 'This is the *core* of my argument', the 'core' is the metaphier and the 'argument' is the metaphrand.

The power of metaphors is not only such that certain aspects of reality are sometimes highlighted, while at other times they remain hidden (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 10, 156, 163, 178, 179), but they are also what Jaynes calls 'an organ of perception' in that they 'literally create new objects' (Jaynes, 1990, p. 50). For example, in the phrase "seeing a solution to a problem", the metaphrand is the 'obtaining of the solution', the metaphier is 'sight with the eyes', and what is created in the process is 'the mind's "eye"', and 'mind-space' – the space in which the seeing is going on.

Metaphors of the mind

I have argued in the last section that there is no such 'thing' as the mind. However, many people believe that the mind can be located somewhere in the body. A favourite place is to locate the mind in the head, but some philosophers prefer other places. Aristotle, for example, located thought just above the heart. It is tempting, though, to locate the mind in the head. One reason for this is that physical damage to the brain can have an effect on thinking processes in a way that physical damage to other parts of the body does not. Another reason for locating the mind in the head is that in introspection we look 'inward', at a point or space behind our eyes. Psychologist Julian Jaynes argues, however, that such a space does not exist anatomically, and its location is arbitrary – judging from reports of near death experiences, whereby people regaining consciousness have looked at themselves lying in bed from the corner of a ceiling (Jaynes, 1990, p. 46).

Jaynes concludes that despite the fact that the mind is not located *in* the head, parts of my brain are being used when I am conscious. He compares it with riding a bicycle. When riding a bicycle, we use parts of our brain. However, the bicycle riding does not go on inside our head (Jaynes, 1990, p. 46). Jaynes expresses a popular view among philosophers. It is the non-materialistic view that although the brain is a necessary condition for thinking, thinking cannot entirely be explained by referring to chemical reactions occurring in the brain. For example, philosopher Suzanne Langer argues that in the mind there is a constant dialectic of sensory and imaginative activity – a making of scenes, acts, beings, intentions and realisations. And it is only human beings who can speak of such "experiences". So the brain "...gives off electrical energy through chemical reactions; the mind lives and feels and experiences" (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 15).¹¹

The following are some well-known metaphors of the mind:

- The **attic** metaphor. This metaphor sees the mind as a place to collect ideas worth keeping and exploring. With a torch hidden corners can be highlighted and ideas can be rediscovered (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 13).
- The **computer** metaphor. This metaphor highlights the mind's ability to store and retrieve bits of information.

Dan Kirby and Carol Kuykendall explain:

"Such a model explains thinking as the taking in of information bit by bit and storing it, first the short term memory with its very limited capacity, and then organising and shunting information into long term memory through some kind of filing system. Information is then retrieved by accessing through a mysterious central processor somewhere in the brain" (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 13).

- The **kaleidoscope** metaphor. Alrich Neisser compares the mind with a kaleidoscope so the brain makes sense of "...new information in terms of mental maps or schemes or frames already in place. Sudden flashes of brilliance can be explained as newly formed maps or the recombination of existing information to new patterns." These mental maps are not like photographs in a gallery but "...rather as an elaborate group of lights that flash first one way and then another, creating patterns by altering their circuitry" (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 14). Despite the fact that the human element is missing, Kirby and Kuykendall do prefer this metaphor to the others, because they feel that it gives the mind the power to create its own meanings.

So far, examples have been given of quite well-known metaphors of the mind. I would like to concentrate now on metaphorical language that is so embedded in our culture that we are not even

aware of its metaphorical character. We even call it 'literal language'. However, it is this language that feeds and shapes our thoughts and actions, and is all the more powerful because we are unaware of it. Examining those metaphors gives us insight into the philosophical presuppositions of our everyday language. It has far-reaching consequences for education – some of which will be addressed in the next section.

The first step consists of examining the metaphorically structured language of the attic, the computer, and the kaleidoscope metaphor. What is it that those metaphors have in *common*? The mind is *seen* as a *place* where ideas can be *collected, explored, discovered, or highlighted* with a *torch*. The mind *is* also a *place* where information can be *stored, retrieved, and taken in*. The mind *has* a *short and long* term memory with a *limited capacity, a filing system*, and there is *access* to a *central processor*. The mind *uses* *mental maps*, and these maps are like a *group of lights that flash* first one way and then *another, creating patterns by altering their circuitry*. In short, what these metaphors have in common is that we talk about the mind as if it were a physical object. The human body is an often used metaphier in metaphorical language.

Many people fail to recognise the metaphorical character of the use of words such as 'is', 'short', 'central', 'in', and 'has' – seemingly a *literal* use of language, but these metaphors already assume 'thinking' or the 'mind' to have physical characteristics.¹² An example of this ignorance is the confidence expressed by Kirby and Kuykendall in getting closer to a definition of 'thinking', but making the mistake of using the same kind of metaphorically structured language as used in the three well-known metaphors of the mind mentioned above. Their conclusion is that "...thinking is *whole, not piecemeal...*" (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 17; my emphasis).

Thinking is the 'making of meaning', and with 'making' they mean, in what they call its "most *literal* sense" (my emphasis), that in "making sense" and "making up our minds". Thinking, they believe, is the process of the mind creating its own understanding by putting things together in its own way (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 18). It is for this reason that they offer as an alternative for the three metaphors above, the metaphor of the mind as an artist, comparable with the well-known image of the mind "...as an enchanted *loom* weaving the *stuff* of life into a one of a kind *tapestry* of *ever-changing* meanings" (my emphasis).

My criticism is that they still talk metaphorically about the mind as if it were a physical object. This is very clear in their alternative metaphor of the mind offered with the use of words such as 'loom', 'weaving', 'stuff', 'tapestry', but also in understanding the verb 'make' in 'making up our minds' as literal, as if non-entities (minds) can 'make' anything.

A similar point is made by Jaynes, who draws our attention to the fact that "metaphors of the mind are the world it perceives" (Jaynes, 1990, pp. 2, 3). What he means is that, for example, the first half of the 19th century can be characterised by great geological discoveries. In geological terms a record of the past is 'written' in layers of the earth's crust. At the same time in the history of psychology and philosophy of mind, the idea gained popularity that consciousness consists of different layers and different depths – take for example the notion of 'subconscious'. However, when chemistry took geology's place as the popular science in the middle of the 19th century a similar shift in our thinking about the mind can be noticed: "...subconscious as a boiler of straining energy – when repressed pushes up and out into neurotic behaviour" (Jaynes, 1990, p. 3).

Similarly, in an interview on television, philosopher George Steiner commented on Sigmund Freud's metaphor of the mind:

"Ego. Id. Super-Ego is a Vienna house of three stories. You've got the basement, you've got the living quarters, and you've got the attic with all the secret objects, memories and haunting dust. This is a very odd analogy. He sees

the consciousness of men in terms of middle-class, Austrian, Central-European architecture.”¹³

Again, what these examples show is how our thinking about the mind is directly related to our thinking about the physical world around us.

In the most important book dealing with this issue in recent years, *Metaphors We Live By*, the authors George Lakoff and Mark Johnson give an overwhelming number of linguistic examples of words, phrases, and sentences, which, although commonly regarded as a *literal* use of language, seem to be metaphorically structured. Their examples show how our conceptual system is grounded in a constant interaction with our physical and cultural environment, and therefore that meaning is not ‘disembodied’ – it is related to the fact that we ‘have’ (non-dualistic language: ‘are’) bodies. ‘Disembodied meaning’ refers to the idea that meaning is independent of anything human beings do, either in speaking or in acting (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 199). Lakoff and Johnson, on the other hand, claim that metaphors not only structure our everyday language. They also structure our thoughts, attitudes, and actions.

For my purposes, the most relevant metaphorical structuring they mention, is that of the **ontological** metaphor, which imposes the structuring of entity and substance onto our experiences – as a result of the fact that we have bodies, and interact with our physical environment. They argue:

“We experience ourselves as entities, separate from the rest of the world – as containers with an inside and an outside. We also experience things external to us as entities – often also as containers with insides and outsides. We experience ourselves as being made up of substances...”

Moreover,

“...when things have no distinct boundaries, we often project boundaries upon them – conceptualizing them as entities and often as containers...” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 58).

It is for this reason that we understand the non-physical, such as mind, time, ideas and emotions, in terms of the physical, and we do this for the sake of clarity and for human purposes. The reason being that,

“Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them – and, by this means, reason about them... Human purposes typically require us to impose artificial boundaries that make physical phenomena discrete just as we are: entities bounded by a surface” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 25).

In other words, the advantage of talking and thinking about the mind in physical terms is that it can be understood as an object, as part of a *causal* relation, as consisting of parts (e.g., different cognitive faculties), as being ‘slow’ or ‘fast’. Such properties can be important requirements for the mind to be fit as an ‘object’ of scientific study.

Many metaphors reflect the way in which we understand the mind in physical terms. For example, the ontological metaphor mind-is-an-object is present in understanding the mind as a *machine* (“My mind is not *working* today”), the mind as a *brittle* object (“He cracked up”), and the mind as a hollow object, *full* of thoughts and ideas. Lakoff and Johnson claim that it is important to realise that,

“These are not inherent objective properties of ideas and of the mind. They are interactional properties, and they reflect the way in which we conceive of mental phenomena by virtue of metaphor” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 214).

One significant conclusion that can be drawn from Lakoff and Johnson’s theory is that the common-sense distinction between the literal and figurative use of language is extremely dubious. If most of our ‘literal’ use of language is metaphorically structured, then most scientific and philosophical discourse is metaphorically structured too. The language we use to construct *rational* arguments and theories is already structured by human ‘embodiment’. The significance of their work is that it highlights the bodily roots of human thinking and language.

4. Metaphors of the child's mind

What are the educational implications of the idea that so much of our so-called 'literal' language is metaphorically structured? In educational literature about children's thinking, concepts are used such as '*meta-cognition*', or '*higher-order thinking*' (Fisher, 1990; Lipman, 1991; my emphasis).

In schools, teachers, educational psychologists, special needs teachers, parents, and others, use all kinds of metaphors to evaluate children's thinking. They talk about children being *slow* or *quick* thinkers, making *deep* or *superficial* remarks, having *in-sight* in, or *under-stand* problems. Children might have a *fertile* imagination when they work with *mind-bending* problems. Some of them are *reflective*, and have a *sharp*, or *keen* mind, and a *razor* wit. Others are *losers*, or are as *thick as a brick*.

What these metaphors have in common is that the 'mind', or 'thinking', is thought of as a physical object, as, for example, in describing someone's mind as 'keen', or 'bright'. We can call ideas 'razor sharp' only because we understand them as cutting instruments (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 51). There is another metaphor that has had dramatic educational implications – the time-is-money metaphor. But this falls outside the scope of my current research¹⁴.

a. The mind-as-an-eye metaphor

A metaphor with far-reaching educational implications is the mind-as-an-object metaphor, of which the mind-as-an-eye is one example. The underlying assumption is that what we think we know best about the world is what we can perceive, and this explains why we use the human body, and especially the human *eye* often as a metaphier. The Western tradition in philosophy has understood our primary relation to objects as one of knowledge – with *optics* as its paradigm: one “stares at” (*begaffi*) at the world rather than “doing” something with it (*hantieren*) (Heidegger, 1979, paras. 12, 13).

Rorty, too, attributes this important insight to Heidegger; the idea that in Western philosophy ‘knowing’ has been modelled on ‘seeing’; which is another way of saying that ‘knowledge of’ (which is a relationship between persons and objects) is prior to ‘knowledge that’ (which is a relationship between persons and propositions) (Rorty, 1980, p. 146). Consequently, the Platonic origin of the notion of ‘objectivity’ can be traced back to the identification of the reality of a thing with its presence before us (Rorty, 1980, p. 162).

Rorty explains:

“... it helps to think of the original dominating metaphor as being that of having our beliefs determined by being brought face-to-face with the object of the belief (the geometrical figure which proves the theorem, for example). The next stage is to think that to understand how to know better is to understand how to improve the activity of a quasi-visual faculty, the Mirror of Nature, and thus to think of knowledge as an assemblage of accurate representations” (Rorty, 1980, p. 163).

It is for this reason that the language we use to describe children’s thinking is predominantly visual: some children are *brilliant* or *bright*; their thinking can be *clear-headed*, when they, for example, *see* solutions to problems. Other examples: ‘It *looks* different from my *point* of view’, ‘I’ve got the whole *picture*’, ‘Let me *point* something out to you’, This argument is *clear* or *transparent*’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 51). This is the *heart* or the *core* of my argument in this chapter and can be *seen* only with the mind’s ‘eye’. I hope it is going to be an *eye-opener* for the reader.

As pointed out in the last section, the abstract concept actually created in the mind-as-an-eye metaphor is ‘mind-space’, that is, the space in which the ‘seeing’ is going on, which makes it possible to talk about mind-space as if it were an actual physical space. It makes it possible to talk about *approaching* problems from different *points of view*, when *grappling* or *struggling* with its difficulties, etc (Jaynes, 1990, p. 55).

Similarly, we describe children’s thinking in the same way as we describe the behaviour of physical objects in space. We talk about children’s thinking being ‘quick’ or ‘slow’, their minds can be ‘open’, ‘broad’, or ‘narrow’. They can be ‘occupied’ with problems, which they can get ‘off their minds’, or ‘put out of their mind’ by talking about it. This is something we ‘have to bear in mind’ or ‘keep at the back of our mind’ as teachers. In teaching, we start off by trying ‘to find a common ground’ in order to know ‘where the child is’, so that we can ‘point things out’ or ‘give them new ideas’.

What are the educational implications for talking about childrens’ minds in this manner?

The consequences of what Lakoff and Johnson call **orientational** metaphors are significant for how we think and talk about the mind. Orientational metaphors can vary from culture to culture, and they organise a whole system of concepts with respect to one another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp.

15, 16). They give the concept 'mind' a spatial orientation, such as: up/down, in/out, front/back, on/off, deep/shallow, central/peripheral. As an example Lakoff and Johnson give:

"The discussion fell to the emotional level, but I raised it back up to the rational plane. We put our feelings aside and had a high-level intellectual discussion of the matter. He couldn't rise above his emotions" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 17).

They explain the physical and cultural basis of these metaphors as follows:

"In our culture people view themselves as being in control over animals, plants, and their physical environment, and it is their unique ability to reason that places human beings above other animals and gives them control. CONTROL IS UP thus provides a basis for MAN IS UP and therefore for RATIONAL IS UP" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 17).

The way in which concepts in our culture are metaphorically structured reflects our most fundamental values. For example, the metaphorical structuring 'More is up' underlies our values of 'progress' and 'knowledge increase', but there are cultures where 'balance' or 'centrality' plays a more important role. There is great cultural diversity in the way concepts are orientated (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 24), and it is worth exploring to what extent deliberately changing these orientations will result in different educational values. For example, by focusing on 'balance' the emphasis in schools could be less on the rational and more on the emotional side of the child, to counter-balance the emotional neglect taking place at present (Egan, 1989) – an issue that will be addressed at greater length in later chapters.

We often create metaphors when encountering difficulties in answering a question. One such a question is "What is the mind?", and we answer it with "it is like...". In this creation of similes and metaphors language grows. However, the danger is, that when those metaphors are an integral part of language, we forget that initially those metaphors were the "crutches" – to quote Bruner again – "to help us get up the abstract mountain". In the process we remain unaware of the presuppositions that result from this 'forgetfulness' of the history of how language grows through metaphors. As Jaynes puts it:

"Abstract words are ancient coins whose concrete images in the busy give-and-take of talk have worn away with use" (Jaynes, 1990, p. 51).

Dan Kirby and Carol Kuykendall point out the reductionism involved in understanding the mind in terms of a thing, such as, for example, a computer. This metaphor does not explain such phenomena as intuitions, hunches and gestalts "...the sudden-discovery experiences we know are essential to productive thinking" (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 14).

Machine metaphors allow us to focus on different aspects of mental experience, such as: on-off state, certain level of efficiency, productive capacity, internal mechanism, source of energy, operating condition, and they give us an overpowering metaphorical model of what the mind is (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 28). It is so integrated in our everyday language that most people believe that expressions such as "He broke down" or "She cracked up" are direct descriptions of mental phenomena, being either true or false.

To think of the mind as a computer reduces learning to: "...a process analogous to recording symbols in the mind for later retrieval." The human mind is very inefficient and unreliable at this in comparison say with a computer disc, according to Canadian educationalist Kieran Egan, who argues that human minds do not learn or remember like a computer. Although sometimes we do store facts discretely, more often we do not "lodge these as discrete data in our brains". Instead,

these data mix in with “the complex of shifting emotions, memories, intentions, and so on that constitute out mental lives” (Egan, 1992, p. 50). He concludes:

“Whether and how we learn and retain these particular facts is affected by the complex of meaning-structures we already have in place, which in turn are affected by our emotions, intentions, and so on” (Egan, 1992, p. 50).

Kirby and Kuykendall claim that we do think like computers when we remember phone numbers and addresses and social security numbers, but reliving experiences through memory is not. Imagination and wonder cannot be programmed.

The result is that the metaphor widens the gap between thinking and feeling. It makes it possible for most educational research to happen in isolation, i.e., away from real human situations, as Margaret Donaldson has pointed out in her criticism of Piaget’s experiments in her book *Children’s Minds*. In it, Donaldson argues that the computer metaphor tends to create “Apartheid of the mind”, that is an artificial separation of feelings and thoughts. In Nelson Goodman’s words, “Emotion and cognition are interdependent. Feeling without understanding is blind and understanding without feeling is empty” (Goodman quoted in Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 14).

American philosopher Martha Nussbaum would agree. In an interview, she comments that Aristotle insists:

“... that emotions such as love, grief and anger are based upon reasoning about what’s valuable, and in fact are suffused with reasoning. Emotions are ways of perceiving something as invested with value – you would not grieve for a loss if you didn’t see the person or thing you’ve lost as having value” (Kearney, 1995, p27).

Kirby & Kuykendall, too, emphasise a more holistic picture of what it means to think: more appropriate metaphors of the mind would be metaphors that picture the mind as human and not as machines, because:

“We know from our own experience that thinking flourishes in an environment where thinkers are free to voice convictions and beliefs and feelings. Our primary assumption about thinking is that thinking and feeling are one” (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 14).

Another consequence of thinking and talking about the mind as if it were a physical object is the creation of beliefs such as those implicit in the teacher already quoted in the introduction. About her pupils’ performance in philosophy class she commented: “In a philosophical discussion children are only expressing what they already think.” Implicit in her words is the belief that thoughts are ‘stored’ in a sort of ‘warehouse of ideas’, out of which children pick the appropriate ones when engaged in a philosophical discussion. This creates ‘in’ my mind a picture of a ‘Lucky Dip’. The thoughts are already ‘there’ – they ‘exist’, and need only to be ‘taken out’, ‘ex-pressed’. Therefore, in PwC, no learning takes place – in the sense that nothing new has been ‘added’, ‘brought into existence’, or has been ‘created’. The only educational value lies in the practice of formulating one’s thoughts in public – at most a good exercise in ‘Speaking and Listening’, which is one of the Attainment Targets of Britain’s *English National Curriculum*.

Thinking is seen to be *static*: that is, thoughts happen in the ‘inner’ spheres of the mind before and/or after interaction with the ‘outside’ world has taken place. Philosopher Richard Rorty argues that the metaphor of the mind as a mirror ‘containing’ various more or less accurate representations of nature is responsible for this view of thinking, and knowledge more generally speaking, since Descartes (Rorty, 1980).

Modern science has retained this Cartesian conception of the mind – as a ‘thinking thing’ with a separate existence from the body. Knowledge is possible, according to this view, by representing – as British philosopher John Locke argued – ‘outer space’ (the ‘external’ world) in ‘inner space’ (the Cartesian mind) (Benjamin & Echeverria, 1992, p. 67).¹⁵

This metaphor of the mind is implicit in phrases like:

“If thou thinkest twice before thou speakest once, thou will speak twice the better for it” William Penn (1693).

or:

*“Really, now you ask me.” said Alice, very much confused. “I don’t think -”
“Then you shouldn’t talk,” said the Hatter.
Lewis Carroll. Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865).*

So, metaphorical talk about the mind is largely responsible for commonly held beliefs about what knowledge and teaching is in our culture. It is the teacher’s job to ‘fill’ children’s ‘empty’ minds with knowledge, that is, beliefs that accurately represent or mirror the world as it is (Benjamin & Echeverria, 1992, p. 64). As a result the teacher’s role is much more active than that of the pupils. Pupils’ more passive role is restricted to the taking of notes, the memorising of ‘facts’, listening to and answering questions asked by the teacher. And their knowledge is evaluated individually most often by paper and pencil tests.

PwC proponents Martin Benjamin and Eugenio Echeverria sum it up nicely:

“Knowledge, in this view, is acquired passively rather than actively, is more the product of careful observation than of pragmatic exploration. It is also largely individualistic: any singular knower with a properly receptive mind is, in principle, capable of acquiring knowledge of the world by him-or herself” (Benjamin & Echeverria, 1992, p. 65).

So, the influence on education has been the belief that knowledge can be acquired not only individualistically, but also passively, that is, through contemplation and not through action (Leal & Shipley, 1992, p. 42; Benjamin & Echeverria, 1992, p. 67). They continue:

“Education, therefore, has two principal aims: first, to transmit all of the important knowledge that has been acquired firsthand by those who have preceded us (what Russell has called ‘knowledge by description’), and, second, to make sure that the student’s mind remains accurately aimed and highly receptive – so that it is itself capable of acquiring ‘knowledge by [direct] acquaintance’” (Benjamin & Echeverria, 1992, p. 65).

As a result, there are certain features of modern education that can be characterised as follows:

1. A difficulty in appreciating the value of dialogical enquiry in knowledge acquisition.
2. A problem in accepting that individuals are learning *because* and not *despite* of being in a large group setting.
3. A reluctance to accept the importance of encouraging children to question rather than the answering of teacher’s questions in acquiring knowledge.

I will address these issues in the following chapters, in which I will argue against a static Cartesian picture of the mind, and instead will argue for a post-modern education, which appreciates that thoughts are not so much created 'in' mind-space, but are created in the *dynamic* process of interaction itself – while talking we actually create new ideas and (re)structure what we already know.

Another consequence of the prevailing metaphor of the mind as a mirror in our culture is the belief in *certainty*, as a result of the fact that in the past each time we did not know the 'right' answers to questions, we found 'answers' through metaphors instead. This quest for certainty and the search for a foundation of knowledge is also very Cartesian. It is the belief that there is "...an essentially transcultural, historical, indubitable fixed point, or bedrock, from which a more or less foolproof method will trace those appropriately related beliefs that can be then be embraced with as much certainty as is the foundation" (Benjamin & Echeverria, 1992, pp. 65, 66).

We still find this Cartesian belief in the scientific methods of modern science. Apart from pinpointing the theories of one particular philosopher as the cause for our present day *modern* beliefs (as opposed to *post-modern*), Martin Benjamin and Eugenio Echeverria, also see its roots in Enlightenment thinking more generally speaking. They write:

"The idea, rooted in the main project of the Enlightenment, is to find out what nature or the world is really like – wholly independent of any of our particular aims or preconceptions – and then to have nature or the world dictate the shape of our individual lives and social, political, and economic institutions" (Benjamin & Echeverria, 1992, p. 66).

In our culture one commonly held belief is the idea that *literal* language is language that consists of words and sentences that describe, or correspond with, 'the world as it really is'. Many thinkers (Lakoff, Johnson, Rorty, Jaynes, Bruner, etc) nowadays argue that much of this so-called literal language is in fact metaphorically structured. And after having thrown away – to use Bruner's vocabulary – those "crutches", that is, after having forgotten its metaphorical character, we claim that we *know* the answer, that we *understand*.

However, Jaynes argues that 'understanding' itself is a metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson agree: the metaphor 'understanding is seeing', whereby ideas are light-sources, and discourse is a light-medium (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 51).¹⁶ When we say that we understand something we are, in fact, saying that we have found a more familiar metaphor. The feeling of familiarity that then emerges is the feeling of understanding, Jaynes claims (Jaynes, 1990, p. 52). As an example he gives our understanding of a thunderstorm. Is it "a roaring and rumbling about in battle of superhuman gods?", or, is it "experiences with friction, sparks, vacuums and the imagination of bulgeous banks of burly air smashing together to make the noise?"

Jaynes explains:

"Our images of these events of physics are as far from the actuality as fighting gods. Yet they act as the metaphor and they feel familiar and so we say we understand the thunderstorm."

In the same way, when talking about 'consciousness', 'thinking', or the 'mind', our *understanding* of it can be characterised by a search for metaphors that feel familiar to us. Again, this familiarity is very much influenced by the culture and the time in which we live. In twentieth century Western countries there is great resistance in trying to understand something that cannot be observed, measured, or located in space. The advantage of understanding something as a thing is that it must have a location. Therefore, in principle, it can be measured, observed and possibly controlled. This

is the underlying temptation of understanding the mind as a thing, forgetting that the spatial location of thinking is a metaphor.

Understanding of the metaphorical structuring of our language also highlights the basic assumption in much scientific talk and experiments about the significance of the brain in how we think. One good example is the fashionable division of the right and left side of the brain and its supposed effect on how we think. The habits of materialistic thought are deeply engrained in our present day language and actions,¹⁷ but, it is reductionist to think about the mind as a physical thing in the world. Although there may be good reasons for believing that the physical entity – brain – is a necessary condition for ‘thinking’, it does not explain how we *experience* our thinking (see Section 3).

If ‘understanding’ consists of finding more familiar metaphors, then the problematic of understanding ‘consciousness’, the ‘mind’ or ‘thinking’, becomes immediately apparent. As Jaynes argues, how can there be anything in our immediate experience that is like immediate experience itself? Or, as Heidegger has pointed out, we always already find ourselves thinking (Heidegger, 1968, p. xii) *in* this world, and not *about* this world, so it would be impossible to define ‘thinking’, for this would mean to think about ‘thinking’ as if it were an object.

Jaynes’s explanation for our physicalistic talk about mental issues is that consciousness and the ‘external’ world we are conscious of are very similar in structure, that is, “highly organised” (Jaynes, 1990, pp. 58, 59). So, what he is saying is that linguistic dualism exists, because there *are* these two different entities. But, as I have argued in Section 2, the mind cannot step outside the mind/world relationship. The mind cannot separate itself from the world it lives in. Therefore, meaning cannot be understood as a fixed relation between words and sentences and what they refer to in the ‘outside’ world, because this already assumes the possibility of the mind stepping outside the mind/world relationship. The mind, however, is always already ‘there’.

The belief that meaning *is* the relation between words and sentences and what they refer to in the ‘outside’ world is called ‘objectivism’. Truth, in that view, is the *correspondence* between language and the world (the intrinsic nature of things). The roots of this objectivism are in our everyday language, and it makes us believe that truth is attainable through contemplation and *rational* thinking divorced from the subjective, human element.

The main beliefs on which objectivism rest are:

- The ‘world’ (‘external’ or ‘objective’ reality) is made up of objects with properties independent of us human beings.
- We have knowledge or understand these objects through categories and concepts which correspond to the object’s intrinsic properties and the relationships between them.
- Words and sentences have fixed meanings, i.e., they ‘fit’ reality.
- There is a clear distinction between literal and figurative language (including metaphorical speech), and literal language is preferable in obtaining objective knowledge.
- To be objective means to be rational, and to be subjective means to be irrational, i.e., giving in to the emotions.
(Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

It is the above mentioned *mirror* metaphor which is responsible for this picture of knowledge and truth. Critics of the mirror metaphor claim, on the other hand, that truth is always relative to

understanding (based on a non-universal conceptual system) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 226, 227). Rorty points out that “certainty ... [is] ... a matter of conversation between persons, rather than a matter of interaction with non-human reality (Rorty, 1980, p. 157). And, according to Kreitzberg, this mirror metaphor has reduced education to “...questions of precise and minute objectives accompanied by atomising scientific knowledge into logical and sequential proportions for achieving efficiency in finding the right answers to the right questions” (Kreitzberg, 1995, p. 24), instead of asking what exactly the aims are of education.

b. The growth metaphor

Another inconsistency in Jaynes' explanation of the physicalistic structure of language is his claim that, on the one hand, there *are* these two entities, and at the same time, he maintains that the verb 'to be' is of a metaphorical structure. He explains that the concept of 'being' is generated from a metaphor about breathing and growing. 'To be' comes from the Sanskrit verb 'bhu', which means 'to grow', or 'make grow', whilst 'am' and 'is' have evolved from the same root as the Sanskrit 'asmi' which means 'to breathe' (Jaynes, 1990, p. 51).

The growth metaphor is another example of the mind-as-an-object metaphor, for it compares the mind with a physical thing – a living organism. On the other hand, being a *living* thing, rather than a lifeless thing, such as a mirror or a computer, means there could be significant differences. Now what could be the consequences of thinking about 'being' in terms of 'breathing' and 'growing' as, for example, in the statement 'George *is* a slow thinker'?

In our culture to *be* a slow thinker, intelligent, artistic, etc, suggests the impossibility, or, at least, unlikelihood of *change* – George just thinks slowly; there is not much a teacher can do about it. Living organisms, however, constantly and visibly change. So why is it that in our Western culture the verb 'to be' has such a static meaning?

In an article by British philosopher Trevor Curnow I have found a possible answer to this fascinating question. According to Plato, we cannot have 'real' knowledge of the world as perceived through our senses. This 'sensible' world is in a constant state of flux, and is therefore,

"...inadequate as a foundation [for knowledge], and he [Plato] rejected it in favour of the 'intelligible' world, the world of the Forms, from which all change has been excluded. For Plato the stable is the static, being not becoming. The Forms therefore have a fixed identity. If it is not possible to step into the same sensible river twice, there is nevertheless, for Plato, the assurance that there is an intelligible river which never changes. In the intelligible world, everything most definitely is what it is, and not another thing. On the basis of such a stability is erected the structure of a logic which operates in terms of a strict either/or. Such a logic is possible precisely because identity is not problematic" (Curnow, 1995, p. 25).

Aristotle took up Plato's logic of being, but applied it to the sensible world (the world of becoming) and as a result problems emerged, as illustrated by the Problem of the Ship of Theseus, discussed in Chapter Three.

Curnow claims that Aristotelians have focused too much on the logic of either/or, neglecting at the same time the notion of *potentiality* – an important notion in Aristotle's thought, for, as Curnow argues:

*"It is scarcely surprising that a botanist should want to say not only that the seed is not the plant, but also that the seed **may** become the plant. The notion of potentiality as developed by Aristotle short circuits the strictures of either/or, and recognises the existence of intrinsic relations over time. It is not accidental that the seed becomes a particular kind of plant, rather than just any kind of plant. Potentiality provides the basis for a logic of becoming which rejects the tyranny of either-the-same-or-different. What the notion of potentiality does is to point towards a different conception of identity"* (Curnow, 1995, p. 26).

What Curnow seems to be saying is that a conception of identity that includes the notion of potentiality fits in more with a world of becoming, than with a world of fixed identities. Transferred

to educational practice, the value of this reading of Aristotle is the notion of potentiality in children's thinking. It is often believed that children are either 'bright' or 'stupid', either 'quick' or 'slow' thinkers. This either/or thinking has its roots in Plato's logic. It gives little hope for a child like George, who, according to his teacher, happens to *be* a slow thinker.

For change it would be necessary to rid ourselves of – what philosopher Henri Bergson called – “cinematographical habits of our intellect”. Bergson, who lived around the turn of the century, argued that ‘becoming’ did not conform to the Greeks’ thought habits and use of language. They regarded reality as something unchanging – immutable. So they dismissed ‘becoming’ as unreal. Bergson writes:

“...Our habitual manner of speaking, which is fashioned after our habitual manner of thinking, leads us to actual logical deadlocks – deadlocks to which we allow ourselves to be led without anxiety, because we feel confusedly that we can always get out of them if we like: all that we have to do, in fact, is to give up the cinematographical habits of our intellect. When we say ‘the child becomes a man’, let us take care not to fathom too deeply the literal meaning of the expression, or we shall find that, when we posit the subject ‘child’, the attribute ‘man’ does not yet apply to it, and that, when we express the attribute ‘man’ it applies no more to the subject ‘child’. The reality, which is the transition from childhood to manhood, has slipped between our fingers. We have only the imaginary stops ‘child’ and ‘man’, and we are very near to saying that one of these stops is the other, just as the arrow of Zeno is, according to that philosopher, at all the points of the course. The truth is that if language here were moulded on reality, we should not say ‘the child becomes the man’, but ‘there is the becoming from the child to the man’. In the first proposition, ‘becomes’ is a verb of indeterminate meaning, intent to mask the absurdity into which we fall when we attribute the state ‘man’ to the subject ‘child’. It behaves in much the same way as the movement, always the same, of the cinematographical film, a movement hidden in the apparatus and whose function it is to super-impose the successive pictures on one another in order to imitate the movement of the real object. In the second proposition, ‘becoming’ is the subject. It comes to the front. It is the reality itself; childhood and manhood are then only possible stops, mere views of the mind; we now have to do with the objective movement itself, and no longer with its cinematographical imitation. But the first manner of expression is alone conformable to our habits of language. We must, in order to adopt the second, escape from the cinematographical mechanism of thought...” (Bergson quoted in Emmett, 1991, p. 68).

And Bergson concludes:

“No wonder, then, if philosophy at first recoiled before such an effort. The Greeks trusted to nature, trusted the natural propensity of the mind, trusted language above all, in so far as it naturally externalises thought. Rather than lay blame on the attitude of thought and language toward the course of things, they preferred to pronounce the course of things itself to be wrong” (Bergson, quoted in Emmett, 1991, pp. 67, 68).

‘Either/or’ thinking gives a reductionist view of what people ‘are’. It ignores the ‘movement’, the process of constant change and growth people go through, and makes it difficult to think in terms of potentiality and what is possible. People are not isolated entities; in stead they are constantly changing through interaction with their environment. Also, the cells that make up human bodies are constantly changing too. So a view that pictures the mind in terms of constant growth and change

would give a more dynamic, interactive idea of what the mind 'is'. Also, metaphors of growth bring about associated ideas of 'enrichment', 'nurturing', and 'development' (see footnote 14). It gives hope to educationalists for what is *possible* when teaching thinking.

Estonian philosopher Peeter Kreitzer is less optimistic. He sees the growth metaphor as typical Enlightenment thinking in the sense that it reduces human development to natural biological analogies. This metaphor emphasises "...the objectively discoverable laws of the imminent unfolding of human nature, independent of any cultural or historical givens" (Kreitzer, 1995, p. 24).

It is the growth metaphor that is inherent in child developmental theories that assume all children to pass through a fixed amount of closed stages of development leading teleologically towards a definite terminus. This was assumed, for example, by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (see Chapter Three) – a similar growth process to what turns an acorn into an oak tree. It makes not only children's physical growth, but also their mental growth predictable, observable, quantifiable, in short, an object for scientific study.

Kreitzer argues that the mind-as-mirror metaphor pretends that knowledge is "unconflictual" and "separated from the subjective interests of the learners" (Kreitzer, 1995, p. 25). This is why, he says, the knowledge presented in schools fails to reflect the real conflicts between habits of thought within scientific and social thinking. It also ignores the influence of unpredictable, transformative changes.

To argue against this deterministic view of child development which is assumed in modern educational practice, Kreitzer maintains that:

"The unfoldment of the human nature is also influenced by the self-determination of an individual. It is not justified to derive the aims of education directly from some prefixed description of human nature but by communicatively arranged negotiations involving some unpredictability and indeterminacy" (Kreitzer, 1995, p. 25).

c. The conduit metaphor

Another significant metaphor for educational practice, because it structures our language about thinking, is the conduit metaphor. It is a complex metaphor, because it consists of three other metaphors, namely:

- ideas (or meanings) are objects.
- linguistic expressions are containers.
- communication is sending.

The speaker puts ideas (objects) into words (containers) and sends them (along a conduit) to a hearer who takes the ideas/objects out of the word/containers. For example, 'Jane gave me this idea', 'Words carry little meaning', 'I put my ideas into words', 'The meaning in this book' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 13, p. 206; Kreitzberg, 1995, p. 25; my emphasis).

Also, apart from the spatial relation between form and content in the metaphor 'linguistic expressions are containers', the meanings of those expressions are the *content* of those containers. In other words, with a small content there is little meaning (more is better), and more of form is more of content (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 127).

The traditional theory of meaning, already mentioned in relation to the mind-as-object metaphor (which presupposes the same belief) presupposes that, independent of any context or speaker, words and sentences have meanings in themselves. For the implicit belief is that, when communicating, a speaker sends a fixed meaning to a hearer via the linguistic expression associated with that meaning, and therefore, "...it is possible to objectively say what you mean, and communication failures are matters of subjective errors: since the meanings are objectively right there in the words, either you didn't use the right words to say what you meant or you were misunderstood" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 206).

It is this metaphorically structured language that is responsible for the picture we have of the mind as *receiving* a certain *in-put* – *im-press-ions* (e.g., from teachers, books, parents, friends, television), after which an *inner* digestive process takes *place*, followed by a certain *out-put*, in the form of *ex-press-ion*. The thoughts are already 'there'; they just have to be 'excavated', released. It is this conduit metaphor that underlies much of modern educational practice. Technologies have influenced the way we think about ourselves – the mind and learning in particular – "what you put in is what you get out" (computers, wax-tablets, parchment) (Egan, 1992, p. 49). It presupposes a direct *transmission* of knowledge. Sentences, thoughts and emotions are directly transferred to learners, as is clear in the sentence "I gave you that idea". Peeter Kreitzberg argues that the result is that "[A]lmost no role is left for the learners spontaneous internal self-regulation processes in his knowledge construction" (Kreitzberg, 1995, p. 24).

Margaret Donaldson does not explicitly mention the metaphorical nature of the language we use when talking about 'knowledge', but the following passage refers implicitly to the conduit metaphor. She writes:

"One common but mostly unexamined way of talking about knowledge is as a thing which we receive – an abstract kind of thing, certainly, but having none the less the thing-like property of being able to be handed over. We often speak of 'getting' knowledge as we might talk of getting a refrigerator or a new car – or perhaps of getting praise from someone. Only a manner of speaking? So it is. But it carries the implication, no less powerful for going often unnoticed, that

the knower is passive and that knowledge comes to us ready-made. It may also carry the further implication that the receipt of the knowledge leaves us essentially unchanged: we only 'have' a new possession. The picture thus drawn does not correspond to the way we are" (Donaldson, 1992, pp. 18, 19).

So what are we then instead, according to Donaldson? Like Kreitzer (above), Kieran Egan (Egan, 1988, 1989, 1992), Mark Johnson (1987), Jerome Bruner (1986), and many other contemporary thinkers, she argues for a theory of knowledge in which the knower is not passive, but active in his or her knowledge construction:

"We come to know through processes of active interpretation and integration. We ask questions, which may or may not be put into words and which may or may not be addressed to other people. We have strategies of many kinds for finding out. We struggle – and it can be a long, hard struggle – to make sense" (Donaldson, 1992, p. 19; my emphasis).

Or, as Egan formulates it:

"Each mind is different and is a different perspective on the world. In the process of learning, the student has to fit whatever is to be learned into his or her unique complex of meaning-structures that are already in place" (Egan, 1992, p. 51).

Both, the 'mirror' and the 'conduit' metaphor highlight the epistemic relation between knower and the world, leaving no space, according to Kreitzer, for "democratic negotiations and will formation" (Kreitzer, 1995, p25). What seems to be needed is a revision of those major metaphors. Kreitzer argues that the conduit metaphor should be replaced by the **construction** metaphor, for "The understanding of a message is supposed to be connected to personal meaning" (Kreitzer, 1995, p25). He refers to philosopher, Karl Popper, who has pointed out that there is no fundamental difference between personal and objective knowledge – both are tentative and subjected to continuous revision.

Kreitzer argues that the advantage of the construction metaphor is that it makes it possible,

"...for everyone to hold his own paradigm in order to derive his own naive theories about the phenomena under consideration. In this way the main style of school instruction, 'to give right answers to right questions' is seriously questioned. The questions concerning motivational and personal meaning would become more serious than direct transmission of ready made knowledge atoms" (Kreitzer, 1995, p. 25).

Deep dualism in contemporary thought and action, however, makes it very difficult to accept the view that metaphors not merely *describe*, but *construct* our conceptual system, and, as such, create realities; and that we can change these realities by constructing new metaphors. The former view assumes metaphysical dualism, because what is 'real' is understood to be external to, and independent of, how human beings conceptualise the world.

Metaphors create realities in the sense that they make similarities possible – similarities that would not exist independently of those metaphors. For example, a similarity created by the conduit metaphor and the mind-is-a-container metaphor is that between ideas and food. The conduit metaphor makes us think that ideas are objects and that we get them from 'outside' ourselves, while the container metaphor has established a similarity between the mind and the body – both being containers (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 214). It is for this reason that – like pieces of food – ideas

can 'come into' the body from the outside. Thus, we say "They unthinkingly *swallowed* the Guru's ideas", or "I haven't *digested* all the ideas in this book yet".

Lakoff and Johnson argue that these metaphors are not based on pre-existing similarities, but based on other metaphors influenced by human embodiment, that is, by the fact that we have (are) bodies, and interact with our physical environment and other people of which some will be culturally dependent and others more universal.

They write:

"The view that THE MIND IS A CONTAINER is a projection of entity status with in-out orientation onto our cognitive faculty" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 214).

They continue, that it is important to realise that these are not *objective* descriptions of ideas and the mind, but "...reflect the way in which we *conceive* of mental phenomena by virtue of metaphor" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 163, 214).

5. Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to give the philosophical reasons behind why reading transcripts or watching a videotape of a good philosophy class fails to convince the so-called ‘sceptics’ that these children are indeed engaged in and learning something from philosophical discussions.

The ‘deeper’ reason for believing that philosophy does not teach children to think better, but is merely an exercise in speaking and listening, is based on presuppositions of what concepts mean such as ‘thinking’ and ‘mind’. The sceptic’s thinking is typically dualistic in the Cartesian sense. What this means, and the powerful rejection of dualism through the Beetle-in-the-Box metaphor, indicates what I mean by post-modernism (Section 2).

It was Wittgenstein who powerfully has brought to our attention that we can indeed talk meaningfully about the mind, without assuming its ontological existence as a ‘thing’, a ‘*res cogitans*’ in the world. It was Wittgenstein, who *dissolved* the classic philosophical mind/body problem by examining the uses of the philosophical concepts such as ‘mind’, ‘thinking’ in their everyday use rather than their metaphysical use.

As opposed to assuming the mind-as-object metaphor, I would like to argue, following Heidegger, that thinking is an *activity* rather than a thing, and that therefore it cannot take a detached (subject-object) view of itself (that would mean regarding itself as a thing). We always find ourselves thinking, which highlights the non-dualistic, dynamic, interactive character of our understanding and of meaning more generally. We should understand people as thinking, whole persons, being already *in* the world, and not thinking *about* the world.

In contrast, a critical analysis of most of our talk about the mind and about thinking exposes deeply ingrained modernist habits of thought. We talk about the mind as if it were a physical object, a substance, a thing in the world that we can divide up into parts (e.g., left and right brain thinking), make part of a causal chain, in short: that we can make an object of scientific study. It is for this reason that I have focused on the metaphors we use when we think and talk about (children’s) thinking and (children’s) minds, in order to show how these metaphors dichotomise our thinking – using dichotomies such as: subject/object, mind/body, world/self.

Ridding ourselves from those dichotomies in post-modern discourse – understanding the mind as an activity rather than a thing – implies a rejection of traditional theories of meaning, the kind of theories that assume that meaning is the result of a fixed relation between words and sentences and what they refer to in the ‘outside’ world. This is the assumption behind the *mind-as-mirror* metaphor, and the *conduit* metaphor. It sees meaning as ‘disembodied’, that is, as independent of anything human beings do, either in speaking or in acting.

On the other hand, a closer look at the metaphors we think with and live by has revealed that the fact that we have bodies constantly interacting with our cultural and physical environment, is crucial for understanding language – even the sort of language many people would call ‘literal’.

As a result, the common-sense distinction between the literal and figurative use of language is not as straightforward as it may seem. Most of our so-called ‘literal’ use of language, including scientific and philosophical discourse, is metaphorically structured.

The importance of being aware of those metaphors and what they tell us about our personal assumptions, presuppositions, and values and those of the culture and time in which we live, is that it makes us understand our culture and ourselves better. This is important for educational practice. In teaching for thinking, the metaphorical structure of language makes us think about thinking in a particular way, and that in turn determines how educationalists and others assess children’s

thinking. Being aware of the metaphorical nature of the so-called objective, literal, scientific language of the educational community could dramatically change the claims made by that community.

Deep dualism creates a gap between individuals, their physical environment and other human beings. It has created the illusion that we are masters or mistresses over the environment and other people. I have argued that the mind can no longer be understood as an isolated entity immune to change. The mind 'breathes' and 'grows' in its constant interaction with the environment.

Some of the educational consequences of the metaphorical language we think with can be summed up as follows: the metaphorical language teachers, educational psychologists, special needs teachers, parents and others use to talk about children's thinking presupposes that the 'mind', or 'thinking' is being thought of as a physical object. How that thinking is being evaluated is connected to how physical objects (including our bodies) behave in space. These metaphors can vary from culture to culture. At the same time they organise a whole system of concepts with respect to one another, and express our (educational) values. For instance, 'more' is 'up' in our culture, which is reflected in our belief that more thoughts, more knowledge is better than less, and is measured physically: the amount of facts one has at one's 'disposal', the sum of books one has read, etc.

One physical object the mind is often compared with is the human eye. The metaphor mind-as-an-eye has actually created the abstract concept 'mind-space', that is, the space in which the 'seeing' is going on, which makes it possible to talk about children *approaching* problems from different *points* of view, or for them to have ideas in the *back* of their minds. It makes us think that the mind is like a container, which has made it possible for the sceptic to claim that, "In a philosophical discussion children are only expressing what they already think".

Metaphorical talk about the mind is largely responsible for commonly held beliefs – backed up by modern science – about what knowledge, learning and teaching is in our culture. It is the teacher's job to 'fill' children's 'empty' minds with knowledge, that is, beliefs that accurately represent or mirror the world as it 'is'. Children can acquire knowledge passively through contemplation and individualistically. This is the reason why in schools today little educational value is attached to dialogical enquiry in knowledge acquisition and to the unique role large group settings can have for individual learning.

Also, a Cartesian belief in *certain* knowledge, the existence of right answers to questions, has resulted in the reluctance in education to value the importance of asking questions by pupils in their knowledge acquisition rather than the answering of teacher's questions.

The crippling effect of this metaphorical language with all its culturally bound metaphysical assumptions on children is overwhelming. I believe that a deconstruction of this language is urgently needed. For example, still too many people label children's thinking as 'superficial' or 'deep', and restrict their potential by calling them 'slow thinkers', forgetting that those metaphors are only the "...crutches to help us get up the abstract mountain".

Also, metaphorical language has created an artificial separation of thinking and feeling in organising curriculum content, with insufficient attention to the imagination, emotions, and reverence. Children's active, speculative questioning is not encouraged; instead, answering teachers' questions prevails. Knowledge is not presented as fallible – as the *product* of previous enquiries (with possibly conflicting points of view). The educational need for deconstructing these metaphors will be a recurring theme through later chapters.

The language we use to construct *rational* arguments and theories is already structured by human 'embodiment'. If human thinking and language has bodily roots, then the common distinction between 'rationality' and 'imagination' is less straightforward than it may seem at first glance. By

constructing new metaphors, focusing on notions such as ‘balance’ and ‘centrality’, it may be possible to counter-balance the one-sided emphasis on rationality in education today.

It may result in a more holistic picture of what it means to think, as an alternative for the reductionist habits of Western thought that compare the mind with an object (e.g., a computer). The underlying temptation of understanding the mind as a thing is the great resistance in our culture to try to understand something that cannot be observed, measured, or located in space. The advantage of understanding something as a thing, is that it must have a location, and therefore, in principle, can be measured, observed and possibly controlled.

It may be possible, however, to compare the mind with an object, and still avoid modernist educational values. For example, the growth metaphor understands the mind in terms of a *living* organism. The consequences of thinking about ‘being’ in terms of ‘breathing’ and ‘growing’ (= the etymologically roots of ‘to be’), for example , as in the statement ‘George *is* a slow thinker’ – suggests the possibility of *change*. We would end up with a different conception of identity – not the inherited Platonic one, but a conception of identity that includes the notion of *potentiality* in children’s thinking. People are not isolated entities, and a view that pictures the mind in terms of constant growth and change could perhaps give a more dynamic, interactive idea of what the mind ‘is’. Also, metaphors of growth bring about associated ideas of ‘enrichment’, ‘nurturing’, and ‘development’.

The downside is that the growth metaphor suggests determinism. An acorn *has* to become an oak tree. It does not have the choice to become a weeping willow. In the same way we are influenced in education to think about children’s minds in terms of – “you can only get out what *is* there in the first place” (children are born ‘bright’), and “you get out as much as you put in it”. It does not leave an active role for the learner to *construct* his or her own knowledge. Knowledge comes ready-made, and is transmitted directly (conduit metaphor) from teacher to learner.

It is crucial to explore and create new metaphors that do more justice to the self-determination of an individual in his or her own knowledge *construction*. Leaving space for unpredictability and indeterminacy and the importance of communication in that process of constant growth. I agree with French contemporary philosopher, Jean-François Lyotard, that the mind is not given, but possible (Lyotard, 1992, p. 115).

I also like the way Jaynes reminds us of our temporality, an awareness that possibly could counter-balance present day scientific arrogance when he gives an explanation for why we tend to underestimate the creative power of metaphors. The reason, he says, is that:

“...in our brief lives we catch so little of the vastness of history, we tend too much to think of language as being solid as a dictionary, with a granite-like performance, rather than as the rampant restless sea of metaphor which it is”
(Jaynes, 1990, p. 51).

In later chapters I will examine the consequences of my post-modern critique of the metaphors that dichotomise our thinking as relevant for the teaching of philosophy to children. These consequences are for:

- how we think about concepts such as ‘rationality’ and ‘imagination’ (throughout later chapters);
- the pedagogy of philosophy with children (Chapter Four);
- how we interpret philosophical enquiries with children (Chapter Five);

- what kind of educational material to use (Chapter Seven);
- the desirability of PwC as an integral part of the nursery and primary school curriculum (Chapter Eight).

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Two

- ¹ One such sceptic is John White in his paper *The Roots of Philosophy*. Published in A. P. Griffiths. *The Impulses to Philosophise*. Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992, pp. 73-88. I will respond to his critique in Chapter Four.
- ² Miller is referring to Michael Pritchard's *Philosophical Adventures with Children*, Lanham. University Press of America, 1985, pp. 26-32.
- ³ Leal and Shipley call it *deep* dualism, first because it has such a "profound grip on us", but also, they claim, because it underlies all other dualisms (Leal & Shipley, 1992, p. 35).
- ⁴ 'Transcendental' for Immanuel Kant means 'the-condition-of-the-possibility-of' of having this or that kind of experience. For example, without 'time' and 'space' I could not do any mathematical sum. See: '*Der transzendentalen Aesthetik*' in: Immanuel Kant, I. *Kritik Der Rheinen Vernunft*, pp. 66-94.
- ⁵ This is of crucial importance for deciding what sort of material to use when teaching philosophy. As I will argue in Chapter Seven, Cartesian dualism is inherent in the *Philosophy for Children Programme*, and also in *Laura and Paul*, a specially written novel for the teaching of philosophy by Catherine McCall.
- ⁶ See Chapter One, Section 3, and footnote 10 of the same chapter.
- ⁷ This is my translation of: "...*Angenommen, es hätte Jeder eine Schachtel, darin wäre etwas, was wir 'Käfer' nennen. Niemand kann je in die Schachtel des Andern schauen; und Jeder sagt, er wisse nur vom Anblick seines Käfers, was ein Käfer ist. –Da könnte es ja sein, dass Jeder ein anderes Ding in seiner Schachtel hätte. Ja, man könnte sich vorstellen, dass sich ein solches Ding fortwährend veränderte. – Aber wenn nun das Wort 'Käfer' dieser Leute doch einen Gebrauch hätte? – So wäre er nicht der Bezeichnung eines Dings. Das Ding in der Schachtel gehört überhaupt nicht zum Sprachspiel; auch nicht einmal als ein Etwas: denn die Schachtel könnte auch leer sein. – Nein, durch dieses Ding in der Schachtel kann 'gekürzt werden'; es hebt sich weg, was immer es ist. Das heisst: Wenn man die Grammatik des Ausdrucks der Empfindung nach dem Muster von 'Gegenstand und Bezeichnung' konstruiert, dann fällt der Gegenstand als irrelevant aus der Betrachtung heraus.*" From: Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971, p. 157, par. 293.
- ⁸ This is my translation of: "...*dann fällt der Gegenstand als irrelevant aus der Betrachtung heraus*". See: footnote 5.
- ⁹ This is my translation of: "*Ein lächelnder Mund lächelt nur in einem menschlichen Gesicht*" From: Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971, par. 583. It does not mean, however, that Wittgenstein adopts a Behaviourist point of view. Wittgenstein argues that Behaviourism itself is a metaphysical position. First of all, the behaviourist accepts the Cartesian mind/body dualism, rejects mind as being real, and is then left with human behaviour.
- ¹⁰ There are so many different concepts people use when they talk about 'thinking', such as 'mind', 'reasoning', 'cognition', 'right/left brain', and as Dan Kirby and Carol Kuykendall

point out: our choice of words that we use when we talk about thinking reflects an underlying set of values, not just about the mind but also about teaching and learning. From: Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 11.

11 It is for this reason that I have talked, and will continue to talk, about the 'mind' as distinct from the 'brain' when referring to 'thinking' and 'thinking about thinking'.

12 For a further explanation see Section 4, especially about the metaphorical character of the verb 'is'.

13 *Memento*; George Steiner in an interview with Joan Bakewell. Broadcast by Channel Four, 13 May 1993.

14 In modern industrialised societies, time is seen as a valuable commodity (limited resource). Time is something we can 'have', 'waste', 'save', 'spend', 'invest', 'put aside' or 'borrow', and 'time-is-money' is a metaphor, because we use our everyday experiences with money, limited resources, and valuable commodities to conceptualise 'time'. From: George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. London, University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp. 7-9. The educational implications of this metaphor are pointed out by teacher and journalist Brigidin Crowther, who argues that in the 1980's a new language was introduced in education – with the central idea of the market place. For example, as seeing schools as small businesses, pupils as economic units, and the introduction of competitiveness between schools. Educational language started to centre around buzzwords such as 'efficiency', 'target-setting', 'curriculum audit', 'human resourcing', 'client base', 'winners and losers' and replaced metaphors of growth and cultivation, such as 'to enrich', 'to nurture', 'to develop' (Brigidin Crowther. "Metaphors and Meaning"; In: *Language & Learning*, 1991, pp. 35, 36.). An economically centred ideology entered our minds, focusing on efficiency and productive output, with little place for notions such as self-expression and creativity. Lakoff and Johnson would argue that these changes are not trivial, but embody a major change in educational values and, therefore, actions. The time-is-money metaphor has introduced in education the central idea of the marketplace. Schools and universities are increasingly seen as small businesses competing with each other, and pupils have become economic units.

15 Jaynes points out how Aristotelian, Locke's metaphor of the mind is, namely that of a slate, a 'tabula rasa', empty at birth, but soon filled with empirical information, and accessible through introspection. In: *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (new ed.). Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1990, p. 27.

16 For example: 'I see what you mean'. For more examples, see: Section a. 'The mind-as-an-eye metaphor'.

17 What I mean by 'materialistic thought' is in its philosophical sense – i.e., the view that it is the *matter* of the brain, the physical 'stuff' that determines how we think. This presupposition often remains unquestioned in educational literature about how we should teach 'thinking'. See, for example: Robert Fisher. *Teaching Children to Think*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Chapter Three

CAN CHILDREN DO PHILOSOPHY?

STRUCTURE

- 1. Introduction.**
- 2. The Ship of Theseus.**
- 3. Children cannot do philosophy – objections by psychologists.**
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1. Introduction

The question ‘Can children do philosophy?’ has been answered in the negative by both philosophers and psychologists. On the other hand, believers in the possibility of children’s capacity to tackle philosophical problems give an affirmative answer to this question.

In a paper called *Do children think philosophically?* by a defender of Piagetian theory, Richard Kitchener, a claim is made that young children cannot do ‘real’ philosophy. It has been chosen as a focus point for this chapter as it challenges thoughtfully and extensively many claims made by PwC proponents.

Kitchener claims that although children are capable of doing ‘concrete philosophy’, they are *not* capable of doing ‘abstract philosophy’. This is a distinction not made, but *should* be made by Philosophy with Children (PwC) proponents, he says (Kitchener, 1990, pp. 427, 428). For example, Kitchener argues that Matthews, Lipman, Pritchard and others, show only that children are capable of *concrete* philosophising when giving examples of children talking about: ‘death’, ‘dreaming’, ‘bravery’, ‘time-travel’, ‘the material composition of cheese’, ‘the ship of Theseus’, ‘sharing the television set’; and questions such as: ‘Do computers think?’, ‘Are people animals?’, ‘Do plants have feelings?’.

He claims, that those philosophical dialogues are about concrete examples, rather than general principles, and that children cannot grasp the *principle qua principle* underlying a concrete case, e.g., the ontological principle of what constitutes identity over time in the case of the ship of Theseus.

Is it indeed true to say that children cannot abstract from concrete examples to make more general conclusions and apply those to other, similar, concrete cases, make analogies, etc.?

In an attempt to answer those questions I will take a closer look in Section 2 at one of those examples in particular – the Ship of Theseus. I have deliberately chosen this example as it has been taken from Gareth Matthews’ work, a PwC proponent who argues, in various publications, that young children *are* philosophers. Empirical evidence brought forward by Matthews consists of spotting the resemblances between what young children say and think, and what has been said in the past by well-known philosophers. I will argue in Section 4, that this connection does not constitute sufficient empirical evidence to support the claim that children can do philosophy – a point I will return to in Section 6.

But first, in Section 5, I will take a closer look at some of the arguments philosophers have brought against the possibility that children can do philosophy. Two questions will dominate this section: ‘What is peculiar about children that makes us ask this question in the first place?’, and, ‘Are there good reasons for saying that young children’s thinking – under the age of 10 – is indeed different from that of older people?’ The answers to these questions have implications for the teaching of philosophy to children.

This will prepare the ground for the next two chapters in which I will return to the question of chapter one ‘What is philosophy?’ – this being central for answering the questions as to whether philosophy with children is ‘real’ philosophy, and whether young children can do it.

2. The Ship of Theseus

The Ship of Theseus is one of the subjects of a philosophical dialogue among children facilitated and reported by Gareth Matthews (Matthews, 1984, pp. 37-48). The Ship of Theseus was an ancient ship of which all the boards had been replaced one by one over a period of time, until all the boards were new. This raises the philosophical problem whether this ship can still be called the same old ship, and, if not, *when* and *why* the old ship ceased to exist. Also, the problem of identity is further complicated by the fact that the planks which have been taken out could be used to construct a second identical ship (Cumow, 1995, pp. 25,26).

Donald¹ formulates the problem as follows: "Is the ship the old ship, or is the ship just a model, a replica, a copy of the original ship?"

David-Paul has an answer: "If there are still a few planks left, it's the old ship", and adds: "Perhaps the spirit of the old ship would still be there. It's not really a new ship if it's still got some of the old timbers...and the spirit of the old ship."

Matthews asks the group the following question:

"Suppose we replaced those last boards. Suppose the captain came along one day and said those boards are rotten, too. And they replaced them. Suppose the only thing left from the old ship is the keel. How many say it is still the old ship?"

David-Paul: "I think the ribs and the keel are the most important parts of it."

Now, could we say that the keel is the most important part of the ship?

David-Paul: "No. People never see the keel anyway."

Donald disagrees: "It doesn't matter whether you can see it. That doesn't mean it isn't the old ship, just because people can't *see* that it is" [my emphasis].

Matthews admires Donald's insight – his ability to distinguish between knowing whether it would *be* the old ship, from whether people would *recognise* it as the old ship (Matthews, 1984, pp. 41, 42).

This is the difference in philosophy between *ontological* and *epistemological* criteria for identity over time. Another example may clarify this distinction. One could say that I am the same person as the one who killed my cat yesterday, because my fingerprints are on the weapon. I can be *identified* as the same person as the one who killed the cat on the grounds of epistemological criteria – i.e., how do we *know* such-and-such?

But if I want to know whether I *am* the same person as I was yesterday, more is needed. I need ontological criteria, i.e., what *makes* me the same person as I was yesterday? Thus, chopped up as cat food² it could be established that it was *me* who was chopped up, after my tissue, teeth, etc., had been analysed in a laboratory. But my thoughts, feelings, etc., belonging to me – this person – cannot be reduced to the sum total of all my bits chopped up.

What Matthews shows is that at least *some* children can make this distinction. But does Donald understand the ontological principle *qua* principle? Could he apply the principle of what constitutes identity over time not only to this particular case of the ship Theseus, but also to other similar cases?

The dialogue that follows shows that the children subsequently use analogies. They transfer the problem to castles (how many bricks can we replace before it is not the same castle any more) and cars (windows, wheels and doors can be replaced but unless the engine stays the same it is not the same car any more). However, these are concrete examples. Would children struggle more if they had to apply this distinction to the more abstract problem of, for example, personal identity?

This issue could be settled perhaps by empirical evidence of children doing exactly that. Matthews reports elsewhere of children making the analogy between the gradual replacements of planks with the gradual displacement of cells in their own bodies (Matthews, 1994, p. 6). But this would not satisfy the critics. Sceptics claim that children would have to show that they can think about the principle itself, like Aristotle did, when he postulated his theory of *substance* (Kitchener, 1990, p. 427). ('Substance' is derived from the Latin 'substantia' and means literally 'what stands on its own'.³)

However, Matthews does not seem too concerned to meet his critics' demands. He settles for less, and argues for a *relative* and not an *absolute* distinction between philosophy for adults and philosophy for children (Matthews, 1978, p. 68). He refuses to use adult philosophy as a criterion for judging the philosophical dimension of children's thinking. Children are *natural* philosophers (Matthews, 1994, p. 6), not *cultivated* philosophers – the two can never be the same, he argues.

The 'cultivated' philosopher cultivates the innocence necessary for philosophising, and can therefore better rationally defend views expressed, but the adult – according to Matthews – has lost a child's natural sense of wonder about the meaning of concepts, which disappears when a person starts to take for granted the difference between the literal and the figurative use of language (Matthews, 1978, p. 72).

Therefore, it would be better to say that Matthews does not claim that children philosophers *are* like adult philosophers, nor does he claim that they *should* be like adult philosophers. He seems to claim the reverse – that adult philosophers would be better philosophers if they had more of the natural innocence of a child' (Matthews, 1978, p. 72).

True or not, what I am more interested in is the presupposed belief of what this 'real' philosophy amounts to that adult philosophers are supposed to be doing' – 'real philosophy' as being the examination of principles *underlying* particular cases. In this century many adult philosophers are critically examining this claim as a result of philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger, who turned their attention to the philosophical presuppositions we acquire through the learning of our everyday language (as I have argued in Chapters One and Two). Also, the philosophical meaning given to everyday concepts, and the invention of new concepts in philosophical discourse, has received much attention in the 20th century.

Relevant here are Wittgenstein's philosophical ideas as expressed in *Philosophische Untersuchungen* – in contrast to his beliefs in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* – that philosophical problems, metaphorically speaking, are like a disease ("*eine Krankheit*"). ° Philosophical problems arise when philosophers are being misled by the superficial grammar of our language, says Wittgenstein.

Applied to the example above, when a police officer asks you: "Please prove your identity" it is possible to be misled into thinking that "identity" is the name of a thing – emphasised by the fact that a usual response would be to prove our identity by *showing* a thing – passport, driving licence, etc. – in response to the demand. It is the language learned from an early age that spreads this 'disease' – i.e., assuming a name presupposes the existence of an object (Curtis, 1985, pp. 10-19; Clark, 1990, pp. 247-265).

What is the cure to this 'disease' of philosophical problem seeking? According to Wittgenstein, it is the task of philosophers, not to *solve*, but to *dissolve* philosophical problems by looking at the everyday use of the concepts involved.⁷

He writes:

"We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose – from the philosophical problems. These are indeed not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking at how our language works, in such a way that it gives us insight in the workings of our language; despite an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by rearranging what we have always known. Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our intellect by means of language" (Wittgenstein, 1958, par 109).⁸

and:

"Don't think, but look" (Wittgenstein, 1958, par 66).⁹

That is, look how words are actually used in everyday language. In other words, it is our misunderstanding of how everyday language actually functions that has created philosophical problems. If we apply this to the example described above, then – following Wittgenstein – we could say that the attempt to find an ontological principle to explain identity over time, in order to postulate philosophical notions such as "essence", "substance", etc., are a blind alley. Philosophers should not ask themselves "What is identity?", but instead concentrate on how words such as "identity" are actually used in everyday circumstances. This would not *solve* the problem, however, for there was no real problem in the first place!

Examining the circumstances in which people use the word 'identity' will reveal that the word has straightforward meanings that do not involve any metaphysical issues at all.¹⁰ The question could be raised "What is the principle underlying $x_1 = x_2$?", in other words, how can we justify the claim that x is the same at time1 as at time2? Now this depends on the context of " x ".

Suppose " x " is a ship. Having booked a world cruise at a travel agency, a tourist's ticket will show the name of the ship and time and place of departure. When at the right place at the right time, and seeing the same name on the physical object resembling what one has learned to call 'a ship', the tourist will board in all confidence that this is the same ship on which the passage was booked. If, on the next cruise 30 years later, the tourist sails on the same ship, this could easily be established, despite the fact that the ship might have become more rusty, dirty, and possibly having undergone alterations. One could find out by talking to the crew, and with the help of photographs, etc.

Now suppose " x " is the ship of Theseus as in Matthews' example. Could it confidently be said that this ship, of which most boards have been replaced, is the same ship as the one built so many centuries previously? Although mentioned by Matthews only in passing (Matthews, 1984, p. 44), I believe that crucial to answering these questions is the notion of *continuity*. As long as the changes are *gradually* undertaken, and the new resembles the old (e.g., same kind of wood is used, the same shape, etc.) there are no problems in identifying " x " at t_1 with " x " at t_2 .

Also, the quantity of boards that can be replaced, before it can no longer be called the same historical object, depends entirely on the criteria used by a particular society for calling objects 'historical objects'. Looking for an ontological principle underlying all those changes – the quest for the 'essence' of the ship, and the difficulty in finding one, could be described as the *creation* of a philosophical problem that will never be solved. The problem is *dissolved*, however, when the concept 'identity' is examined in its everyday use.

So, by taking concepts out of the context of everyday life in which they are used, philosophical problems are created. One such problem is to look at a principle *qua principle*. This 'disease', some

adult philosophers argue, should be transmittable to child philosophers if they are to do 'real' philosophy. Wittgenstein argues – and I agree with him – that this 'disease' should be 'cured' in adult philosophers. Making it a criterion with which to judge children's philosophy is, therefore, insufficient without offering further arguments.

3. Children cannot do philosophy – objections by psychologists

During the second half of this century educational reform has been influenced greatly by Jean Piaget's psychological theories on children's cognitive development. His theories were innovative in the sense that he settled the belief that part of learning is an *active* process. Piaget's child is a "self-constructing organism" (Kennedy, 1992, p. 3). Largely responsible for the development of intelligence, he argued, is exploration and discovery, i.e., children's own actions on the physical world (Tizard & Hughes, 1983, pp. 17, 19; Donaldson, 1978, 1992).

Piaget claimed that children are not philosophers. In "Children's Philosophies" (1933), he writes:

"...the child does not actually work out any philosophy, properly speaking, since he never seeks to codify his reflections in anything like a system" (Piaget quoted in Kitchener, 1990, p. 417; my emphasis).

It is claimed that Piaget – living in French speaking Switzerland and in France – was acquainted primarily with the continental philosophical tradition, described as "pompous, hegemonic, *a priori*, subjective, overly systematic" (Kitchener), and "pretentious" (Matthews) (Matthews, 1984, pp. 117, 118; Kitchener, 1990, p. 417).

Matthews continues by saying that "...analytic philosophy... [is] much more closely akin to the kind of reflection young children are so readily capable of, and indeed, so very good at, than are the much more ambitious styles that Piaget took for a model". I do not agree with what Matthews says about analytic philosophy, because analytic philosophers understand as their primary task the analysis of complex entities (e.g., sentences) into the simple entities (e.g., words) of which they are composed. This in sharp contrast with post-modern philosophers, who maintain that the *context* is crucial to the understanding of simples – simples as such are unintelligible. In philosophy with children there is a constant search for the meaning of concepts by examining the contexts in which the words are being used.

So, Matthews rejection of the kind of continental philosophy Piaget took as a model, I agree with. However, contemporary continental philosophy is very important for PwC, because it has made it possible for PwC to develop in the first place (as I have argued, especially in Chapter Two, by rejecting 'deep dualism').

What Piaget claims is that the sort of philosophy children are not capable of, is philosophy as a *system* of beliefs, i.e., a whole framework of answers to particular philosophical problems – found in the sort of philosophical works written by, not only continental philosophers such as Kant and Descartes, but also by Anglo-Saxon philosopher, David Hume, so much admired by analytic philosophers.

It is true, no child has ever published such a philosophical work (also very few adult philosophers I hasten to add), but that in itself does not prove that children are not *capable* of doing so, for until recently children have never been taught philosophy. However, even if it were true that children cannot produce their ideas in a philosophical system, Piaget had more reasons for assuming that children cannot do philosophy, and for the simple reason that he thought children do not *think* like adults.

In *Le langage et la pensée chez l'enfant* (1923), Piaget claims that children ask different kind of questions at different ages (Elkind, 1974, pp. 45-52). From the age of three, children ask questions, not only to express their wishes, but also to gain information about the world around them. He also points out that their main concern is the naming of things, important for concept formation.

Toddlers point at something and ask “What is that?”. Adults answer those questions by ostensibly defining the objects involved: “This is...a cat, a tree, or a house”.

According to Piaget, soon after they also ask rhetorical questions to express their anger and frustration: “Why do I have to go to bed?”. Towards the end of their fourth year, he claims, children are not merely concerned about the names of things, but they start to experience the world as a mysterious place. They are concerned about the origins of things and death. That is why four and five year olds ask questions, such as “Why do we grow bigger?”, “Where do children come from?”, “Why do people die?”. Piaget identified a third theme around the same age concerning living things in general, expressed in questions like “Why do birds fly?”. Children in that age group believe everything in the universe has a purpose, he claims.

According to Piaget, five and six year olds, on the other hand, will be more concerned with the physical world, with concepts such as ‘space’ and ‘time’. Also, questioning will decrease at the age of six and seven when children’s questions take more the form of adults questions. Those questions will centre round faraway countries, historical persons, and more generally the “how” of things.

British philosopher, John White, also argues for a difference between the kinds of questions children ask and the kinds of questions adults ask. Children ask questions in order to find out how to use concepts. Adult philosophers, on the other hand, already knowing how to use the concepts “...are interested in mapping it from a higher-order perspective” (White, 1992, p. 75).¹¹

An important criticism of Piagetian frameworks is the one-sided emphasis on the logical aspects of children’s thinking – using mathematical thinking as its paradigm. Canadian educationalist, Kieran Egan, argues that the “other half” of the child as learner – the *imaginative* side – has been neglected by many educational researchers (Egan, 1988, 1992, 1993).

An underlying philosophical assumption of Piagetian theory is that children’s reasoning will develop automatically as children get older. Moreover, an attempt to hasten this process will be a waste of time – perhaps even regarded as educational malpractice (Gazzard, 1985, p. 11). In this view, it is assumed that children’s development goes through irreversible, necessary age-related stages. This stage-theory of cognitive development is reflected in how educational curricula for primary education have been designed.

The sort of educational material taught, and how it is being taught, has to conform to the particular intellectual capacities characteristic of the child’s age. Thus, the educator should focus on the child’s *age*, and not the child itself, running the risk that too much importance is given to what children have in common (their age) instead of what makes them different from one another (different abilities).

Secondly, at most, the different stages *describe* what children of a particular age group are intellectually capable of, but, as Ann Gazzard points out: “...now [stage theory of cognitive development] serves to define the range of thought children are capable of” (Gazzard, 1985, p. 11). We do not know yet the effect on the intellectual development of the young child, of long-term exposure to proper philosophy-tuition.¹²

The unquestioned assumption in developmental theories is that the goal of the process is maturity – each stage is followed by one that is ‘better’, more mature. It is what Matthews calls “evolutionary bias” (Matthews, 1994, p. 17). The point he makes is that this kind of bias might not be appropriate for philosophy. The reasons being that:

- a. The better handling of philosophical questions is not guaranteed by just growing up.

- b. Maturity often brings “staleness” and “uninventiveness” (Matthews, 1994, p. 18) to the exploration of philosophical ideas, while children are often “fresh and inventive thinkers”. Matthews admits that children can be less “disciplined” and less “rigorous” than *some* adults, but he cautions the reader quite rightly for comparing children with just *any* adult (Matthews, 1994, p. 17). After all, there is a great variety among adults in the ability to be involved in rigorous and disciplined philosophical enquiry.¹³

Dutch philosopher, Karel Van der Leeuw, agrees with Matthews in leaving the possibility open that philosophy as a discipline could learn something from children engaged in philosophical enquiry. After all, each generation has to find its own answers to philosophical questions (Leeuw, 1991, p. 13; Lipman & Sharp, 1978, pp. IX & X).

There is a danger in philosophy that too many conventions remain unquestioned. Therefore, rather than an asset, Van der Leeuw argues that it could be a disadvantage for adults to know the philosophical tradition. Children’s lack of knowledge of many of culture’s conventions might put them in an advantageous position (Leeuw, 1991, p. 13).

It is for this reason that it has been argued that there is nothing new about philosophy with children, except as a planned school activity (*Filosoferen op de Basisschool*, 1994). Children have always asked philosophical questions and sometimes grown-ups do discuss those questions, and when they do so, they are philosophising. Examples of such questions are: “Why is it that things can’t fall upwards?, What happens to the light when switched off? Do my shoes have insides and outsides? Is nothing something? Can rabbits think?”¹⁴

The assumption here is the belief that there are no essential differences between children and grown-ups. Robert Mulvaney agrees and stipulates that philosophy with children may help “to preserve the child in the philosopher”. He argues that:

“One of the tragedies of the grownup is his loss of a sense of wonder, curiosity and playfulness, in short, of childhood. But these emotions are central to philosophical enquiry. Perhaps by starting philosophy earlier and seeing to it that it continues throughout school, grownups will rediscover suppressed reservoirs of playfulness and leisure” (Mulvaney, 1993, p. 400).

- c. Following Plato and Descartes, philosophy is the epistemological pursuit of ‘starting all over again’, i.e., finding out for ourselves “...that I really do know whatever it is I claim to know” (Matthews, 1994, p. 18). One necessary condition for this philosophical exercise is the abandonment of cherished beliefs and assumptions – something that is much harder for adults, whose beliefs often have become firmly ‘rooted’ habits of thought.¹⁵

After all, it was American philosopher, William James, who said: “A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices”.¹⁶

Children’s lack of knowledge about culture’s conventions forces children to take a ‘Cartesian stance’, and to start from scratch thinking about philosophical questions. As a result their answers to philosophical questions are bound to be more original than those of adults (Leeuw & Mostert, 1987). Van der Leeuw claims that it is for this reason that “[c]hildren’s thinking shows us another side of the world, that is how the world could have been” (Leeuw, 1991, p. 13). The world as-it-is, is too often taken for granted by adults – including adult philosophers. So children’s lack of experience could be an advantage rather than a disadvantage when they do philosophy (Leeuw, 1991, p. 14).

Throughout Gareth Matthews’ works we find the idea that children are the ‘natural’ philosophers, in contrast to adult philosophers who cultivate young children’s sense of wonder. This is clear, for

example, when he claims that philosophising adults “...try to be little children again – even if only temporarily” (Matthews, 1994, p. 18). Philosophy is not ‘immature’. Philosophy is naive perhaps, but it is a “profound naiveté” (Matthews, 1994, p. 34).

To summarise, what we mean by ‘being a child’ or ‘childhood’ is crucial to answering the question as to whether children can do philosophy. Merely assuming that childhood is connected to a particular biological, psychological or social age seems unsatisfactory, because:

- By focusing too much on what children have in common, rather than respecting the differences between individual children, it does not do justice to what *individual* children might be capable of.
- It could limit the possibilities of what children *as a matter of fact* can do. Adult expectations are influenced by assuming the truth of deterministic developmental processes, thereby already assuming *a priori* that children’s thinking cannot be significantly improved by regular engagement in philosophical enquiry throughout their education – it will develop automatically, so the theory goes.
- It limits cognitive development to include merely logico-mathematical thinking, and ignores imaginative development. This bias has its philosophical roots in Plato’s philosophy, in particular the *Simile of the Cave* (an issue addressed in Section 5).
- It ignores what is perhaps *special* about childhood. Is it indeed true to say that childhood is something we leave behind, and replace by the *same, albeit more mature*? Or, can we make a claim for the uniqueness of childhood? These questions will be taken up again in Section 5.

But first of all, in order to answer the question about whether *children can do philosophy*, we have to return to the central question of Chapter One, ‘What is philosophy?’, my answers to this question, and, following on from this, to consider what would constitute evidence for the claim that children can indeed do philosophy. I will introduce this topic by starting with a critical analysis of empirical evidence offered by one of PwC proponents, Gareth Matthews, who claims to offer empirical evidence for the claim that children can do philosophy as a way of ‘opening up’ the enquiry.

4. Empirical evidence – a first attempt.

Gareth Matthews gives the following example in an attempt to demonstrate children's ability to think philosophically (Matthews, 1978, p. 63; 1980, pp. 2-4):

“Jordan, a five year old, going to bed at 8.00pm, asked: ‘If I go to bed at 8.00 and get up at 7.00 in the morning, how do I really know that the little hand of the clock has gone round only once? Do I have to stay up all night to watch it? If I look away even for a short time maybe the small hand will go around twice.’”

The child seems uneasy about the fact that there is not enough evidence to assume with certainty that the small hand of the clock will go round only once. Matthews compares the child's problem with the philosophical problem of induction, that is, “...no matter how much constant attention Jordan lavishes on his clock, there may still be a worry about how he can justifiably extrapolate from observed periods to unobserved ones” (Matthews, 1980, p. 3). Matthews continues by speculating whether the child does not express a more fundamental philosophical doubt: “...he wants to know how he can be sure there is anything at all (!) when he looks away, or how he knows there is a world while he sleeps” (Matthews, 1978, p. 64).

But does not Matthews read too much into the child's words? Although he admits this possibility without talking to the child in more detail, he maintains that the child “...was in the grip of at least one familiar philosophical problem...” (Matthews, 1978, p. 64). But could not the contrary be argued – that Jordan's sceptical attitude was a mere *animistic confusion* (see below)? Matthews, himself, suggests that the reason for Jordan's worries may be his experience of people making faces behind each other's backs. He could have extrapolated onto clocks his experience of people.

Matthews acknowledges that the question “Can clocks cheat on us, that is, do something unexpected each time we look away?” could be seen to be an expression of a lack of knowledge about the nature of people and the nature of things, rather than be a philosophical question. Here, Matthews plays into the hands of the critics of PwC, who believe that children's thinking under the age of eleven is quite different from that of adults.¹⁷

They could interpret Jordan's behaviour as that of a typical five year old who does not distinguish between his own experience and 'external' reality – that he attributes human behaviour (the ability to cheat) to the clock.

Jean Piaget argued that this inclination to animism is strongest with four to six year olds – all things that move are conscious (even, for example, a ball). Now, Jordan could have assumed that, because the hands of a clock move, the clock's behaviour resembles that of humans. Continuing Piagetian thinking, at the age of six and seven for Jordan the number of objects in this category would become smaller. They would be things like the sun, cars, and animals, which he would assume have human minds. At the age of eight until ten, he would accept only that things that move on their own can act voluntarily, and have consciousness. In accordance with Piaget's line of thought, this would exclude things like cars, and also clocks.

Jordan, at that age, would understand that batteries make a clock's hands move, and that therefore clocks cannot be said 'to cheat on us'. Only after the age of eleven, could Jordan think completely like an adult, i.e., “logically, objectively, and realistically”. It is then that he could *in principle* understand that consciousness and voluntarily action can be attributed only to humans and animals, and not to clocks (Thomson, 1968, p. 362; Elkind, 1974).

A temporary conclusion could be that Matthews' example does not show that children can do philosophy, but, on the contrary, seems to confirm Piagetian theory that children at the age of five project their own human experiences onto things. So, Jordan's animistic way of thinking would be typical for a child of his age.¹⁸

In Matthews' defence one could refuse to accept that animism is a less rational cognitive stage. As Shellie-Helane Levine argues:

"Piaget's determination that the attitude of younger children is animistic/artificial and that this mode of cognition is 'less adequate' than the reductionist approach, must be sharply challenged. Based upon this view some of the world's greatest philosophers are irrational and infantile" (Levine, 1985, p. 9, footnote 41).

She argues that if *rationality* is reduced to the sort of cognition prevalent in mathematics and the natural sciences – which Piaget presupposes – then a philosopher such as Leibniz would have to be classified as "irrational and infantile" when he developed his theory that the deity created the best of all possible worlds.

In the last two decades, much effort has been put into reinterpreting Piaget's conclusions drawn from psychological experiments. Margaret Donaldson argues that, not his *findings* as such are suspect, but that the conclusions drawn from those findings are wrong (Donaldson, 1978, p. 23). Empirical evidence for this conclusion is given by constructing similar experiments, but in situations that *make sense* to the child (Donaldson, 1978, p. 23; Sutherland, 1992, p. 15).

For example, in an attempt to demonstrate how ego-centric children are, Piaget conducted an experiment to show that children under the age of around eight do not have the ability to take account of someone else's point of view – literally. In his experiment, a child sits at a table with three different mountains on it. A doll is placed somewhere else round the table. Most children cannot show or describe what the doll sees.

Donaldson contests Piaget's conclusion that children are "unable to 'decentre' in imagination" (Donaldson, 1978, p. 20), which is a crucial requirement for thinking and reasoning well – because if a child cannot shift between different points of view, she cannot make valid inferences (Donaldson, 1978, p. 41).

Returning to Matthews' example, it is clear that such examples will not convince the critics that children can do philosophy, for it is easily shown that the philosophical dimension could stem from the adult's *interpretation* of what the children are saying, rather than what the children are *actually* saying.¹⁹

A similar criticism can be found in British philosopher John White's paper *The Roots of Philosophy*. White rightly points out that a question is not, in and by itself, philosophical. It is the *context* that makes a question a philosophical one, in the sense that the context would determine if a question "calls into doubt a very ordinary notion" (White, 1992, p. 74).

White also points out that the intention of the questioner is very important in determining whether a question is philosophical. It is for this reason that he believes that, because children's intentions differ from that of adults, children are not philosophers. He writes:

"Children want to know how to use the concept; philosophers, who have no trouble using it, are interested in mapping it from a higher-order perspective, and usually in the pursuit of larger theoretical enquiries. Needless to say, too, philosophers are only interested in those concepts which present philosophical

problems, whereas the point just made about children can apply to their acquisition of all kinds of concepts – of cats, rivers, computers” (White, 1992, pp. 75, 76).

Children are not philosophising, but “simply on the way to acquiring the concept” (White, 1992, p. 76). No evidence has been presented to John White yet to make him think otherwise.²⁰

What is it that would count as empirical evidence for convincing sceptics such as Richard Kitchener and John White that children can indeed do philosophy? This question will be readdressed in Section 6, after having taken a closer look in the next section at the arguments philosophers have offered in the past of why children cannot do philosophy.

5. Children cannot do philosophy – philosophers’ objections

Our views on what it means to be a child, or on what the nature is of childhood, is crucial for the theoretical underpinning of any educational practice, but especially of the practice of philosophical enquiry with children. This is because implicit in the practice of philosophy with children is the belief that children can originate philosophical thoughts and that the *quality* of children’s thinking does not differ substantially from that of adults.

This is a view definitely not shared by many philosophers in the past. Aristotle, for example, in the *Ethics* associates wisdom with age. Wisdom is one of the virtues, but no child can be virtuous (therefore wise), because no child is truly human (Mulvaney, 1993, p. 348). But what exactly falls under the concept ‘child’ or ‘childhood’?

I agree with Matthews who argues that, apart from culturally and historically problematic, the concept ‘childhood’ is also *philosophically* problematic, because it is philosophically very difficult to say exactly what the difference is between children and adults (Matthews, 1994, p. 8; Bottery, 1990, p. 237).²¹

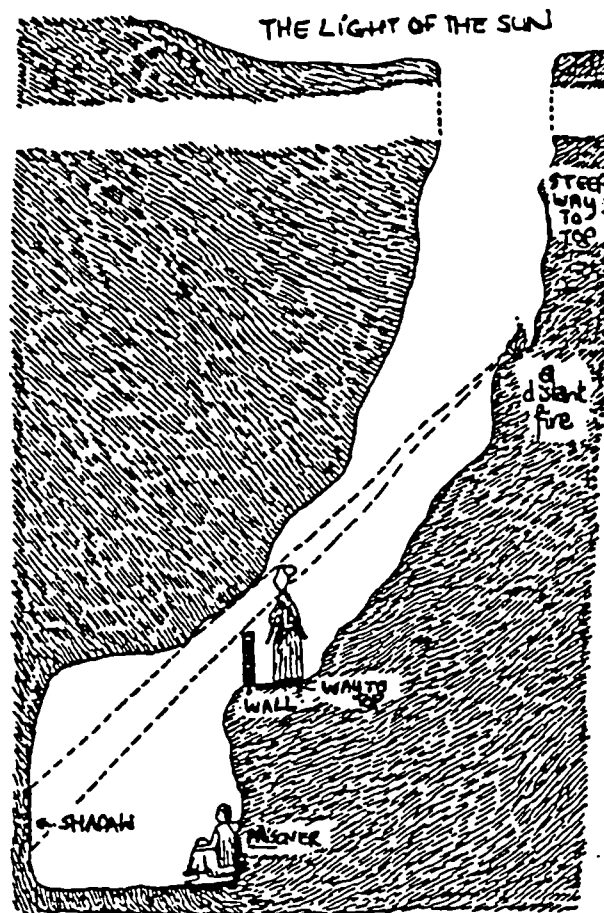
However, the traditional picture of children according to philosophers such as Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill, has been that children are not like adults – they lack “some capacity for rational thought which adults have” (Hughes, 1992, p. 39). Childhood is seen as a period of unreason (Egan, 1988, p. 17).

Children are understood not to be autonomous, which means “that they lack the capacity to act rationally in pursuit of their own self-chosen goals (Hughes, 1992, p. 39). Philosopher’s comments about children’s lack of rationality puzzle British philosopher, Judith Hughes. For example, Thomas Hobbes’ views imply that children have “the ‘possibility apparent’ of becoming reasonable”, but he fails to explain how and when. And then there is John Locke, who claimed that children are “not rational, but love to be treated as if they were” (Hughes, 1992, p. 40). Hughes comments:

“Apparently they like having things explained to them without understanding either the explanation or even what an explanation is” (Hughes, 1992, p. 40).

So, where does this idea come from that children lack the rationality adults possess? It has its roots in Ancient Greece, in particular in Plato’s theory of knowledge, poignantly illustrated by his Simile of the Cave (see: figure 2.²²).

Figure 2



In *The Republic* Plato describes the simile as follows (BK VII 514b):

“Imagine an underground chamber like a cave, with a long entrance open to the daylight and as wide as the cave. In this chamber are men who have been prisoners there since they were children, their legs and necks being so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads. Some way off, behind and higher up, a fire is burning, and between the fire and the prisoners and above them runs a road, in front of which a curtain-wall has been built, like the screen at puppet shows between the operators and their audience, above which they show their puppets.”

The prisoners cannot move their heads all their lives, therefore they cannot “...see anything of themselves or their fellows except the shadows thrown by the fire on the wall of the cave opposite them...[and] they would assume that the shadows they saw were the real things...the whole truth” (515b,c).

In combination with two other similes mentioned earlier in *The Republic*, Plato's theory of knowledge becomes clearer. The tied prisoner in the cave corresponds with *illusion*, the freed prisoner in the cave with *belief*, looking at shadows and reflections in the world outside the cave and ascent thereto corresponds with *reason*, and looking at real things in the world outside the cave with *intelligence* (Plato, 1987, p. 320, Footnote 1).

Perhaps an easier way of understanding the simile, for 20th century beings, is by replacing 'cave' with 'television', as Desmond Lee – translator of the Penguin edition of *The Republic* invites the reader to do. He writes:

“It is the moral and intellectual condition of the average man from which Plato starts; and though clearly the ordinary man knows the difference between

substance and shadow in the physical world, the simile suggests that his moral and intellectual opinions often bear as little relation to the truth as the average film or television programme does to real life” (Plato, 1987, p. 316).

Especially relevant in this context is the fact that Plato associates *episteme* (knowledge) with adulthood, and *doxa* (belief) with childhood (Egan, 1988, p. 47). Both Plato and Aristotle believe that rational theoretical understanding gives superior knowledge of reality (Egan, 1988, p. 47). For Plato, only educated adults can acquire knowledge of the unchanging reality (the Platonic Forms, such as Goodness, Beauty, etc.) through rational enquiry.

Less rational beings – including children – have only access to the world of appearances, i.e., of the world as it is perceived through our senses. We perceive this or that beautiful object, we judge this or that action to be a good one, but Beauty or Goodness-as-such (the Platonic Forms) cannot be perceived through the senses. Children cannot get out of the cave – this world of appearances, which is the object of opinion (*doxa*). According to Plato, it is the (adult) philosopher, who is in love with the truth, i.e., wants to know how the world *is*, rather than how it *appears* to be, and because *episteme* is reserved for adults only, children cannot ‘love the truth’, i.e., be a philosopher. Children can only have ‘mere beliefs’ about the world.

Plato compares the process of education with ‘unchaining prisoners in a dark cave’. When chained they have access only to the shadows on the wall – mere appearances of what things are really like ‘outside’ (Egan, 1988, p. 47). However, Egan quite rightly points out that even if Plato is right in believing that they are distinct ways of thinking, then it still does not exclude the possibility that they can be present in the same individual, and that they are not age-related (Egan, 1988, p. 49)!

Knowing about the Simile of the Cave, helps us realise to what extent modern and post-modern educational discourse about children’s thinking is influenced by Platonic dichotomies (see also: Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 189, 190).

Some of the Platonic dichotomies we have inherited are, on the one hand:

- rationality – as the tool to discover reality and truth (Egan, 1988, p. 11).
- reason, or *logos*, which is also used for ‘word’, or ‘speech’, and therefore rational thinking enables us to mirror reality in words (Egan, 1988, p. 47). Rationally understanding something involves being able to articulate it into words.
- *theoria*, or ‘sight’, ‘speculation’, ‘contemplation’, which results from taking a disengaged perspective.
- *episteme* or ‘true knowledge’ is the product of rational thinking, and involves understanding things as they are, despite our (bodily) wishes, fears, desires, etc..

And, on the other hand:

- irrationality – fantasy (which ignores the boundaries of reality, being a world of impossibilities, contradictions, the illogical, the inconsistent, etc.); dreams; myths; passion; *doxa* or ‘mere opinion’, which is the product of irrational thinking.

These Platonic ideas had a revival during the Enlightenment with the rediscovery of the Ancient Greeks and the reading of the original Greek texts. This has profoundly influenced modern thinking (see, for example, Hatcher, 1991). It is only during the last few decades that we have started to become aware of many of these what we now call ‘modernist’ assumptions, despite the fact that the

ground for these criticisms was prepared long before then by philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, John Dewey and the later Wittgenstein, and already voiced earlier, but not in philosophical format, by the Romantic poets such as Coleridge and Wordsworth (Egan, 1988, 1992; Rorty, 1980).

The Romantic poets believed that truth about the universe was more likely to be revealed in dreams, unencumbered by reason, and that we have a greater facility for this as children than as adults.

Approaching the turn of this century we are in the confusing, but exciting, position of being neither modern, nor post-modern – we are in a period of transition from modern to post-modern. Metaphorically speaking, our split self-identity is constantly pulled apart by the force of one leg enthusiastically running forward deconstructing the sort of language that expresses modernist habits of thought, while the other leg is still desperately stuck in our traditional, Enlightenment views – as for example subtly expressed in the metaphors we use when we think about thinking (see Chapter Two).

However, it was not only the rereading of the Ancient Greeks, but also the forceful and influential reformulation of Platonic dualism by Descartes, that contributed to this development. His *cogito, ergo sum* – ‘I think, therefore I am’, and significantly not ‘I feel, (or I imagine,) therefore I am’, has reinforced the concept of rationality as it is still prevalent today – the kind of rationality that emerges slowly through education, modernists argue. Children’s minds can be shaped to any new circumstance as they are ‘empty’ from the start – like a blank piece of paper, according to John Locke (Kennedy, 1992, pp. 2, 3).

This is in sharp contrast to Rousseau, who believed that the child represents “an inner world of essential and unalterable relationship between mind and nature” (Kennedy, 1992, p. 3).

Rousseau opens his famous work on education *Emile or On Education* with the following words:

“Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man. He forces one soil to nourish the products of another. one tree to bear the fruit of another. He mixes and confuses the climates, the elements, the seasons. He mutilates his dog, his horse, his slave. He turns everything upside down; he disfigures everything; he loves deformity, monsters. He wants nothing as nature made it, not even man; for him, man must be trained like a school horse: man must be fashioned in keeping with his fancy like a tree in his garden” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 37).

What Rousseau shows is an interest in growth and development of each *individual* child, rather than a finished product of development determined from the outset (Mulvaney, 1993, p. 397).

Arguably the philosophies of Rousseau and Plato have been the most influential in Western educational thinking, in the sense that they still polarise the current debate between traditionalists and progressivists, between child-centred and subject-centred ways of teaching. On the one hand, there is the idea of a child’s intrinsic nature guiding curriculum design (Rousseau); and on the other hand, there is the belief that education is fixed on an ideal end of accumulated knowledge and social and vocational skills to be transmitted to the child (Plato) (Egan, 1988, p. 2).

I believe the most promising idea is the alternative offered by Kieran Egan, which is not a *compromise* between Rousseau (nature) and Plato (culture), but an educational theory that interprets both philosophies in such a way that they are no longer opposites. Egan sees childhood as an end in itself, with its own perfection, and says that therefore proper education has to attend to its cultivation (Egan, 1988, p. 1).

Egan has taken up Rousseau's idea that childhood is not something we leave behind – it *constitutes* our 'later' self, and peculiar to childhood is "a nature to whose patterns of development, learning, motivation, and so on, our educational practices must accommodate" (Egan, 1988, p. 2). Taken from Plato, Egan holds the belief that nature gives us no particular guidance. Precise ends are needed to use as criteria to guide our choices which have the potential to stimulate and develop – "[o]ur nature is cultural" (Egan, 1988, pp. 2, 3).

What are the consequences for everyday educational practice, and of the teaching of philosophy in particular? Influenced by Plato, modern curriculum design assumes that fantasy is a hindrance for the development of rationality. Egan, on the other hand, believes that fantasy is not just peculiar to early childhood, but is also a feature of adult thinking, in the sense that it gives rationality its richness, its creativity, and is therefore essential to it. Fantasy is not something we leave behind in childhood. Egan offers a far more holistic picture of how children think than that commonly found in literature on philosophical enquiry with children.

The PwC child is often understood as being a combination of the Enlightenment – with its emphasis on rationality – and the Romantic tradition by stipulating that reasonableness includes feelings and emotions. This is often referred to as 'caring' thinking (Kennedy, 1992), and enjoys the same kind of status as 'critical' or 'creative' thinking.

However, in PwC literature, the concept of 'rationality' in its Enlightenment meaning often crops up unquestioned (Lipman & Sharp, 1978), although gradually post-modern and feminist philosophical critique is starting to change the PwC discourse with its criticism of the Enlightenment notion of rationality as being white-male dominant (MacColl, Redshaw, Glaser, Haynes, Sharp, 1994).

Many teachers of philosophy to young children have been influenced by the writings of Matthew Lipman – the creator of the *Philosophy for Children* programme. The mind of Lipman's child is not like that of a blank piece of paper. Instead, it already has the logical structures, and the disposition and motivation to think critically, and thus manage change ("a critical thinker by nature"). Lipman's thinking has been very much influenced by American pragmatist, John Dewey. In fact, PwC proponent David Kennedy, identifies Lipman's child as a Deweyan child.²² He writes:

"Deweyan pedagogy... is a process of self-preparation for children which attends to process rather than content, as well as an approach to the self-shaping nature of change through the dialectics of the community of inquiry [= the pedagogy of P4C, KM]. Dewey's child is inherently rational and collaborative, and can do the community of inquiry just as well if not better than many adults, who are afraid – or so the mythology goes – of the dialectics of change" (Kennedy, 1992, p. 3).

Therefore, the Deweyan child, the post-Piagetian child, is "graced with a much earlier, and more inherent rationality..." (Kennedy, 1992, p. 4)

Egan agrees with Dewey, who argued that education should start with the *experience* children already have, but he challenges the way this has been interpreted by progressivists as meaning: the everyday practical world of children's lives, which has led to the 'expanding horizon curriculum' (Egan, 1988, p. 19; 1989, pp. 2, 4) – a topic further addressed in Chapter Seven. Education is not only about what we gain, but also about minimising losses; and what has been lost is "the ability to see that world as the child sees it, transfigured by fantasy" (Egan, 1988, p. 20). This is an area of thinking which is neglected in Piaget's writing with his emphasis on logical-mathematical thinking. Piaget called children's imaginative responses "mere romancing" (Matthews, 1980, p. 39-41).

One characteristic of fantasy is the fact that settings and characters tend to be distant, remote, or exotic – very much *unlike* children's everyday experiences. But Egan argues that it does not follow

that therefore fantasy does not help in making sense of everyday experiences. Despite the fact that smurfs, talking teddy bears, giants and monsters are not part of our everyday experience, the concepts involved in order to make sense of stories with such characters in it, for example, 'good and bad', 'big and little', 'fear and security', 'nature and culture' are part of everyday life.

Understanding fantasy in such a way means that in fantasy we see "the early forms and early developments of the most profound and fundamental concepts that we use to make sense of the world and our experience" (Egan, 1988, p. 26). In other words, "[t]he abstract concepts...provide the means of access to understanding particular content". This makes fantasy highly relevant for philosophy as the activity of thinking for oneself about abstract concepts.

David Kennedy shows the importance of 'redefining' rationality, by arguing that, in the West, adult rationality has failed. His examples include the holocaust, nuclear proliferation, and ecological catastrophe. He says that what PwC has to offer is "[t]he concept of an expanded reason through a recovery of childhood", expressed "in the more post-modern notion of the child as an excluded voice" (Kennedy, 1992, p. 5) – a position children share with other groups such as women and blacks. The child's voice is something we have not heard before. It has so far been an excluded knowledge. Kennedy concludes:

"To 'remember' childhood is to accept both the culture of childhood and the child within oneself... Lipman's child is the child reintegrated into adult forms of discourse, for whom we have a new respect" (Kennedy, 1992, p. 5).

But what is the child's voice like? If Egan is correct then – in contrast to Lipman – respecting the child (in us) means a reappraisal of fantasy as a sense-making ability.²⁴

Egan maintains that young children's thinking is different from that of older children or adults. He calls it 'mythical thinking': a kind of thinking with "its own complex logic and...this logic is not an opposite to rational thought" (Egan, 1988, p. 39), but a *foundation for rational thinking*. It involves techniques of thinking that rely on resources available in oral cultures (Egan, 1988, pp. 42, 43) – the kind of thinking prior to the internalisation of literacy.

As a result of literacy – the technology of writing – thought is restructured to focus more on knowledge content or psychological development, and makes it easier to reflect upon the meaning of what has to be memorised (Egan, 1988, pp. 51-53, 59). Pre-literate thinking, on the other hand, focuses on memorisation. What helps when memorising texts is the involvement of the whole body through music, rhythm, and dance, and also, by fixing "...affective responses to the messages it contains and to bind what is to be remembered in emotional associations" (Egan, 1988, p. 66).

Egan argues that this kind of thinking is certainly not 'primitive', and only less 'abstract' when we mean by abstraction the kind that heavily depends on writing. The written word is much less charged than the spoken word "...with the direct energy of the speaker's body, and so the speaker's hopes, fears, wants, needs, intentions, and so on" (Egan, 1988, p. 70). It is the written word (internalised literacy) that makes our rationality 'disembedded' – i.e., not embedded in one's lifeworld (Egan, 1988, p. 65). Since the Enlightenment the notion of 'disembedded rationality' has become prevalent in Western culture in order to keep separate what one is thinking about (objective knowledge content) and the subject who is doing the thinking with all her feelings, hopes, and fears.

The ideal of 'disembedded rationality' makes it possible to discuss the meaning of a word-as-such, outside the particular context in which the word is used. In this light, the work of many philosophers can be seen as a search for the absolute, universal meaning of a particular concept independent of its use in particular circumstances (e.g., the Platonic Forms). This is still an ideal for many philosophers, and is used as an argument against the idea that children can do philosophy – e.g., Richard Kitchener's claim that children can do only 'concrete philosophy' and not 'abstract

philosophy' (see the beginning of this chapter); or, John White when he argues that 'real' philosophers are interested only in those concepts which present philosophical problems. Philosophers are not interested in concepts such as 'cats', 'rivers', or, 'computers'.²⁵

But as I have argued in Section 2, Wittgenstein warns us against catching this 'disease' suffered by many philosophers – the unhealthy activity of philosophical problem seeking by taking concepts out of the context of everyday meaning. It does not make sense to establish the meaning of words outside the contexts in which they are being used ('embodied') in everyday life.

With the philosophical critique of the Western notion of 'disembodied rationality', awareness is growing that children's thinking is not inferior to that of adults, and that children's distinct voices deserve to be listened to.

Egan argues that children *do* think abstractly in the sense that they use abstract concepts, such as 'brave', 'fair', 'good', 'friend', but not dissociated from their lifeworld as literacy enables and encourages them to do (Egan, 1988, pp. 75, 90, 91). He also adds that children think abstractly, in the sense that they think very metaphorically. Egan claims that:

"Mythic understanding moves fluidly according to the complex logic of metaphor, more readily than it follows the systematic logic of rational inquiry"
(Egan, 1988, p. 67).

As opposed to our common belief that metaphorical language comes late in language development, the younger that children are, the easier they find it to complete metaphors (Egan, 1988, p. 83).

I conclude that if Egan is right, then young children's distinctive way of thinking is perhaps not rational in the narrow Western meaning of the word, but deserves recognition and respect as a distinctive way of thinking.

Respect would entail changes in early childhood education. Rather than an urge for early literacy, it would have to be recognised how the kind of thinking peculiar to orality helps children to establish meaning in their experiences. According to Egan, this kind of thinking "...is not something to be replaced by logico-mathematical, more rational, more realistic forms of thinking. These forms grow out of it and ideally grow along with it; it is what gives rationality life, color, and meaning" (Egan, 1988, p. 86).

Recognition of young children's distinctive way of thinking would also have consequences for teaching philosophy to children. This means in practical terms less focus on logical explanations, and more understanding for their "...search for a satisfying story into which to fit the *explanans*..." (Egan, 1988, p. 91). At the same time it could have consequences for what adults understand the discipline of philosophy to be. Mythical thinking is only excluded from philosophical thinking when we adopt a narrow meaning of rationality.

6. What constitutes empirical evidence?

John White argues that it is up to PwC proponents to point out that the intention behind the “overt verbal behaviour” recorded on audio or video tapes, and subsequently transcribed, indeed is philosophical (White, 1992, p. 75). White claims that children should be able to show, not only that they can be logical, or that they can reason, but that they have to prove that they can take a “higher-order stance to reasoning” (White, 1992, p. 75). (Lipman reportedly claims that children start philosophising when they ask the question ‘why?’; elsewhere Lipman claims that philosophy begins when children start to question the meaning of words.²⁶)

Would it be possible to invalidate the criticism that children cannot do philosophy, by giving examples of children saying the same thing as a famous adult philosopher, only formulated in a simpler vocabulary? This is a tactic often used not only in PwC (Matthews, 1994, pp. 10, 11, 37; McCall, 1993), but also justified as the correct procedure.²⁷

Take, for example, the following dialogue with nine-year olds. The class was discussing the picture book, *Where The Wild Things Are*, by Maurice Sendak.²⁸

Teacher: “Do you think the world, the universe had a beginning?”

Kieron: “Space goes on forever.”

Phillip: “No, say somebody made the universe, the place where they made it...let’s say you make the universe on that table... If you are making the universe from outside, there has got to be something outside, and then whoever built that outside would have to be outside something, and that would just go on forever and ever.”

Teacher: “Do we all understand this thought?”

Some: “Yes.”

George: “Say he was making the universe out of plasticine, someone would still have to make what *he was in*, and someone has to make what that was in, and it would go on forever.”

If we compare Phillip’s remark with what St Augustine writes in Sermon 101, we find a striking similarity:

“O God, didst Thou make heaven and earth? Truly, neither in the heaven nor in the earth didst Thou make heaven and earth; nor in the air, nor in the waters, since these also belong to the heaven and the earth; nor in the whole world didst Thou make the world: because there was no place wherein it could be made before it was made...” (St Augustine quoted in Jones, 1969a, p. 86).

To avoid the criticism that too much was read into the child’s words, it is important to point out that George reformulated Phillip’s thought without losing the philosophical depth. Apart from the similarity with Augustine’s line of thought, it could be argued that Phillip’s remark was indeed philosophical, because he reasons that the creation of the universe out of nothing is logically impossible (although he does not use those words). He says that if you create the universe you have to be *outside the universe*, and for creating the outside of the universe you have to be *outside the outside... ad infinitum*. The thoughts are the same, although the words to express those thoughts are different (for the entire transcript of the dialogue, see Chapter Five, Section 4).

This would not necessarily convince a critic like Kitchener, however, who argues that examples like these merely show that children are capable of “single, one-time performances” or “philosophical one-liners” (Kitchener, 1990, p. 426). His methodological objection is that philosophical ‘one-liners’ do not demonstrate a child’s ability to do philosophy, whether or not an adult – respected and regarded as being a philosopher – has made a similar remark in the past. What is

needed, according to Kitchener, is evidence that children are capable of *sustaining* philosophical thought over a long period of time.

Moreover, Kitchener also claims that long, complete transcripts of classroom discussions cannot constitute sufficient evidence for the claim that children can do philosophy, for the following reasons:

- I. Group discussions lack a “sustained one-one dialogue”, that is, “...a critical dialogue in which children are questioned on a one-one basis about their comments, elaborate upon their views, and rationally defend them” (Kitchener, 1990, pp. 426, 427).

I have two comments:

- It is not clear why a one-one dialogue is not possible within a group discussion – two participants could challenge each other’s beliefs when they disagree.
- It is not clear whether Kitchener insists that the participants in such a one-one dialogue should necessarily consist of one adult and one child.²⁹

Take, for example, the following dialogue between two six-year olds and their teacher:

Line 1 Teacher: “What *is* a secret?”
Line 2 Child 1: “A secret is a thing that no one knows, only you.”
Line 3 Child 2: “What do you mean...a *thing*?”
Line 4 Child 1: “Well, my tree house is a secret.
Line 5 A tree house is a thing.”
Line 6 Child 2: “What does he mean by a thing?”
Line 7 Teacher to child 1: “What do you mean by a thing?”
Line 8 Child 1: “Something you can pick up.”
Line 9 Teacher to child 1: “Are all secrets, things?”
Line 10 Child 1: “No, but my tree house is a secret.”³⁰

By *repeating* the question (Line 6) the teacher helps child 2 to examine what child 1 means by a “thing” (line 7), but the original question was the child’s (line 3). Then the teacher poses a more general question to child 1 (line 9) in order to help the children define the concept ‘secret’.³¹

This dialogue shows that adult and child can work together when critically examining each other’s beliefs. However, even *if* this dialogue were part of a longer, complete transcript of a philosophical discussion, and even *if* Kitchener would accept that children can critically examine each other’s beliefs over a long period of time, there is another reason why he believes such transcripts do not constitute sufficient empirical evidence for the claim that children can philosophise.

- II. He claims that even if it were true that children can be taught philosophy in the primary school, they will forget it as soon as they leave the classroom (Kitchener, 1990, p. 425). The difference between adults and children learning philosophy, Kitchener claims, is that “adults make philosophy an essential part of their lives: they have been taught a form of life” (Kitchener, 1990, p. 425).

Empirically it is easy to show that children pick up a discussion in subsequent philosophy lessons with no difficulty at all, but do they also take what they have learned home with them, and/or do they use it in other school subjects? Michael Pritchard writes:

“In preparing for our session the following week, I was not certain how much I should encourage the continuation of the topics of the previous week. I was anxious to have the students follow up on some of the ideas, but I did not want to force the discussion. So I decided to let them take the initiative. Fortunately, several were anxious to share further thoughts that they had had since our last meeting. In fact, I’m not sure that I could have prevented the discussion from continuing, even if I had wanted to! Penny, in particular, was anxious to share something that she and Amy had discovered” (Pritchard, 1985, pp. 49, 50; my emphasis).

It could be argued that the skills and factual knowledge learned in traditional primary school subjects are easily pointed out in everyday situations: the reading of books at home, or the writing of letters (English); use of money in shops (Mathematics); use of maps (Geography); reference to how Romans ate until they were sick (History), etc. It is not so easy to point out the progress made in reasoning skills – one of the claimed benefits of philosophy with children.

Even videotapes of philosophical discussions do not necessarily count as empirical evidence that ‘real’ philosophising is possible with young children. In Chapter Two, I have discussed the difficulty in convincing, what Richard Miller calls, “the skeptic”. With “the skeptic”, Miller means those who are unconvinced of the possibility of children engaging in genuine philosophical enquiry (Miller, 1986, pp. 46–49).

However, the sceptic’s reasons differ from those of Kitchener, who argues from *within* the philosophy profession: philosophy is what professional philosophers do, therefore a description of professional philosophers’ way of life constitutes the criteria by which we can judge the philosophical dimension of children’s discourse and actions. Kitchener’s conclusion is that children under the age often do not meet those criteria³².

The “skeptic”, on the other hand, after reading transcripts or watching a videotape of a good philosophy session with children, remains unconvinced that the discussion can be called ‘philosophical’ – but for reasons different from those of Kitchener. They are a result of the sceptic’s prejudice or a lack of philosophical training. It is the kind of prejudice that stems from our engrained habits of thought. Philosophical training makes us aware of those habits of thought – the metaphors we think with and live by.

It is because of modernist assumptions in our everyday language that many critics of PwC do not recognise the philosophical character of a dialogue between children when it occurs. Therefore my first step towards convincing the sceptic has been to raise awareness about these assumptions, and to argue the importance of creating new metaphors when thinking about (children’s) thinking (see Chapter Two). What I still need to do is to try and convince the skeptic that the creation of new metaphors can in principle be done by everyone, and even better by children through philosophical enquiry.

The aim of Chapter Five is to put forward empirical evidence that children can indeed do philosophy. This follows further exploration of what exactly philosophical enquiry with children is (Chapter Four).

7. Summary and Conclusion

Some critics of PwC claim that empirical evidence of children's ability to do philosophy consists of children talking about concrete examples, rather than general principles, and that children cannot grasp the *principle qua principle* underlying a concrete case, for example, the ontological principle of what constitutes identity over time in the case of the ship Theseus.

This particular example has been further examined to show what the criticism exactly consists of. The distinction between me, chopped up as cat food, and me, the killer of my cat, was introduced to show what is meant by an ontological principle. The philosophical dialogue with Donald and David-Paul had the purpose of showing the ability of at least *some* children to make the distinction between an ontological and an epistemological principle. It also showed their capacity to make analogies with other similar cases, but it did not prove that they understood the principle as such, without its particular application to a concrete example, and, therefore, would not convince the critics of PwC.

Then some of Wittgenstein's philosophical ideas were introduced to show that not all adult philosophers believe the philosopher's attention – at whatever age – should be focused on abstract 'principles *qua principles*'. This philosophical 'disease' – asking abstract questions in the form of 'What is _____? (e.g., life, mind, space)', and, as a result, creating abstract problems – is 'cured' by looking at the circumstances in which these words are used, in order to demonstrate the diversity of meaningful uses one and the same concept can have.

This was followed by applying these ideas to the 'What is identity?' – question. Concrete examples of the everyday use of this concept showed that no ontological principles need to be postulated in order to use the word meaningfully.

Therefore, even if the critics are correct in saying that children are not capable of doing 'abstract philosophy', they also have to show that this is what philosophers – young or old – should be concerned with. This is because not all adult philosophers agree with this claim – Ludwig Wittgenstein being one of them.

The danger of assuming – as many psychological theories do – that what is meant by 'being a child' or 'childhood' is automatically connected to a particular biological, psychological or social age was pointed out in Section 3. It was questioned, because:

- It does not do justice to what *individual* children might be capable of.
- It could limit the possibilities of what children *as a matter of fact* can do by possibly underestimating from the outset what they are philosophically capable of.
- It limits cognitive development to include merely logico-mathematical thinking, and ignores imaginative development – a bias that has its philosophical roots in Plato's theory of knowledge – an issue I addressed in Section 5.
- It does not respect what is perhaps *special* about childhood as a distinct, but not less rational, way of thinking.

Also, in Section 3 the idea was put forward that developmental theories about children's thinking – such as the Piagetian framework might not be appropriate in the case of *philosophical* thinking, for the following three reasons:

1. The better handling of philosophical questions is not guaranteed by just growing up.

2. Maturity often brings ‘staleness’ and ‘uninventiveness’ – wondering at the world-as-it-is might come easier to children, who have less knowledge of culture’s conventions.
3. Philosophy’s method is ‘each-time-starting-all-over-again’, i.e., not taking anything for granted, and this might come easier to children, who have less beliefs that have become ‘rock solid’ than adults have. In that sense, there is indeed a difference between adults and children in their capacity to do philosophy, but it works in children’s favour; adult philosophers merely cultivate the sense of wonder young children already possess. Adult philosophers can reason their case better, but they may have sacrificed their natural innocence in the process – a naïveté so characteristic of children.

This claim – that children can indeed do philosophy and perhaps even better than adults – was put to the test in Section 4, by examining a concrete example. I concluded that this example in and by itself did *not* constitute empirical evidence. Another possible interpretation of the child’s reasoning along the lines of Piaget’s theory of cognitive development was offered to show how easily we can use examples like these to fit the hypothesis we want to prove.

Then, a first attempt to show the weaknesses in Piaget’s theory was undertaken – the claim made, for example by Donaldson that Piaget drew the wrong conclusions from the findings of his experiments. Subsequently, an example was given of a child expressing a philosophical thought by referring, not only to the similarity of the child’s thought with that of a famous adult philosopher, but also by examining the philosophical dimension of the argument itself. However, it could be argued that expressions like these are merely philosophical ‘one-liners’.

Also, it has been argued that complete transcripts, or videotapes of philosophical discussions with children will not suffice as empirical evidence either, for the following reasons:

- i. Children need to be questioned on a one-to-one basis, to ensure that they fully grasp the problem, and can defend their beliefs over a long period of time.
- ii. Proponents of PwC have to provide evidence that children make philosophy part of their lives, in the way that professional philosophers do.
- iii. The ‘sceptics’ are unconvinced that children engaged in a philosophical enquiry are doing more than “just talking”.

Those criticisms were commented upon:

- i. Children could question each other on a one-to-one basis in a philosophical enquiry.
- ii. At least one teacher of philosophy with children reports how children do make philosophy part of their lives (see Section 6). Also, in and by itself, adult philosophy cannot be used as a paradigm for judging whether philosophy with children is ‘real’ philosophy. As pointed out in Chapter One, this amounts to committing the ‘natural fallacy’, i.e., making a ‘jump’ in one’s reasoning from ‘how things are’ to ‘how things ought to be’ without further justification.
- iii. The ‘sceptics’ are prejudiced in believing that children do not learn to think better through talking. This prejudice takes the form of metaphors we think with and live by, and in Chapter Two its modernist presuppositions have been criticised. Also, the difference between ‘normal’ talk and ‘philosophical’ talk will be further examined in the next chapter.

Psychologists and philosophers settled the belief in education that children think differently from adults. Their theories have been touched upon in Sections 3 and 5, but deserve more thorough critical and creative scrutiny which goes beyond the scope of this research.

To provide evidence that children can indeed do philosophy, and that they will benefit from being taught philosophy at primary level, the following steps still have to be taken:

- Elaboration of what is meant by philosophy with children (Chapter Four).
- Listing criteria enabling recognition of philosophical dialogue when it occurs (Chapter Five).
- Analysis of complete transcripts of large groups of mixed-ability children under the age of ten. It needs to be shown that these dialogues meet those criteria in order to satisfactorily call those discussions philosophical (Chapter Five).
- It needs to be shown that teaching philosophy is more than teaching 'critical thinking' – that philosophy is a subject in its own right, and cannot be reduced to certain skills (Chapter Six).
- Even if it can be proven that children can indeed do philosophy, reasons need to be given in support of the belief that it is also desirable to teach children philosophy (Chapter Six).

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Three

- ¹ It is not entirely clear how old the children are, but somewhere between eight and eleven years old.
- ² I owe this example to the late Ian McFetridge, lecturer at Birkbeck College, London.
- ³ See: Footnote 14, Chapter One.
- ⁴ For example, Matthews writes: “When a child assimilates from our culture the desensitizing thesis that many uses of words are merely figurative or metaphorical, she or he loses the fascination with the web of words that inspires poetry and animates philosophy.” From: “The Child as Natural Philosopher”, in M. Lipman and A. M. Sharp (eds.). *Growing up with Philosophy*. Temple Univ. Press, Philadelphia, 1978, p. 72.
- ⁵ For example, adult philosopher Trevor Cumow understands this so-called philosophical problem of the Ship of Theseus to be both impossible and simple at the same time. It is impossible for the logic of either/or, the logic of being, to provide an answer to a problem about becoming, he says. I quote: “We cannot transpose a logic from one world to another and expect it to work automatically. The logic of either/or is derived from a world of fixed identities. It is scarcely surprising if it begins to struggle when it is applied to a world where change is a constant fact of life. The world of becoming needs a logic of becoming”. From: Trevor Cumow. “Transcendence, Logic, and Identity”, In: *Philosophy Now*, No. 12, 1995, pp. 24-26.
- ⁶ From: Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1971, p. 255.
- ⁷ See also Chapter One, Section 5.
- ⁸ My translation. Literal quote: “*Alle Erklärung muss fort, und nur beschreibung an ihre Stelle treten. Und diese Beschreibung empfängt ihr Licht, d.i. ihren Zweck, von den philosophischen Problemen. Diese sind freilich keine empirischen, sondern sie werden durch eine Einsicht in das Arbeiten unserer Sprache gelöst, und zwar so, dass dieses erkannt wird; entgegen einem Trieb, es misszuverstehen. Diese Probleme werden gelöst, nicht durch Beibringen neuer Erfahrung, sondern durch Zusammenstellung des längst Bekannten. Die Philosophie ist ein Kampf gegen die Verhexung unsres Verstandes durch die Mittel unserer Sprache.*” From: Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1971, par 109.
- ⁹ My translation. Literal quote: “*...denk nicht, sondern schau!*” From: Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1971, par 6.
- ¹⁰ It was Bertrand Russell who pointed out that such concepts have no metaphysical implications despite the misleading grammatical structure of subject and predicate. See Chapter Two, Section 2.
- ¹¹ For a further explanation, see Section 4, and for my comments Section 7.
- ¹² Norwegian philosopher and author Jostein Gaarder in a lecture to celebrate the publication of the English translation of his best-seller *Sophie's World* on 14 January 1995 in London

compared philosophy with learned skills such as swimming. At birth, babies can swim, but if we do not let them swim, they will have to (re)learn it after half a year. This is confirmed by Janet Balaskas and Yehudi Gordon in their book *Waterbirth*. Gaarder's argument was extended by Scottish philosopher and psychologist Catherine McCall in a subsequent lecture on the same day, when she argued that analogous to learning to swim, the right environment is crucial for children to learn to philosophise. Just because children are not presented with the opportunity to do philosophy, does not mean that they cannot do philosophy.

- 13 This is my main problem with Richard Kitchener's article: what he claims about children's incapacity to do philosophy, holds just as much for the average adult. Kitchener seems to be referring to the *educated* adult, but this seems hardly fair. Also, even if there was a difference between children and adults in their capacity to do philosophy, is it a difference of degree or of kind? And even if children are less capable of doing so than adults or only partly can achieve the same philosophical level does that justify the conclusion that philosophy should not be taught at all? Cannot philosophical thinking be encouraged? Kitchener refers to "considerable evidence" that children cannot engage in "higher-order thinking", but fails to explain what this evidence consist of. From: Richard Kitchener. "Do children think philosophically?". *Metaphilosophy*, Vol. 21, 1990, No. 4, p. 422.
- 14 Examples taken from *Filosoferen op de basisschool*. (1994), edited by Tjitse Bouwmeester, Berrie Heesen, Karel van der Leeuw, and Leen Speelman. Enschede, SLO Instituut voor Leerplanontwikkeling.
- 15 For examples of firmly 'rooted' habits of thought, see Chapter Two.
- 16 This quote I found in a leaflet announcing courses in philosophical enquiry, organised and written by British philosopher Barbara Rae, and brought to my attention by Myrna Shoa.
- 17 See also Section 3 of this Chapter.
- 18 Victoria Hazlitt believes that there is no *qualitative* difference between adult and children's reasoning powers. According to this British psychologist, Piaget mistakenly assumed that understanding something equals the ability to express concepts and relations *verbally*. She claims, however, that children *show* an understanding of concepts and logical reasoning when they express their ideas *concretely*. From: Robert Thomson. *The Pelican History of Psychology*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1968, pp. 362, 363.
- 19 As the 'Jordan anecdote' shows, both Matthews and Piaget could use the example to justify their own beliefs.
- 20 So, why *do* children ask questions? One could argue that they want to understand more about the world around them. A six-year old once remarked during a philosophical discussion about the picture book *What's under my bed?* by James Stevenson, that the question What's under my bed? is a silly question to ask, because you already *know* what's under your bed, so why ask the question? The other children agreed with her that when you know the answer to a question, you should not ask *the* question. Now could we not say that sometimes children's questions merely *resemble* the sort of philosophical questions adults ask, but that in fact children's questions cannot be called philosophical, because children ask questions for entirely different reasons? Could it not be *ignorance*, rather than *innocence* that is the driving force behind the questioning attitude? Karel van der Leeuw and Pieter Mostert identify two reasons of why young children sometimes ask questions that have nothing to do with philosophy. The first kind of question is being posed simply to keep the conversation going – children often ask for the obvious, because they like talking, Van der Leeuw and Mostert claim. The other kind of question children sometimes ask, are specific

questions out of a particular concern or interest, and because we adults are not informed about the specific event that ignited the question, we easily misunderstand the question. From: Karel van der Leeuw and Pieter Mostert. "Learning to Operate with Philosophical Concepts"; In: *Analytic Teaching*, Vol. 8, 1987, No. 1, pp. 93. Although it might be true that sometimes there are indeed differences between the questions children ask and the questions adults ask, I do not agree with White's claim, however, that adults *always* ask questions for different reasons. Moreover, I disagree with his assumption of what is meant by 'philosophy'. His belief that adult philosophers 'already know how to use a concept' expresses the view that philosophy is the taking of concepts out of ordinary language and giving them new philosophical meanings. As opposed to 'philosophising', which is the thinking for oneself about concepts as they are being used in *everyday* (always differing) contexts. See: Section 2 of this chapter.

²¹ The concept of childhood is historically problematic, because childhood is in a sense a modern (adult) invention, and also oppressive, according to John Holt. See: Judith Hughes. "The Philosopher's Child; In: *Thinking*, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 40. Children used to be regarded as "little people" – no substantial differences were assumed between the *ways* grown-ups think and children. However, their status and role in family and society has dramatically changed since industrialisation. Children's 'experts', 'authorities' on childhood have since "construed them as creatures apart from their parents..." From: David Kennedy. "Why Philosophy for Children Now"; *Thinking*, Vol. 10, no 3, pp. 2-6. See also: Gareth Matthews. *The Philosophy of Childhood*. Cambridge (Mass), Harvard Univ. Press, 1994, p. 8. It for this reason, for example, that there never used to be separate children's literature, and infants were artistically represented as 'miniature grown-ups' – with their heads drawn one-eighth of the body, rather than the one-fourth which it is in reality. The concept of childhood is also *culturally* problematic: children are seen to be substantially different in various cultures. See, for example: Sheila Kitzinger and Celia Kitzinger. "Obedience and Autonomy", Chapter Four in: *Talking with Children; About Things That Matter*. London, Pandora, 1989, pp. 48-74.

²² Taken from the book Vogel, C. J., *Plato: de filosoof van het transcendente*. Baam, Wereldvenster, 1974, p. 93, I translated the text with the illustration into English from the Dutch.

²³ David Kennedy points out, however, that despite Dewey's influence, the PwC child is not entirely a Deweyan child. In one sense, because they are not as rationalist as Dewey thought, but also romantic which expands reason by including the emotions, feelings, hopes, desires, etc. (Kennedy, 1992, pp. 4, 5). In the other sense, because it assumes that children are in a way more philosophical than adults, that is, live more in wonder (Kennedy, 1992, p. 4).

²⁴ For example in *Wondering about the World*, the manual to accompany the philosophical novel *Kio and Gus*, written by Matthew Lipman for seven and eight year olds, he remarks: "Children ...need to appreciate the world as it is and to imagine what it might have been otherwise. The world as it is doesn't have to be any less fantastic than imaginary world made up of strange monsters from outer space and other concoctions of fairy tales and television" (p. 26). His derogatory attitude towards what triggers children's imagination is quite common, and will be criticised in the last chapter. Urgent research is needed into the role of the imagination in rationality, and the possible differences between the way young children and older people think. Young children seem to look at their immediate environment differently than adults do. Cracks in paving stones, for example, are essential ingredients for many games children play.

²⁵ A conception of philosophy I criticise in Section 4.

- ²⁶ In an interview with Matthew Lipman for the BBC documentary series about educational pioneers called *The Transformers*. The documentary about philosophy for children is called *Socrates with six olds* and was broadcast in the Autumn of 1990.
- ²⁷ For example, Matthews explains what the philosopher can do for the non-philosophical parent or teacher. The philosopher can "...collect examples of philosophical thinking in young children and then, by linking those childish thoughts to our philosophical tradition, help parents and teachers to recognize philosophy in their children, respect it when it appears, and even participate in it and encourage it on occasion." From: Gareth Matthews. *The Philosophy of Childhood*. Cambridge (Mass), Harvard Univ. Press, 1994, p. 37.
- ²⁸ Partly quoted in Karin Murrin. *Teaching Philosophy with Picture Books*. London, Infonet Publications, 1992.
- ²⁹ Kitchener writes: "Until we have more complete transcripts of these conversations with children, we simply cannot decide the issue – at least in many cases." See: Richard Kitchener. "Do children think philosophically?". *Metaphilosophy*, Vol. 21, 1990, No. 4, p. 427. I conclude, therefore, that in principle it could be children, who critically question each other in one-one dialogue.
- ³⁰ Partly quoted in Karin Murrin. *Teaching Philosophy with Picture Books*. London, Infonet Publications, 1992b, p. 11.
- ³¹ Further points to emerge from this dialogue include child 1's initial understanding of a 'thing' as a material or physical object, and how consistently he uses this meaning of the concept throughout the dialogue. I (the teacher) was assuming that the child meant 'thing' in a more loose sense, i.e., 'whatever we can talk about'. Therefore, I would never have posed this question (line 3) in the first place. It shows how important it is, to have more participants, children or adults, to reduce the risk of having beliefs remain unquestioned, which could block a philosophical enquiry.
- ³² The validity of Kitchener's criteria I rejected in Chapter One. I will also argue in Chapter Five that the comparison between philosophically trained adult philosophers with philosophically untrained children is unfair (see Chapter Five, Section 2). Also, adult philosophers seem to be unreasonably demanding. Primary children do not 'do' mathematics or history like professional mathematicians or historians. Does it, therefore, follow that, either they do not do 'real' mathematics or real history, or that they should not do those subjects?

Chapter Four

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY WITH CHILDREN?

STRUCTURE

1. Introduction.
2. Classroom discussions and Philosophical discussions.
3. Socratic methods of teaching philosophy:
 - a. Socrates
 - b. Leonard Nelson
 - c. Gustav Heckmann
 - d. Matthew Lipman
 - e. Conclusion
4. Communities of Philosophical Enquiry.
5. Metaphors of talk and argument.
6. Summary and Conclusion.

1. Introduction

In the first chapter, I took up John Wilson's challenge to clarify what is meant by 'philosophy'. It involved, first of all, a clarification of what we mean by *philosophical thinking*. I concluded that philosophical thinking is thinking about problematic, but significant, abstract concepts; the sort of concepts we use in everyday life to think and communicate with, and which we use as a basis for our actions. Philosophical concepts are common, because *all* of us (including children as young as three) use those concepts; and they are central, because we use them in order to make sense of ourselves, others, and the world we live in.

An important aim of philosophical enquiry is 'autonomous thinking', i.e., thinking without so-called 'epistemological authorities' – the sort of authorities, such as doctors, books, and all kinds of so-called 'experts', that people turn to in order to justify their beliefs without further questioning. It therefore involves a constant reflection upon the sources of our thinking (what do I base my beliefs on?) and those of others – 'thinking about thinking'. Therefore, philosophical enquiry is possible only when the participants have an open-minded attitude, i.e., an attitude of accepting the need to examine the many things which we take for granted. This attitude, or 'philosophical urge', Lipman characterises in a striking analogy:

"Philosophy goes for the problematic as a moth is drawn to a flame..."
(Lipman, 1988, p. 33).

I also addressed the question what philosophical truth is, and how we know that we have got it 'right' when we do philosophy. I argued that there is no paradigm philosophical 'form of life'. What philosophers did in Ancient Greece and what is being regarded as 'real' philosophy nowadays differs enormously.

I concluded that there are no 'right' answers when doing philosophical enquiry, in the sense of offering a 'true', final definition, but there can be wrong answers, for example, by not making sense, or being illogical. Philosophical concepts are always contestable, because other concepts are needed to clarify the concept under examination. Therefore, philosophising is the activity of justifying one's beliefs, rather than searching for 'The Truth'.

I also clarified what is meant by a *philosophical* question, and concluded that the surest symptom of a philosophical question is that we do not know how to go about answering it – there are no clear guidelines or generally agreed methods for philosophers to use. There is bewilderment and mystery often because of the general character of philosophical questions, as in, for example, "What is Being?", or, "Is life worth living?".

Generally speaking what can be said about philosophical questions is that they are questions:

- that become philosophical, because of the intention and the attitude of the questioner;
- that are not 'closed', i.e., not mere information-seeking;
- that have to make sense.

Undeniably children have a *questioning* attitude. From an early age they drive adults to distraction with their never ending questions, but, as I concluded in the last chapter, not all questions children ask are indeed philosophical.

As already mentioned in the last chapter, philosopher John White has strong reservations about calling children's questions philosophical. He claims that children merely want to know how to use a concept, and that he has not come across evidence as yet that children can map a

concept “from a higher-order perspective”, and that the concepts they are interested in “present philosophical problems” (White, 1992, pp. 75, 76). Hence, they are not philosophising, but “simply on the way to acquiring the concept” (White, 1992, p. 76).

On the other hand, philosophers such as Gareth Matthews and Bernard Groethuysen admire children’s philosophical tendencies. Matthews writes:

“They stumble into philosophy from innocence, rather than from the cultivation of naiveté, that adults are limited to” (Matthews, 1978, p. 70).

He says that children’s questions tell us a lot about philosophy: “In important part, philosophy is an adult attempt to deal with the genuinely baffling questions of childhood” (Matthews, 1994, p. 13). It seems as if the thing children and philosophers have in common is that they wonder why things are as they are – as in “Why is the moon where it is?” (Boy, aged 9), or “Where does the wind come from?” (Girl, aged 7), or “Where do our ancestors come from?” (Boy, aged 10).

Matthews claims that good teachers of philosophy remember the questions they had when they were a child. Otherwise philosophy would lose its urgency and much of its point (Matthews, 1994, p. 14). It has been argued that open-mindedness comes naturally to children, whilst adults can do this only in a cultivated or institutionalised manner (Groethuysen, 1978; Matthews, 1978, 1994) (see also: Chapter Three).

This would make it possible to agree with Matthews, who says that – as opposed to developmental theories about thinking – the asking of philosophical questions, or philosophical wonder in general, has nothing to do with age (Matthews, 1994, pp. 36-40). I argued in the previous chapter that thinking is not more philosophical just because people are older. On the contrary, children may find it easier to ‘start from scratch’ in each philosophical enquiry because they have less knowledge of the philosophical tradition, and therefore will take less for granted. To sum up the conclusion of Chapter Two:

Modern education can be characterised as follows:

- A difficulty in appreciating the value of dialogical enquiry in knowledge acquisition.
- A problem in accepting that individuals are learning *because* and not *despite* being in a large group setting.
- A reluctance to accept the importance of encouraging children to question rather than the answering of teacher’s questions in acquiring knowledge. In post-modern education, on the other hand, there is an appreciation for the belief that thoughts are not so much created ‘in’ mind-space, but are often created in the dynamic process of interaction itself – while talking we actually create new ideas and (re)structure what we already know.
- An unwillingness to accept that there are no right answers, or that there is no transcultural, indubitable foundation of knowledge.

Dialogue as an appropriate post-modern educational pedagogy for the teaching of philosophy is the central topic of this chapter. I like the way Laurance Splitter and Ann M. Sharp define dialogue as “...a conversation which is problem-focused, self-correcting, egalitarian and based on the interests of those involved...” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 6).¹ I will be looking at its inspirational source – Socrates – and some modern applications (‘Community of Enquiry’, ‘Socratic Method’).

Academic philosophy in itself and without further argument cannot be used as a paradigm for judging whether other practices of philosophy can genuinely be called philosophy. In this

sense, philosophy as practised with children is a criticism of the way philosophy is usually taught in academic settings, and coincides with a 20th century critique from philosophers within academic philosophy itself (see Chapter Five, Section 2; Chapter Eight, Section 5). Many philosophers nowadays prefer to focus on philosophising – the activity of *doing* philosophy, as opposed to philosophy as a body of knowledge. As Australian philosopher Peter Singer puts it:

“Philosophy is often thought of as a body of knowledge; but this idea makes little sense, because for virtually every significant statement that one philosopher makes, it is possible to find another who will disagree with it. It is better to consider philosophy as a method of enquiring into very fundamental questions that do not yield to the methods of science. In the Western tradition, since the time of Plato, this method can be characterised by a form of relentless questioning, in which the answer to one question only leads to a further question, and so on, and on and on. Readers of Plato will know what I mean. And so will parents of small children” (Singer, 1995, p. 1).

Philosophical enquiry focuses on asking philosophical questions and analysing concepts with an attitude of open-mindedness. It is for this reason that teaching philosophy to children in the classroom consists of offering the opportunity and encouraging the activity of questioning and the analyses of philosophical concepts; and not just the written response to, or memorising, the answers given by famous philosophers (mostly) from the past. If philosophers are ‘lovers of wisdom’, surely the ‘wisdom’ to which they aspire is not merely memorising answers given by others?

If Socrates has taught us anything, it is in showing that philosophical concepts can be clarified only by each person for herself connecting abstract philosophical concepts to concrete experiences. In a sense, Socrates is the paradigm for philosophising, i.e., philosophy *practised* as a form of life.

In Section 3, I will examine a few possible options for a Socratic way of teaching philosophy to children, but I will start by examining the difference between ‘normal’ classroom discussions and philosophical enquiry. Despite the fact that, on the surface, philosophical discussions bear a resemblance with classroom discussions there are some important differences.

2. Classroom discussions and Philosophical discussions

Unlike the academic tradition in philosophy, philosophy with children does not comprise the study of an existing body of knowledge; it is a free exploration of philosophical concepts – the *content* of philosophical enquiry – starting with our everyday experience, and, in the end, returning to it. It is an *activity* – a search for answers to questions we all have to undertake for ourselves. It is an activity generated out of pure necessity, because all of us already give answers to philosophical questions, either explicitly, or implicitly through our actions (Leeuw, 1993, pp. 9, 36); and it makes a difference whether we do it well or badly (Emmet, 1991, p. 18). This intrinsically practical nature of philosophy is also emphasised by Maurice Finocchiaro (Finocchiaro, 1993, pp. 674-676).

This is what Heidegger had in mind when he emphasised that the teacher-student relationship should be like that between master and apprentice in the medieval guilds – to let “learning occur”, since Dasein is always thinking about its own thinking – an *activity* rather than a thing.² This is exactly what happens in the dynamic praxis of a philosophical enquiry – thinking takes place, no matter where the train of thoughts leads the students. The teacher’s role is like that of a midwife: letting the creation of new thoughts occur; and intervention being restricted to when things go wrong.

To continue the simile, what is wrong with midwifery in Britain is what is wrong with education. The majority of midwives (and especially obstetricians) do not just intervene when things go wrong, i.e., when mother or baby are in danger. The prevention of things going wrong has become so important that pregnant women are hospitalised routinely, and childbirth is treated as though it were an illness. Similarly, exaggerated intervention by many teachers prevents the birth of children’s original thoughts, the unusual connections children make, and new relationships they discover. Pupils help each other create new thoughts by building upon each other’s ideas, wherever they may lead – a procedure they are rarely used to.

Lipman writes:

“To learn philosophy, one must be actively involved in the life of philosophy and this can only be accomplished by children’s appropriating the philosophical tradition for themselves, re-enacting it in terms of their own experience, critically reflecting upon it and incorporating the meanings thus acquired into the on-going conduct of their lives” (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, pp. IX & X; my emphasis).

In other words, philosophy can be a suitable subject for children if “...reconstructed in ways that suit their talents and their interests” (Cam, 1995, p. 13). This reconstruction should be such that children do not learn *about* philosophy, but *do* philosophy, because, as I concluded in Chapter One, you cannot do philosophy for someone else – one has to think for oneself. In a sense, in the context of PwC, talking of the activity of *philosophising* is more appropriate than of the subject, philosophy.

The first step in philosophical enquiry is an analysis of the question itself, before it can be usefully discussed. This ‘tidying up of the question’ is part of the emerging philosophical discussion (Emmet, 1991, p. 105). This questioning is an expression of a kind of wonder that I call ‘reverence’, in order to set it apart from other kinds of wonder, such as scientific wonder.³ I agree with Bitting and Southworth, who argue that in contrast to ‘wonder’, ‘reverence’ needs to be learned. They say:

“Reverence requires the capacities of wonder and awe to be actively developed but reverence, itself, must be learned. Reverence goes beyond wonder and awe in that it carries within it the qualities of a deep and abiding sense of relatedness, caring and respect for the subject of inquiry as an integral identity as well as a respect for oneself as an inquirer” (Bitting & Southworth, 1992, p. 14).

They also claim that reverence is the true foundation of all learning as the “quality which forever seeks to comprehend the all in the particular” (Bitting & Southworth, 1992, p. 18).

The most common pedagogy used for the teaching of philosophy worldwide is that of a ‘community of enquiry’. American pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce was the first to fuse together the terms ‘community’ and ‘enquiry’, but despite being a philosopher himself, he restricted the scope of a community of enquiry to scientific enquiry only. It now refers to all subject areas and age groupings. Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp, who have written extensively on the subject, prefer not to give a definition⁴ of a community of enquiry, because it is one of those key concepts, they say

“...which takes on new aspects and dimensions as teachers and students apply it and modify it to their purposes. A community of enquiry is at once imminent and transcendent: it provides a framework which pervades the everyday life of its participants and it serves as an ideal to strive for” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, pp. 17, 18).

This methodology is inspired by Socrates with the prevailing metaphor of thinking as ‘inner speech’. In the dialogue “Theaetetus”, Socrates says that “...when the mind is thinking, it is simply talking to itself, asking questions and answering them, and saying Yes or No. When it reaches a decision – which may come slowly or in a sudden rush – when doubt is over and the two voices affirm the same thing, then we call that its “judgement”. So I should describe thinking as discourse, and judgement as a statement pronounced, not aloud to someone else, but silently to oneself” (Plato quoted in Matthews, 1980, p. 42).⁵ The pedagogy of a community of enquiry is based on the Vygotskian assumption that children will learn to think for themselves, if they engage in thinking together (Cam, 1995, p. 17). But prior to Lev Vygotsky, George Herbert Mead had already pointed out that “the child does not become social by learning. He must be social in order to learn” (Mead, 1993).

We have to attribute to Mead the belief that reflective thinking displayed by individuals is the internalisation of linguistic behaviour in our society (Lipman, 1993c, p. 319). Thinking is not a self-contained, individual activity, but a shared process (Chambers, 1985, p. 5). Philosophical enquiry as a social practice will be internalised at an individual level. Participants of a community of enquiry will question themselves after they have learnt to question each other.

Australian philosopher Philip Cam describes a community of enquiry with children as:

“...an educational activity in which children raise questions and investigate issues using the tools and procedures of philosophy” (Cam, 1995, p. 100).

However, his description of the procedures of philosophy are not *unique* to philosophy. He mentions: “asking appropriate questions”, “making useful distinctions”, “drawing relevant inferences” (Cam, 1985, p. 16). But what is it that makes useful distinctions, ‘useful’, or appropriate questions, ‘appropriate’? What may be a useful distinction for a philosopher, for example, between ‘reality’ and ‘appearances’ could be judged as merely an academic exercise, or even a waste of time by a scientist, or perhaps even by another philosopher.

Cam's definition forces us to return to the fundamental question 'What is philosophy?'. As seen in the last chapter, Matthews argues that philosophers have learnt from Descartes that philosophy is 'starting all over again':

"I am to make a fresh beginning to see if I can show by some means of my very own that I really do know whatever it is I claim to know" (Matthews, 1994, p. 18).

To rid oneself of cherished beliefs and assumptions is much harder for adults, than it is for children. In that sense adult philosophers try to be little children again – even if only temporarily (Matthews, 1994, p. 18). There is more to philosophy than this, but "learning to be comfortable with 'naive' questions is an important part..." too (Matthews, 1994, p. 18). Matthews admits that seeing children as "little philosophers" is a distorted view of children, but he tries to compensate for the distorted view we have of children's thinking as the result of popular developmental theories.

As the result of a growing critique of those theories, and more pragmatically, the need to meet the demands of at least one Attainment Target of the English National Curriculum in Britain, that of *Speaking and Listening*, classroom discussions are becoming increasingly popular. Meeting National Curriculum Targets was the reason for the administering in 1988 of the *National Oracy Project*, by the then National Curriculum Council (Baddeley, 1992, p. 9).

Despite the superficial resemblances between 'normal' classroom discussions and philosophical discussions, there are significant differences. I will illustrate this point by the following example from Aidan Chambers' *Booktalk*. As the title suggests, he encourages teachers to explore ways of helping children talk about their reading, and it has become a popular way of teaching 'Speaking and Listening'. He acknowledges the importance of talk in that:

"By owning the thoughts of others we each extend the range of our ability to think and the limits of our individual potential by the addition of the range of the other speakers in the group. In short, we each take on the power of the others' thoughts" (Chambers, 1985, p. 142).

He continues by giving an example of this kind of talk – the account of a discussion a primary schoolteacher had with his eight year olds:

"We were talking about Sendak's 'Where the Wild Things Are' and things weren't particularly interesting. Nobody had mentioned dreams or imagination; we were still busy with likes and dislikes. To move things on I asked them to tell me about what they didn't understand. Several immediately began comparing illustrations and saying how they couldn't understand how trees would grow in Max's room. I said, 'Yes, that's certainly a bit strange.' Wayne replied, 'He's having a dream.' Several 'Oh, yeah's' followed and some looked even more confused. I asked for a show of hands. 'Who agrees with Wayne?' The majority agreed and claimed they had always known it to be a dream! Wayne had actually, I think, enabled the others to possess what he had said and, also, by saying it had made others convinced that they had already thought it" (Chambers, 1985, p. 142).

In contrast to philosophical enquiry,

- the teacher (not the children) decides what is or is not an interesting topic for the discussion (“Things weren’t particularly interesting. Nobody had mentioned dreams or imagination...”).
- the teacher’s role is directive (“To move things on...”).
- the teacher is more leader than participant (“I asked them to tell *me*” [my italics]).
- chorus answers are not discouraged (“Oh, yeah’s followed...”).
- Wayne is not asked to clarify his belief by giving reasons (“...some looked even more confused. I asked for a show of hands”).
- the direction of the discussion is not influenced by reason (I asked for a show of hands”).
- individual answers are not cherished (“The majority agreed...”).

The last few sentences of the quotation especially show how the discussion is guided by a lack of logic and reason (“...by saying it had made others convinced that they had already thought it”). The children are convinced by the mere *expression* of beliefs, and not the *justification* of them – central in a *philosophical* discussion, in which children are not merely talking together, but reasoning together.

Therefore, philosophical enquiry thrives on disagreement, because it brings children into dialogue, and good reasons will have to be sought in order to convince one another. Thus, either they change their minds about something in the face of a stronger, more coherent idea, or else the belief or idea they have is strengthened by the lack of good opposition. This ‘good reasons’ logic is context based, for it takes into account the wide variety of situations that call for deliberate thinking (Lipman, 1988b, p. 138). According to Lipman, the main purpose of good-reasons logic is “to evaluate one’s thoughts and the thoughts of others in reference to actions or events” (Lipman, 1988b, p. 139). Superficial agreements are avoided in a philosophical enquiry which is guided by a search for the truth, in the sense of “movement away from error”.⁶

Moreover, and pointed out by Philip Cam:

“By interacting with one another over matters of mutual interest, children will really begin to think together. Through exploring disagreement and considering reasons that may be given on different sides of a dispute, they will become more reasonable in their dealings with each other. It will help to build both community and inquiry” (Cam, 1995, pp. 45, 46).

According to Burbules, “[d]ialogue represents a continuous, developmental, communicative interchange through which we stand to gain fuller apprehension of the world, ourselves, and one another” (Burbules quoted in Johnson, 1995, p. 45). In philosophical enquiry there is an emphasis on *process* rather than the *product* of the enquiry.⁷ However, as Lipman points out, that does not mean that there is no aim to the process. There is a product, however partial or tentative this may be. The process also has a sense of direction: it moves where the argument takes it, and it also has a structure, a dialogical structure, which distinguishes it from conversation⁸ or discussion. These procedural rules, are largely logical in nature, according to Lipman (Lipman, 1991, p. 229).

So, in contrast to ‘normal’ discussions, in a philosophical enquiry *reasoning* is central, since all participants have to justify their beliefs by giving good reasons. They have to distance themselves and reflect upon their own thinking as an outcome of the dialogue. Splitter and Sharp point out that reasonableness⁹ is primarily a social disposition. They argue:

“The reasonable person respects others and is prepared to take into account their views and their feelings, to the extent of changing her own mind about issues of significance, and consciously allowing her own perspective to be changed by others. She is, in other words, willing to be reasoned with. This points, in turn, to the importance of active listening¹⁰ and dialogue, and hence to the idea of the classroom as a community of reasoners. Indeed, to be reasonable, one must be part of such a community” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, pp. 6, 7).

However, despite being a *necessary* condition, being reasonable is not a *sufficient* condition for calling the enquiry a *philosophical* enquiry. Not even when it is argued that philosophers are ready and willing to *always* engage in reasoning (Finocchiaro, 1993, p. 674). Not just the fact that someone is reasoning, but also what s/he is reasoning *about* is a criterion for distinguishing talk from philosophical talk.

This is acknowledged by Sharp and Splitter who insist that the discussion should focus on the analysis and formation of *concepts of a certain kind*. They are the concepts all of us use to make sense of our experiences and they always invite further enquiry (Splitter & Sharp, 1995). This is one of the reasons why philosophical thinking is *complex* thinking (Lipman, 1991; Cam, 1995). It is, because “[p]hilosophical concepts distinguish themselves from those of everyday life by their generality, by their abstract character, but especially by their complexity: most philosophical concepts are not simple class concepts which can be dealt with by prototype learning” (Leeuw & Mostert, 1987, p. 94). For example, we do not learn the concept ‘person’ by simply pointing at various concrete individuals. It does not tell us anything about what it is that makes us different from our goldfish.

Sceptics, such as John White and Richard Kitchener, claim that this kind of abstract thinking is beyond the capacities of young children.¹¹ However, for young and old alike, it is very difficult to answer questions such as “What do I mean by ‘time’?”, or “What is a ‘person’?”. It makes philosophical enquiry not only a very difficult activity, but also crucial in order to make sense of our experiences, and this will have to take place in a community, Sharp and Splitter argue, because “[e]ach concept is a product of negotiation within the community and culture in which it is used”, and an important goal of a community of enquiry is to work “towards a shared (communal) articulation of concepts which are important to children” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 11).

An important feature of concept-analysis is a search for criteria. In order to distinguish between people and goldfish we need *criteria*. A search for criteria is an ever-returning feature of philosophical enquiry. For example: if stealing is permissible in some circumstances, how do we know a particular circumstance fulfils the criteria (e.g., stealing medicine from a closed chemist to prevent someone from dying). Or, what is it that makes a ‘witch’ a ‘witch’? A search for criteria is expressed generally in the form of the question “What is it that makes ‘x’, ‘x’?”

Splitter and Sharp stress that the activity of formulating and using criteria cannot be handed down from teacher to student. Each student for herself has to examine her own attitudes, values and behaviour. It involves reflection and deliberation on one’s own experience and altering one’s thinking when necessary, and they call this process *enquiry*. Lipman defines enquiry as “...any form of self-critical practice whose aim is more comprehensive understanding or more expert judgment” (Lipman, 1991, p. 245, footnote 3). According to Charles Pierce, enquiry is “The struggle to attain a state of belief” and we are motivated to enquiry by what he calls a “real and living doubt” (Kyle, unpublished). Sharp and Splitter agree with Lipman that logic is an important component in enquiry, because one has to follow the structure and threads of an argument (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 13).

3. Socratic methods of teaching philosophy – Nelson, Heckmann, and Lipman

A. SOCRATES

Socrates was born in Athens c 470 B.C. and committed suicide¹² after he was sentenced to death for allegedly introducing strange gods and corrupting the young (Blackburn, 1996).

The difficulty in talking about *the* Socratic Method, Socratic Dialogue or Socratic Teaching is that it means different things to different people. Socrates is the main character in Plato's early dialogues, and most of our knowledge of him is via Plato. Socrates left no writings of his own and his attitude and pedagogy differ in the various Platonic dialogues.

Socrates is often criticised for his arrogance, directiveness and dominance in the discussion (Pekarsky, 1994), and he has been described as an "authoritarian, picky, overly verbal, self-righteous, insensitive manipulator of other people's thoughts" (Lessing, 1993, p. 444). His style of teaching has been referred to as "fierce" and "intimidating" (Johnson, 1995, p. 45). In Socrates' defense, it is very likely that he was not directive in the actual conversations he did have, but it was Plato who wrote them down as a transformed, but easier and more interesting to read, end-product. However, when reading the dialogue between Socrates and the slave Meno in Plato's book *Meno* – usually referred to as being characteristic of Socrates' pedagogy – it is easy to understand criticisms of Socrates' directiveness and dominance. The dialogue is characterised as:

- a dialogue between two people.
- Socrates only asks questions.
- Socrates constructs the argument.
- Socrates knows beforehand where the discussion is going to lead and how to get there (no sidetracks).
- Socrates visualises the conversation by making drawings in the sand.
- Socrates constantly checks whether the slave understands him (Kessels, 1987, p. 5; Lessing, 1993, p. 445).¹³

It is difficult to imagine how this kind of teaching could be adopted or even be desirable in modern day classrooms. When advocating Socratic teaching people usually refer to the core principles of Socratic teaching. So what are these core principles?

For Socrates, education was a very personal affair. It is impossible to transfer insight in one's own experiences from one person to another. This can be acquired only through mutual, critical enquiry. Education is an *activity*, "a particular emotional and critical orientation towards experience" (Abbs, 1994, p. 17). This is often not appreciated, because the grammatical structure of the English language misleads us in understanding education as an object (body of knowledge, facts, skills, etc.) that can be transferred as such. According to Peter Abbs:

"The noun 'education' is here peculiarly deceptive for there is no object to correspond with the word. We do well to employ a participle – educating or, even better, a series of participles: thinking-imagining-participating-relating-dividing-joining-anticipating, etc. At least, such a stringing of hyphenated participles escapes the deceptive stasis of nouns and evokes a sense of personal drama that, for Socrates, education ineluctably is" (Abbs, 1994, p. 17).

Socrates believed that truly wise people are those who have recognised their own ignorance. When thinking Socratically, people discover that they cannot define ideas that are central to the beliefs they hold with certainty (Morton, 1996, p. 31). This ignorance, in turn, inspires authentic curiosity and critical reflection upon one's *own* thinking and experiences. Thinking about hypothetical cases has no place (Jos Kessels in Nelson, 1994, p. 11).

One of Socrates' main influences on the theory and practice of education is the realisation that everyday experience should be the starting point for, and the ethical aim of, any teaching – to know what the good life is and how to act justly. Moreover, the role of the teacher is to ask questions in such a way that students understand their own experiences better. Socratic teaching is more than the mere asking of questions – they are particular *kinds* of questions, in a particular *order* and *manner*, and with particular *aims* in mind (Lessing, 1993, p. 445).

This aspect is often not sufficiently appreciated by teachers who argue that Socratic teaching does not suit young children. For example, Ann Diller argues that in a teaching situation consisting of adults and children "...the adults' experience and verbal facility combined with institutionalized power and authority places the student at a decided disadvantage not easily forgotten or overcome", and that that is the reason why it is sometimes essential "...to provide them with necessary information, point out consequences, and clarify relevant connections" (Diller, 1978, p. 335). Proponents of Socratic teaching would argue that the teacher has to master the art of questioning in such a way that those consequences will be seen, and connections will be made, by the children themselves. The teacher should not direct the children towards particular answers.

Socrates saw education as "a continuous quest, of endless speculation" (Abbs, 1993a, p. 1) with the focus on questioning, rather than on the answering of pre-set questions. Of special importance are the kinds of questions that students have *not* asked, but should ask (and answer) before the question they *did* ask can be answered. For example, if a student asks "When was the beginning of the universe?", a teacher could ask "Does everything have to have a beginning?".

Peter Abbs describes Socrates' role as a philosopher poignantly:

"Each dialogue was an exploration whose specific unfolding depended on the personalities of those engaged. Through cross-examination, through definition of terms and the examination of their consequences, through the systematic articulation of opposed conceptions, the individuals moved, at best, toward the communal reflective clarification of the truth they were seeking. But even this truth, whatever it was, had to be seen as provisional, as, in principle, always open to fresh examination and subsequent re-formulation" (Abbs, 1993a, p. 1).

In that sense the answers to questions – posed by oneself or others – invite further enquiry. This is powerfully illustrated by the following simile:

"A good answer, instead, is like a candle in the dark. It provides both light and mystery" (Lipman, 1980, p. 203).

In order to teach children the art of questioning, the role of the teacher is significantly different from the norm. Not only the student, but also the teacher, is 'at risk' of being transformed and altered as a person, and solely by a change in the concepts used (Abbs, 1993a, p. 1).

Socrates looked for universal definitions, particularly in the sphere of ethics. For example, when we talk about some things (or people) being good, this would imply, according to

Socrates, that there is an absolute standard of Good. To determine what the absolute standard or definition is, he employed the method of the *elenchus*, i.e., assisting people to give birth to their own ideas (his mother was a midwife).

Since Socrates, philosophy has been concerned with language and in particular with the definition of philosophically interesting concepts (Winch, 1996, p. 25). It is in that sense that, very much like reading and writing, it is something you *do*, rather than learn. It is a systematic reflection upon concepts people use to structure their everyday experiences. Therefore, to educate people to become philosophers, the only method available is “teaching to think for oneself” (Draken, 1989, p. 46).¹⁴ This was even more important for Socrates than finding the Truth (Jos Kessels in Nelson, 1994, p. 19), as Dutch philosopher Jos Kessels illustrates by an example from Plato’s Dialogue, the *Symposium*, whereby Socrates lets one of the characters, Acibiades, discover the truth for himself – that he is not interested in a physical relationship – rather than telling him. The message conveyed is that only self-discovered truths have meaning, and every search for the truth is a personal affair (Jos Kessels in Nelson, 1994, p. 20).

The conclusion of the first three chapters has been that philosophy is an enquiry into very fundamental questions. Methods of teaching inspired by Socrates have in common a relentless questioning, in which each answer necessitates further enquiry. Socrates is the paradigm for philosophy *practised* as a form of life. Form and content should not be separated, therefore *how* we teach philosophy is intrinsically linked to *what* we teach. When teaching philosophy, teachers should encourage the activity of questioning and the analyses of philosophical concepts. Using Lipman’s words again, children should be taught to appropriate the philosophical tradition for themselves, re-enacting it in terms of their own experience.¹⁵

But how is it possible to teach Socratically in the artificially constructed context of a classroom? There are significant contextual differences between the dialogues held by Socrates and his friends, and those in classroom discussions. First, in the Platonic dialogues the discussions were voluntary – there were no authorities to enforce participation. Secondly, the discussions evolved out of normal daily activities (for example, the marketplace). Thirdly, there were no such constraints as a set time limit.

In a wider sense, Socratic teaching is the kind of teaching whereby the facilitator does not impart any information, but only asks questions (Blackburn, 1996), and as such is involved in a *mutual* enquiry. Simply being non-directive as a teacher is not sufficient, Rosalyn Lessing observes. She argues for significant changes to be brought about in the social dynamics of the classroom in order for Socratic teaching to be possible with the prime task of the teacher to:

“transform teacher-mediated relationships among students into unmediated, direct, student-student relationships. without thereby removing herself from the classroom” (Lessing, 1993, p. 451).

Leonard Nelson, Gustav Heckmann, Matthew Lipman and his colleague Ann Margaret Sharp have put forward suggestions on how to bring about this kind of transformation as a way of adapting Socrates’ ideas to fit in with modern day educational practice.

B. LEONARD NELSON

German philosopher, Leonard Nelson (1882-1927), also believed that, unlike empirical knowledge (that can be derived from sensory experiences), philosophical wisdom is insight gained through the use of reason (Kessels, 1987, p. 8).

In 1924, Nelson founded the *Philosophisch-Politische Akademie* and an experimental school the *Landeserziehungsheim Walkemuehle* (Jos Kessels in Nelson, 1994, p. 9). The aims of both were to educate children in a love of truth, and to encourage self-esteem. It was a radical attempt to change education at a time of many other educational pioneers for mainly primary education: Montessori, Dewey, Petersen, Freinet, which had roughly the following characteristics in common:

- emphasis on the needs and the individuality of the child;
- emphasis on activities and skills, rather than purely passive learning;
- attention for social skills and a sense of community; attempt to integrate traditional subjects to a more project-based curriculum.

(Kessels, 1987, p. 7; Leeuw, unpublished reader, pp. 3, 4)

After his death, Nelson's educational and political work was carried on by his pupils, Minna Specht and Gustav Heckmann. Seminars on 'Socratic Method'¹⁶ are still held twice a year under Heckmann's supervision (in Germany) and by philosophers trained in the method (in the Netherlands and Britain¹⁷).

Philosophy, says Nelson, is about *insight*, not knowledge. This insight can be achieved only by:

- thinking for oneself with the help of one's own judgments;
- working systematically;
- defining concepts clearly;
- concentrating on real, important problems that help us to understand reality better and or not just formal problems;
- expressing oneself in clear, everyday language (Kessels, 1987, p. 10). This is achieved through Socratic Method, which forces participants to express thoughts clearly, to systematise judgments, and to test their own beliefs during the thinking process itself. There is no exchange of 'facts'.

Dutch PwC proponent and Socratic Method facilitator Karel van der Leeuw describes the method as follows: "...the collective effort to find the truth about the subject under discussion, that is the search for a satisfying answer to a question or solution to a problem which the participants in the discussion think important enough to pay careful attention to and to investigate" (Leeuw, Internet P4C list, January 1997).

The benefits of Socratic Method include the acquisition of various philosophical skills – e.g., different discussion techniques, the practice of concept analysis, practice in formulating definitions, working with relations such as cause/effect, appearance/reality, part/whole; use of examples, counter-examples, etc. The main advantage is the practice of autonomous thinking with the help of one's own judgement (Kessels, 1987, p. 11).

Extending the Socratic method to large groups was Nelson's idea.¹⁸ Unfortunately, he gave few guidelines on how such a discussion should be conducted. This gap has been filled by his pupil, Gustav Heckmann.

C. GUSTAV HECKMANN

Gustav Heckmann practised the Socratic Method before World War Two in Nelson's experimental school – a boarding school and training college for children and adults. It was closed down by the Nazis in 1933. He practised after the war in Hannover Teacher's Training College.

Heckmann taught philosophy by discussing and jointly reasoning about possible solutions to philosophical problems, and not by studying a philosophical text. His lessons – lasting ninety minutes – were accessible to all, but he did insist upon continuous and regular attendance. Socratic Method, Nelson/Heckmann style, is exceptional in the way in which a fundamental question is answered (e.g., can you change the meaning of words?) – via the examples and experiences of the participants (e.g., can I change the meaning of ‘is’, in ‘George *is* a slow thinker’?). This is central to the method itself. Examples must be a concrete reflection of the basic question under discussion. It is only through concrete examples, which are in principle accessible to all participants, that insight in the general, abstract is possible (Draken, 1984, p. 47).

After each lesson the results of the discourse are written down by students and the facilitator. This gives students an opportunity for quiet reflection, and the freedom to follow their own trains of thought. It also clarifies for the facilitator whether everyone was able to follow the discourse, and whether there were any misunderstandings. These results are used as minutes for the starting point of the next lesson. They are read out aloud to provide an effective summary of the previous lesson’s discussion, or to introduce a new line of thought, or extend the line of reasoning.

The only ‘technique’ admissible in Socratic discourse is that of reflection on experiences common to all participants.

The facilitator of a Socratic dialogue has a role which is in a sense more ‘Spartan’ than the ‘midwife’ typical of Socrates. Although facilitators are well acquainted with finer points of the subject under discussion, they remain completely outside the argument itself. They have the task only of ensuring the reasonable conduct of the discussion.

The rules of Socratic dialogue currently used in Socratic Method workshops have been developed mostly by Heckmann. The rules are as follows (Kessels, 1993, pp. 28, 29):

- Participants think about their own experiences, and not what they have merely read about or experienced second hand. No ‘outside’ authorities are allowed.
- This thinking is a ‘sincere self-examination’. There is no pretence of doubt – e.g., Cartesian doubt. No hypothetical discussions are permissible.
- Participants have to do their utmost to express themselves simply and clearly, therefore, avoid monologues.
- Participants should reflect, not only on their own thoughts, but do their utmost to understand those of others.
- The facilitator should ensure that consensus is reached at a ‘deeper’ than ‘superficial’ level.
- Every general, abstract statement should be tested by giving concrete examples accessible to all participants.
- The dialogue is finished only once consensus is reached between all participants. Consensus has been reached when within the group there are no participants who hold contradictory points of view. It is possible, however, to temporarily postpone the dialogue.

It follows from these rules that there can be no reference in the discussion to experiments, empirical surveys, historical studies, and psycho-analysis (Heckmann, 1989, p. 36).

What we regard as knowledge, according to Socrates, is often nothing more than prejudice. The ability to get one’s own opinions in perspective in the light of someone else’s sound counter-arguments is the main aim of a Socratic dialogue. If it is successful, the participants

learn and experience the meaning of an 'open' discussion. They learn to be receptive to the arguments of their discussion partners.

D. MATTHEW LIPMAN

In the late Sixties, and early Seventies, Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp developed the 'Community of Enquiry' pedagogy. They acknowledge that their influences were derived from the philosophies of Socrates, John Dewey, and Charles Sanders Peirce (Lipman, 1991, pp. 15, 230; Splitter & Sharp, 1995).¹⁹

The main differences between Socratic Method – as shaped by Heckmann and Nelson – and Lipman's Community of Enquiry²⁰:

Matthew Lipman describes a community of enquiry as moving "...forward indirectly like a boat tacking into the wind..." (Lipman, 1991, pp. 15, 16). The starting point for a community of enquiry is a choice from a large number of questions generated by participants from a stimulus (chosen by the teacher). During the enquiry, numerous questions or issues can be touched upon. The method itself does not 'force' students to explore one problem vigorously, although a facilitator can encourage the community to do so. Socratic Method differs in that the facilitator is more directive, and keeps the students' attention focused on the aspect of the problem currently under discussion, or bring them back to it again and again. It is aimed at *consensus*. Participants have to reformulate what they themselves have said earlier, but they also have to put in other words what other participants have said. However, with the Socratic method, the facilitator does *not* ask philosophical questions. Under no circumstances Nelson urges, should the teacher try to cut corners and ask questions himself, 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, p. 440). The facilitator's role, therefore, is more procedural by keeping a record of the discussion and summarising it; and being especially concerned about the clarity and rigour of the discussion. Participants have to reformulate what they themselves have said earlier, but they also have to put in other words what other participants have said. Thus step by step, full emphatic agreement is reached, rendering the original thought more precise and enriching it with nuances of meaning.

Aiming for consensus is not always important for community of enquiry facilitators. For example, Catherine McCall – a former colleague of Lipman – strongly believes in conflicts of opinion as the driving force behind any philosophical enquiry. In the classroom we should celebrate conflicting points of view and use them to 'force' students to clarify and justify their beliefs. Facilitators *do* ask philosophical questions and introduce concepts (e.g. 'connections').

Lipman (and followers) use specially written educational materials. They consist of philosophical novels appropriate to different age groups, and teacher's manuals. The characters in the novels model the ideal community of philosophical enquiry.

In Socratic Method no particular educational material is being used. The starting point is a philosophical question – e.g., "When do I know enough?", "Is there life before death?", "What are the limits of tolerance?" – carefully chosen by the facilitator, and selected according to the following criteria:

- it has to be a *real* question – not merely theoretical;
- it should be connected with one's own experience;
- this experience can in principle be experienced by others;
- it should not lead to a moral condemnation of someone in the group (Kessels, 1993, p. 32).

In a community of enquiry there is no criterion for preferring one question over another as a starting point for discussion. All questions are posed by the participants, written down on the blackboard; and the question chosen to start the enquiry depends usually upon democratic decision-making, that is, by majority vote. In Socratic Method the original question used as a starting point for the enquiry is subjected to more careful scrutiny – very much guided by precise selection criteria, and it is the facilitator’s task to ensure that those criteria are applied. In Socratic Method the aim is to start with a question that gives “aporia” – a sense of awe or reverence.

An important feature of Socratic Method, introduced by Heckmann, is the ‘metadiscourse’, i.e., there is a methodological distinction between discussing the case itself (question, problem, theme, etc.) and the dialogue about the dialogue (Heckmann, 1989, p. 36; Kessels, 1993, pp. 28, 29). The facilitator or participants can voice at any time their (dis)pleasure about, for example, each others’ behaviour, or the way a problem is tackled. It is important that this metadiscussion is led by someone other than the facilitator – his or her role is just as much a subject for critical reflection. Metadiscourse allows the shedding of all kinds of emotions and frustrations that might come up during the discussion, without affecting the content of the discussion. This is not practised by community of enquiry facilitators.

In Socratic Method there is an extensive use of the blackboard or flipchart for writing down central questions or statements *during* the discussion. This is regarded as essential for acquiring or maintaining an overview, and for monitoring the results of the discourse. In communities of enquiry the flipchart is used mainly to set the agenda at the beginning of a session.

E. CONCLUSION

It is possible to use Nelson’s and Heckmann’s ideas with children, but because of the rigour involved of this kind of dialogue this is possible only when children are engaged on a *voluntary* basis, and therefore, not suitable for mainstream education. All members have to participate in Socratic Method – something that cannot be enforced in schools. Also, the length of Socratic dialogues makes them less suitable to fit in ordinary school lessons. With adults those dialogues sometimes last up to six days of separate sessions lasting each approximately one and half to two hours.

It is for those reasons mainly that I will focus on teaching philosophy using ‘community of enquiry’ pedagogy. It would be very worthwhile, however, to try out Nelson/Heckmann style Socratic dialogues with groups of children, for example, in an after school club, or Summer School.

4. Communities of Philosophical Enquiry

In the previous section the reasons for preferring community of enquiry pedagogy for the teaching of philosophy in present day educational settings was outlined. In Section 2, the different criteria were given for distinguishing between ‘normal’ discussions and ‘philosophical’ discussions. However, these criteria are not sufficient to call a philosophical enquiry a *community* of philosophical enquiry. Someone who very much emphasises the ‘community’ dimension of philosophical enquiry in her writings is Ann Margaret Sharp. The community not only provides an epistemological context to any enquiry (“...coming to know...”), she claims, but also a metaphysical (“...coming to be”) (Sharp, in press) – it changes you fundamentally as a person. She characterises the community of enquiry as follows:

“They learn by doing. They learn how to object to weak reasoning, build on strong reasoning, accept their responsibility for making their contributions within the context of other remarks, follow the enquiry where it leads, respect the perspective of others and co-operatively engage in self-correction. They come to care for each other as persons and for the procedures that they use to enquire. With time, they come to take pride in the accomplishments of the group as well as in themselves as persons” (Sharp, in press).

This position assumes that the question ‘Who am I?’ makes sense only when people are prepared to acknowledge the existence of others – in contrast to what Descartes was claiming. We use language not only to communicate, but also for reflection, and we define ourselves as persons through the dialogues and conversations we engage in (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, pp. 32, 33). Judy Kyle also attaches great importance to what she calls the *collaborative* aspect of this kind of philosophical enquiry. Collaboration, she claims, implies interaction of a sort that includes and goes beyond cooperation, exchange and sharing. A useful analogy she gives is that of two musicians collaborating, one for instance contributing the melody, and the other the lyrics. In contrast to ‘cooperation’ the results could not have been produced by either of the contributors on their own (Kyle, unpublished). An important characteristic of communities of enquiry is this attitude of “laying oneself open to change” through the discussion.

Jen Glaser sees the relationship between persons as the primary relationship within a community of philosophical enquiry. Therefore, the ethical and social aspects of this encounter become central to the very notion of reason itself. Glaser writes:

“Empathy, openness, respect for the integrity of persons, along with aspects of communication such as the role of science and gesture, become significant features of reasoning as dialogical enquiry. By expanding our concept of reason to encompass aspects of this human encounter the concept of reason is transformed into one which emphasises the quality of human relationship as well as the interaction between ideas” (Glaser, 1994, p. 15).

Thus, through their encounters with others, people ‘form’ their ‘selves’, their individuality. Dialogue, Glaser observes, “...is not a method of expressing one point of view and hearing another, but a transformation into a communion in which neither person remains where they once were” (Glaser, 1994, pp. 16, 17).

I will now expand upon those features that are distinctive to communities of philosophical enquiry.

First, the enquiry is *self-corrective* and the participants are *self-effacing*, i.e., the participants are not only aware that they talk about a topic in a particular way (guided by good reasons, active listening, etc.), but they also think and talk about the way they (and others) think and talk about a topic. For example, they ask themselves questions such as ‘Is the structure of the enquiry egalitarian?’, ‘Is the majority interested in the question we are discussing?’, but also ‘*Should* we always discuss what the majority is interested in?’²¹

Also, the relationship pupils have with each other, and with their teachers, is *egalitarian*. No point of view occupies a privileged position, soon they realise that their point of view is just a view, one view amongst many (Glaser, 1994, p. 15). Each contribution made in the enquiry is treated as genuine and with respect, i.e., deserves impartial evaluation. It is often thought incorrectly that for this reason there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers in a philosophical enquiry (‘anything goes’). It is up to the community of enquirers to judge whether a particular contribution is relevant, valid or correct, and sometimes it is the case that what is being said is “irrelevant, inconsistent or otherwise out of place” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 36).

Whether the voice is that of a child or an adult, that of a girl or a boy²², makes no difference – the structure of enquiry is such that each contribution has to be listened to, and it is the facilitator’s responsibility to ensure that this is carried through. Since every participant is a potential source of insight, each member of the community does their utmost to actively listen to what others are saying in order to understand them. Not everything that is being said is accepted uncritically, but demands what Sharp calls “a response of intellectual integrity”, by, for example, asking for reasons, pointing out consequences, or clarifying implications (Sharp, in press).

Children are not just learning from the teacher, but also from each other and vice versa. The role of the teacher is that of *co-enquirer*. The teacher “...can also be mistaken and learn anew through enquiry. Otherwise, without this genuineness, ‘the teacher’ will be unconvincing and, consequently, ineffective in nurturing ‘the learner’s self-esteem, critical awareness and autonomy” (Lane & Lane, 1986, p. 267). The community of enquiry structure is unique in the sense that all ideas expressed are used as building blocks, and all participants (including the teacher) follow the enquiry where it leads (see below Section 5, and footnote 29).

Engaged in a community of enquiry, students start to internalise the process and the structure of the enquiry. As T. J. O. Jenkins succinctly put it:

“Dialogue...is the externalisation of thinking, and thinking is the internalisation of dialogue.” (Jenkins. 1988).

Thinking is an ‘inner forum’, whereby ‘forum’ points at the social component of our thinking.²³ Other members of a community of language-users are ‘present’, because they give the language its meaning – the language we use when we think. Through its linguistic features, thinking has been taken out of the private domain of the self into the public domain. Concepts are first acquired ‘externally’ in dialogue, and are later ‘internalised’ to elaborate and differentiate thought. According to Vygotsky:

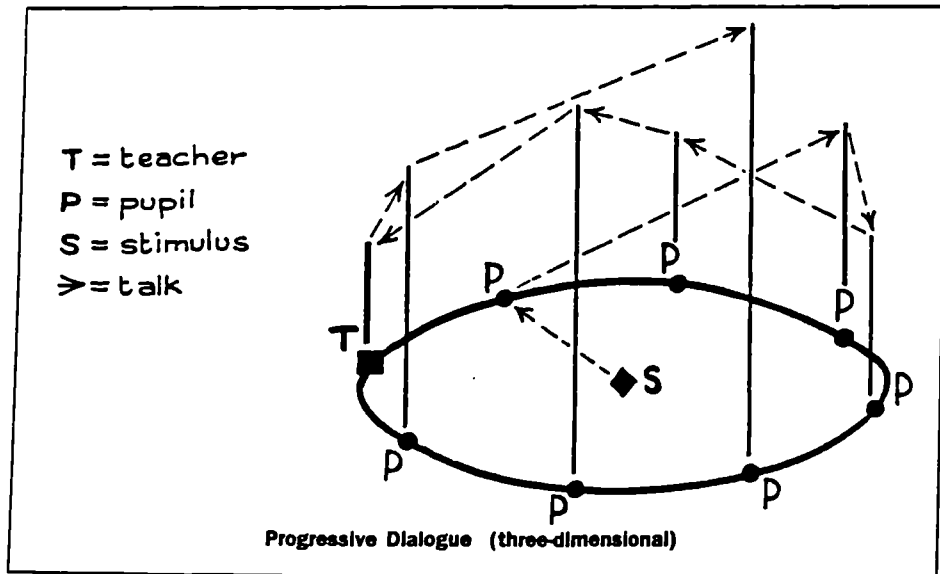
“The history of the internalisation of social speech is also the history of the socialisation of children’s practical intellect” (Vygotsky quoted in Cam. 1995, p. 9).

An individual’s cognitive and emotional development is mediated by language and shared concepts. The habits of thought at an individual level are formed through the internalisation of

social practices – children start to think about their own thinking. They start to address themselves as they have learned to address others (Cam, 1995, pp. 2, 9).

The best illustration I have encountered with which to visualise the dynamics of a community of philosophical enquiry is by British educational psychologist Mike Lake (Figure 3).

Figure 3²⁴



N. R. Lane and S. A. Lane point out the similarity between the role of the teacher in a community of enquiry approach and that of the counsellor in group counselling programmes. It is imperative that the teacher is non-judgmental, that s/he encourages the pupils to express their own views, and talk about what *they* are interested in, and that s/he shows the pupils that what they say makes her/him think (Lane & Lane, 1986, p. 266). In a community of enquiry, the participants set their own agenda; the teacher's own points of view about the topic for discussion are irrelevant, nor should s/he be judgmental about the children's thinking. By careful questioning the teacher can encourage the members of the community to evaluate each other's and their own thinking.

Sharp compares philosophy with a conversation in which all voices ought to be heard and taken seriously (Sharp, in press). In that sense philosophy respects the dignity of each individual. The post-modern rejection of one universal explanatory framework implies that every theory is always partial and contentious. Using Lyotard's terminology, there are no "metanarratives", because they are themselves partial expressions of a particular point of view (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 395). So a wide variety of voices and perspectives should be encouraged. The teacher's voice is just one among many. This is a difficult role for many teacher's to adopt, and therefore adequate teacher training is crucial to its success.

As with all democratic approaches to teaching critical thinking and autonomy (and they explicitly include the Philosophy for Children Programme), Lane and Lane argue that:

"Teachers are ill-prepared to deal with an approach which does not rely on the traditional authority/knowledge-based teaching strategy. Although there is much lip-service paid to democratic relationships between teachers and pupils, most teachers do not fulfil this ideal" (Lane & Lane, 1986, p. 269).

Another distinctive feature of a community of enquiry, according to Sharp, is that of *translation*. She writes:

"It involves the endless making of connections between what we learn and what we think we already know, what we learn in one discipline and what

we learn in the others, what we know and what we experience, what we think and what others think” (Sharp, in press).

Laurance Splitter accepts this term only when it is used in the sense of ‘meaning-making’, as an *opening up*. Both post-modern and anti-modern writers²⁵ are not so convinced about the possibility of translation, and of bridging the gap across differences through dialogue. The notion of ‘difference’ derives primarily from French philosopher Jacques Derrida, although originating in Saussurian linguistics (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 399). To put it simply, there are differences we choose, and differences we do not choose; and modernism has overlooked the ways in which power operates in dialogic relations and has ignored the possibility of radical misunderstanding. According to Burbules and Rice it would go too far, however, to totally deny the possibility of inter-subjective understanding and consensus, because difference already *implies* sameness. They argue:

“Two different political outlooks, or two racial groups, or two sexual orientations often have as many common elements as they do differences... it is often their points of similarity that make the members all the more aware of their differences” (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 403).

This is often clearer from a third point of view – similarities will be much more striking than the differences.

According to Burbules and Rice:

“...at a deeper level we need to realise that understanding and misunderstanding always occur together. ...[therefore] it is by the very process of ‘misunderstanding others’ – that is, interpreting their claims and beliefs in slightly different terms than they do themselves – that the process of communication actually moves forward to new understandings. This is partly why we engage in conversation. We need to be similar enough to make dialogue possible, but we also need to be different enough to make it worthwhile” (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 409).

Thus one of the conditions to be put upon structured talk that makes dialogue across differences possible is sensitivity to the various kinds of diversity one may encounter (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 407). I agree, and in that case, rather than trying to eliminate differences, *maintaining* differences can be the aim of the dialogue. This is why the ‘community’ aspect of any philosophical enquiry is so important, where all voices are respected and the facilitator is not judgmental, but models what Burbules and Rice refer to as ‘communicative virtues’, i.e., “being tolerant, patient, having respect for differences, being willing to listen, having clarity of expression, taking turns, being honest and sincere” (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 411). Similarly, Lakoff and Johnson argue that negotiation of meaning is possible if and only if:

- there is respect for differences in background;
 - one is aware that divergent world views exist and what they might be like;
 - one is patient;
 - there is flexibility in world views;
 - there is tolerance for mistakes;
 - one has a talent for finding the right metaphor to communicate the relevant parts of unshared experiences.
- (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 231).

One has to be aware in translation that the *conduit* metaphor – the transmission of a fixed, clear proposition from one person to another, by means of expressions in a common language, where both parties have all the relevant common knowledge, assumptions, values, etc. – is hardly ever applicable (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 231). They, therefore, emphasise *metaphorical imagination* as a crucial skill in adjusting the way we categorise our experience and bend our world views. Without this imagination, mutual understanding can be very difficult when people do not share the same culture, knowledge, values, and assumptions. This understanding will have to be constructed through collaborative enquiry (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 1).²⁶

Another feature of a community of philosophical enquiry is that participants are encouraged to question their own thinking and that of others. It includes examining one's own values, the criteria one uses in arguments, the reasonableness of one's own judgements, and the acceptance of different points of view. This is best achieved by thinking *with* others; otherwise one misses the "potential for self-correction and examination that only emerges when children can explore their thoughts and ideas with their peers" in a non-competitive atmosphere (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, pp. 14, 15).

Participants are discouraged to refer to 'outside' authorities, such as, textbooks, professors, the Bible, famous philosophers, but also teachers. In order for children to feel confident to do this and to think more for themselves, it is crucial that the teacher models epistemological modesty by not presenting knowledge as certain, secure, and unquestionable. As Kieran Egan puts it:

"By presenting it as our best understanding at the moment, or as relatively insecure, or as one possibility, we can encourage student's sense that knowledge...is but one of a number of ways of making sense of the world and experience" (Egan, 1992, p. 57).

Quoting German philosopher, Hans Georg Gadamer, Jen Glaser highlights how meaning is generated in communities of enquiry by the sheer exposure of our own world view followed by a fusion with other constructions of meaning (world views). Glaser writes eloquently:

"We make public the cutting edge at which our universe ends whilst remaining open to the fact that other world views may have different horizons, and that our end point may be another's beginning" (Glaser, 1994, p. 16; my emphasis).

Unless we alter the balance of power and reshape the definition of 'knowledge' and 'knowing', children will not develop into independent thinkers. Too often teachers teach content as material that they know and children do not know. This view "...of knowledge is the norm in many classrooms, and it is a hangover from the 19th Century when people believed that the essential mysteries of the Universe had been encountered and solved by smart people" (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 207). Dan Kirby and Carol Kuykendall continue by saying that "[i]t's a view of knowledge as a containerised commodity locked in libraries that locks up the act of teaching too. It leads teachers to what Carl Rogers has called "the exposition of conclusions". But they admit that changing these ways of thinking about knowledge and knowing will be difficult.

The dominant view of what we mean by 'knowledge' is very much influenced by, and is predominant in, Western culture. It sees knowledge as "finite, reducible to lists, and essentially what adults in the dominant culture know. Such views have tended to favour linear thinking over recursive: Anglo over African, American, Latino and Asian; masculine over feminine; rational over intuitive: deductive over inductive; and the teaching of knowledge as a

canon, a body of revered texts by a collection of sacred writers and thinkers” (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 207).

The pedagogy of philosophy with children very much questions such of view of what knowledge is by pre-supposing that children should take an active, critical role in constructing their own understanding. Ann Margaret Sharp summarises it by stipulating that traditional education is about knowledge which means:

- transmission of knowledge;
- priority given to final contents;
- knowledge is truth;
- lecture method;
- absolutism/ static facts.

What she calls the “new proposal” is a focusing on *wisdom* rather than knowledge:

- discovery and invention by means of continual enquiry;
 - priority given to process;
 - knowledge seen as a social construction;
 - dialogue method;
 - fallibilism/ warranted assertions.
- (Sharp, in press.)

What Sharp calls the “new proposal”, I refer to as post-modernism. PwC’s post-modern character shows itself very clearly in an another article by Ann Margaret Sharp, in which she argues that:

“...knowledge is an historical, linguistic and social activity and, as such, always open to self-correction as new data or evidence has to be taken into account. There is no ultimate foundation for our knowledge. What we have is reason as a regulative ideal, and even the form of this reasoning process is open to revision within the context of questioning, dialogue and praxis”
(Sharp, 1991, p. 34).

Another important social and moral characteristic of a community of enquiry is that of *trust* and *care*.²⁷ In order to feel sufficiently confident to take responsibility for their own thinking, to self-correct, and to take intellectual risks in an enquiry, participants must be able to trust each other (for example, that no one will be ridiculed), and care for each other (for example, a willingness to understand each other). But this also includes care for the procedures of the enquiry and for its subject matter. The reason is that without this dimension children will not “...see themselves as active thinkers rather than passive learners, as discoverers rather than receptacles, and as valuable and valued human beings rather than resources or commodities” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 19).

5. Metaphors of talk and argument

In Chapter Two, I have given possible reasons for the inability of some teachers to see the benefits of structured talking for children's thinking and learning. I have pointed at the engrained habits of thought responsible for this inability – the belief that teaching consists of 'filling' children's 'empty' minds with knowledge, beliefs that accurately represent or mirror the world as it 'is'.

Again, it is only after rejecting mind-body dualism that we can appreciate fully how beneficial philosophical dialogue is for thinking. When we construe thinking as a purely mental process occurring in the privacy of one's self, it is difficult to imagine how thinking might be improved through structured talking. In attributing the linguistic dimension, thinking becomes much more closely connected to talking. In the praxis of a community of enquiry new thoughts are generated. Matthew Lipman writes:

"...when people engage in dialogue with one another, they are compelled to reflect, to concentrate, to consider alternatives, to listen closely, to give careful attention to definitions and meanings, to recognize previously unthought of options, and in general to perform a vast number of mental activities that they might not have engaged in had the conversation never occurred" (Lipman, 1988, p. 22).

Implicit in our language is the belief that knowledge can be acquired passively, individualistically, and through contemplation. This is the reason why in schools today little educational value is attached to collaborative enquiry in individual knowledge acquisition.

Also, the emphasis in most schools on the answering of teacher's questions by pupils (rather than encouraging pupils to ask questions themselves as aiding knowledge construction) is very Cartesian, because it assumes the existence of *certain* knowledge, that is the correspondence of words and sentences with things or states-of-affairs in the 'outside' world. Metaphorical language about the mind is responsible for understanding learning as mirroring what is 'outside' the mind, as opposed to the post-modern view that the mind is always in the process of constructing meaning.

As I have shown in Chapter Two, this "deep dualism" is very engrained in everyday language, thought, and action, because they are part of our political, social, and cultural inheritance, and we are usually not aware of them, since we think and act more or less automatically. However, post-modern thinking has enabled a critique of those "outworn vocabularies", and, through its critique, offers an alternative: the creation of new metaphors to think with and live by. I would like to focus now on the kind of metaphors that structure the way we think about the educational value of 'talking' in general and 'argument' in particular; the kind of metaphors that make it difficult to see the educational benefits of being a member of a community of enquiry.

Judy Kyle, for example, criticises the often competitive and confrontational language used by researchers when evaluating discussions ('attack', 'concession', 'weaken', 'opponents'). What she misses is any reference to enquiry, to common search, or to identification of meaning and issues. The latter is what feminist philosopher Sarah Ruddick would call more 'maternal thinking', a commitment to nurturing life and an inherent opposition to its destruction in war. In order to assist a child in optimum growth, the mother must avoid excessive control and adopt a more guiding attitude (Sharp, 1994, p. 25).

Many metaphors we think and live with are masculine in character. For example, our language is “peppered” as Kyle calls it, with military images (Kyle, unpublished). This is due to the conceptual metaphor ‘argument is war’. We can, for example, ‘attack a position’, ‘plan a strategy, or new line of attack’, and ‘win arguments’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4). Lakoff and Johnson remind us that we do not just *talk* about arguments in terms of war, but we can actually *win* or *lose* arguments. The argument-is-war metaphor structures the actions we perform in arguing. The benefits are that it:

“...allows us to conceptualize what a rational argument is in terms of something that we understand more readily, namely, physical conflict”
(Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 61, 81).

This is in sharp contrast to the kind of interaction the pedagogy of a ‘community of philosophical enquiry’ would like to promote. If one has to compare a community of enquiry with bodily movements, the metaphor of a ‘dance’, rather than ‘battle’, would be more appropriate. The kind of talk encouraged in a community of enquiry is *cooperative*, rather than *competitive*. There is not just a focus on the Other. In genuine dialogue, the boundaries between ‘self’ and ‘other’ are dissolved, according to Martin Buber. There is no longer individual subjectivity, but an encompassing oneness (Glaser, 1994).

This sensitivity, Glaser argues, shows itself in a community of enquiry by students displaying “...awareness of such things as the unspoken doubt behind the question, helping each other to find words that express an idea, or building upon each other’s idea in a fluid way” (Glaser, 1994, pp. 16, 17). In this way, Glaser believes dialogue could help the feminist cause, since it “...provides the potential to bridge the dichotomy which exists when gender difference is seen in terms of differentiation and objectification by transforming it into one of direct association and engagement” (Glaser, 1994, p. 17).

The purpose of genuine dialogue is not to impress or convince, but to learn from one another *and* also to learn from ourselves (even if only because we have to listen carefully to the knowledge claims we ourselves make and how we justify those claims).

Instead of a competitive model of education we see a co-operative model of education. What it questions is the validity of emphasising the role of the *individual* for knowledge acquisition. The notion of a community of philosophical enquiry presupposes the view that knowledge is a human construction belonging to everyone – something to be built upon, revised and enlarged (Sharp, in press).

However we look upon it, avoiding metaphors of some kind seems impossible. Even the very idea of Socratic teaching is conceptually structured through metaphors – including the core belief that the teacher as facilitator works as a midwife.²⁸ Lakoff and Johnson explain the connection as follows:

“A midwife assists in childbirth and “[t]he experience of birth...provides a grounding for the general concept of CREATION, which has as its core the concept of MAKING a physical object [= the baby, who comes out of a container – the mother], but which extends to abstract entities as well” in, for example, ‘He conceived a brilliant theory of...’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 74).

Another relevant metaphor when thinking about dialogue is the argument-is-a-journey metaphor. It has structured our belief that arguments have a goal, beginnings, and proceed in linear fashion (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 90). Again, how we think and talk seems determined by our physical environment, because we say things such as: ‘Do you *follow* my

argument?', 'Now we've gone off in the wrong direction', 'You've lost me', 'You're going around in circles', 'We covered a lot of ground', 'You're getting off the subject', 'We're well on our way to solve the problem, 'You're onto something here'.

This would explain why participants in a community of enquiry often get frustrated with the lack of a linear direction in the dialogue, and express their frustration with statements such as 'We're going round in circles', 'We're getting side-tracked'. It is difficult to understand a community of enquiry in a linear fashion. Its structure is dialogical, and there is movement, but its more like a "boat tacking into the wind" (Lipman, 1991, pp. 15, 16), or another metaphor Lipman uses is that of *walking*. Unlike a mere conversation, a community of enquiry aims at a disequilibrium – you move forward by constantly throwing yourself off balance (Lipman, 1991, p. 229) as you do when you're walking by shifting your weight from your left foot to your right and so on.²⁹

These metaphors are all related to the progress an enquiry makes. On the other hand when we talk and think about the *content* of an argument we use the 'argument-is-a-container' metaphor. This is the reason why we can talk about arguments as if they have not much *content*, with *holes* in them, or that they are *empty*, and we also say that some objections do not have much *substance*, and some points are *central* to the argument (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 92).

Another metaphor related to the argument metaphors is 'understanding-is-seeing'. The influence of the physical environment is that when we dig, we reveal more, therefore we see more, i.e., understand more (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 103, 104). And also, what we see is the *content* (e.g. 'This argument isn't very clear', 'I can't see what you're getting at').

A significant element in evaluating the progress of a philosophical enquiry is the fact that metaphorically the *quality* of an argument is often viewed in terms of *quantity* by focusing on those aspects of an argument that can be quantified, such as content ('That's *not much* of an argument'), clarity ('This argument won't do – it's just *not clear enough*'), strength ('This argument is *too weak* to support your claims'), and directness ('The argument is *too roundabout* – no one will be able to follow it') (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 104).

Besides 'argument' or 'understanding', there are many concepts such as 'mind', 'emotion', 'idea', 'time', that are either abstract, or not clearly delineated, and are therefore grasped by means of other concepts that we understand in clearer terms, such as spatial orientations and objects (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 115).

It is therefore not sufficient to know what a concept means by looking it up in a dictionary, because dictionaries do not use metaphors to explain the meaning of concepts. It is an objectivist³⁰ belief that definitions capture the inherent properties that experiences and objects *have*. As opposed to the post-Wittgensteinian belief that in analysing concepts we are concerned with how human beings "get a handle on the concept, how they understand it and function in terms of it" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 116). Lakoff and Johnson give as an example how we get a handle on the concept of 'love' – through concepts such as 'madness' and 'journeys'. Because of this standard view of what definitions are it is not surprising that often in a philosophical enquiry participants comment that we should *start* with a definition ("to get it over and done with"). Then and only then can the 'proper' discussion begin.

However, the arrival at a communal understanding about a particular concept is what motivates an enquiry, and at the same time is its purpose. In other words, it is the reason we start an enquiry, follow it through, and possibly have some kind of a definition as the outcome of an enquiry. In that sense, philosophy with children is a critique of the standard concept of 'definition', since we are more interested in the *interactional properties*, i.e., with how we

interact with the things or experiences that fall under a particular concept, and we do it in order to understand the world we live in better. This is, for example, why we categorise beanbags and hanging chairs as chairs, despite the fact that they have not got legs, or a well-defined back, but simply by virtue of their relation to a proto-typical chair. Each bears sufficient family resemblance to the proto-typical chair (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 120, 121).

The authors conclude that individual concepts cannot be defined in isolation, are defined primarily in terms of interactional properties, and not solely in terms of inherent properties, and they are not rigidly defined but open-ended (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 125). Revision is always possible through metaphors.

Similarly, Lipman argues that 'reasonable judgments', i.e., the products of a community of enquiry are never cast in stone and should be understood as *temporary resting places* (Lipman, 1991, pp. 17, 65). Progress has been made in the sense that in the process of the enquiry certain concepts or issues are illuminated and insights gained (McCall, 1991a, p. 18; Splitter and Sharp, 1995, p. 13), but revision is always possible in the light of further evidence or ideas. The principle of human fallibilism is an essential feature of any true community of philosophical enquiry. Fallibilism is the belief that anyone and everyone – including experts and authorities on particular subjects – can make mistakes (McCall, 1991a, p. 22). McCall sees the logical implications. She says:

"People who are sure of their own conclusions are not curious, people who are not curious have no desire to inquire. The disposition which drives inquiry, either in a community of philosophical inquiry, or in Peirce's community of scientists arises from curiosity" (McCall, 1991a, p. 23).

So if enquiry is always fallible, then self-correction is of vital importance. Sharp writes:

"This is done by thoroughly scrutinising every step taken in the investigation. Participants become aware that each and every assumption, statement, inference and argument are subject to questions and indeed must be questioned if good enquiry is to proceed" (Sharp, in press).

This is an important feature that distinguishes philosophical enquiry from any other kind of discussion. In a philosophical enquiry everything is open to question (McCall, 1991a, p. 20), and because fallibilism and communal self-correction are inherent parts of a community of philosophical enquiry participants develop a certain attitude towards knowledge – an attitude of tentativeness, open-mindedness, non-dogmatism, humility and responsibility (Sharp, in press).

6. Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that dialogue, as defined by Splitter and Sharp, is the most appropriate pedagogy when teaching philosophy to children, by first, summarising what I mean by ‘philosophy’, and consequently showing that form and content should not be separated, therefore *how* we teach philosophy is intrinsically linked to *what* we teach.

I concluded that therefore the way philosophy is often taught in academic settings is not appropriate when teaching to children – not because of their age, but because academic philosophy fails to do justice to the enquiring nature of philosophy altogether. In this sense, academic philosophers could do worse than improving their own teaching practices by examining the way young children are taught philosophy. PwC is, in a sense, a critique of academic philosophy which interestingly coincides with a 20th century critique from philosophers within academic philosophy itself (e.g., Wittgenstein). Teaching philosophy through dialogue does justice to the fact that philosophy is “a method of enquiring into very fundamental questions that do not yield to the methods of science”, as contemporary philosopher Peter Singer puts it.

In Section 2, I examined the significant differences between ‘normal’ classroom discussions and philosophical enquiry, and concluded that philosophical discussions are not merely a matter of talking together or expressing different points of view, but are driven by *reasonableness*. In a philosophical enquiry children have to justify their beliefs by giving good reasons for them. It is for this reason that *disagreement* is the ‘self-generating engine’ of an enquiry rather than a nuisance, because it forces children to find good reasons for their beliefs in order to convince one another. Also, the teacher is significantly less dominant in a philosophical enquiry. In this section, I also introduced the notion of a ‘community of enquiry’ as the internationally well-established pedagogy of philosophical enquiry with children.

In Section 3, I took a closer look at the inspirational source of dialogical teaching – Socrates. He is the paradigm for philosophy *practised* as a form of life, because of his insight that philosophical concepts can be clarified only by each person for herself connecting abstract philosophical concepts to concrete experiences. I also examined another modern application of Socratic teaching – called ‘Socratic Method’ and compared it with the pedagogy of a ‘community of enquiry’. I concluded that there is a possibility of using Nelson’s and Heckmann’s ideas with children, but because of the rigour involved of this kind of dialogue this could only be carried out on a *voluntary* basis, and would therefore, not be suitable for mainstream education. Also the length of Socratic dialogues (sometimes lasting up to six days of separate sessions of approximately one and half to two hours each) renders them unsuitable. It is for those reasons mainly that I focused on teaching philosophy using ‘community of enquiry’ pedagogy.

In Section 4, I focused on the distinguishing features of a ‘community of philosophical enquiry’ (a summary of which can be found in the introduction of the next chapter as the criteria for recognising a philosophical dialogue when it occurs).

In Section 5, I examined how metaphors of talk and argument make us believe that knowledge can be acquired passively, individualistically, and through contemplation – the reason why in schools today little educational value is attached to collaborative enquiry in individual knowledge acquisition, and why the emphasis is on the answering of teacher’s questions by pupils rather than on pupils’ own questions. I conclude that new metaphors will have to be constructed in order to fully appreciate the educational benefits of being a member of a community of enquiry (e.g., in order to understand argument in terms of ‘dance’ rather than ‘battle’) Also, the argument-is-a-journey metaphor explains why we feel uncomfortable in

education with discussions that do not proceed in a linear fashion (e.g., going round in circles, getting side-tracked). These metaphors make it more difficult to appreciate the progress in a discussion that has a dialogical movement.

Therefore, to practice what Lakoff and Johnson call *metaphorical imagination* should be high on the educational agenda; especially because it is a modernist assumption to believe that definitions of concepts capture the inherent properties that experiences and objects *have* as opposed to the post-Wittgensteinian belief that in analysing concepts we are concerned with how human beings *use* them. It is not sufficient to know what a concept means by looking it up in a dictionary, because dictionaries do not use metaphors to explain the meaning of concepts. As a result of this common (modernist) view of what definitions are, many educationalists find it difficult to appreciate the aim of a community of philosophical enquiry as the process of finding communal understanding about a particular concept by examining how it is used in a variety of contexts.

The following is a table comprising some distinguishing characteristics of philosophical enquiry with children contrasted with typical mainstream 'modern' education (i.e., when expressing modernist ideals) to summarise what has been mentioned so far as an aid to clarification. It will also serve to formulate criteria for good philosophical enquiry with children – essential for the next chapter in which I will give empirical evidence of children doing philosophy.

	MODERN EDUCATION	POST-MODERN EDUCATION (PwC)
Aim education	<p>Transmission contents human knowledge from old to young</p> <p>Emphasis: knowledge</p> <p>Essential: amount of information, knowledge acquired</p>	<p>Generation of thinking activities</p> <p>Emphasis: thinking</p> <p>Essential: development judgment</p>
Knowledge	<p>Set of beliefs that accurately mirror the world (independent of cultural, historical setting)</p> <p>Truth is not linguistic Truth = correspondence belief/world-as-it-is Truth = descriptions of the world</p> <p>Knowledge acquired passively</p> <p>Product of careful observation</p> <p>Individualistic</p> <p>Mechanical: application of non-linguistic criteria</p> <p>Theoretical reflection</p> <p>End in itself</p>	<p>Justified true beliefs (necessarily linguistic, social) Justification: good reasons to support belief</p> <p>Truth is linguistic Truth = coherence between beliefs</p> <p>Acquired actively</p> <p>Product of pragmatic exploration</p> <p>Social</p> <p>Holistic: depends on a network of beliefs</p> <p>Practical judgment (Useful for our way of life?)</p> <p>Means to pragmatic ends</p>
Learning	<p>Individual activity</p> <p>Learning in groups is second best</p>	<p>Social activity</p> <p>Learning as a group is essential</p> <p>Central: discovery, analysis and justification of beliefs</p>
Teaching	<p>Clear and precise</p>	<p>As a group, teacher</p>

	transmission of true and relevant beliefs from teacher to student	and students actively involved in discovery, analysis and justification of beliefs
	Teaching of finished product of scientific enquiry	Models process of scientific enquiry
	Emphasis on facts and correct answering of 'closed' questions	Emphasis on asking 'open' questions attempt to answering
Role teacher	Authority of knowledge	Models a questioning and open-minded attitude
	More active role than student; asks most questions, knows most answers; does most of the talking	More in background; interested co-enquirer/facilitator listens to students
	Emphasis on product of thinking	Emphasis on process of thinking
Role student	More passive role	More active role
	Emphasis on listening, taking notes, memorising doing tests	Emphasis on talking, thinking independent thinking valued
Relationship student/student	Competitive	Cooperative
Relationship teacher/student	Central for learning: relationship teacher/student	Relationship student/student just as important for learning
Attitude teacher	Demands respect, obedience	Trust, respect towards student both ways
Ideal learning	One teacher/one student situation	Community of Enquiry
Thinking/talking	Talking mere expression of thoughts already in the mind	Thinking is internalised dialogue
	Thinking generates	Talking generates

	talking	thinking
Mind	<p>Mind is private and internal</p> <p>Mind and body are separate entities in the world</p> <p>Prevailing metaphor: Mind as a mirror of nature</p>	<p>Mind is itself a metaphor, and should not be compared with physical entities in the world (e.g. "slow", "bright")</p>
Language	<p>Functions to represent external world (Neutral medium between subject/object)</p>	<p>Knowledge of the world only through language</p>
Meaning	<p>Meanings can be transmitted like data (e.g. dictionaries, encyclopedias)</p> <p>Meaning of words, sentences depend on correspondence with external reality; not context-dependent</p>	<p>Meanings must be acquired through thinking; not data, but <i>capta</i></p> <p>Meanings must be discovered</p> <p>Meaning of words, sentences are context-dependent Emphasis on connections and inferences</p>
Reason	<p>Disembodied; purely cognitive</p>	<p>Embodied; no dichotomy between cognitive/affective</p>
Reasoning	<p>Emphasis: three "R"'s</p> <p>Learning to reason through mathematics, science, technology</p>	<p>Emphasis: fourth "R" (Reasoning); is presupposed by 3 R's</p> <p>Need for reasoning as separate subject</p>
Problem-solving	<p>Individual activity</p>	<p>In collaboration with teacher, classmates</p> <p>Also: problem-finding</p>

Thinking Skills

**Focus: teaching of
critical thinking
skills**

**Thinking critically
and creatively about
concepts important
for understanding
ourselves, others,
the world we live in
(e.g. life, death,
bad, fairness,
justice, nature)**

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Four

- ¹ There is great confusion in terminology in PwC literature. For example, on one and the same page British philosopher George MacDonald Ross uses three terms interchangeably: 'dialogue', 'dialectic', and 'debate'. He writes that Matthew Lipman values "...equal *debate* as a means both of developing thinking skills and of arriving at the truth..." and "...his primary concern is to train children in the art of Socratic *dialectic*" and "The stress on *dialogue* is as much a question of teaching methods as a theory of reasoning (my emphasis). In: George MacDonald Ross. "Philosophy in Schools"; In: *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1988, p. 215. I agree with Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp who define 'dialogue' as "...a form of conversation which focuses on the shared concern of a problem, yet takes into account each individual's perspective", as such dialogue is central to all enquiry and is not confined to the specific context of teaching philosophy to children. The classroom is just "...like any environment in which genuine enquiry occurs: as a place where persons have to learn not only to talk to each other, but to recognise and incorporate the different world views that lie behind their words". Sharp and Splitter propose the following necessary and perhaps jointly sufficient conditions for conversation to be called dialogue. Dialogue is a conversation that i) is focused on a topic or question which is problematic or contestable, ii) is self-regulating or self-correcting, that is, children question their own positions and those put forward by others, iii) is egalitarian, iv) is guided by mutual interests of its members, that is, children set their own agenda and determine the procedures for dealing with the issues at hand. A 'debate', on the other hand, necessarily involves participants to take or to pretend to take different and opposing points of view. They point out that rhetoric and points-scoring are other worrying features of a debate. From: Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp. *Teaching for Better Thinking; The Classroom Community of Enquiry*. Melbourne, Acer, 1995, pp. 2, 3, 6, 34. For a critical examination of the concepts of dialogue and discussion as they appear a) in relation to contemporary issues in education and b) with particular reference to community of enquiry, see: A comprehensive examination project by Judy A. Kyle in partial fulfilment of *ad hoc* PhD requirements, Faculty of Graduate Studies, McGill University, March 1994 (unpublished work).
- ² See Chapter Two, Section 2.
- ³ See Chapter One, Section 3.
- ⁴ Rather than giving a definition, Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp invite their readers to visualise what it would look like to see a classroom which is on the way to become a community of enquiry. They describe it as: "We would see a physical configuration which maximises opportunities for participants – notably, students and teachers – to communicate with one another; a round table format or perhaps a collection of smaller groups... We would see participants building on, shaping and modifying one another's ideas, bound by their interest in the subject matter to keep a unified focus and to follow the enquiry wherever it may lead, rather than wander off in individual directions. We would hear, from students and from teachers, the kinds of questions, answers,

hypotheses, ponderings and explanations which reflect the nature of inquiry as open-ended, yet shaped by a logic which has features which are both general and specific to each discipline or subject. We would detect a persistence to get to the bottom of things, balanced by a realisation that the bottom is a long way down. This means, for example, that the members of a community of enquiry are not afraid to modify their point of view or correct any reasoning – their own or that of their fellow members – which seems faulty; and they are willing to give up an idea or an answer which is found wanting”. From: Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp. *Teaching for Better Thinking; The Classroom Community of Enquiry*. Melbourne, Acer, 1995, pp. 18, 19. For practical advice on the establishment of a community of enquiry – physical arrangements, length of sessions, how to set the agenda, and how to conduct philosophical discussions – see, for example: Phillip Cam. *Thinking Together; Philosophical Inquiry for the Classroom*. Australian English Teaching Association & Hale and Iremonger, 1995; Robert Fisher. *Teaching Children To Think*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990, and *Stories for Thinking*. Oxford, Nash Pollock, 1996; Michael Whalley. “Some factors influencing the success of philosophical discussion in the classroom”; In: *Thinking*, Vol. 4, 1983, Nos. 3 & 4, pp. 2-6; Judy A Kyle. “Managing Philosophical Discussions Using Self-Corrective ‘Name-Recorder’ Procedures”; In: Matthew Lipman (ed). *Thinking, Children and Education*. Montclair, Kendall/Hunt, pp. 495-503, 1993; Karin Murriss. *Teaching Philosophy with Picture Books*. London, Infonet Publications, 1992.

⁵ According to Gareth Matthews in “Philosophy and the Young Child” (Chapter Four), the consequence of Piaget’s theory is that philosophers who maintain that thinking is ‘inner speech’ are slightly retarded in their philosophical development, and these would include adult thinkers such as Socrates and Vygotsky. The reason being that Piaget sees three stages of progress in concept formation. As far as the concept ‘thinking’ is concerned, at the first stage (around the age of six), children believe that thinking is something one does with the mouth, thus thought is identified with the voice. Followed by the second stage (around the age of eight). It is then that children learn that we think with the head or the brain. Not until the age of eleven or twelve will children have learnt that thought cannot be materialised, according to Piaget. Matthews argues that in the history of philosophy there have been various materialistic theories of thinking that correspond to Piaget’s second stage (e.g., “identity theory” – thought is supposed to be identical with brain events), and corresponding to Piaget’s third stage are classical dualistic theories in the philosophy of mind. Again, this shows the dubiousness of developmental psychological theories, and the great complexity in comparing the thinking of children with that of adults when trying to prove that children’s thinking is less developed than that of adults. See: Chapter Three, especially Section 4.

⁶ I find this a useful description of what is the driving force of an enquiry as distinct from the pre-modern and modern search for ‘The Truth’. It was used by Catherine McCall in a talk at the *Growing Up with Philosophy Conference* organised by the Centre for Philosophy with Children on 14 January 1995 in London.

⁷ The emphasis is on *process* in a community of philosophical enquiry, but the *content* is just as important, although content is not meant as factual information. Ann Margaret Sharp and Laurance Splitter argue that the content of a community of enquiry is, generally speaking, the construction of meaning, and more specifically the connections made by participants themselves about essentially problematic concepts and ideas. In that sense

PwC is *relativistic*, because it assumes that there are no final answers (as yet?) to many of life's questions. From: Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp. *Teaching for Better Thinking*; The Classroom Community of Enquiry. Melbourne, Acer, 1995.

- ⁸ The difference between conversation and dialogue is more complicated than Matthew Lipman makes it out to be. Judy Kyle correctly points out that just about any human activity which we judge to be interactively thought provoking can be called conversation in the metaphorical sense of the word, because it is in this sense that all culture is a conversation. She writes: "Thus, music, art, and literature, for example, are seen to be dialogical both in terms of the interaction between the artists and their work, and between the artist's products, and those who 'interact' with them by listening, reading, looking." She continues by quoting Neil Postman in *Amusing Ourselves To Death*, 1985, who takes it a step further by saying: "Nature itself does not speak. Neither do our minds or our bodies, or, more to the point of this book, our bodies politic. Our conversations about nature and about ourselves are conducted in whatever 'languages' we find it possible and convenient to employ. We do not see nature or intelligence or human motivations or ideology as 'it' is but only as are languages are. And our languages are our media. Our media are our metaphors. Our metaphors create the content of our culture." From: Judy Kyle. A comprehensive examination project in partial fulfilment of *ad hoc* PhD requirements, Faculty of Graduate Studies, McGill University, March 1994 (unpublished work).
- ⁹ The concept of 'reasonableness' is central to philosophy with children. See, for example, Matthew Lipman. *Thinking in Education*, 1991, pp. 64, 92. Reasonableness is more than being rational. Splitter and Sharp observe that: "...rationality... is all too often rigid, exclusively deductive, ahistorical and uncreative." In footnote 1 on page 8 they claim that reasonableness includes, but also goes beyond, logic. They say: "In philosophy for children, the call to teach children to be logical should be interpreted as a call to foster reasonableness. We note an affinity here with Harvey Siegel characterisation of a critical thinker as one who is 'appropriately moved by reasons'. More significant is the affinity with feminist modes of thought which are likely to favour the idea of reasonableness over that of reason". From: Laurance Splitter & Ann Margaret Sharp. *Teaching for Better Thinking*; The Classroom Community of Enquiry. Melbourne, Acer, 1995, pp. 6, 7. Psychologist Julian Jaynes also argues that being reasonable should not be confused with being rational. He makes the following interesting analogy. He writes: "Reasoning and logic are to each other as health is to medicine, or – better – as conduct is to morality. Reasoning refers to a gamut of natural thought processes in the everyday world. Logic is how we ought to think if objective truth is our goal – and the everyday world is very little concerned with objective truth. Logic is the science of the justification of conclusions we have reached by natural reasoning." And he continues: "The picture of a scientist sitting down with his problems and using conscious induction and deduction is as mythical as a unicorn." He gives many examples of some of "the greatest insights of mankind" as somehow just occurring (Helmholtz, Gauss, Einstein). He has been told that in physics the great discoveries are made in Bed, Bath, and the Bus. From: Julian Jaynes. *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (new ed). Boston, Houghton Mifflin, pp. 41, 43, 44). This point about the creation of new thoughts is also made by Catherine McCall. She argues that the Western model of 'rationality' in contrast to 'reasonableness', does not take into account human fallibility, with its claims of universality and necessity. In order to be reasonable one has to make (new) connections. She says: "reasoning with others is important, not only because of the fallibility of the

individual – i.e., not merely as an extra check on mistakes, but also because other people are creative and therefore can generate new connections and inferences which have not been thought of by the individual”. From: Catherine McCall. “Is it Rational to Be Reasonable?”; In: *Stevenson Lectures in Citizenship 1991*. University of Glasgow, p. 30.

- ¹⁰ According to Judy Kyle, listening cannot be called *active* listening when “...the reasoning and/or arguments remain independent and as if not heard”. This is what she calls “dual monologues”. This is when two highly opinionated participants talk “...from highly contrasting positions, each seeking to prevail. To the extent that neither is interested even in modifying his/her opinions in the light of what the other said, each is engaging in monologue. Whether they speak at once or take turns makes little difference since although they may hear each other, they do not listen ‘in a sense needed for dialogue’”. From: Judy Kyle. A comprehensive examination project in partial fulfilment of *ad hoc* PhD requirements, Faculty of Graduate Studies, McGill University, March 1994 (unpublished work).
- ¹¹ See Chapter Three, Sections 4, 5, and 6.
- ¹² It is generally accepted that Socrates committed suicide, but can we indeed call it ‘suicide’ considering the enormous pressure he was under to drink the hemlock? This question and a philosophical enquiry into the concept ‘suicide’ (by nine-year olds) is the topic of my paper “Not Now Socrates...” published in *Cogito*, 1993, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 236-244 (Part I), and *Cogito*, 1994, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 80-86 (Part II).
- ¹³ The differences between Socrates’ pedagogy and that of a ‘community of enquiry’ are significant; a community of enquiry consists of more than two people; Socrates is very directive here – with a particular aim in mind he questions other people; contributions made by others do not influence the course of the dialogue. See also: Section 3d of this chapter.
- ¹⁴ My translation from the German: “...*Unterricht im Selbstdenken sein.*”
- ¹⁵ See Section 2 of this chapter.
- ¹⁶ Although there is no direct link between the Socratic Method practitioners in Europe and the philosophical ideas of contemporary German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, there are some interesting similarities, in particular the emphasis on breaking down power structures when communicating ideas, and the search for consensus. Habermas argues that a stable democratic system is only possible when citizens are convinced that the constitutive rules are based on arguments. It is only then that citizens not only accept the existence of the rules of the law, but also accept their validity. When there is a conflict of opinion, our claims to truth, truthfulness, and correctness – implicit in whatever we say – should be justified with reasons. This is the condition of the possibility of any truly democratic, social and political organisation, Habermas claims. Habermas’ *discourse ethics* shifts the frame of reference from Kant’s solitary, reflecting moral consciousness to the community of moral subjects in dialogue. See: Jürgen Habermas. *Moral Consciousness and*

Communicative Action; transl. by C Lenhardt and S W Nichol森. Oxford, Polity Press/Blackwells, 1990, and Bert van den Brink. "Jürgen Habermas en de (Duitse) rechtsstaat; *Filosofie Magazine*, Jaargang 2, no 2 (Maart 1993). pp. 15-20.

- ¹⁷ In the UK the Society for the Furtherance of the Critical Philosophy promotes Socratic Workshops in the Nelson and Heckmann tradition. Contact: Dr Rene Saran. Kings Gardens. West End Lane. London NW6 4BU.
- ¹⁸ With regard to the *size* of a group when teaching philosophy, ideally, the group should not be too small, otherwise many presuppositions of a dialogue will remain unexamined. On the other hand, the group should not be too large either, allowing all members of the group to participate. In an interview, PwC proponent and Socratic method facilitator, Pieter Mostert, confirmed my conclusion from empirical findings that the ideal group size is different for adults and children. Adults seem to prefer smaller groups. Even groups as small as five seem to work well, and not larger than 12 members. However, with children this is different. In order to gradually move away from a teacher-centered discussion it is important to have a group with a minimum of about eight or nine participants and ideally not larger than 20 students, although it is still possible with whole classes of more than 30 children.
- ¹⁹ See also Section 2 of this chapter.
- ²⁰ The idea of comparing Nelson's, Heckmann's, and Lipman's pedagogies occurred to me when doing a workshop in Socratic Method in the Spring of 1993. I subsequently arranged for a meeting with Pieter Mostert – facilitator of that workshop and also a prominent figure in PwC – in September of the same year at his house in Voorburg, the Netherlands to discuss the similarities and differences between the different methods. I published the results in the newsletter *Classroom Philosophy* in Spring 1994, and used it in a hand-out on a course I taught in January 1995 together with Roger Sutcliffe and Robert Fisher. Unfortunately, my comparison was taken up (almost *ad verbatim* and unattributed) in a paper presented by Robert Fisher at an ICPIC Conference in Australia in July 1995, and published unattributed in the following article: Fisher, Robert. (1996a), "Socratic education"; In: *Critical & Creative Thinking*, 1996, Vol. 4, No. 1, March 1996, and in *Thinking*, 1995, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 23-30.
- ²¹ This is the useful distinction Splitter and Sharp make between first-level enquiry and second-level enquiry. See: Laurance J Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp. (1995), *Teaching for Better Thinking; The Classroom Community of Enquiry*. Melbourne, Acer, p. 35.
- ²² Ann Margaret Sharp and other feminist philosophers claim that not only the 'voice' of children, but also that of women has been excluded in philosophy. As opposed to the practice of philosophy in communities of enquiry in which it is presupposed, according to Jen Glaser, that "those aspects of 'self' that are labelled as 'masculine' or 'feminine' by society – and valued (or devalued) accordingly – will be taken as equally valid in relation to what they can contribute to the enquiry. Gender distinctions will be ones of difference rather than dominance". Glaser also claims that the community of enquiry provides an

environment in which a number of the traditional gender dualisms (reason/intuition, emotion/logic, self/public, etc) break down, and concludes: "...so not only masculine modes of thinking but also feminine modes of thinking are respected within a community of enquiry." In: Jen Glaser. "Reasoning as Dialogical Inquiry" ; In: *Thinking*, 1994, Vol. 11, Nos. 3, 4, p. 15. Philosopher San MacColl agrees that philosophy so far has been inadequate with regard to women. Like other feminist philosophers she claims that "philosophy has been imbued with an implicitly male orientation, masked in various ways as abstract, universal or neutral". The importance is that this "...orientation infects its ideals, its argumentation, its issues, its methodology and its limitations". From: San MacColl. "Opening Philosophy"; In: *Thinking*, 1994, Vol. 11, Nos. 3, 4, pp. 5-9. Often quoted in feminist literature is Genevieve Lloyd who in her influential book "The Manner of Reason: Male and Female in Western Philosophy" argues that the Enlightenment notion of reason is 'disembodied', i.e., excludes the body, therefore, emotions, faith, dreaming and lived experience, and the concept of reason is, therefore, associated with the norms and values of masculinity. The goal of feminist reform is to develop a concept of reason not alienated from life experience. It seems that both, the pedagogy of a community of enquiry and the Socratic method express this feminist ideal of a more holistic thinking by firmly rooting philosophy in everyday life. Sharp points out the difference between the everyday life of men and women. The everyday life of many women consists of housekeeping, child rearing and economic production for use, therefore they have to be flexible to change, to circumstance, are never totally in control of their own world, and their projects can always be interrupted. Sharp also claims that, because women have more respect for context and for the concrete details of everyday life, a different epistemology and therefore a different kind of ethics will be possible. The theory of knowledge is different, she claims, because "women appear to be less willing to wrench that context apart or to impose upon it alien abstractions", thus resulting in an ethics which is "non-imperialistic, relational, contextual, life affirming, and focused on the concrete details of daily life". From: Ann Margaret Sharp. "Feminism and Philosophy for Children: The Ethical Dimension" ; In: *Thinking*, Vol. 11, 1994, Nos. 3, 4, pp. 25.

²³ See also Section 2 of this chapter.

²⁴ From: Mike Lake. *An Introduction to the Primary Thinking Skills Programme*. Birmingham, Questions Publishing, 1990, p. 3. For the differences between a socratic structure, individual task structure, group task structure, tutorial structure, didactic structure, conference structure, and class meeting structure, see: Robert Fisher. *Teaching Children To Think*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp. 163-167. For a list of 'do's' for teachers when building a community of enquiry see especially: *Philosophical Inquiry: An Instructional manual to Accompany Harry Stottlemeyer's Discovery*, 1984, p. i.

²⁵ Central in the contemporary discussion about the pedagogical value of *dialogue* is the following article: Nicholas C Burbules, and Suzanne Rice. "Dialogue Across Differences: Continuing the Conversation" In: *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 61, No. 4, 1991, pp. 393-416. In it the authors wonder whether dialogue across differences, particularly differences in social power, is possible and worthwhile. They urge teachers and educators to reflect upon their language, their arguments and their actions that always exist within a system of power and privilege. In order to answer their main question, they distinguish two trends within post-modern thought: the first one extends and redefines modernist principles, which is democracy, reason and equality; the other deconstructs and rejects these principles

(anti-modernism). They argue that it is the redefinition of modernist principles, and not their wholesale rejection, that offers educators the most hopeful and useful conception of dialogue across differences.

²⁶ Just like any other human enterprise, a community of philosophical enquiry has to take into account issues of power and dominance. To my knowledge the optimism that we can ‘bridge’ our differences through collaborative enquiry (what Ann Margaret Sharp calls “translation”) remains unquestioned in the PwC literature. PwC practitioners should take seriously the claim made by some post-modern authors that all classroom authority should be abandoned and there should only be disinterested claims to knowledge, for the implications could be far-reaching: “It is crucial to recognise that for the post-modernist, this responsibility goes beyond merely *pluralism*, or an invitation for all to participate. It is not enough merely to create the conditions of a forum in which all parties present have the right to speak. In a society structured by power, not all differences reside at the same level. Therefore, further questions must be posed: who may feel unable to speak without explicit or implicit retribution? Who may want to speak, but feels so demoralised, or intimidated, by the circumstances that they are effectively ‘silenced’? What tacit rules of communication may be operating in schools and classrooms that rule certain areas of concern or modes of speech out of bounds by the very procedures that a discussion takes for granted?” These questions are raised by Nicholas Burbules and Suzanne Rice in “Dialogue Across Differences: Continuing the Conversation” In: *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 61, No. 4, 1991, pp. 396, 397. They will need to be answered by philosophically reflecting upon the rules presupposed by a community of enquiry.

²⁷ For more about the concept ‘care’, see for example: Martin Heidegger, Martin. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen, Max Niemeyer, 1979, p. 227, and Erik Erikson. *Childhood and Society*. London, Paladin (1977). Heidegger argues that care (*Sorge*) is an ontological attribute and a prerequisite to reasonableness. According to Erikson a condition for any serious enquiry is caring about what happens in and to the world.

²⁸ See Sections 2, 3a, and 3c of this chapter.

²⁹ It is significant that Matthew Lipman uses the metaphor of a boat “tacking into the wind” or that he refers to the kind of movement when walking, rather than, a straightforward, linear movement. As Sharp and Splitter observe: “Although the yacht may not be taking part in a race to the finish, it nevertheless arrives somewhere eventually. However, this end point cannot be determined in advance of the arrival.” In other words, the community of enquiry follows the enquiry where it leads. From: Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp. *Teaching for Better Thinking: The Classroom Community of Enquiry*. Melbourne, Acer, 1995, p. 25. However, this metaphor could be deceiving. Judy Kyle points out that the pedagogy of a community of enquiry presupposes that knowledge is socially constructed, therefore, it is not the boat that tacks into the wind but those who are sailing it. The ‘sailors’, therefore, require ‘tacking skills’ and are responsible for and can influence the direction and destination of their own enquiry. From: Judy A Kyle. A comprehensive examination project in partial fulfilment of *ad hoc* PhD requirements, Faculty of Graduate Studies, McGill University, March 1994 (unpublished work). There are differences of opinion between community of enquiry facilitators, however, about how directive they should be in an enquiry. See, for example: Susan Gardner. “Inquiry is no Mere

Conversation (or Discussion or Dialogue); Facilitation of Inquiry is Hard Work”; In: *Analytic Teaching*, 1996, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 41-47.

- ³⁰ Lakoff and Johnson’s position is, in my view, post-modernist. They call themselves ‘experientialist’ bringing about a synthesis between objectivism and subjectivism. They claim that they do not believe in absolute truths, because truths are but relative to our conceptual system. This conceptual system is, they argue, “grounded in, and constantly tested by, our experiences and those of other members of our culture in our daily interactions with other people and with our physical and cultural environments” and “...there is no absolute standpoint from which to obtain absolute objective truths about the world” (because truth is relative to understanding). From: George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. London, University of Chicago Press. 1980. Hence, there can be objectivity, but always relative to the conceptual system of a culture. I don’t think their philosophical position is as new as they claim it to be. See, for example, the Phenomenological Tradition in philosophy claiming that consciousness merely discloses objects, but does not construct them (anti-subjectivism). These objects are the ‘things in themselves’ (objectivism), but they are always *for* consciousness (anti-objectivism). Or, more recently: Robert M Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of the Motorcycle Maintenance; an Inquiry into Values*. London, Corgi, 1974, and *Lila; an Inquiry into Morals*. London, Bantam Press, 1991, in which he tries to transcend the dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism through his Metaphysics of Quality. I also agree with Adler who criticises Lakoff and Johnson for terribly simplifying the objectivist and subjectivist philosophical point of view. See: Jonathan Adler. “Book Review...”(of Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*), In: *Thinking*, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 47, 1984, pp. 46-48.

Chapter Five
**EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE THAT YOUNG CHILDREN CAN DO
PHILOSOPHY**

STRUCTURE

- 1. Introduction.**
- 2. A philosophical form of life.**
- 3. Criteria for a community of philosophical enquiry.**
- 4. Transcript of nine year olds discussing *Where The Wild Things Are*.**
- 5. Transcript of ten year olds discussing *The Island of The Skog*.**
- 6. Transcript of infants discussing *Bear Hunt*.**
- 7. Summary and conclusion.**

1. Introduction

The conclusion of Chapter Three was that, irrespective of the truth or falsity of Piagetian theory, philosophical dimensions in children's thinking can be properly examined only by means of empirical evidence in the form of *complete* transcripts of large groups of mixed-ability children, preferably aged 10 or under. It is only then that we can evaluate properly children's ability to do philosophy.

Richard Kitchener correctly pointed out that short anecdotes, or philosophical 'one-liners', can be misleading (Kitchener, 1992). The danger with using short anecdotes is that particular theories are easily projected into children's words; and the problem with 'one-liners' is that, even *if* children express a philosophical thought, only questioning will bring out to what extent they are capable of *sustaining* this philosophical way of thinking (Kitchener, 1990).

The aim of this chapter is to provide empirical evidence for the claim that, not just adults, but also young children can practice philosophy in the sense outlined in Chapter Four. First, I will argue what a philosophical form of life *should* be, in contrast to Kitchener's description of what academic philosophers as a matter-of-fact do. This is followed by a list of criteria that will enable recognition of philosophical dialogue when it occurs.

Subsequently, I will put forward three transcripts of whole-class discussions with different age-groups for critical analyses. My comments on the transcripts are aimed at demonstrating the philosophical depth of children's thinking by showing how groups of children take an enquiry into a particular, more philosophical 'direction', by listening to each other and building on each other's ideas; although on the surface the logical structure may not be so apparent. The role of the facilitator is paramount to the emergence of the philosophical content of the enquiry, but, as David Kennedy points out, teacher's interventions are more:

"in the nature of scaffolding for moves the children make spontaneously. rather than a specific call for or modelling of those moves; so she provides a measure of the extent to which skilled facilitation is necessary but not sufficient for the emergence of community of inquiry among young children" (Kennedy, 1996, p. 29).

A further examination of the effect of facilitators' interventions on the philosophical outcome of an enquiry will be examined in Chapter Six, as it raises many questions that need to be answered when we evaluate communities of philosophical enquiry.

My comments on the transcripts, in this chapter, reflect the changes I went through during my research. In the beginning, I focused very much on the traditional philosophical topics the children were discussing – as apparent in my analysis of *Where The Wild Things Are*. Subsequently, I concentrated more on acquiring evidence that children displayed all kinds of critical and creative thinking skills when engaged in philosophical enquiry (Section 5). I criticise this approach, and with it the teaching of thinking without any specific content, by arguing that the kind of thinking that should take place in a philosophy class is provoked by an incipient sense of the unknown.

Finally, my growing suspicion that especially pre-literate children make sense of their experiences differently from literate children and adults, made me evaluate transcripts of dialogues by looking at what is *different* about young children's thinking. In Section 6, I give a possible reading of a transcript of five and six year olds which suggests that their thinking-moves may be different in emphasis from those of older children or adults when engaged in philosophical enquiry.

The first two approaches of evaluating transcripts (Sections 4 and 5) are commonly found in PwC literature. The last approach (Section 6) is rare, but deserves urgent further research.

At the end of each transcript, I will also re-examine the philosophical enquiries and conclude that they meet the criteria as outlined in Section 3, and that for that reason children can indeed do philosophy.

In the last section, I conclude that four to six year olds can do philosophy as outlined in Section 3, but that the role of fantasy in their thinking extends the boundaries of what we mean by 'philosophy' and 'rationality'. Young children's thinking seems very much concerned with an imaginative search for overall coherence and connectedness inspired by the unknown – expressed in a keenness to create stories within a story.

2. A philosophical form of life

In Chapter One, I pointed out that most philosophers have struggled, but failed, to give a satisfactory definition of 'philosophy'. Therefore, it seems that there are no necessary and sufficient conditions which can be formulated for calling something 'philosophy'. According to Ludwig Wittgenstein, this is because philosophy is a 'form of life', that is, a way of doing things.

If we take up the idea that philosophy is a form of life, what would such a philosophical way of doing things look like? How can you recognise a particular way of doing things as 'philosophy'?

In the same chapter, I also rejected Kitchener's list of characteristics of a philosophical form of life on the grounds that he merely describes uncritically what academic philosophers do, without giving any *reasons* that this is how philosophy *ought* to be practised. I pointed out that he therefore commits what is known in philosophy jargon as the 'naturalistic fallacy' – from the factual description of what philosophers do, we cannot conclude that if, and only if, people are engaged in those activities, they can truly be called philosophers. Reasons have to be offered to justify the claim that this way of doing philosophy *ought* to be the way philosophy is done.

In deciding whether children can do philosophy, it is relevant that relativism is implicit in the Wittgensteinian notion of 'form of life' – there is not *one* (ideal) form of life. Forms of life differ, depending on factors such as language, ways of doing things, ways of thinking, place and time. So the everyday practice of adult philosophers in academic settings should not, without further argument, be used as a paradigm of how philosophy should be practised with children.

It could be argued that children have a different form of life than adults. This would introduce a social dimension to what it means to think and to know, together with a criticism of understanding cognitive development merely as a linear biological progression of stages (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p. 56).

Christopher Olsen also uses the Wittgensteinian notion of a 'form of life' when comparing young children's understanding of the world with that of adults. He warns against using adults' knowledge as the norm, and urges concentration on children's knowledge manifesting itself when they deal practically with their environment. For example, when tying shoelaces, children will have to understand a great deal about their culture in order to make the 'right' knot (Olsen, 1978, p. 115).

This notion of a 'form of life' makes objective knowledge impossible, and, consequently, makes it impossible to set an absolute standard of what it means to know. This is because:

"...forms of life constitute the background against which all objective understanding of the world must be reflected, in the sense that the system of concepts by which we make the world intelligible to ourselves and which we invoke in communicating with others about the world has its roots in, and thus derives its sense from, forms of life" (Olsen, 1978, p. 111).

Challenging adults' claim to the 'right' way of knowing the world could form a major step towards acknowledging and respecting children's own way of 'doing things'. Persuaded by the writings of Kieran Egan, I argued in Chapter Three that childhood should not be understood as an immature stage to something cognitively better, but as a time with its own perfection: and that therefore it should be appreciated as an end in itself.

To summarise: Egan calls young children's thinking 'mythical', that is, a kind of thinking dominant prior to the internalisation of literacy (pre-literate child, oral cultures) – a thinking that focuses on memorisation. The kind of knowledge involved is 'embodied' – embedded in their lifeworld. To

recall, the ideal of 'disembodied rationality' makes it possible to discuss the meaning of a word-as-such, outside the particular context in which the word is used. This is still an ideal for many philosophers, and is used as an argument against the idea that children can do philosophy. Examples include Kitchener's claim that children can do only 'concrete philosophy' and not 'abstract philosophy'; and John White's criticism that 'real' philosophers are not interested in concepts such as 'cats', 'rivers', or, 'computers'.¹

If young children's thinking differs from that of adults, then educationalists engaged in research should try to see the world as the child sees it, as transfigured by fantasy, says Egan. Children make sense of their world, themselves and others through fantasy. Literacy enables and encourages children to think abstractly and disembodiedly (i.e., dissociated from their lifeworld). Pre-literate children, too, think in an abstract manner, because they use not only abstract concepts such as 'brave', 'fairness', 'good', and 'friend' meaningfully, but they also think very metaphorically.²

However, if children's form of life is different from that of adults, is it possible for adults to understand them? Wittgenstein said: "If lions could talk we would not be able to understand them." Similarly, would it be possible for grown-ups to re-appreciate fantasy as a sense-making ability for the kind of thinking peculiar to orality that helps children to establish meaning in their experiences? This problem of communication across differences and linguistic, cultural and logical relativism, is addressed by Christina Slade in a clear overview of the different positions (Slade, 1996).

The problem with strong logical relativism, Slade argues, is that "logical practices are relative to a culture – or possibly to a linguistic community". She recommends adoption of a "very weak logical relativism – which directs us to be wary of too rapid a judgement that others are irrational" (Slade, 1996, pp. 19, 20). Slade acknowledges the fact that the model of a community of enquiry with its criteria of rationality has been criticised as being gender, race, and cultural biased, but concludes:

"...the community of inquiry ... does have a resource for dealing with the suggestion that difference is excluded. For ... [this approach] takes the process of discussion as fundamental. rather than the product... [T]here exist[s] the procedures of reasoned debate through which the conception of rationality itself can be debated" (Slade, 1996. p. 24).

Surprisingly, Slade does not mention the *age* bias – the assumption that adult rationality is the ideal rationality. I believe this is significant. For cultural-historical and social reasons, it may be more difficult for women to be informed, articulate and competent debaters in the public domain in comparison with men; but can we really expect children as young as five to question the fact that certain type of questions and procedures in a community of enquiry presuppose a certain type of rationality (for example, the giving of good reasons and search for logical consistency)?

I believe that Slade and many others in PwC underestimate the extent to which children's unique voices are excluded – *even* in communities of philosophical enquiry! This I will try to demonstrate in Section 6.

A possible way of bridging the differences between children's and adults' form of life would be to highlight the limitations of the above-mentioned analogy of lions and children. I have never been a lion, and it is also physically impossible for me to ever be one. But there is a difference with childhood. I have been, and, in a certain way, still am a child³, and my *memories* of my childhood give me access to children's particular way of thinking. Bernard Groethuysen would disagree. He argues that what we remember from when we were little is always mixed up with later experiences, and we cannot bring back our original awareness (Groethuysen, 1978).

This issue deserves extensive research, especially because, as I argued in Chapter Three, recognition of young children's distinctive way of thinking would have significant consequences for

teaching philosophy to nursery children and infants. In practical terms there would be more emphasis on metaphorical understanding and less of a focus on logical explanations. At the same time, it could have consequences for what adults understand the discipline of philosophy to be. Only when we adopt a narrow meaning of rationality is mythical thinking excluded from philosophical thinking; it could well include the kind of playful imaginative responses Piaget dismissed as “mere romancing”.

In order to formulate what a philosophical form of life ought to be, I would like to build on Lipman’s use of this notion. He uses it to highlight the oft-made distinction between philosophy as a ‘body of knowledge’ and philosophising as the *activity* of doing philosophy. This is an activity which is different from ‘applied philosophy’ – applying academic philosophy to specific, everyday, practical situations.

In an interview Lipman explains:

“College students ‘learn’ philosophy, that is, they study the history of systems of philosophy, whereas primary school children ‘do’ philosophy in the manner of Socrates: they speculate and they reason, using their reason to follow lines of inquiry” (Lipman interviewed by Liverani, 1991).

This would explain why academic philosophers – ironically – often are not very competent in philosophical enquiry. Socrates’ inspired enquiry is characterised by a step by step solution of problems with each ‘step’ firmly rooted in experience (Nelson, 1993, p. 441).

Nelson comments:

“For your adept in Philosophy scorns nothing so much as using his intelligence concretely informing judgements on real facts, an operation that obliges him to remember those lowly instruments of cognition, his five senses. Ask anyone at a philosophy seminar. ‘What do you see on the blackboard?’ and depend on it, he will look at the floor. Upon you repeating ‘What do you see on the blackboard?’ he will finally wrench out a sentence that begins with ‘If’ and demonstrates that for him the world of facts does not exist. He shows the same disdain for reality when asked to give examples. Forthwith he goes off into a world of fantasy, or, if forced to stay on this planet, he at least makes off to the sea or into the desert, so that one wonders whether being attacked by lions and saved from drowning are typical experiences among the acquaintances of a philosopher. The ‘if’ sentences, the far fetched examples, and the premature desire for definitions characterise not the ingenious beginner but rather the philosophical indoctrinated dilettante. And it is always he, with his pseudo wisdom, who disturbs the quiet and simple progress of an investigation” (Nelson, 1993, p. 441).

Although Nelson’s criticism was, and is, certainly valid for the practice of many academic philosophers, it seems as if things are changing gradually within the profession itself. For example, Maurice Finocchiaro claims that philosophy is intrinsically practical in its approach. He writes:

“That is, philosophers do not study a given subject for its own sake, merely as a mental exercise or intellectual game; instead, they are always concerned with its connection with practical life, always willing and ready to try to relate the most abstruse or abstract ideas to the solution of practical problems and the improvement of everyday life” (Finocchiaro, 1993, p. 674).

It is true to say that philosophers have locked themselves away in universities for centuries, writing articles in learned magazines, accessible to only a few. But nowadays more and more academic philosophers emphasise the importance of philosophising as an integral part of their teaching.

Also, it would be wrong to say that the distinction between practical philosophy, or philosophising, on the one hand, and academic philosophy, or the study of a body of knowledge on the other, is that clear-cut. Doing a degree in philosophy involves studying the 'great philosophers'. This means (ideally) entering into a dialogue with those philosophers – all the time asking oneself (and the philosopher) questions and looking for possible answers to those questions. There is also continuous dialogue with fellow students and tutors, and the written dialogue in essay and paper form.

Preparing for dissertations or papers will, for example, involve reading articles in philosophy journals. Despite its sterility, this is still entering an ongoing dialogue. One hopes that people start the study of philosophy because they feel that certain questions deserve pondering and desperately need answering. The dialogue with others – including famous, albeit mainly deceased, philosophers – should inspire many new questions.

However, the way philosophy is *taught* at universities, or at A-level, often does not reflect this internal dialogue with other philosophers, and these external dialogues in written form. The structure of many lectures and workshops at philosophy departments worldwide does not have the form of a genuine enquiry where real philosophising is taking place. This does not do justice to the very heart of the philosophical enterprise, that is the activity of philosophical questioning and concept-analyses with an attitude of open-mindedness. Without such an attitude there would never have been philosophy (however defined) in the first place.

Philosophical questioning, concept-analysis and an open-minded attitude are *necessary* conditions for being a philosopher, and an awareness seems to be growing among teachers of philosophy that, in order for students to acquire the necessary skills and attitudes, the way the subject is taught needs to be changed.

For example, a recently published textbook opens as follows:

“There is no point studying philosophy unless you are prepared to think for yourself... You will not understand philosophical theories ... unless you have struggled with the questions. You may be interested in what the great philosophers – Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Wittgenstein – have said. You will not understand what they have said unless you have thought some of their thoughts for yourself. You may just be wanting to get good grades in a philosophy course. Then the sad fact is that people with brilliant minds and amazing memories sometimes do not get the top grades in philosophy courses, because they have not tried to think for themselves. Perhaps you want just to learn what philosophers have said and to understand the main philosophical theories, and don't want to do some real thinking. You don't want to find that some of your deepest beliefs may be challenged: you don't want to become puzzled by questions you are not given the answers to; you don't want to take the risk that at the end you may feel you know less than you did before. Then STOP. Don't read this book. Don't take a philosophy course. Study something else” (Morton, 1996, p. xiii).

The textbook, however, does not give any suggestions about the *method* the teacher should be using. For students to feel at ease and confident to think for themselves, to be increasingly puzzled by questions that have no obvious answers and to have their cherished beliefs challenged (among other things) a suitable pedagogy needs to be employed. This needs to be one that reflects the dialogical character of philosophical thinking.

The social, moral and intellectual dimensions of the ‘community of enquiry’ pedagogy make it highly suitable for the teaching of philosophy. It changes you as a person, because it teaches a form of life, a way of doing things that will become internalised over a period of time *independent of one’s age*.

Kitchener is, therefore, wrong when claiming that “even if it were true that children can be taught philosophy in the primary school, that they will forget it as soon as they leave the classroom” (Kitchener, 1990, p. 425). In the following sections, transcripts of children doing philosophy will demonstrate that children *can* be taught a philosophical form of life through the community of enquiry method. Also, anecdotal evidence suggests that children *do* use enquiring skills in other subjects, and that they do raise philosophical problems and ask philosophical questions at home (e.g., see Pritchard, 1985).

Young children do meet Kitchener’s criteria of what constitutes a philosophical ‘form of life’.⁴ Empirical evidence will show that children do think about philosophical issues; they do raise philosophical questions, and they are puzzled by things ordinarily taken for granted; they do engage in various kinds of conversations about philosophy; they are not able to stop philosophising; they can read the great philosophers (when rewritten in easier to understand language)⁵; and finally they do construct arguments in support of certain kinds of conclusions.

Of course there is a difference between children’s ability to express themselves and the ability of adult philosophers to do so, but it is a difference of *degree* rather than of *kind*. Even if children’s repertoire is less extensive, it is still possible to do PwC (Matthews, 1978, p. 68).

Philosopher Mary Midgley in her response to journalist Jenny Turner’s rejection of philosophical enquiry with children in *The Guardian*, points out that:

*“Of course children’s arguments are not the same as the discussions of university students. But then neither is a child’s eager participation when his or her parents are mending the garage just like the work which that child may do later as an engineering student. In both, what matters is to pick up the general spirit of such activities, to start seeing them as interesting and possible. And if one does not do this as a child, it is much harder to do it later. Philosophy has never been a quarantined enclave for professionals, any more than literature has, and it would die if it were to become so” (“Letters to the Editor”, *The Guardian*, 18 June 1996, p. 14).*

What is important is that children can, and do, pick up “the general spirit of such activities” and, as such, are being taught a philosophical form of life. Or, as Clyde Evans put it, the children are introduced to philosophical issues and philosophical commitments – the sort of commitments to certain procedural principles that make philosophical discourse possible. He mentions: impartiality, objectivity, consistency, comprehensiveness, respect for other persons, searching for defensible reasons, and consideration only of relevant criteria (Evans, 1978, p. 162). He calls these commitments “pre-philosophical”, as they precede any actual philosophising – they are more “akin to a philosophical outlook or attitude”. But it is precisely this attitude that makes it possible to use the reasoning skills necessary for philosophy, i.e., the same skills – albeit less sophisticated – as the ones used by professional philosophers (Evans, 1978, p. 165).

What is novel about Evans’ defence of children’s philosophy as ‘real’ philosophy is that he focuses more on what children philosophers and adult philosophers have in *common* than on their differences.

When evaluating a philosophical enquiry with children, he concludes:

“The important thing was not whether what we did satisfied all the canons of true philosophy, but whether what we did had enough in common with true philosophical activity to begin leading the children toward the goal of becoming more and more philosophical.” (Evans, 1978, p. 171)

I also believe that the comparison between child philosophers and adult philosophers is an unfair one. Not many non-philosophically trained *adults* are capable of what Kitchener describes as ‘formal operational thinking’, that is, the ability to hypothesise about contrary-to-fact situations, to draw logical conclusions, and to apply this knowledge to other, similar cases. Neither are many non-philosophically trained adults capable of ‘post-formal operational thinking’, that is, doing meta-ethics, meta-logic, etc. (Kitchener, 1990, p. 440).

My point of view that many adults lack philosophical reflection (formal and post-formal thought) is the result of my work in providing In-Service training to potential teachers of PwC. Many teachers are not familiar with philosophical thinking, and are poorly skilled in critical and creative thinking with an attitude of open-mindedness. They are especially uncomfortable with the role of the teacher as co-enquirer. To actively listen to what the children are saying, and to be *really* puzzled about what they are thinking, requires a kind of ‘openness’ and acceptance of fallibility I seldom encounter with non-philosophically trained teachers.

Even when teachers voluntarily start the training in PwC, it is often with the idea that the skills and attitudes will be acquired by the *children*, and that they themselves will remain unchanged. Philosophy can be taught properly only when the teacher is *self-effacing*.⁶ Without a shift of ‘power’, that is, a sense of responsibility for the enquiry felt by *everyone*, it is impossible to change ‘normal’ discourse to one whereby the metaphor of a ‘dance’, rather than ‘war’ springs to mind.⁷

In contrast to non-philosophically trained children *and* adults, *philosophically trained* children do have the inclination to think about their own thinking (formal operational thought). And David Ecker argues, for example, that children’s talk about art is more than just art criticism.

Lipman and Sharp summarise Ecker’s position as follows:

“Children’s remarks about art can be considered ‘critical’ when the criteria underlying such remarks can be identified, and ‘philosophical’ when the criteria employed can themselves be subject to discussion. But children’s talk about art also bears a philosophical character when they inquire into those meanings of human existence as are to be found in art. Thus the child who asks, “‘Pretty’ – what do you mean by that?” is raising a question of criteria, but the answer to that question – revealing the role of ‘being pretty’ in human experience – equally involves the child in a profound pursuit of philosophical understanding” (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p. 264).

For example, in philosophical enquiries I have conducted with teachers using the picture book *The Three Robbers* – a story in which robbers use their loot to build an orphanage for abandoned children – many teachers believe in moral absolutes such as that stealing is *always* wrong, and conclude therefore that this kind of material is not suitable for open-ended discussions in the classroom. Initially, children too, believe that stealing is always wrong; but after doing philosophy for a couple of months they start to appreciate the complexity of the issues involved. Children are then quick to explore the idea that intentions, circumstances, and consequences have to be taken into account.

In November 1994, Channel Four broadcast, in a programme called *Class Action*, a philosophical enquiry with nine and 10 year olds at Manorbier Primary School in Wales. The children were exploring ideas that arose as a result of watching a video of *The Three Robbers*.

These are some of their comments:

Louise: Still if they stole things they're still wrong, even if they have taken the children in, we don't know if they've still been stealing. It's nice that they can keep the children alive and they are looking after them, but they still *did* rob from the adults. It doesn't really make them nice people just because they're helping the children. They robbed all the adults.

Teacher: So you're saying that they didn't change. That they still stole the children and that makes them bad. So is it always wrong to steal then Louise, is that what you're saying?

Louise: Yes.

Teacher: Always?

Louise: Yes, because you might take something that's really valuable to someone and that makes them hate you, even if you like take something little it's still stealing and it's wrong.

Teacher: Can we think about that one for a minute and is it *always* wrong? What if you stole something that actually saved somebody's life? Would that be wrong?

Andrew: I think what...it depends. If you're really poor you know, and you haven't got anything to eat and so you might starve and if someone else is really rich and wealthy and you know, and they don't need all the money, if you take a bit of money to keep you alive I don't think that is *too* wrong.

Teacher: Louise, would you like to come back on that one? Andrew is saying that there are some circumstances when maybe it isn't wrong.

Louise: It depends really. I think I've changed my mind a bit by what Andrew said because like they probably wouldn't notice that that was gone because they've got so much money unless they kept a count every week or something like that and they...

Teacher: I see, so you sort of decide on whether it harms people or if there is any harm comes out of it. Anyone want to deal with this issue. All of you. Shall we say, Emily?

Emily: I agree with Louise because if you were poor and you didn't have much money and you needed some of it to keep you alive it would be a little bit more riskier but I think you still should because it will feel good to the other person that you stole from for helping a person not die because of starvation.

Lisa: Well, I think that it is really wrong to steal anything because they stole the children and they stole things from the adults and I think it's wrong and uhm...

Teacher: So you're disagreeing with Andrew are you?

- Lisa: Yes, I think it's wrong to steal and things like that and...
- Teacher: Even if it was going to save a life like Andrew said.
- Lisa: Yes.
- Teacher: Can you persuade Lisa to your point of view Andrew?
- Andrew: Say you had a lot of money and someone was really starving, they tried to steal from you, and you stopped them, how would you feel that because of that they died.
- Lisa: Well, I think I've changed my mind a bit. I think in other words if it's like life and somebody's going to die and they have to steal something I think that's another thing, but I think it's not very good to steal anyway, but I've changed my mind a bit because of what you've said.

This suggests that abstract concepts do not simply 'develop'. In order to use concepts in a sophisticated manner, thinking about them in a disciplined and systematic manner helps to expand them. This is something non-philosophically trained adults find hard to do (something they share with non-philosophically trained children). Training in philosophical enquiry, rather than *age*, seems the crucial factor here; and until children have done philosophy throughout their nursery and primary education we should not generalise about children's abilities to do philosophy.

Scottish psychologist and philosopher, Catherine McCall, claims that children as young as five can not only "...discuss and reason about ...philosophical concepts, but they also originate philosophical topics for discussion" when they have been taught philosophy over a period of time. She argues her case with the help of a complete transcript of a philosophical enquiry with a whole class of infants (McCall, 1990, p. 23).

McCall's conclusions confirm my own research findings. Often children ask the kind of questions, or make the kind of inferences in an enquiry, that open up a philosophical 'can of worms' – something that I initially overlooked myself. For example, after reading David McKee's *Not, Now, Bernard*, the children first raised the question as to why Bernard went into the garden, when he knew that a monster was going to eat him up (and they knew that Bernard knew, because he had just told his Mum). They concluded that he must have wanted to be eaten up. We discussed at great length the philosophical elements in the topic of 'suicide' as a direct result of this question (see also Chapter Seven, Section 8).⁸

McCall adds that five year olds can also "articulate the relationship of one idea or argument to other ideas", and they share this ability with professional philosophers, but she admits that:

"They do not share the professional philosopher's language skills or vocabulary, or his/her ability to develop the implications and consequences of the issues raised. Nor is their reasoning as sophisticated. But they do raise and address the same questions" (McCall, 1990, pp. 23, 41).

McCall's impressive dialogue⁹ with the children shows how five year olds can philosophise about what it means to be a person meta-cognitively, according to McCall, for they think and talk about their ideas and relate them to what other children have said. She explains:

"They take care to show the structure of the dialogue as they speak. This also involves paying close attention to whom has said what, remembering the content and the person who originated the idea, while also thinking of their

own contribution. This is a complex cognitive task for anyone, and although they do make mistakes, it is surprising how often their recapitulation of the structure of the dialogue is accurate” (McCall, 1990, p. 27).

So the children are thinking about their own thinking and that of others. But they also think about abstract concepts – in this case the concept ‘person’, which unlike concrete concepts, cannot be explored by examining concrete individuals. This would not help us, for example, in deciding what it is that makes me different from a robot (an issue the children in the dialogue were exploring). This is one of the reasons why philosophical thinking is *complex* thinking.¹⁰

I conclude that the ‘community of enquiry’ method models a philosophical way of life; and that when participants have internalised the procedures and its ethos, the classroom will soon turn into a community of *philosophical* enquiry, that is, they will discuss the kind of problems and raise the kind of questions academic philosophers are puzzled about *when they have just started* doing philosophy. For when comparing children’s ability to do philosophy with that of adults it has to be clear whether we are referring to:

- trained and qualified academic philosophers;
- adult students in philosophy (who have just started);
- non-philosophically trained adults.

I believe that the only fair comparison is that between children and the second group of adults (students who have just started); and even then we have to be cautious, because:

- it is tempting to evaluate children’s thinking through the language they use, and the younger the child is the more we run the risk that they cannot verbalise properly some of their thoughts;
- it is possible that young children’s thinking differs from that of adults. In evaluating their talk, adult researchers run the risk of evaluating children’s thinking by comparing it with how adults reason in order to make sense of their experiences. Children’s fantasy could be a different – but not less rational – way of meaning making (see above).

I will explore especially this last point in more detail in Section 6.

The ‘community of philosophical enquiry’ methodology does justice to the very heart of the philosophical enterprise, and therefore *ought* to be the philosophical form of life. It is what McCall calls an “authentic” environment for reasoning to develop, because:

“...the children are inquiring into issues about which there are no definitive answers, and so the procedure of inquiry, in contrast say to asking the teacher or consulting an encyclopaedia, is a generation procedure” (McCall, 1990, p. 41).

In other words, there is a homogeneity between form (how we teach) and content (what we teach).

In the next section I will proceed by listing the criteria of this philosophical form of life.

3. Criteria for a community of philosophical enquiry

In this section, I summarise what has been mentioned so far (especially Chapter Four) about communities of philosophical enquiry¹¹ to aid the evaluation of transcripts of children's philosophical discussions in coming sections. Their order does not reflect their relative importance, and some criteria overlap.

So what are the necessary conditions, and, perhaps jointly, the sufficient conditions, for calling a group discussion a community of philosophical enquiry?¹²

- **SELF-REFLECTION**

Participants should critically reflect upon their own thinking and that of others, for example, by showing awareness of the kind of 'authorities' (doctors, Bible, books, tv, dads, friends, pop-idols) people use when justifying their beliefs.

- **GIVING REASONS**

Participants should justify and defend their beliefs by giving *good* reasons (see below). The prevailing metaphor in everyday language is to understand argument in terms of physical conflict¹³; and reasons are often offered with the sole purpose of winning or defending an argument. Reasons can be used to intimidate, to flatter, to threaten, to invoke authority, to belittle, to bargain, to evade the issue, etc. And, although we tend to frown upon their use in politics, journalism, and academia, they can be found in a more 'hidden' form in many arguments (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 62, 63). Examples include: "Obviously, it is the case that..." (intimidation), or, "As research shows..." (authority), or, "Few people today hold seriously..." (belittling), or, "This raises some interesting issues..." (flattery).

Moving away from this metaphor in communities of philosophical enquiry, the kind of reasons that should be encouraged are those that are "...*relevant* to the opinion in question and *stronger* (in the sense of being more readily accepted or assumed to be true) than the opinion in question" (Lipman, 1991, p. 118).

- **SELF-EFFACING**

Participants should discuss, not only philosophical topics, but also think about the way they (and others) think and talk about a topic.

- **OPEN-MINDED ATTITUDE**

Participants should have an open-minded attitude, i.e., an attitude that never takes anything for granted. This kind of attitude enables them to change their beliefs in the light of other people's thinking, further evidence, etc.; and, as a result, engage in **self-correction**.

- **TRUTH-SEEKING**

Participants should express an urge, not as such to look for Absolute Truths, but to get 'to the bottom of things', 'to get it right', i.e., not to give up easily when answering a particular question or solving a problem which turns out not to be as straightforward as originally thought.

- **QUESTIONING ATTITUDE**

Participants should ask philosophical questions, i.e., ‘open’ and ‘substantial’, and not merely ‘closed’ questions – i.e., questions that are information-seeking – and show awareness of their importance. Participants should also ask *open, procedural* questions in order to increase understanding and to help the enquiry further. For example, questions such as, ‘What do you mean by...?’, ‘What are your reasons for saying...?’, ‘What follows from what you say...?’, ‘Can anyone think of an example or counter-example?’.

Laurance Splitter and Ann M Sharp make some useful distinctions between questions that are:

- ordinary – we ask them because we want to know something (and we ask the person we expect to know the answer).
- rhetorical – the one who asks the question knows already the answer (e.g., quizmaster, teachers).
- enquiry – invitations for a discussion.

Another common way of categorising questions is to distinguish between ‘open’ and ‘closed’ questions, with ordinary and rhetorical questions falling under the category ‘closed’ questions (the answers to the questions are known), and enquiry questions under the category ‘open’ questions (we do not have the answers [yet]).

But Sharp and Splitter warn against accepting this distinction at face-value. They comment:

“Why... bother to think about questions which are assumed, from the start, to have no answers?” Philosophical enquiry is “...driven by – among other things – a desire to find answers to questions, even if the classroom community must construct the answers for itself” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 54).

Moreover, the distinction can give teachers and pupils the false impression that there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers when engaged in a community of philosophical enquiry (‘anything goes’).

Splitter and Sharp conclude that looking at the answers to a question is an insufficient criterion for deciding whether a question is open or closed. A question can be open, irrespective of whether the questioner knows the answer to the question or not. Answers to apparently straightforward questions can be problematic, for example, when asking ‘Where is Newport?’ one can ask “Do you mean on the map?”, “Which Newport, the one in Gwent or in Pembrokeshire?”, “Do you mean the centre of the town?”, “What *is* exactly the centre of a town?”, “Where does the town stop being Newport?”, etc.

Apart from these kinds of questions aimed at clarification, another way of ‘opening up’ so-called ‘closed’ questions is by the attitude of the questioner. The questioner can *pretend* s/he does not know the answer, even if s/he thinks she does know it. This is what Whitehead called ‘scholarly ignorance’ (Reed, 1992, p. 150).

Ron Reed comments:

“If the traditional classroom praises the accumulation of information, the community of inquiry must prize its own ignorance. The very recognition that there is something we do not know, that there is something important to be

gained by the process. is what gives the community its existence” (Reed, 1992, p. 150).

So in order to classify certain questions as either ‘open’ or ‘closed’, other factors need to be taken into account, namely:

- the intention of the questioner;
- the circumstances in which a question has been asked;
- one has to have already *thought* about the possible answer to the question.

This last criterion could be helpful in distinguishing philosophical from non-philosophical questions. When philosophers enquire about concepts such as ‘time’, ‘space’ or ‘justice’, they are familiar with the ordinary meaning of those concepts in everyday language; but those meanings are understood to be ‘essentially problematic’, that is, they leave us with more to think about (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 55).

Could this criterion help us to decide whether young children’s questions are philosophical or not? This is important, since it is often claimed that young philosophers are ‘natural’ philosophers, because many questions children ask are similar to those asked by philosophers. Despite the superficial resemblance, the questions children ask are not always like the questions adult philosophers ask.¹⁴

Let me try it out on a concrete example. During a walk in the mountains near our home with one of my sons, Tim (who was almost three years old then), we ‘bumped’ into the corpse of a dead ram. Tim asked me what it was, and I answered “a dead ram”, after which he asked: “Is he dead, where did he go?”. What exactly did he try to find out by asking this question, and was it indeed a philosophical question?

It is not that easy to establish whether Tim had already thought about a possible answer to his own question. As I concluded in Chapter One, the surest symptom of a philosophical question is that we do not know how to go about answering it – there are no clear guidelines or generally agreed methods for philosophers to use. They feel a sense of bewilderment, mystery and curiosity.

I believe Tim did feel bewildered, that is why he asked the question. But had he thought about possible answers to his own question? He was looking at the corpse – the physical entity – so his “where did he go?” seemed to express his belief that there is more to personal identity than physical existence, perhaps by having a mind or a spirit that survives bodily non-existence. (He could not make this explicit when I questioned him further.)

The example shows the complexity of this criterion. This is important, because it is an argument often put forward by academic adult philosophers to show that young children cannot do philosophy. The argument is that young children ask questions merely because they are in the process of acquiring concepts. They do not question the ‘ordinary’ meanings of abstract concepts.

But what is the ‘ordinary’ meaning of a concept such as ‘death’? Its meaning differs between individuals, cultures, etc. So, it is up to the sceptics and critics of PwC to explain what the ordinary meaning of such a concept is. The possibility that Tim expressed certain beliefs about, for example, the mind, is confirmed by research unrelated to PwC, suggesting that there “seems to be widespread agreement” that children as young as two have theories about the mind. With ‘theories’ the researchers mean “a set of interrelated beliefs”, perhaps not “tightly systematised”, but the

generalisations children make go beyond “surface-level”, since the beliefs are about mental states, and these are not directly observable (Woodfield, 1996, pp. 1-3).

Andrew Woodfield explains:

“Some will postulate hidden causes of overt effects, others will postulate hidden effects of observable causes. This strengthens the case for saying that the child’s beliefs about the mind constitute a theory” (Woodfield, 1996, p. 3).

So, I disagree with White when he argues that children do not ask philosophical questions, because they merely want to know – he claims – how to use a concept, i.e., they are “simply on the way to acquiring the concept” (White, 1992, pp. 75, 76). As the transcripts in this Chapter will show, children are often puzzled about a particular concept or question, in the same way as adult philosophers, in the sense that they express their wonder and puzzlement and show an appreciation for the complexity of the meaning of the concepts involved. They do know how to *use* concepts such as ‘stealing’, or ‘death’ in everyday life, but when enquiring into their meaning they enjoy the mystery and complexity – like detectives solving a crime.

Splitter and Sharp point out that philosophical questions are not only ‘open’ questions, they are also ‘substantive’, in the sense that their sense and relevance depends on the discipline of philosophy, for each discipline “has its own techniques and, in order to inquire within it, one must know what the techniques are”, in other words, be familiar with “a series of routine, standardised moves” (Reed, 1992, p. 151).

- **CONCEPT-ANALYSIS**

The arrival at a communal understanding about a particular concept should motivate an enquiry, and at the same time should be its purpose. Each participant should clarify for herself what is meant by the concepts under discussion by connecting them to concrete experiences and by examining them in a variety of contexts.

The concepts should be *philosophical*, i.e., central to our sense-making, common to all language-users, and always invite further enquiry, because of their contestability (and they are contestable because of their generality). However, it is a mistake to believe that all concepts in an enquiry should be as abstract as concepts such as ‘time’, ‘space’ or ‘death’. Discussing less abstract concepts such as ‘rainbows’, ‘rats’ and ‘computers’ can also be done in a philosophical manner when we generalise from this or that concrete item in the world to, for example, what it is that makes a ‘rat’ a ‘rat’, or wonder whether rainbows are ‘real’ and what it means that something is ‘real’, or whether computers can think like humans.

In order to define concepts participants should search for **criteria**. A search for criteria is expressed generally in the form of the question ‘What is it that makes ‘x’, ‘x’?’ Emmet gives as an example of a non-philosophical concept, the concept ‘brain’, which is clearly defined, in contrast to the philosophical concept ‘mind’. What a brain is, can be separated from how a brain functions, but to answer the question “What is the ‘mind’?” is “...inextricably bound up with a consideration of the functions and qualities of mind” (Emmet, 1991, p. 74).

- **CARE AND RESPECT**

Participants should care for, and have respect for, the procedures and the subject of an enquiry as well as for themselves and others as enquirers.

- **EGALITARIAN**

The relationship between students, and between students and teacher, has to be egalitarian, i.e., each contribution made in the enquiry is treated as genuine and with respect. Each deserves impartial evaluation. Also, *all* voices ought to be heard and taken seriously and a wide variety of voices and perspectives should be encouraged.

- **ACTIVE LISTENING**

Since every participant is a potential source of insight, each member of the community has to do her utmost to listen actively to what others are saying in order to understand them. Participants should also be encouraged to listen to *themselves* (how they express their beliefs and the underlying assumptions).

- **CO-ENQUIRY**

All participants are co-enquirers including the teacher, and therefore feel and express genuine puzzlement about the topics in question. The teacher should model a kind of enquiry in which *everyone* can be mistaken and can learn anew through enquiry.

- **IDEAS AS BUILDING-BLOCKS**

All ideas expressed should be treated as 'building blocks' to help the enquiry further. The aim should be mutual progress. This can be the case only if participants intend to have a real exchange of ideas without believing they are right anyway.

- **FOLLOW THE ENQUIRY**

All participants (including the teacher) should follow the enquiry where it may lead. The progress of the discussion is not linear, but has dialogical movement, using Lipman's metaphor, like a boat tacking into the wind. The boat will arrive somewhere eventually, but this end-point cannot be determined in advance of the arrival. Progress will have been made when certain concepts or issues are illuminated and insights gained depending on the 'tacking skills' of the 'sailors' of the boat.¹⁵

- **TRANSLATION**

All participants should aim at translation, that is, at making the enquiry meaningful by making connections between what we think and what others think, what we learn and what we think we already know, what we know and what we experience, etc., in order to avoid misunderstandings, and in order to understand ourselves and others better. This 'connecting' is essential, because ideas, concepts and experiences are not just like 'bricks' that can be handed from one person to the next (Reed, 1996, p. 152).¹⁶

- **NON-JUDGMENTAL**

The enquiry should be non-judgmental, i.e., should model what Burbules and Rice call "communicative virtues", which they describe as follows:

"tolerance, patience, respect for differences, a willingness to listen, the inclination to admit that one may be mistaken, the ability to re-interpret or translate one's own concerns in a way that makes them comprehensible to others, the self-imposition of restraint so that others may have a turn to speak.

and the disposition to express oneself honestly and sincerely” (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 411).

- **COOPERATIVE ENQUIRY**

The kind of talk encouraged in a community of enquiry should be *cooperative*, rather than *competitive*. The purpose of the dialogue is not to impress or convince, but to learn from one another and also to learn from ourselves (even if it was only because we have to listen carefully to the knowledge claims we ourselves make and how we justify those claims).

- **HUMAN FALLIBILITY**

Participants should appreciate that ‘reasonable judgements’ – the products of a community of enquiry – are never cast in stone and should be understood as *temporary resting places*. Revision should always be possible in the light of further evidence or ideas, because everyone, including experts and authorities on particular subjects, can make mistakes. Everything is open to questioning in a philosophical enquiry, and the enquiry is driven by curiosity.

I will apply those criteria to the transcripts of philosophical enquiries with children in following sections.

4. Transcript of nine year olds discussing *Where The Wild Things Are*

It is commonly accepted that transcripts or videotapes of children engaged in philosophical enquiry are most powerful in showing that children, not only are able to do philosophy, but also greatly benefit educationally and socially from regular participation in a community of enquiry. However, transcripts in and by themselves are not sufficiently convincing, as Richard Miller has pointed out¹⁷. So each transcript will be commented upon at great length. As explained in the introduction to this chapter, they are *complete* transcripts of large groups of mixed-ability children.

Trained as an academic philosopher when I first started my research, I focused on the traditional philosophical issues raised by the children. I was also influenced by the fact that in the PwC literature in those days, this was regarded as the way to go about it. This was especially true of the writings of Gareth Matthews, and Michael Pritchard, and also, for example, of Catherine McCall's paper "Young Children Generate Philosophical Ideas" (1990) in which she tries to show that children raise traditional philosophical problems *themselves*.¹⁸ It is along those lines I started my analysis of the transcript of children discussing Maurice Sendak's *Where The Wild Things Are*.

DREAMING OF WILD THINGS?¹⁹

The setting:

The children featured in the transcripts were pupils at Badgemore Primary School, Henley-on-Thames, with around 80 children aged five to 11, and a significant majority of boys. The school's catchment area is mainly a council estate with one- or two-bedroomed houses, and occupied by an unusually high number of lone parent families.

The headteacher employed me to help 'sort out' the severe behavioural problems the school had to deal with. He also believed it would help with the learning difficulties many of his pupils had, and preferred to tackle the problem in whole class settings, rather than taking the 'problem children' out of the group. I was told that approximately two thirds of the pupils in year 5 and year 6 had, either learning difficulties, or behavioural problems, or both.

I visited the school for over two years one day a week teaching philosophy to all classes. A special space, called 'Plato's Cave', had been allocated to it in the basement of this modern, open plan school. I used the same video of a picture book for each age group for two one-hour lessons, and the school library had purchased each picture book for the children to refer to during the discussions, and/or to read afterwards in their own time.

Most of the time their 'normal' classroom teacher sat in with the discussions, sometimes to participate, but mostly to observe their reasoning and to follow the discussions so that they could follow the enquiry up with drama, artwork, creative writing, factual information or further discussion – although one teacher used the time to assess homework. On the whole the members of staff were very supportive, and I thoroughly enjoyed my time with the children.

My experiences in Badgemore School taught me that picture books are an excellent stimulus for philosophical enquiry. With the help of the pupils, I published the teacher's manual *Teaching Philosophy with Picture Books* in 1992. The practical and theoretical reasons for using this kind of material are dealt with in Chapter Seven.

The transcript that follows is of a whole class of 21 nine-year olds (Year 5), six girls and 15 boys who watched the video of the picture book *Where the Wild Things Are*, written and illustrated by

Maurice Sendak. As was usually the case after introducing a new stimulus, the weekly one hour philosophy session was spent on:

- thinking time – straight after watching the video, the children spent approximately five minutes on silent reflection during which they wrote down questions/statements, or made a quick drawing;
- discussion in pairs;
- all their questions and statements were written down on the flipchart with their names in brackets behind their question or statement;
- a very short discussion at the end of the session;

The second week, one of the children read aloud their contributions from the flipchart after which all children were invited to comment. They quickly picked up the discussion at the point where it had been left the previous week.

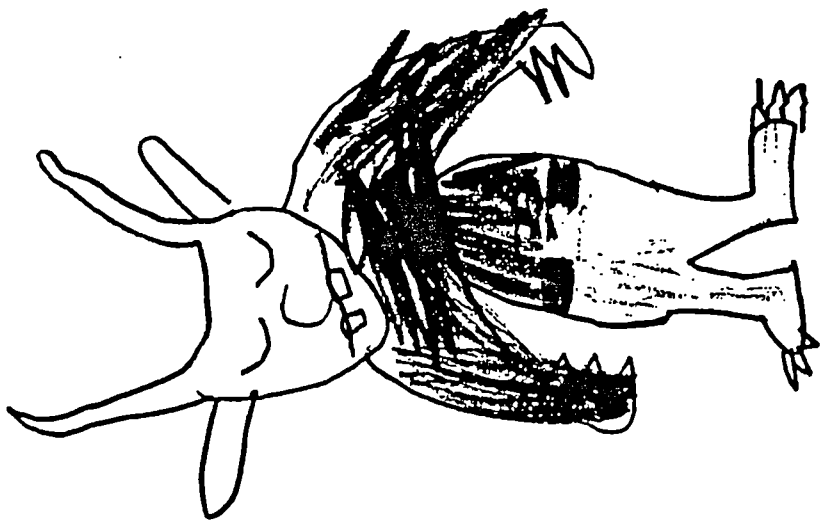
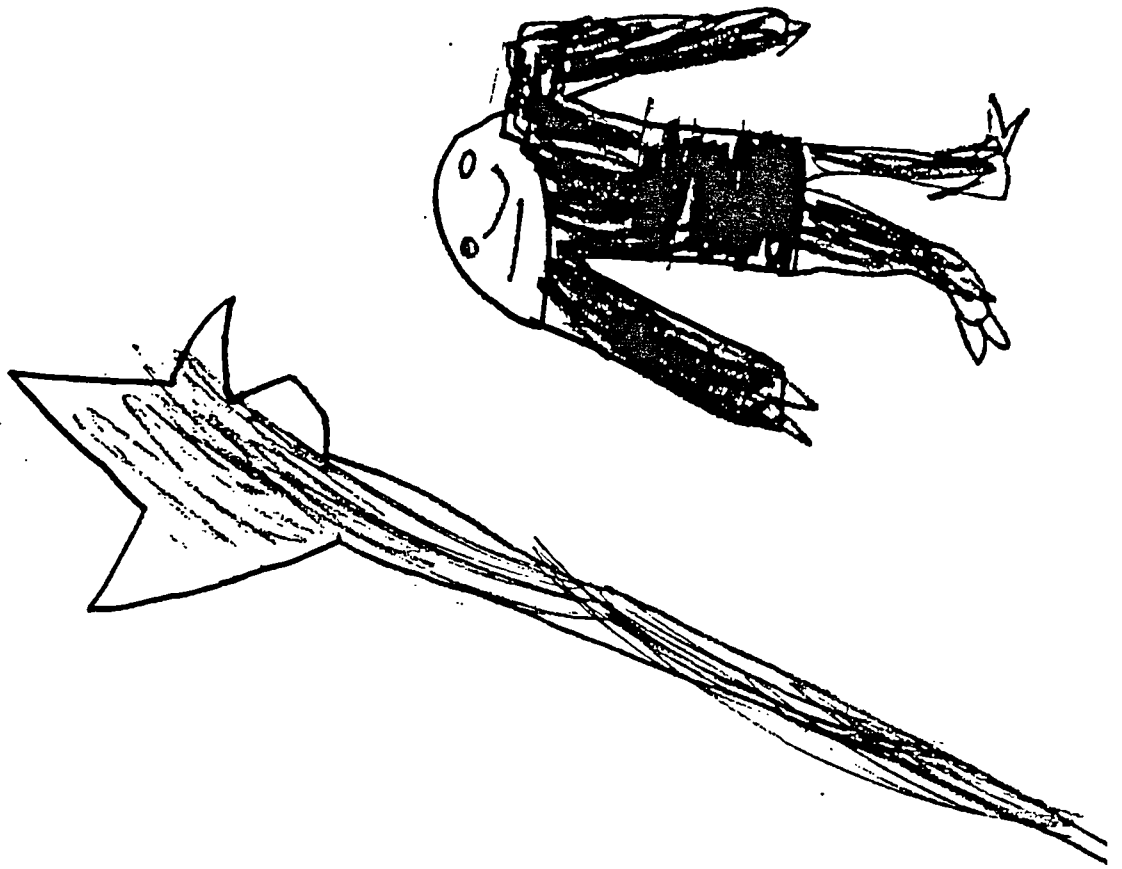
The children were:

Joanne(9)	Kieron (9)
Krystina (9)	Darren (9)
Claire (9)	Anthony (9)
Kelly (9)	Gary (9)
Gemma (9)	Christopher (9)
Tammy (9)	Michael (9)
Gemma 2 (9)	Stuart (9)
	George (9)
	Tommy (9)
	Russell (9)
	Kevin (9)
	Jake (9)
	Phillip (9)
	Nathan (9)
	Andrew (9) (New to the school)

The story line is as follows:

Max is wearing his wolf suit and is making, “mischief of one kind and another”. His mother calls him: “WILD THING!” And, when he replies that he is going to eat her up, she sends him off to bed without his supper. Max looks very angry. That night, out of his carpet, grows a forest and the walls become “the world all around”. He seems very pleased with the transformation, and, when an ocean tumbles by with a boat, he sails off “through night and day and in and out of weeks and almost over a year to where the Wild Things are.” Faced with their “terrible roars” and their “terrible teeth” and their “terrible eyes” and their “terrible claws”, Max tames them with a magic trick: he stares in their yellow eyes without blinking once. As a result they make him King of all Wild Things; and the Wild Rumpus starts. After that, Max feels lonely, and wants to be where someone loves him best of all. He gives up his Kingdom and sails back, “over a year and in and out of weeks and through a day and into the night of his very own room”. He is delighted to find his supper waiting for him. Moreover... it is still hot! Mum doesn’t seem to be angry anymore!

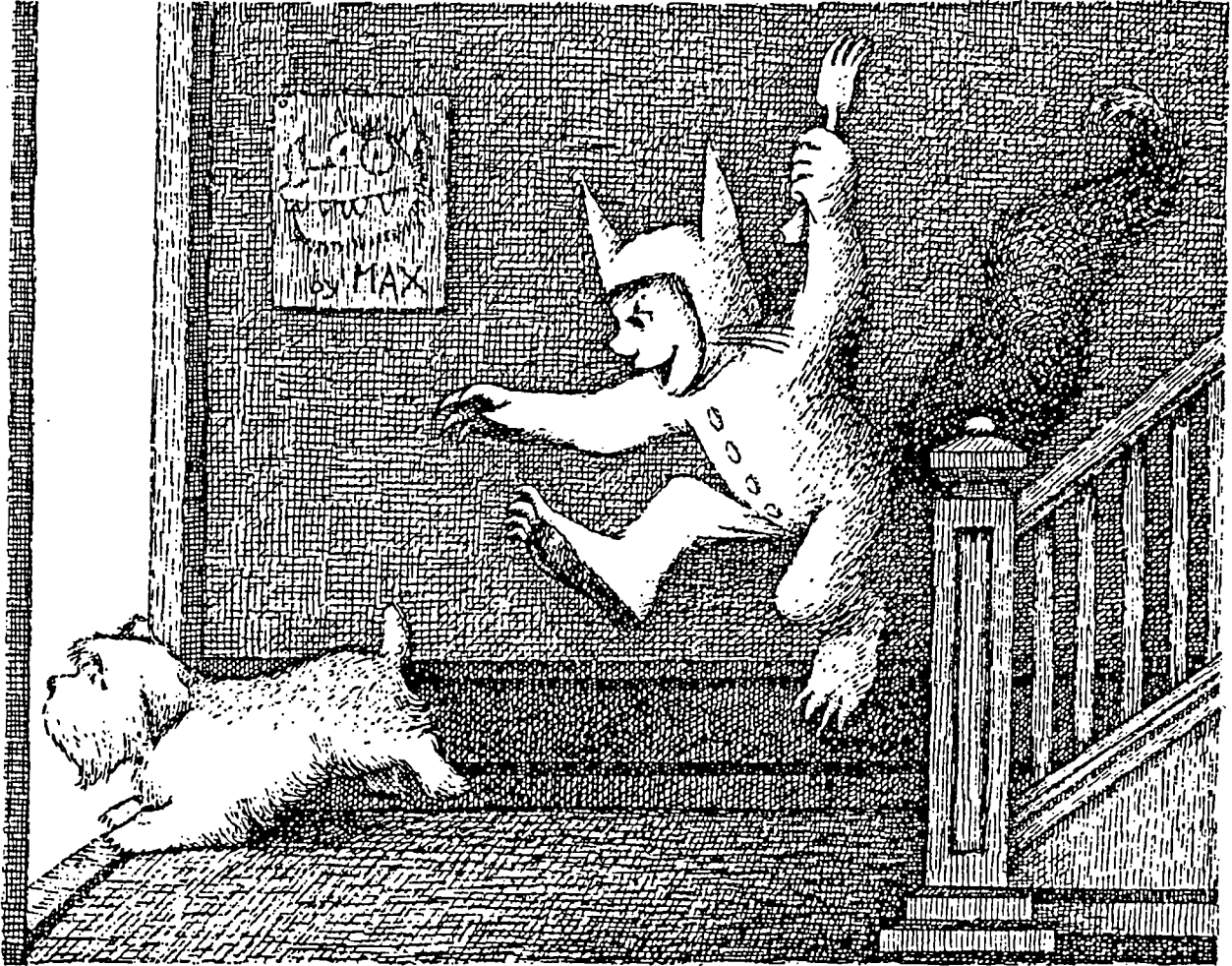
Here is a short part of the first session relevant for understanding the enquiry a week later:



- Anthony: It was a dream.
- Tommy: How do you know? He didn't come out of the bed, did he? He wasn't dreaming.
- Gary: I agree with Tommy, because if he was just standing there, dreaming, his mother would probably have woken him up.
- Anthony: He was just standing there, imagining it.
- Christopher: I think he was dreaming, because he might still have been dreaming when his supper was on the thing he might still have been dreaming then...
- Kieron: I liked it when he arrived, and he was about to go. The illustrations were jumping up and down. It looked really scary.
- KM: Do you think whether something is a dream or not makes any difference to whether it's scary or not?
- Kieron: You could have a nightmare, and you're dreaming, and it's scary. It must have been a dream, because if it had been a nightmare, he would have woken up.
- Some: You don't always wake up.
- George: I disagree with Tommy – it definitely was a dream, because when he was upstairs and there was nowhere for the roots to come out off in his bedroom, and at the end it said he was feeling unloved, and he smelled something delicious far away, and that was his tea, and he was in his bedroom, and the smell of it woke him up.
- Anthony: His Mum couldn't put his tea in the jungle – she wasn't in the jungle.
- George: I know, so it has got to be a dream, because she couldn't have put the stuff in if it wasn't a dream.
- Phillip: He couldn't have smelled the food from so far away, if he had travelled a year. If he had travelled in a straight line, he wouldn't have been able to smell.
- Nathan: I agree with George, because roots can grow only if you put some seeds in. It can't grow without the seeds.
- Darren: Even if you put seeds down, they wouldn't grow that quick.
- Gemma 2: It couldn't be a dream, because of that picture he drew of a Wild Thing.
- Kelly: If it was real supper he wouldn't have smelled it in his dream.
- George: You only dream about things that you think about in the day.

Figure 4

Does the picture on the wall tell us something about whether the story is a dream?



One week later...

[We watched the video for the second time.]

Gemma 2: It must be a dream, because in the book and in the thing, first of all it says that he is making a tent, and that's where he was sitting where he was King there, and there's a picture of the Wild Thing there, so it must be a dream.

[Gemma 2 hypothesises that Max must have been dreaming. Her reasons? The tent was in the house, but also on the island where the Wild Things are (see Figures 5, 6). Secondly, there is a picture on the wall that shows one of the Wild Things before he was sent to bed (see Figure 4).]

Christopher: He was probably imagining it or daydreaming, or something.

[Christopher offers alternatives: it could have been his imagination, or he might have been daydreaming.]

Gemma 2: It must be a dream, because he was travelling all over the house.

[Gemma clarifies her belief: Max was in his bedroom, but he was thinking about things in the house (pictures on the wall, the tent), so he must have been dreaming.]

KM: Why do you say that, Christopher? What is the difference between dreaming, and imagining or daydreaming?

Christopher: I don't know. I just think that, because when you're imagining it, you are sort of like not asleep, you're just...I could be daydreaming NOW, or imagining something NOW, but when you're dreaming in your sleep, that's when you are in your bedroom...you can only dream in your sleep, but you can imagine sort of anywhere you like.

[Christopher distinguishes between daydreaming, dreaming and imagination. He believes that daydreaming and imagination are things you can make happen, here and now; dreaming, on the other hand, happens to you in your sleep, and is therefore restricted to the place where you sleep, i.e., your bedroom.]

Phillip: It could be a dream, and, in other words, it couldn't be a dream, because when he comes back from going to this island, well if let's say his Mum would come in and put the supper on his table, she would have woken him up. In other words, if it was real, his Mum wouldn't have woken him up, he would have just been playing around.

[Phillip sees the difficulty of both opposite points of view. If Max was dreaming, he would have been asleep and woken up by his Mum when she came in. She did not wake him up, therefore he was not dreaming. But he could not have been awake either, because he would have noticed his mother coming in while he was playing around; and he did not.]

Michael: It wasn't a dream, because he didn't get into bed.

Anthony: I know, but you don't *know* that!

[Anthony believes Max was dreaming, but he challenges Michael's reason: how do we know Max did not go to bed?]

Christopher: He might have started sort of daydreaming and then fall into bed and then...

Michael: But he was woken up, wasn't he?

Kieron: But he had his eyes shut.

Tommy: Well, on the film he's standing up when he can see his room and you can't go asleep when you're standing up, because you'll fall to the ground...

[Tommy makes Christopher's observation more precise: we do not go to sleep in our bedroom as such – we cannot sleep standing up. He infers, therefore, that because Max was standing up he must have been awake, bedroom or no bedroom is irrelevant.]

Christopher: But you can daydream.

George: I disagree with Tommy and Michael, because you can sleepwalk, because I used to sleepwalk. You can actually go to sleep standing up. I was reading a book once and I fell asleep when I was reading it.

[George gives a counter-example: we are asleep, and standing up when we are sleepwalking.]

KM: Gemma, you said, dogs can, so why shouldn't we be able to?. Do you think that's a good reason?

Gemma 2: No, but we can, because if something is really boring, or something, or you're really tired, you could sleep anywhere.

[Gemma 2 supports George by rejecting Tommy's idea that we cannot sleep standing up – if bored enough we can sleep anywhere!]

KM: Like in philosophy class! [laughter]

Kieron: Even when you're hanging upside down, you can still fall asleep...

Gemma 1: Bats can.

KM: And because bats can, we can?

Gemma 2: No, not necessarily.

Kieron: Horses do.

Kelly: I thought he was daydreaming, because in *The Explorers*, every time they'd done a daydream, or dreamt, they drew a picture of what they'd dreamt, and he was standing up, closing his eyes, and that's what I do when I daydream, so he might have been daydreaming, and he could have smelled it if he was daydreaming.

[Kelly offers a reason for saying that he must have been daydreaming. How could he have smelled the food if he had been asleep. This leaves us with the fascinating question of whether our senses work when we are asleep, and if so, to what extent?]

Nathan: Remember when he... Max went to his room, his hands went kind of blue.

KM: Why do you think that was?

Nathan: He was angry, probably.

[Nathan makes a connection between Max's hand turning blue and him being angry. Others have noticed this too, but come up with other possible interpretations. Kieron believes it could be the shadow of his suit, or a massive vein (George).]

KM: What do you think of that? Do your hands turn blue when you are angry?

Kieron: No, it's just the shadow of his suit.

Gary: Michael has to stay in at play-time and he is angry...

Michael: But my hands haven't turn blue.

[Even if true for some people, it is not always the case that hands turn blue when angry -- Michael's do not when he is angry (counter-example).]

KM: Do you think it could be possible though, that you're so angry that your hands turn blue?

George: Well, it was night-time because when he stepped out of the boat the lights got brighter, and with the shadow from his suit as well, it would turn blue. Or, he could have a massive vein.

Kieron: You mean a vein about that thick?

George: Yeah.

Kieron: Oh yeah, you really have veins that big.

[Kieron doubts the physical possibility of having veins of that size.]

Phillip: You know that place [in the book] when he said that he smelled food from far across above, well, remember you said that he could travel around in a circle and came to the same place, but he couldn't have, because if it was from across the world there would be only a few miles when you come back to the same place.

[The previous week Phillip had remarked that Max could not have smelled the food from so far away. He makes the following valid inference: if Max travelled for more than a year and he travelled in a straight line, then the food would be too far away to smell it. When repeating his remark a week later I emphasised how good it was to add in a straight line, because it would not hold if you would go round in circles. I had not thought about circling round the globe, but they did! This remark will be shown to be crucial for the rest of the discussion.]

George: No, because you could circle round the world and come back to the same place.

Phillip: If he had come round there to where the Wild Things are he would be near the same place so he wouldn't necessarily smell it far far away across the world.

Nathan: He said, "What a nice smell is that." It might have been his supper, because he said that you see.

KM: So you think he wasn't far away?

Nathan: No, I don't think he was...about fifty miles or so.

Nicholas: I agree with George, because the world is like a circle, is round shaped like that.

Kieron: If he had travelled a year, and a few weeks and a day, he would have gone all round the world.

Some: Yeah.

Tommy: Yeah, eighty days.

Gemma 1: Eighty days to go round the world.

Russell: That's not a year, is it! [laughter]

[Russell reminds us to be accurate.]

Gemma 2: He wasn't sort of like under five thousand pounds, so he is sort of like going slow, so he could take much longer than eighty days.

George: It said that the walls of his bedroom were all of the world around, so he has probably been miniaturised and all the trees been miniaturised in his room, and so his room is the world and that's why he could smell his dinner, because his dinner is there.

[George finds a creative solution to the problem, using factual information given by the book. If he did smell the food and the walls became the world around him, then his bedroom must be a miniaturised world.]

Michael: I disagree with Nathan, because he couldn't have been fifty miles or so, because if you would walk up from here, right across that field for a year and a day, you'll be say 500 miles away from that fence up there. If you walk for a year.

Kelly: I disagree with Nathan, because I am only five miles away from my house on a Brownie walk and I can't smell my dinner cooking.

KM: What do you think of George's idea that it could all be miniature. That the walls had become the world around?

George: In the programme it did say it. Say I have got a cooked dinner at one end of my room, then I could smell it and if it were a miniature I could still smell it.

KM: When you go round the world, do you think there is a beginning somewhere and an end somewhere? Where is the beginning of the circle and where is the end?

Russell: I think the beginning is at the top of the world.

KM: And where is the end?

Kieron: At the top, because you just go round.

Russell: It's like you've got the beginning at the top and you've got the end at the top.

Anthony: The North pole.

Russell: I haven't finished... or it's the equator.

Nathan: I agree with him, because if you're starting at the top and you go right round it, that's a whole circle from where you started you see.

[Russell, Kieron and Nathan agree; in a circle the beginning and the end are at the same place.]

Tommy: Aren't we meant to be talking about the dream?

Michael: We can talk about anything.

Gemma 1: When somebody makes a point to do with something else, like when we were talking about ice and water.

[Tommy is calling for relevance. Children are usually asked 'to stick to the point', and not to follow a discussion where it leads – i.e., the procedure of a philosophical dialogue. Gemma 1 is referring to a discussion the children had had after watching the video of a picture book called *The Pig's Wedding*. In the story, two newly wedded pigs are dancing on the clouds. The children thought the pigs would fall through clouds made of water, but also – they wondered – if they were perhaps made of ice?]

Michael: Well, I agree with Russell in a way, because if you went from the top and you went by boat you have to cross land and he didn't cross land.

KM: But did Russell say that Max had started at the top of the globe and went round?

Russell: No, I'm saying that if you start you probably... somebody will probably start at the top.

George: It didn't say he went round the world, it said he was travelling for a year.

Russell: I never said that he did. I am just saying that he could have started at the top.

George: I mean, he could have gone right round his bedroom thirty-thousand times, and then come back through the door and then that would be where the Wild Things are.

[George realises that there is no evidence in the book for saying that Max travelled round the world. He comes up with another idea: he could have circled round his bedroom. Now, he does not have to assume that the bedroom was a miniaturised world, and can still maintain that Max did smell the food.]

Kieron: I agree with Russell, because I think it's the magnetic north where it starts.

KM: Does a circle have to have a beginning?

Some: No.

Christopher: No, you could start in Australia.

- Gemma 2: It depends where you start, it could be Poland.
- Gary: Or in the middle.
- KM: Why are you trying to pinpoint a beginning, though? Why say North Pole, or Australia?
- Nathan: Well, how do you know if his country isn't somewhere else, it might be somewhere like India, or it might be somewhere like Australia.
- Kelly: You have to have a start, because if you want to start in Rome or somewhere like that, you have to travel, say, you're starting to go round anyway.

[Kieron misunderstands Russell. Russell did not say that the top *is* the beginning, but *could* be the beginning. However, the issue is a difficult one. In a sense a circle has no beginning as such, because there is no specific place we can point at, as the beginning. At the same time, there are *ad infinitum* beginnings, dependent upon where you start (Russell). Conclusion: the beginning of a circle is where you start (Kelly).]

- Russell: You can start everywhere. If I was going to go round the world I can start there, or I can start there, or I can start there.
- KM: Do you think everything has got a beginning?
- Russell: There is a beginning everywhere for walking round the world.
- Nicholas: Well, you could start from where you live.
- Gemma 2: You have to have a beginning, because otherwise things will go on forever and ever all the time and you wouldn't be able to see an end or anything, so everything must have a beginning and an end.

[Gemma 2 argues that everything must have a beginning, otherwise everything will go on forever and ever. So, why is there any world at all? Do we have good reasons to believe that there was a beginning? We are in the middle of what in academic Western philosophy is called the 'Cosmological Argument'. 'Kosmos' is the Greek for 'universe'. The starting-point for the argument is the wonder that there is any universe at all. This being perplexed about the existence of the universe has always been one of the prime sources of philosophising. Aristotle wrote: ...it is owing to their [the earliest philosophers'] wonder, that men both now begin, and at first began to philosophise; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters, e.g., about the phenomena of the moon and those of the sun and of the stars, and about the genesis of the universe (*Metaphysics* Bk. I (2) 982B13-18). And over 2000 years later, Wittgenstein wrote: Not how the world is, is the mystical, but that it is (*Tractatus*, par. 6.44).]

- Christopher: Yeah, it's like a story. A story needs an end and a beginning.

[Christopher gives a story as a good example of something that needs a beginning and an end.]

- KM: That's a point, isn't it? Does everything have to have a beginning and an end?

Tommy: I was just going to say that I disagree with Nathan, because I think it was the humans who named the countries, so this might be Australia, so they named Australia Australia, so that's Australia and this is the United Kingdom.

KM: But do you think there is a beginning to everything? – who agrees with Gemma 2?

Christopher: I agree with Gemma 2, because a story needs a beginning and an ending, otherwise the story will go on and on forever and it will get really boring. You couldn't really read a story forever until you die.

George: I disagree with Gemma and Christopher, because a circle does not have a beginning and an end, except a balloon, because balloons always got a tag where you blow it up from, and the world has got the Mount Everest, so it is not necessarily a circle.

[Gemma argues that everything must have a beginning/end. Circles do not have a beginning/end, George says, although there are at least two exceptions: balloons and the world. (He makes a creative analogy when he compares the tag on a balloon with the Mount Everest in relation to the world.)]

Kieron: I agree with Gemma, because there wouldn't be anything if you there wasn't a start, because you wouldn't be able to start something, because there wouldn't be a beginning... and if you start something in the middle, you couldn't, because that would be the beginning.

Jake: I agree with Gemma and Christopher as well.

KM: Why, Jake?

Jake: Because if you didn't have a beginning you couldn't end it.

KM: So if there is a beginning there must be an end, and if there is an end there must be a beginning?

Nathan: Well, I've got a train set, and it doesn't have a start or a finish. One hasn't...

Kieron: It does!

Nathan: No, it doesn't.

Kieron: The place that it is, and then you start playing with it is the place where it started.

[Kieron reasons logically that the beginning is where you start, and if you start in the middle, then the middle is the beginning – whether that is in time, or space (train set, racetrack).]

Nathan: It hasn't got a start and a finish, it's just got one start, it hasn't got a start and a finish.

George: You go straight round.

Nathan: You don't know what it's like. It goes like that, round in a circle.

Kieron: Whatever it is, you'll always come back to a start and that's the end as well.

Joanne: I agree with everybody who agrees with Gemma, because it would be really weird if you didn't have a start for anything.

Gary: If you are in a race there is a finish, but even if you don't get there wherever you stop you'll finish.

[Gary argues along the same lines: you finish at the place where you stop.]

Gemma 2: The whole world wouldn't be here, if there wasn't a bit of a start, because if there wasn't a start, then nobody could have made a start, and that means nobody would have made it, and that means if nobody had made it, it wouldn't be there.

[For Gemma 2, there is more involved than just linguistic convention. Gemma means a beginning/end in *time*, while George talks about the beginning/end of something in *space*. If no one had started the world, then it would not be there. It is there, therefore there must have been a beginning... caused by God? This is known as another version of the Cosmological Argument and raises many questions such as If the universe is all there is, can we experience what produced the universe? or, If God caused the universe, who made God (Davies, 1987, p. 7)?]

Christopher: You couldn't start at the end, though, could you really?

[Nathan is fighting with Darren. I ask them: Who started this and who is going to end it? Nathan laughs. They have stopped fighting.]

Kieron: You started it by asking the questions.

KM: I can end it as well... and end you.

Tommy: I know how you can end it... by saying You have to finish it.

Russell: Or 'no hands up'.

Gemma 1: Well, if there wasn't any starts, if no one invented starts or... then they would finish all the time. Everything would be a finish at the start.

George: I disagree with Kieron, like you can't start and finish, because if you think about a circular race-track... they start at the finish and they finish at the finish and they finish at the start.

Kieron: Yeah, because your start *is* the finish, so you agree with me.

Christopher: It doesn't have to be circular, a race-track.

Russell: I disagree with Gemma 2, because she said that a story needs a beginning and an end, but it needs a beginning, a middle and an end.

KM: That was Christopher, wasn't it, who said that about the stories?

Christopher: Yeah.

Russell: It's like Once upon a time there was a little boy and The End. You have to say what he did or... like he got eaten up in the middle bit.

KM: Do you think the world, the universe had a beginning?

Kieron: Space goes on forever.

Phillip: No, say somebody made the universe, the place where they made it...let's say you make the universe on that table, if you are making the universe from outside, there has got to be something outside, and then whoever built that outside would have to be outside something, and that would just go on forever and ever.

[The philosophical depth of his remark is breathtaking! Phillip argues that the creation of the universe out of nothing is logically impossible – i.e., if you create the universe you have to be outside the universe, and for creating the outside of the universe you have to be outside the outside... *ad infinitum*. Augustine struggled long and hard with this problem. He wrote: “O God, didst Thou make heaven and earth? Truly, neither in the heaven nor in the earth didst Thou make heaven and earth; nor in the air, nor in the waters, since these also belong to the heaven and the earth; nor in the whole world didst Thou make the whole world; because there was no place wherein it could be made before it was made...” (St Augustine, quoted in W. T. Jones, 1969). A possible solution could be our interpretation of the concept ‘creation’. It was Jean-Paul Sartre who wrote that ‘destruction’ is merely a reorganisation of matter (Sartre, 1958). Why not understand ‘creation’ as a rearranging of existing materials? However, one could argue that divine creation is of a complete different kind, since we cannot rearrange materials when creating out of nothing, since there is nothing to rearrange! It would follow that human and divine creation are not comparable.]

KM: Do we all understand this thought?

Some: Yes.

George: Say he was making the universe out of plasticine, someone would still have to make what HE was in, and someone has to make what that was in, and it would go on forever.

[George expands Phillip's idea by giving an imaginative example.]

KM: Do we all agree with that?

Russell: No, because the person who first started off, might have fallen through the space... there is nothing there like a blank piece of paper... and he had special powers and he quickly landed and started building round him and...

Kelly: I disagree. I agree with Phillip, because you have to be in something to make something else, like otherwise if I wasn't here I wouldn't be able to make anything, because I would have no tools or anything, so...

[“...nor didst Thou hold anything in Thy hand wherewith to make heaven and earth.” (St Augustine. See quote above.)]

George: Well, I disagree with Russell, because...I don't know and I disagree with Phillip, because it didn't go on forever.

Phillip: But he is saying the opposite to me, so you don't disagree with anyone...

Russell: Well, I disagree with Phillip, Phillip disagrees with me, so who do you agree with?
[laughter]

George: With myself, because the world was just there.

Russell: That's what I was saying.

[Are Russell and George touching on the idea that perhaps the universe was suddenly (?) or just (?) there – without a cause – from a blank piece of paper?]

Nicholas: Well, the world hasn't ended yet and it hasn't been destroyed yet, has it?

KM: Do you think it has to have an end, though?

Nicholas: Some things have a beginning, but they don't have an end.

KM: Could you give an example of something that has a beginning, but no end?

Darren: Space.

Tommy: World.

Kieron: Universe.

Phillip: But not at the same place. Have you ever seen something like a dragster track, it's just a great big strip of rope that cars go along with high speed, and it has a start and a finish, but like it hasn't got a start and a finish at the same time. It's just a straight bit of rope.

KM: So you mean it has a beginning and an end?

Phillip: Yeah, but not at the same place.

Christopher: I disagree with Nicholas what he said about you can have a beginning and no end, because the world will come to an end, because we're going to have another Ice-Age, I think.

Gemma 2: Or, 'cause our sun is a star and sooner or later, millions and millions and millions of years later that star is going to blow up, so we will go with it, because we can't live without light.

Tommy: How does Christopher know that the world isn't going to live forever?

[Tommy demands justification of belief.]

Kieron: I know, I know!

[They all shout out.]

George: He's [He is referring to Charley from Year 6] got this theory that one day the sun will blow up and we will all blow up with it.

Phillip: One day the sun will burn out, well, the sun is a star.

Figure 5

Max makes a tent in the house at the beginning of the story.

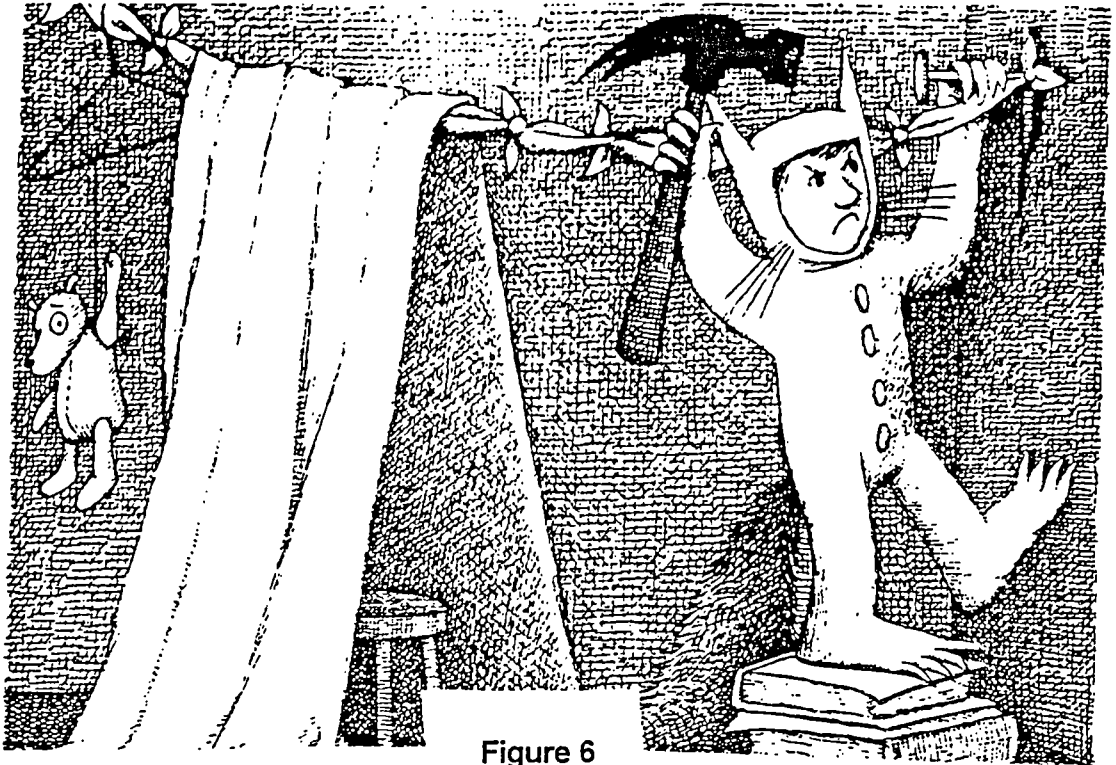


Figure 6

At the end of the story, Max is sitting in a tent, having decided to give up being King of Where the Wild Things Are.



[It is time to stop. I ask them to make a drawing and/or write a story about what would happen if the world ends. What would it be like? Gemma: We wouldn't be here to experience it. We would be dead already, so nobody would know what it would be like!]

FURTHER EVALUATION AND COMMENTS

In Chapter Six, a diagrammatic representation of this discussion, and the ones in Sections 5 and 6, have been taken up when looking more closely at the role of the teacher in philosophical enquiries, and the kind of interaction that takes place between teacher and pupils.

During the discussion the children were clearly aware that they could follow the enquiry where it may lead, and that this was *their* agenda, and not that of the teacher. One example is Tommy asking: "Aren't we meant to be talking about the dream?", and Michael replying: "We can talk about anything."

This enquiry would not have been possible if the children had not been actively listening to each other, and had not shown care and respect, not only for each other, but also for the procedures of the enquiry. They were also truth-seeking, in the sense that they were very keen to find out whether or not Max really was dreaming (despite their frustration about their lack of factual information).

They were building on each other's ideas, sometimes by agreeing, at other times by disagreeing, either with the conclusion of an argument, or with the reasons given.

They almost automatically gave reasons for their beliefs, at the same time holding these beliefs tentatively, sometimes almost as if they were rejecting them whilst expressing them – thinking through aloud with others. Rather than putting forward beliefs as if cast in stone, the children expressed beliefs more in a playful, speculative manner (e.g., Max could have started daydreaming and then fallen into bed...) in order to help the enquiry further (e.g., it would have solved their problem of not being in bed, but still dreaming).

They addressed each other directly, responding not only to questions and remarks from the facilitator, but also from their peers, and looking at them when talking. They also carefully connected what they thought with what had been said before. Take, for example, the following exchange I have taken from the transcript:

- Kelly: I disagree. I agree with Phillip, because you have to be in something to make something else, like otherwise if I wasn't here I wouldn't be able to make anything, because I would have no tools or anything, so...
- George: Well, I disagree with Russell, because...I don't know and I disagree with Phillip, because it didn't go on forever.
- Phillip: But he is saying the opposite to me, so you don't disagree with anyone...
- Russell: Well, I disagree with Phillip, Phillip disagrees with me, so who do you agree with?
[laughter]
- George: With myself, because the world was just there.

The concepts, the children were exploring were also philosophical. Among others they discussed 'dreaming', 'daydreaming', 'imagining', 'beginning', and 'end' – their different meanings in different contexts.

5. Transcript of ten year olds discussing *The Island of The Skog*

After having become more aware of the myriad of dimensions of a community of philosophical enquiry, and having been influenced by the reading of an excellent article by Ann Margaret Sharp called *The Community of Enquiry: Education for Democracy*, I started, in my research, to focus less on traditional philosophical content and more on critical and creative thinking skills.

With that in the 'back' of my mind, I analysed the following transcript. I also focused on how the children created new thoughts as a *direct* result of the dynamic process of the enquiry itself. They were clearly listening to each other, and thinking about the ideas expressed by others; using the new thoughts as building blocks. The end result was completely different from the remarks they started off with, in the sense that their original statements and questions about the story were more information-seeking than philosophical.

The class comprised 23 children; 17 boys and six girls. Most of them were 10 years old, and from the same school as the children in Section 4 – a school trying to cope with many behavioural problems among its pupils, and many statemented children with special educational needs.

The story the children were discussing was Steven Kellogg's *The Island of the Skog*.²⁰ They watched the video made of this picture book at the start of both sessions.

The story line is as follows:

The story is about a group of mice, who, after being constantly pestered by other animals, decide to sail away in a model ship to find freedom on a peaceful island. Bouncer acts as the leader, but is constantly challenged in his judgement by the more circumspect Jenny. They do find their island, described by their geography book as having one inhabitant: a Skog. Bouncer suggests they fire 12 cannon balls to show "they mean business". They go ashore and try to trap the Skog, but to no avail, until Jenny comes up with a complicated plan that works. They finally ensnare the Skog, which turns out to be a small, harmless animal dressed up as a huge monster. The Skog explains that he dressed up as a monster out of fear. A mouse explains that *they* were afraid of *him*. Jenny comments that they should have talked to each other instead. They decide to live together on the island in harmony.

The remarks made during the first session (written on the blackboard):

Model ships can't always float. (Edward)

Or fire cannon balls. (Ted, Mark S, Omar)

How could the Skog stay in this big costume and how could he move his arms around? (Clinton)

He might have stilts and sticks in his arms. (Robin)

I liked the way they made up the National Anthem. (James 2)

I would like to know where they got the rope from and stuff for the costume? (Alex)

Is there such a thing as a Skog? (Vicky)

As a preparation for the second lesson, their remarks from the blackboard, combined with what they had written down on a piece of paper during 'thinking time' (handed in after the lesson), were transcribed onto large sheets of paper. The children watched the video again, new remarks were

added, and the discussion started. For the teacher, this procedure has the added advantage that comparisons can be made between what has been said, and what has been written down on paper. Also, the questions and comments of children, who were, perhaps, too shy to put them forward verbally during the first session, could be the focus for the discussion the week after.

Their remarks were written on their piece of paper during ‘thinking time’:

I think the mouse was called bouncer because he was always helping in danger and in party they have bouncers at the door of the party to prevent danger. (Vicky)

Bouncer (negative remarks):

I thought that bouncer was really horrible the way he spoke to the other mice. (Anonymous)

I think bouncer was a bit too bossy telling all the other mice what to do. (Mark S)

I thought that bouncer was a horrible mouse because it was his fault that the Skog scared them. (Georgina)

Bouncer (positive remarks):

I like bouncer because he always liked being the boss. (Luke)

I like the mouse called bouncer who was always boss because every time he said something like I will do it. (Mark A)

I like it when the skog tride to fritened the mices away. (Stefen)

I didn't like the mice. But I like the scoge. Because he is mean and ugly and I like it when the scoge eats all the jars of honey and I like the clothes and he is so big. I just like sizes and when the mice tride to out smart the scoge but the scoge was to smart for the mice. (Omar)

I liked the bit when they fired the bombs. (James 1)

I began the session by reading from large sheets of paper their remarks and questions, and asked the following question:

KM: Would you like to add something to the remarks already made?

James 2: Yeah, at the beginning...there wasn't any hands on the clock.

Mark A: The thing that confuses me is: how did they get the boat of the shelf?

Omar: I'm sorry to disagree with the remark that the boat can't fire cannons, but you could, because you can add springs, put the cannon in, let go and.. "pfoogh".

KM: So you disagree with yourself?

Omar: Yeah.

[Omar has changed his mind.]

KM: Ted and Mark S do you still believe that model boats can't fire cannon balls?

Alex: Two things...he lit it, he didn't pull it back, and also it wouldn't have made a hole, it wouldn't have been powerful enough.

Paul: Yeah, with the springs.

Luke: You can pull things back, like on Lego cannons.

[Luke supports Omar in giving an example.]

Charley: They must have had matches to light the toaster thing.

Robin: The waffle-iron.

[Robin corrects Charley.]

Charley: Yeah, the waffle-iron. They could have just burnt something that would release the spring.

[Self-correction; Charley is supporting Alex with a new hypothesis – one does not *have* to use a spring.]

Ted: What gets me is that if the cannon balls could make a dent, they have to be heavy, so how could they lift them?

[A logically valid inference: All things that make a dent are heavy. Cannon balls make a dent. Therefore, cannon balls are heavy. Subsequently, Ted infers the consequence: mice are small, so they can't lift the heavy cannon balls.]

Robin: Ted, just because it made a dent, it doesn't mean that they couldn't lift them.

[Robin challenges the first premise.]

KM: Do you think it was a good thing to do – firing cannon balls?

Robin: No, because it scared the Skog. He was frightened for the cannon balls.

Paul: I agree with Robin, because the Skog would scare the mice even more, because they scared him.

[Paul supports Robin's view by giving another good reason – the mice scared the Skog, so the Skog would scare the mice even more, so the mice will scare the Skog, etc.: vicious circle.]

KM: Who thinks it was a good thing to fire the cannon balls?

Omar: The point was that they wanted to show him that they meant business, but if the Skog was really nasty and horrible, he would have had them by now.

[A good reason for the mice's action is being offered, although he does not agree.]

KM: But you liked the Skog and not the mice?

Omar: I know, but I'm just saying that it would have been a good idea to scare the Skog, but I expect the Skog would scare them if they would swim back to the ship.

James 2: You know when he said about firing the cannon balls, well, you don't know what's going to be on there, giants, or anything like that.

[Another reason for firing the cannon balls is offered.]

KM: So you think it was a good idea to fire the cannon balls?

James 2: Yeah.

Paul: But it said "The Island of the Skog", and it showed you that there was only one person on there and that was the Skog.

[Paul challenges James; his evidence is the geography book.]

James 2: Yeah, but they didn't know how tall he was. It didn't say a description. For what we know it could have been a giant.

[James questions the evidence as insufficient to prove the size of the Skog; and size is crucial for judging the appropriateness of firing cannon balls.]

Karen: It's *cruel*, because there might be other animals on the island.

[Karen expands James' remark: the book might not only be inconclusive with regards to size, but also the *number* of animals.]

Alex: But the book said there is only one.

Boy: There might be other animals.

Charley: The book might be wrong.

[Charley supports Karen and James with another good reason: authors can make mistakes.]

KM: So you agree with Karen?

Charley: Yeah, because the book might be wrong, so there could be other animals on there. I think it was cruel to fire *all* the cannon balls on the island. They should have just fired one, high up in the air, a warning shot, to show that they can be....

[He offers an alternative for firing all cannon balls, thereby finding a compromise for, on one hand, wanting to mean business because the Skog might be a giant, or dangerous (Omar, James) and on the other hand, not wanting to be cruel (Karen).]

Robin: They should have written something on it.

Omar: Yeah: "We mean business".

Vicky: How did they know that there was only one creature on the island?

Robin: It could have been dead.

[Another reason in support of the belief that there was only one animal is being offered.]

Vicky: Soon after they had written the book, there could easily, suddenly, some other animals have gone to the island. It wouldn't be a true book then, because they wouldn't know, because they might have not seen how many animals are on there.

[Vicky expands on Karen's remark, but as a result of Charley's sceptical remark that the book could be wrong, she takes the argument into a different direction. Moreover, her use of the word "suddenly" prepares the ground for the discussion later on.]

Paul: It could have been out of date.

[Paul infers validly from Robin's remark that if the animal was dead, then the book must have been out of date.]

KM: How do you know it is true what is in a book?

Alex: You take a chance.

Omar: What Vicky said, some animals can't swim, like they are so far away from the island, they can't swim, like squirrels and rabbits.

[Omar challenges Vicky by casting doubt on the *physical* possibility of some animals to go to the island by giving examples.]

Robin: Monkeys.

KM: So what you are saying, Omar, is that it is not very likely that there are more animals on the island, because not many animals can swim?

Charley: I disagree with Omar, because how did we *grow* into the world? We just grew into the world. You don't have to swim there, or fly there, they could have just grown into the world, like we did.

[Charley discovers Omar's assumption that we can only arrive at a particular place if, and only if, we come from another place, by picking up Vicky's usage of the word "suddenly". Charley distinguishes between what is *physically* possible and what is *logically* possible. He argues that it could logically be the case that we came to the island, without coming from another *place*, whilst Omar is assuming that *as a matter fact*, it is impossible to arrive at a physical space, without leaving another physical space.]

Vicky: There could have been sex and birds and stuff, because they only have to fly to the island.

KM: There are two different issues here: you could fly to the island, but what Charley is saying, is that you can actually grow into existence out of nothing. Is that what you are saying, Charley?

Charley: We did that, didn't we? We started as monkeys.

[He makes a connection between Robin's example of monkeys not being able to swim to the island, and his belief that we can grow out of nothing.]

Karen: They have more right than us to be on the island.

KM: You mean, animals have more right to be there than humans?

Karen: Yeah.

KM: Why?

Karen: Because that's their home. They live on there. They have probably been living there all their lives.

[She gives a good reason for empathising with animals.]

Paul: Charley, I reckon, that monkeys, we can't exactly...have you ever seen a monkey...because they are our nearest relatives to animals. Nothing else is as near as monkeys are, but that doesn't mean that we *grow* out of monkeys.

[Paul recognises the logical invalidity of Charley's connection between two ideas.]

Charley: Apes just grew into the world, so animals on the island could have just grown into the world.

[Charley is forced to be more precise in his judgment about the relationships between apes, humans, and growing into existence.]

KM: Are you saying we were *created*?

Vicky: We created ourselves, because the universe created itself and then there were probably lots and lots of little bits created the earth, and then we just started growing on it and then we got our population.

Marie Bates: If we did grow from monkeys, then today we would still be growing out of monkeys.

Mark S: Yeah, I think that's true, because if we did come out of monkeys, we would probably still *look* like a monkey.

Andrew: What Charley said, we might have *evolved* from monkeys...

Boy: Apes.

Andrew: Apes, then it would have taken a long time for a monkey to evolve into a man, so we didn't come from apes, because it would have taken a long time.

[Andrew makes a logically valid argument, but is the second premiss true: that it didn't take a long time?]

Omar: Monkeys could have become more intelligent and then they might have thought of things like cutting all their hair off with sharp sticks and that, get all their hair off.

[He hypothesises how wo/men could have evolved out of monkeys.]

KM: So you are saying that humans are more intelligent than monkeys?

Omar: Yeah.

James 2: You know what Karen said that the animals have more right to live on the island, well, some people just point their shotgun at them and kill them, so if they were able to talk they could reason with us.

Vicky: They can't reason, because they haven't got a language.

James 2: Because it is not fair animals being killed for just nothing, for just food, we can eat apples and stuff.

Michael: How did we get from that mice to how the human race is made?

[James touches on even more topics and Michael calls for relevance.]

Alex: From how many animals were really on the island, or something...flown and that evolves.

KM: Why do you ask, Michael?

Michael: Because we have been talking about the universe for ages and that, and what we really MEANT to be discussing is actually the tape we've just seen.

Paul: We are, we are getting to that point.

KM: How, Paul?

Alex: But there is loads of different things that scientists have discovered about how human beings came. Some scientists say that we're star dust.

James 2: That means I'm an alien! [laughter]

Joanne: What Charley said, that they could have been born on the island, well, that means that there would have been a male and a female on the island.

[Joanne offers an empirical reason against Charley's belief.]

KM: Why is that, Joanne?

Joanne: You couldn't create another Skog, without a male and a female Skog.

Vicky: You could, snails they are not mans or ladies and they still have babies. [laughter]

[A counter-examples challenges Joanne.]

Stefen: I disagree with Omar when he said that humans are more intelligent than monkeys. On the news I heard that monkeys have more tools than men.

KM: What does that mean when you have tools?

Robin: Like a tail. Like we developed hands from monkeys, well, we haven't got tails, because monkeys had tails they would be apes, and we got fingers from the monkeys and we didn't get the tail.

KM: What does that have to do with intelligence?

- Robin: Well, they had more tools like tails and stuff.
- KM: And tails are tools?
- Georgina: We have got tails, at the end of our spine. It just doesn't show.
- Vicky: It's just like normal bit of skin. Not like animals. Our tail might be our legs.
- Charley: I have two things to say, because Stefen is right, because some bread of monkeys are made up to twenty-five different tools, and also they were discussing about how did the Skog get to the island, how did we get to the earth. How did our ancestors – the apes – get to the earth?

[Charley critically examined what he had said before as a result of the reactions of the others. Humans evolved out of the apes, but how did the apes come into being?]

- Andrew: It's about how did the Skog get to the island...maybe, there was only one and that was a lady and she laid eggs naturally.

[Vicky's example of snails – not needing sex to procreate – invalidated Joanne's argument against Charley. Andrew offers an alternative solution. If an animal lays eggs, then it is possible that there were more animals on the island, without having to assume that they had to come from somewhere else, or created out of nothing.]

- Omar: And she died in the end.
- KM: Does that answer your question, Charley?
- Paul: No, because he wants to know how we, and all animals got here.
- Charley: What I'm saying is, how did that mother get there, how did our ancestors get there?

FURTHER EVALUATION AND COMMENTS

What a question to finish a philosophical discussion with!

What they learned that day was definitely *not* a definite answer to this profound, philosophical question. The transcript shows how Charley's ideas became richer and richer, philosophically, through the dynamics of the dialogue; and the constant cognitive challenge by the reasoning of the other children.

But it was not only Charley who learned a great deal. I believe the best response to the sceptics of PwC is showing that this discussion was not merely an exercise in speaking and listening, but a truly philosophical dialogue. This dialogue definitely meets the criteria for a community of philosophical enquiry as, for example, put forward by Ann Margaret Sharp (Sharp, 1991).

There is no doubt that the children were: giving and asking for good reasons; making good distinctions and connections; making valid inferences; hypothesising; giving counter-examples; discovering assumptions; asking good questions; inferring consequences; recognising logical fallacies; calling for relevance; defining concepts; seeking clarification; voicing implications; perceiving relationships; offering alternative points of view; building logically on contributions of others; voicing fine discriminations.

These are *cognitive* skills. With regard to attitudes, they learned that knowledge is always open to revision (open-mindedness).

As regards *social* skills and attitudes, they showed a willingness: to support one another by expanding and supporting each other's ideas; to submit the views of others to critical enquiry; to give reasons to support another's views even if one does not agree; to take one another's ideas seriously by responding; to give themselves to others; to be free of the need always to be right; to empathise; to have the courage and the ability to change their minds and to hold their views tentatively; not to be defensive; to show care for the other members of the community of enquiry.

I admit that evaluating transcripts with a focus on *skills*, was provoked by the usefulness of an analytical 'breaking down' of philosophical enquiry, as an easy way to show the connection between philosophy and Britain's National Curriculum (see, for example, Murriss, 1992b).

The need to provide evidence that philosophy is more than just teaching thinking skills was provoked by reading Richard Kitchener's paper (1990), in which he argues that PwC teaches nothing more than critical thinking.

My own thinking on the matter was given new direction by a paper called *Teaching Thinking, and the Sanctity of Content* in which the author, Michael Bonnett, criticises the teaching of thinking in which there is an emphasis on certain general skills or abilities. He argues that the appeal of such an instrumental, materialistic (in the philosophical sense) approach to thinking is obvious in "a society that likes to see itself in an up-beat, thrusting, entrepreneurial mode" (Bonnett, 1995, p. 296). It is motivated, Bonnett claims, by "a desire to turn the environment (including the world of meanings) into a resource" (Bonnett, 1995, p. 304).

It is another example of 'deep dualism' (see Chapter Two), or, what Bonnett calls:

"a certain disconnection between thinker and world, thinker and truth. It expresses thinking as a form of mastery, domination, manipulation of a content – the things to be thought – and truth as something to be manufactured. Truth is viewed as the product of such thinking" (Bonnett, 1995, p. 303).

The overriding metaphor is that of the mind understood as a person, conceived as an agent. As R K Elliott puts it poignantly:

"This view of mind regards thinking, imagining, etc. as quite like a person's doing or publicly performing something of which, at every stage, he, the monolithic person, is entirely the author..." (Elliott quoted in Bonnett, 1995, p. 304).

What the metaphor hides is the extent to which intuition, and our "incipient sense of the unknown" (Bonnett, 1995, p. 305) provokes thinking. Inspired by Martin Heidegger's philosophical writings, Bonnett argues for 'real' thinking, that is:

"a seeking of what-is-not-yet (for that individual), an awareness of that which is withdrawn or concealed, but whose presence at times can somehow be more sharply felt by us than that which seemingly is already immediately present before us. And it is this, our sense of the withdrawn, that provokes thinking – that, as it were, draws thinking on through its withdrawing and thus constantly sets the direction and motion of thought. In this Heideggarian sense such withdrawing may be thought of as 'way-making'. The draught (drawing) it creates exerts a pull, makes a call upon us. The pull of this draught, the demand of this call, cannot be felt by those preoccupied with imposing a system on

thinking, or any recipe for the structuring of thinking or determining its direction in advance” (Bonnett, 1995, p. 305).

An example Heidegger himself gives is of something being ‘thought-provoking’- it gives itself to thought, but also we can only learn to think by “giving our mind to what there is to think about” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 4; my emphasis).

Understanding thinking as “an open engagement imbued with a sense of the unknown” has significant consequences for the role of the teacher. Teachers should not instruct pupils to use strategies or skills, but as Bonnett points out the implications:

“Rather the role of the teacher is to act as a guide and support in helping the learner cope with and flourish within the openness of the call of the withdrawn. That is to say it will be concerned with supporting the experience of thinking: the courses or careers of affective-cognitive response involved in full engagement with content” (Bonnett, 1995, p. 306).

The emotions accompanying this highly demanding kind of thinking are extreme – ranging between enjoyment, and satisfaction, but also frustration and pain. Such teaching can take place only when the teacher has experienced this thinking herself. Bonnett explains:

“Informed by her own experience of such engagement the teacher can empathise with the courses [KM: this must be a typographical error in the original text; it should be ‘causes’] of such emotions and encourage the learner to accept that, for example, confusion can be a necessary step towards understanding, that what currently feels dead can become enlivened, that which currently frustrates can become a source of enlightenment, that mystery and paradox may portend some greater truth, and that all such features are constitutive of the experience of thinking as it carries us in and out of them in ways that may on occasion astonish and mystify” (Bonnett, 1995, p. 306).

I conclude that separating form and content when teaching thinking assumes a dualistic, instrumental view of the mind. It overlooks the role of the ‘unknown’ – the creative sparkle that gives us our ideas, the restless searching for answers to questions we cannot find satisfactory answers to, and makes us develop further questions. The mind is always already ‘in’ the world – cannot be artificially separated from it, or worse, being made an object itself (for example, when understanding it as a psychological ‘muscle’).

A classroom in which this kind of thinking occurs is full of excitement, but also of frustration. For example, Charley’s excitement when wondering where our ancestors come from, or, Phillips’ satisfaction when pointing out the logical impossibility of creating something out of nothing (Section 4), is accompanied by a frustration that there is so little we really know — not even knowing what a ‘Skog’ is, or, not knowing whether geography books are true.²¹

When philosophy is taught in this way, what will be taught is ‘epistemological modesty’, but also reverence, that is, an awareness that the world (including ourselves) is very mysterious indeed, and that ‘real’ thinking takes place only when we let the unknown press upon us. To bring about such thinking is a heavy burden for a teacher, and requires a particular kind of training in philosophical enquiry, as I will argue in the next chapter.

6. Transcript of infants discussing *Bear Hunt*

In this section, I would like to focus on young children's "unexpected responses" – the kind of playful imaginative responses Piaget dismissed as "mere romancing". As Robert Louis Stevenson remembers himself passionately wondering when he was a child: "Why can we not all be happy and devote ourselves to play?". He believed that when children philosophise, they do this usually to very much the same purpose (Stevenson, 1993, p. 272). It makes facilitation of philosophical enquiries with nursery children and infants a very difficult, but fascinating enterprise. The difficulty may lie in the difference of emphasis in the way pre-literate children seem to make sense of what they know, what they learn, and what they experience.

I start by first giving a complete transcript of a whole class of four to six year olds engaged in philosophical enquiry. In my comments, I try to focus on what might be peculiar to the thinking of very young children. In contrast to all PwC literature on the subject, my aim is to focus on the *differences* rather than the *similarities* between the thinking of adults and that of very young children. Researchers (e.g., McCall, 1990) painstakingly analyse transcripts to point at the rational and logical way very young children argue their case in order to show that children can and do think the way adults do (as I have done in Sections 4 and 5). It could be significant that there are few transcripts of children as young as five published as evidence that children can think as philosophically as adults. I suspect the reason may be that young children's thinking-moves are, in a certain respect, different from that of older children or adults.

For example, in a recent paper David Kennedy persuasively shows how five year olds make distinctions, build logical arguments, exemplify, speculate, build on each other's ideas, hypothesise, and self-correct when engaged in discussions of this kind (Kennedy, 1996, pp. 35-37). But especially I value several of his comments regarding the thinking of these five year olds. For example, Kennedy claims, that one boy speculates "in *story* form", but in a "context of causally chained events". The child "has a way of thinking out loud, or letting his thinking unfold and watching it ironically", a sort of "wild logic" (Kennedy, 1996, pp. 35-37; my emphasis).

That is exactly what young children still *like* to do: to let their thinking occur in the Heideggarian sense of the word, that is, "an open engagement imbued with a sense of the unknown" (see Section 5). They are less inhibited and less self-conscious than older children and adults. This playfulness with ideas is so characteristic, as Kennedy correctly acknowledges. He calls it "a sort of dramatic play", that is, they act out what it is like to know everything (and that is how they view adults, as knowing everything) (Kennedy, 1996, p. 37). They do this by fitting events, people, etc., into coherent wholes (stories). It gives dialogue

"systematic identity", i.e., the group argument proceeds systematically, despite the apparent chaos and non-direction. Despite its non-linear character, philosophical dialogue is a system, in that each thinking move is in some way related to what came before, and what will follow (Kennedy, 1996, p. 28).

This need to seek as much coherence is confirmed by Kennedy's observation that young children make:

"hypotheses in the form of prepositional statements, as if they were facts...This kind of thinking is characteristic of young children...it is a kind of abductive proliferation; getting together everything everyone has ever heard, read, etc. about witches and fairies. Empirical validity is not so much the issue (although it sometimes is, and could be at any moment, if a child raises it) as making an argument that ties together the pieces nicely" (Kennedy, 1996, p. 37).

Related to story-playing is young children's tendency, Kennedy argues:

“to assume that whatever you can think of can be true, just because you can think of it, which is characteristic of the “transitional” quality of the psychological play space of the young child, in which the boundaries between fantasy and reality, inner and outer, are not yet sharply defined... Truth value has to do as much with overall coherence – a sense of moral and aesthetic rightness – as it does with any empirical verifiability. Truth, that is, is a story about something that makes sense” (Kennedy, 1996, pp. 37, 38).

The thinking of older children and adults is less of an open engagement, and more instrumental and closed down; although they still have playful speculation to make, for example, in order to make a hypothesis fit (e.g., the nine year olds in Section 4 speculating that Max could have started daydreaming and then fallen into bed when solving their problem of not being in bed, but still dreaming). But this becomes rarer the older the children get. With the increase of factual knowledge, playful, open-ended speculation diminishes. In that case, doing philosophy properly involves an ‘unlearning what we have learned’, or a Husserlian ‘putting between brackets’, that is, a doubting of everything we believe we have certain knowledge of. In that sense, very young children are in an advantageous position – they already know very little, and therefore the kind of thinking encouraged in communities of philosophical enquiry, that is, an open engagement imbued with a sense of the unknown, comes naturally to them.

There are also many similarities between the thinking of very young children and that of adults in the way they argue together. For example, sometimes a child can speculate in the most imaginative way, but another child will “contest such wild statements”; at other times other children will “build on them”. The explanation for this is that, although less competently, the child, of course, shares with the adult the same language, and this language is rooted in certain logical relationships.

In the following transcript, I first comment on the *logical* structure of the dialogue. I will point at some general thinking skills the children are displaying. But I will also be looking for evidence that shows a possible difference between young children's thinking-moves and those of older children and adults. I will at the same time use the criteria of communities of philosophical enquiry as listed in Section 3.

The story the whole class of infants were discussing was Anthony Browne's *Bear Hunt*. They are from the same school as featured in previous sections. Like their older peers, they had philosophy once a week for one hour, using the same methodology, the same stories, and were asked the same questions. The only difference was that during ‘thinking time’ they drew a picture, rather than writing their thoughts down. During the first session, I had allowed plenty of time in between showing the ‘solutions’ to the problems, by letting them imagine what the possible solutions Bear could draw with his pencil (see below).

The story line is as follows:

Two hunters try to catch Bear. First, they use a net, but Bear quickly draws with his magic pencil two pegs with a string in between, and one hunter trips over. The other hunter throws a lasso, but before it has caught Bear, a rhinoceros has been drawn, and the lasso ends up on its horn.

The first hunter is back and points his rifle at Bear. Bear changes the barrel of the rifle with his pencil to make it point at the hunter's face. The second hunter tries again and captures Bear in a cage. Again, Bear solves the problem with his pencil. He draws a saw and releases himself.

Then Bear falls in a deep hole in the ground. He draws a beautiful white dove, and he flies on its back far, far away from the hunters.

The children were:

Amy (aged 6)
Charlotte (aged 5)
Michelle (aged 4)
Gregory (aged 6)
Timothy (aged 4)
Ben C (aged 5)
Ben G (aged 6)
Phillip (aged 6)
Paul (aged 6)
Louise B (aged 6)
Louise Porter (aged 6)
Jason (aged 5)
Amanda (aged 6)
Kerry (aged 5)
Katie (aged 5)
Owen (aged 6)

We watched the filmstrip of the picture book for the second time, but much faster than the first when the children had a chance to look at each picture in great detail.

I began the one hour session by asking them the following question:

KM: Is there anything you would like to ask, or say about what you've just seen?

[I wrote their remarks down on the blackboard.]

There were mouth plants and they were happy, because Bear got away. (Amanda)

He fell down the hole and he drew the bird. (Owen)

He drew a saw and then he got out the trap. (Michelle)

The hunters were chasing Bear, because Bear was going to rob them of their money. (Amy)

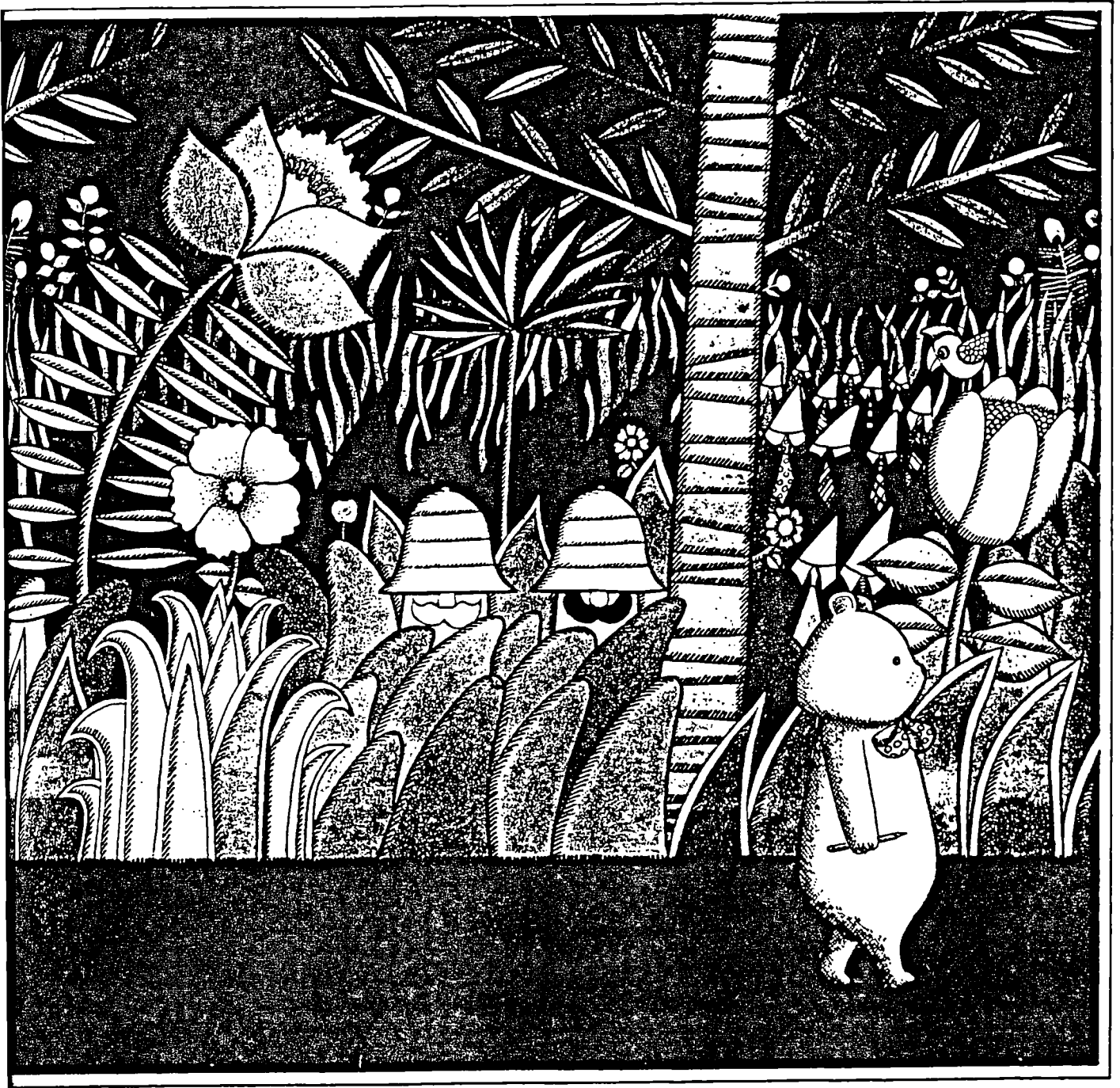
The hunters were going to kill Bear, but they didn't want to. (Phillip)

KM: Amy's, Phillip's and Amanda's remarks are about the hunters chasing Bear. Why do you think the hunters wanted to chase Bear?

Amanda: He's going to kidnap him.

KM: Why do you think they want to kidnap him?

Figure 7



They saw Bear.

From: Anthony Browne, *Bear Hunt*

Amanda: So they can put him in gaol.

Phillip: They weren't chasing him...they try to get him away, because there might have been an eagle or something and it might get him through the bushes. They didn't really want to get [him] killed, that's why they were chasing after him, because the hunters didn't want to kill, so he could live for a bit longer and then they're going to kill him.

[It seems as if there is a logical contradiction here. The hunters are not chasing bear, but protecting him. They will kill him, though, but later! However, what Phillip is arguing does make sense, if we interpret his explanation of the story as being closely related to his own personal fears, i.e., walking past bushes, and not knowing what or who could pounce on him from out of the bushes (see Figure 7). So, Phillip challenges Amanda's explanation of the story, by setting up a speculative causal chain, in story form. The hunters are walking behind Bear to protect him. Bear needs protection, because there might be an animal in the bushes that could hurt him (e.g., an eagle). It is not clear why bear would not need protection later. Perhaps, Phillip was more concerned with integrating Amanda's position into his own, perhaps wanting to do justice to both possible explanations? I believe Phillip is making up a story (by connecting it closely to his own life) within the story, and his explanation will become the issue the children will enquire into during this session. I will refer to it as 'Phillip's Thesis'. Also, how much is his position really a logical contradiction? After all, we do temporarily keep alive animals for, for example, human consumption or pharmaceutical experiments.]

KM: So they want him to live a bit longer, and then they're going to kill him? Do you agree with Phillip?

[Picking up the apparent logical contradiction, and asking for their comments, I hope to move the enquiry forward by 'pushing' for clarification.]

Owen: I don't, because they think Bear is a nice animal, but they sometimes kill people.

[Giving reasons for disagreement with others; argument 1 against Phillip's thesis: Bears can be dangerous, so that is a good reason for killing them.]

Paul: I don't agree with Phillip, because they were trying to catch him.

[Sensitivity to context; argument 2 against Phillip's thesis: by referring to the book, Paul questions the empirical validity of Phillip's interpretation.]

KM: How do you know they wanted to catch him, Paul?

Paul: Because they were using all these things to catch him.

[He gives a reason for his argument against Phillip's Thesis.]

Phillip: I agree with Owen, because they do scratch people sometimes.

[Finding evidence to support one's view; he supports Owen's argument against his own thesis (it is all right to kill when endangering humans) by giving a reason, but it has *not* changed his original position (see his next remark below).]

KM: What do you think of what Paul just said, because he didn't agree with you?

[I repeat the different points of view.]

Phillip: They don't kill him for about a year.

[Fine discriminations (the situation is complex); Bears can be dangerous, but they are still not going to kill him for a year.]

KM: Why a year?

Phillip: Because then he will have a bit more chance to draw all these things...

[Creative solution in support of his view; he offers a reason to support his thesis.]

KM: Do you think hunters are allowed to kill animals?

[I ask this question to try to make the enquiry more abstract, and to help them think about the ethical issues involved.]

Some: Yes.

Some: No.

Charlotte: He drew a rhino and the rhino had mean eyes.

KM: And when an animal has mean eyes, you kill it?

[I ask this question to make them aware of the logical and ethical implications of what Charlotte is saying.]

Charlotte: Yeah.

Louise P: No, because that would be cruel.

[She picks up the ethical dimension of Charlotte's remark.]

KM: Why would it be cruel?

Louise P: If they kill us, we'll die and that's cruel.

[Defining concepts; 'cruel' = killing someone.]

Ben G: If they die, we won't, 'cause that's cruel...'cause if we die, they have to die...the animals.

KM: Why?

Ben G: 'Cause...they die first, and when you die it's not fun...going round...playing ghost.

[Ben agrees with Louise, but takes it a step further. Killing is cruel because dying is cruel, because it is no fun playing ghosts. Therefore, killing is cruel.]

Gregory: I don't agree, because it's not cruel, because the animals that we eat, they can be killed.

[Giving reasons to support point of view, and pointing out logical inconsistency; he offers another argument in support of Phillip's Thesis. *As a matter of fact, we do kill animals, therefore it is not cruel. Of course, just because people do something in a particular way, it does not follow that it is morally justifiable. This is a mistake, some adults make in their reasoning too. Take, for example, the not uncommon argument: 'My parents always hit me, and I have turned out okay (so, I can hit my children)'. However, Gregory's reasoning is logically sound (despite the fact that the original premiss is, perhaps, false, i.e., that killing animals for food is not cruel). He points out the logical inconsistency of believing, on one hand, that it is cruel to kill animals, and at the same time eat animals that have been killed.]*

[Some shout out that it is cruel, others that it is not cruel.]

Gregory: After they've had babies, then there are more.

[Refining of a point of view; he qualifies his argument by saying that they must have had babies before killing them.]

KM: Are you saying that when an animal has had babies then you can kill the animal?

Paul: If the animal gets babies and dies then it can't live with the animals anymore.

[Inferring consequences; he offers a third argument against Phillip's thesis.]

Phillip: If they actually die, when they haven't had their babies, if you put a sharp something in it [stomach], it will go right through the baby.

[Voicing the risks which might be implied by a certain view; he points out the risk of the baby dying in the stomach. He seems less concerned with the abstract question whether it is morally right to kill animals than with making sense of his idea that it is all right to kill later. He is resisting at this point Gregory's condition that they should have had babies first.]

KM: Is that your reason for disagreeing with Gregory?

Phillip: Yeah.

Gregory: If it's a chicken it can lay eggs.

[Taking objection seriously and finding a creative solution to convince others/making good distinctions (between different kinds of animals). To solve the problem that the baby would be killed with the same knife as the one that kills Mum, Gregory speculates it could be the kind of animal that lays eggs. This interpretation is likely when taking Phillip's next contribution into account.]

KM: Is it all right to kill a chicken, because it has no babies, but eggs?

Phillip: I do agree with Greg now, because it won't go actually right through it...the kind of eggs are at the back, and the babies are at the front, then it will be OK.

[Gregory's argument has now convinced Phillip, and it is still consistent with his thesis.]

Owen: When the animal dies, or gets killed, the baby will die.

[Owen disagrees by arguing soundly that not only directly killing the baby with a “sharp something” will kill the baby, but also when Mum is killed. This forces Gregory to refine his argument.]

Gregory: Well, if they get killed and the baby isn't, when it is just about to come out that's OK, because you can get it out then.

[Gregory accepts the point Owen makes.]

KM: Does that count for a rabbit in a hutch as well?

[I ask this question in order to make the children think about the ethical question whether it is right to kill animals by introducing the distinction pets/other animals.]

Timothy: I have a rabbit.

Gregory: She's a lady.

KM: So she can have babies, can she?

Gregory: But we haven't got a man.

KM: Imagine that your rabbit had babies...I go to your house kill your rabbit and eat it...is that all right?

[I deliberately use their own example, but make it more specific by mentioning a (pet)rabbit to make them think about the fact that we are more reluctant to have our pets killed than other animals.]

All: No!

KM: Why not?

Gregory: Because it's our pet.

KM: Is there a difference between pet animals and wild animals?

[As the rest of the enquiry shows, they more or less ignore my intervention here.]

Ben G: No, because you get another animal when they get a baby...you get exactly the same animal. When the babies grow up and you ate the animal that has already grown up, and it looked the same to the other one, the other one would grow up and it would look exactly the same, so Gregory didn't have to worry.

Jason: If you had two rabbits and the man gets a baby, then you've got three. [He counts them on his fingers.]

KM: Because there are three instead of two, it's all right to kill one?

Gregory: We can let one go free.

Amanda: If you had a baby rabbit, the baby rabbit will be the baby...the daddy rabbit will be the daddy... the sister be the sister...

KM: But does the amount of animals you have matters whether you eat one?

Amanda: No, that's not right, because you are not allowed to eat animals, because when you eat animals, that's not right.

KM: Why not?

Amanda: I said it is all right to eat *one* animal.

Timothy: We've got only one rabbit, but if we get a daddy-one then we have babies...if somebody said "Yeah, let's go and kill one", well, that's not all right, because you've got to ask them first if you can kill one.

[Timothy argues that you have to ask permission first. This often happens in ethical enquiries, but not only with children. There is a confusion between what you're *allowed* to do, and with what is *morally right* to do. Adults, too, often confuse what is *legal* with what is *ethical*. Just because something is permissible by law (e.g., abortion), it does not follow that it is a morally right action. The rest of the dialogue is a good example of how the children are building on each other's ideas. Timothy argues that killing is okay with permission... from the owner (Paul)... otherwise it is cruel (Owen)..., but you have to say "Please" (Phillip).]

KM: Who do you have to ask?

Timothy: The people, who live in the houses.

Paul: The people who own it.

KM: So it is different for animals that belong to someone, is it?

Owen: Our friend used to have some guinea-pigs, and they died 'cause of the hot summer, and we got some guinea-pigs that hasn't died, and it will be cruel to eat them without asking.

KM: If I would ask your Dad if I could eat your guinea-pigs, and he would say "Yes", and I would eat them... that wouldn't be cruel?

Phillip: It is cruel.

KM: Why?

Phillip: If someone would eat your things...

Paul: ...guinea-pigs...

Phillip: ...guinea-pigs, then you have to say "Please, may I have your guinea-pig?". and if they say "No", you just go to another house. [laughter]

[It's time to stop.]

FURTHER EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The issues raised by this class took me by surprise, as so often is the case when I work with nursery and infant children. Their questions and remarks were much more unexpected than when using the same story with their older peers in the school, or with adults (in teacher training, for example). This would confirm Kieran Egan's theories that young children's imagination differs from that of older children and from that of adults. However, my reading is speculative, and further empirical evidence is required to substantiate my claim that pre-literate children's thinking has a different emphasis.

This dialogue had, what Kennedy calls 'systematic identity' (see above). The children were building on each other's ideas logically. They were giving reasons, giving fine discriminations, finding evidence, etc. (see comments dialogue). They were also playfully experimenting with their own ideas and those of others. A kind of play, Kennedy refers to as "combinatorial play", i.e., hypothetically varying the situation and seeing what happens by counterfactual talk (Kennedy, 1996, p. 31). This kind of play seemed to display itself in the dialogue. Using Phillip's hypothesis as starting point the children were exploring the issue by refining the original hypothesis, for example, by Gregory who put forward the necessary condition of having had babies before being killed. Paul infers the logical consequence: "If the animal gets babies...etc.". Then Phillip continues to speculate counterfactually: "If they actually died...". Gregory, then, varies the situation hypothetically to solve the problem raised (by themselves) of how to ensure the baby is not killed when Mum gets killed. Phillip accepts that laying eggs would be advantageous, especially because eggs are (he believes) situated at the back and not at the front. Mentioning the physical location of the eggs seems to change the dialogue to make it more empirical – for example, Owen shows concern for the empirical validity of the hypothesis: whether it is an egg or a foetus, when Mum gets killed, the baby will die. Gregory continues to live out the little story this hypothesis has become for them. If the baby is *about to come* out, then even *if* Mum gets killed, you can still get the baby out.

Their concern seems to be one of synthesis building – of trying to fit individual 'pieces' into a sturdy 'building'. They are constructing and reconstructing (part of) stories that make sense to them. This imaginative process of creating and living out hypotheses – i.e., (part) of stories – is the creative origin of sciences. Finding more evidence to substantiate this claim too, is one of the reasons justifying further research in this area. Jerome Bruner argues that:

"We all know by now that many scientific and mathematical hypotheses start their lives as little stories or metaphors, but they reach their scientific maturity by a process of conversion into verifiability, formal or empirical, and their power at maturity does not rest upon their dramatic origins. Hypothesis creation (in contrast to hypothesis testing) remains a tantalising mystery – so much so that sober philosophers of science, like Karl Popper, characterize science as consisting principally of the falsification of hypotheses, no matter the source whence the hypothesis has come" (Bruner, 1986, p. 12).

Bruner's distinction between *two modes of thought*²² is extremely relevant when it comes to evaluating philosophical enquiries with children. He distinguishes between "logico-scientific" thinking, dealing with general causes and universal truths, using criteria such as consistency and non-contradiction, and "narrative thinking", which concerns itself more with specific events, attributing meaning to particular experiences (Bruner, 1986, pp. 12, 13). Despite the fact that a large part of philosophical and scientific thinking is logico-scientific with its emphasis on truth-value and the testing of hypotheses, narrative thinking is essential for the creation of hypotheses. The causality of logico-scientific thinking is of a strict logical kind (if p, then q); the causality of narrative thinking, however, leaves space for interpretation and speculation, as illustrated by Bruner

when pointing out the difficulty of finding the exact cause in “first the king died, then the queen died”.

One may be tempted to interpret the above dialogue as fantastical, or fanciful, and see it as an example of young children’s lack of rational thinking – an expression of the common belief that imagination is not just different, but also inferior to rational thought. How transcripts like these are interpreted very much depends how seriously we take children as thinkers. Bruner writes:

“...we characteristically assume that what somebody says must make sense, and we will, when in doubt about what sense it makes, search for or invent an interpretation of the utterance to give it sense” (Bruner, 1986, p. 28).

PwC presupposes high expectations of children as thinkers. In the evaluation of transcripts, researchers should do their utmost to include in Bruner’s “somebody” very young children, concentrating on both modes of thinking, and not merely the logical.

Apart from thinking imaginatively and playfully, the children in the dialogue were also actively listening to one another, putting ideas forward, and building on those of others tentatively. They clearly had internalised the procedures and ethos of a community of philosophical enquiry, or, as Mary Midgley would put it, picked up the “general spirit” of philosophy (see Section 2). In the enquiry, the children took Phillip’s thesis as far as they could – revising it, adding to it – as if they were making up a story together, although, at times they did show concern about empirical validity (e.g., Owen’s reminder that when Mum gets killed the baby gets killed, or, Paul’s referral to the book when interpreting the story).

It makes it very difficult for the facilitator to know how and when to intervene, because it is so hard to understand exactly what they mean – what sort of story they are creating within the story. The temptation is to intervene a great deal as a facilitator in an attempt to, for example, explore more certain abstract concepts they are using (e.g., ‘cruel’), or, to focus on certain philosophical questions (e.g., ‘is it morally right to kill animals’). But unless the facilitator creates their story with them, she will not understand them.

I realise now that in my research I have been too concerned with interpreting enquiries with this age group like those of older children and adults in order to show that young children can indeed do philosophy. There are similarities (e.g., the giving of reasons, the pointing out of logical inconsistencies), but there also seem to be differences (the larger role fantasy plays in meaning-making, and the embeddedness of enquiries in their lifeworld).

Their enquiries do meet the criteria outlined in Section 3, and, in that sense, children can do philosophy. However, there is not *one, ideal* form of philosophical life (see Section 2). Fantasy very much gives shape to the way young children make sense of stories. They connect them directly to their own lifeworld in a way that often takes us, adults, by surprise. In retrospect, I have severe doubts that my attempt as a facilitator to encourage them to think more abstractly was the right thing to do. Perhaps, I should have gone along in their fantastical exploration, but I am not sure how this could be done.

One way of finding out, perhaps, would be to intervene much less, in order to have more time to reflect upon what each child is saying (and to avoid as much as possible misinterpretation), and to encourage silences, that is, time for reflection at regular intervals in an enquiry.

Another suggestion would be to try and use Socratic Method²³ with this age group, because it would slow down the entire enquiry process enabling the whole group to take much more time to reflect upon one statement. This would be especially beneficial to help the facilitator to feel her way into their story. Another great advantage of using Socratic Method for this age group would be the

lesser role the facilitator plays in the content of the discussion. In Socratic Dialogues the facilitator does not ask philosophical questions, and in that sense stays more outside of the content of the enquiry.

However, I envisage that the major difficulties in using Socratic Method would be that the children cannot read (so how would you record each step in the discussion if you cannot write it on flipcharts?), and all children will need to participate actively, regularly and voluntarily (how can this be enforced when children do not choose to go to school?).

I conclude that a possible reading of the above transcript suggests that the thinking of children between four and six differs in degree, but not kind, from that of older children, and that – if this is true – a different kind of emphasis is desirable when facilitating an enquiry.

During a philosophical enquiry very young children seem more keen than older children to embed their ideas in their own lifeworld, and to use fantasy when thinking about stories, themselves, or their world.

Also, a great deal of educational research in the context of PwC is spent on evaluating children's thinking by comparing it with that of adults. The focus is, therefore, predominantly on children's abstract and logical thinking, and not on their metaphorical and imaginative way of making meaning. Research focusing on the differences, instead, is urgently needed.

Of course, this kind of meaning-making is not reserved for pre-literate children. Older children and adults have this capacity too, but literacy enables them to examine concepts out of the context in which they are used, and to think about them abstractly. Since the Enlightenment, this kind of de-contextualised thinking, or disembodied rationality, so clearly expressed in Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am', has been reinforced by our modernist society to such an extent that the 'other side' of our mind – the imaginative, the metaphorical, the poetical – has been undervalued in its role in rationality.

An expanded notion of rationality – one that includes people's imaginative side, coincides with an urge within philosophy itself to embed our thinking in our everyday lifeworld. Such a move will not only change philosophy, but also one's everyday life as a thinking and feeling being, and it will result in a more holistic way of teaching and learning for all age groups. It would be a move welcomed by post-modern and feminist philosophers.²⁴

Understanding very young children's thinking is hard, but not impossible. I agree with Burbules and Rice, that one of the conditions put on structured talk to make dialogue across differences possible is sensitivity to the various kinds of diversity one may encounter (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 407). Rather than trying to eliminate differences, *maintaining* differences can be the aim of a dialogue, but in order to understand young children's thinking one has to be aware of the reasons why and how they make sense of their experiences. My reading of the dialogue renders it impossible to dismiss their meaning-making as 'irrational', 'immature', or "mere romancing".

7. Summary and Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter was to present empirical evidence to support the claim that children of various ages between four and ten, can indeed do philosophy. This evidence consisted of commenting upon complete transcripts of whole-class mixed-ability groups. I deliberately evaluated the transcripts in a variety of ways to show the development in my own thinking about children's thinking.

I have argued that, when sceptics and critics claim that children cannot do 'real' philosophy, their comparison between adult philosophers and child philosophers is an unfair one. Although their vocabulary is obviously less sophisticated, children do raise philosophical questions and issues, and think about them meta-cognitively, that is, they reflect upon their own thinking and make connections between their own ideas and those of others.

They also think about abstract concepts, such as 'person' (Section 2), 'stealing'(ibid), '(day)dreaming' (Section 4), 'imagining' (ibid), 'beginning' (ibid), 'creation'/'evolution' (Section 5), 'cruel' (Section 6), and they ask philosophical questions, such as 'How do we know (geography) books are true?', or 'Where did our ancestors come from?' (Section 5). Sometimes their philosophical insights are stunningly precise and profound, as for example, Phillip's philosophical discovery that creating something out of nothing is logically impossible.

The transcripts in this chapter show how children are often puzzled about a particular concept or question. I have argued that the sceptic's criticism is inaccurate, when they argue that children, unlike adults, do not know the standard answer to the question, or are unfamiliar with the 'normal' usage of a particular concept. I have rejected the argument that when children reflect upon the meaning of an abstract concept they are merely in the process of acquiring its meaning. I have done this by arguing that *those concepts (questions) have no straightforward 'normal' usage (standard answers)*.

For example, the transcript in Section 2 of children discussing whether it is always wrong to steal, and their judgment at the outcome of the enquiry that there could be extenuating circumstances (e.g., when stealing is necessary to save someone's life), suggests that the complex meanings of philosophical concepts can be appreciated by children if they are given the opportunity to do so.

Children can be taught to use concepts in a more sophisticated manner through engagement in communities of philosophical enquiry – something non-philosophically trained adults find hard to do (something they share with non-philosophically trained children). I conclude, therefore, that not *age*, but the right kind of training in philosophical enquiry, determines whether children can or cannot do philosophy. This is also the kind of training *adults* need in order to do philosophy.

I have argued that the 'community of enquiry' method models a philosophical way of life – the criteria for which I have listed in Section 3 – in which there is homogeneity between form (how we teach) and content (what we teach).

When participants have internalised the procedures and its ethos, the class soon turns into a community of *philosophical* enquiry, that is, the participants will discuss the kind of problems and raise the kind of questions academic philosophers are puzzled about *when they have just started* doing philosophy. When comparing children's ability to do philosophy with that of adults, the comparison should be with adults who have just started doing philosophy themselves and not with professionally trained academic adult philosophers.

But I have pointed out that even then we have to be cautious, for two reasons: first, because of the temptation to evaluate children's thinking through the language they use; and secondly, because of the possibility that young children's thinking has a different emphasis from that of adults.

It is possible to argue for this difference, as I tried to show in my analysis of the transcript of four to six year olds in Section 6, in which I claim that children's fantasy is a different – but not a less rational – way of making sense of their experiences. I will return to this below.

In my comments on the transcript in Section 5, I have rejected my earlier focus when evaluating the dialogue. The focus on critical and creative thinking assumes 'deep dualism' – an understanding of the mind as a person, manipulating the world. The metaphor highlights thinking as an instrument, a tool to manipulate ourselves, others, and our world. At the same time, the metaphor hides the extent to which our intuition, and the unknown provokes thinking. Openness to the unknown, and a seeking for what-is-not-yet are necessary conditions for the kind of thinking I believe good philosophy teaching should be about. Its implications for the training of teachers involved in PwC will be mentioned in the next chapter.

An unexpected outcome of my research was my growing awareness of the possible deconstructive role of young children's thinking on what we mean by 'rationality'. Their creative capacity to fit anything under the sun (and beyond) into a coherent whole, in which they are less concerned about empirical validity, is an art many of us lose in the process of growing up. This is especially true in a society that rewards an analytic, strategic approach to thinking. Thinking has become a resource, to be used as a tool in order to control.

Young children's thinking seems always to be imbedded in a lifeworld, and as such cannot be separated from it. It is part of that world, and can never be made an object in that world, to be carved up into distinct skills and competencies.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Five

¹ See Chapter Three, Sections 1 and 4.

² See Chapter Three, Section 5.

³ My position presupposes understanding the transition of childhood to adolescence as a continuum; as one of constituting differences in degree rather than kind between child and adult.

⁴ These were listed at the beginning in Chapter One, Section 2.

⁵ See, for example, the way six year olds are introduced to Cartesian Dualism in Matthew Lipman's philosophical novel *Elfie*, Upper Montclair, IAPC, 1988. This part of *Elfie* is quoted and critically analysed in Chapter Seven, Section 4.

⁶ See Chapter Four, Section 4.

⁷ See Chapter Four, Section 5.

⁸ See my paper "Not Now Socrates..." (Part I); In: *Cogito*, 1993, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 236-244, and (Part II); In: *Cogito*, 1994, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 80-86.

⁹ Although I believe that what the children are saying is impressive, the topic of personal identity is introduced and explored as a *direct* result of the facilitator's questions. See Chapter Five, Section 2 for an analysis of this crucial part of the dialogue.

¹⁰ See Chapter Four, Section 2.

¹¹ It is my experience that – given a skilled facilitator – any group of people can function (to a certain extent) as a community of enquiry. This is confirmed by David Kennedy when he argues that "...the law of averages would seem to indicate that various forms of intelligence, and many developmental levels of logical and verbal intelligences, are represented in any one statistically normal group", In: David Kennedy. "Young Children's Moves: emergent philosophical community of inquiry in early childhood discourse; In: *Critical & Creative Thinking: the Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*, 1996, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 39. This could be the reason why *mixed-ability* groups work well for children with special educational needs. As regards the *ideal* size of a community of enquiry, see Chapter Three, footnote 17. For a description of what a classroom looks like when children are engaged in a philosophical enquiry and for practical advice on the establishment of a community of philosophical enquiry – physical arrangements, length of sessions, physical setting, etc., see Chapter Four, footnote 4.

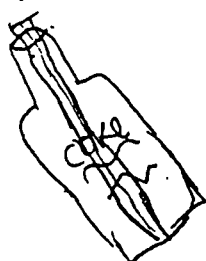
¹² It is worth noting that in practice no community of enquiry can ever be perfect. It is a regulating ideal. There will always be constraints, even if only because children do not volunteer to participate in philosophy sessions. Children cannot chose freely whether they go to school or not.

¹³ See Chapter Four, Section 5.

- 14 See my criticism of Gareth Matthews' so-called evidence that young children can do philosophy in Chapter Three.
- 15 See Chapter Four, Footnote 29. For an in-depth analysis of the role of the facilitator in communities of philosophical enquiry see Chapter Six, Section 2.
- 16 Not all PwC practitioners are equally confident about the possibility of translation. See: Chapter Eight.
- 17 See the Introduction to Chapter Two.
- 18 See also Section 2 of this Chapter.
- 19 Compare the following philosophical discussion with the comments of a teacher after he conducted a 'normal' classroom discussion (using the same picture book) taken up in Chapter Four, Section 2.
- 20 An anonymous explanation of the name "Skog".

≠ know why he he called it #island o
the skog he named it after himself

STEVEN KELLOGG
S K O G
SKOG



- 21 Earlier that year the same group of children – after watching the video of Tomi Ungerer's *The Three Robbers* (a fable about 'bad' robbers doing 'good' things – issues the children were not particularly interested in) – had a long discussion about the truth of *history* books, because they wanted to know the value of the robbers' loot 'in the olden days'. They concluded that the only way of really *knowing* is by travelling in time!
- 22 Mike Lake pointed out to me the relevance of Jerome Bruner's distinction between two modes of thinking.
- 23 See Chapter Four.
- 24 See especially Chapter Four, Footnote 22, and Chapter Eight, Section 5.

Chapter Six

FACILITATING & EVALUATING PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY WITH CHILDREN

STRUCTURE

1. Introduction.
2. The role of the facilitator in philosophical enquiry: five year olds discussing *Elfie*.
3. Preparing facilitators of Philosophy with Children.
4. Assessing the facilitator's role in communities of philosophical enquiry.
5. Evaluating Philosophy with Children.
6. Evaluating *Teaching Philosophy with Picture Books*.
7. Children evaluating Philosophy with Children.
8. Summary and Conclusion.

1. Introduction

Following on from the empirical evidence given in Chapter Five that children can indeed do philosophy, I will examine in Section 2, the controversial role of the facilitator in communities of philosophical enquiry. It has significant consequences for how we evaluate Philosophy with Children.

I argue that the philosophical dimension of an enquiry depends to a large extent on the facilitating skills and attitude of the teacher. I will illustrate this by critically examining a published transcript of a broadcast enquiry conducted by Catherine McCall. It will show that a background in academic philosophy is a necessary condition for building a community of philosophical enquiry. However, such a background can be a hindrance too! This section will also readdress the problems encountered when facilitating enquiries, particularly with very young children.

Conclusions drawn from my analysis of the transcript has implications for the adequate preparation of teachers for the teaching of philosophy to children, who – as I will argue – need, not only a background in academic philosophy, but also training in philosophical enquiry with children.

Subsequently, I give diagrammatic representations of my philosophical enquiries with the children in the previous chapter to show the different teachers' role in 'communities of philosophical enquiry' and 'normal' discussions.

In Section 5, I put forward some suggestions for evaluating 'progress in philosophical enquiries, followed in Section 7 by two evaluations of philosophy by children themselves. The first is a written evaluation published in their own handwriting in *Classroom Philosophy*, and the second comprises a transcript of nine year olds evaluating PwC in an interview with a Channel Four journalist.

Before this, in Section 6, I summarise the main results from a large Welsh research project involving eighteen schools, evaluating the teaching of philosophy with picture books in the context of raising reading standards with Year 1 pupils.

2. The role of the facilitator in philosophical enquiry

The exact role of the facilitator in communities of philosophical enquiry is a complicated and controversial issue; and has consequences for how we evaluate PwC. How 'directive' or involved should the facilitator be? When and how should the facilitator intervene in an enquiry?, and how are the interventions related to the philosophical dimension of the enquiry?

The decision on how and when to intervene depends largely on how facilitators view their own role in a philosophical enquiry; this, in turn, is related to their own beliefs about what philosophy is, and what exactly their objectives are, when they are teaching philosophy as part of the curriculum. It is fair to say that there are differences of opinions among facilitators about what a community of enquiry's dictum 'follow the enquiry where it may lead' really means. For example, some facilitators are more inclined than others to regularly return during the enquiry to the original question or starting point.

Personally, I use stories only as *triggers* for the discussion. The possible starting points for the enquiry are *their* questions about the story, or anything the story makes *them* think off. After that, I follow the children's enquiry; I help the children build on each other's ideas about the topic of their choice.

An enquiry's progress is related directly to the kind of questions the facilitator asks, especially when the children have just started doing philosophy. A problem when the children are very young (3-6 year olds) is that their thinking wanders in all sorts of unexpected directions, and it is difficult, as an adult, to follow their enquiry.¹

In order for the 'boat' – to use Lipman's metaphor – to have some kind of forward movement instead of floating like driftwood, it is often essential that the facilitator focuses the children on a particular issue, problem or question; and this is necessary even if they themselves have raised the particular issue. However, with very young children, this strategy should be used sparingly in order to do justice to their imaginative and affective way of making meaning.²

The facilitator has the very difficult task of helping the children to build on each other's ideas, resulting in a way of talking we are unfamiliar with, not only in education, but in our society generally. Although the children will internalise some of the facilitator's thinking moves, I have never experienced an enquiry where the facilitator's role is completely redundant in helping the enquiry progress.

It is true to say that ideally "the part of Socrates is taken by students as well as by the teacher" (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 59), which means that "open procedural and open substantive questions ... are constructed and asked by students of one another", but the facilitator has a great advantage as far as skills and experience in formulating those questions is concerned. Also, in order to ask *substantive* questions³, the facilitator must be familiar with the discipline of philosophy, its questions, its problems, its procedures. Without this background the facilitator would not know how, when and where to intervene in order to make the discussion philosophical.

To show how much teacher's intervention actually *does* take place in a philosophical enquiry, but also how important training in philosophical enquiry is when teaching philosophy to young children, I will continue by commenting upon a transcript of what I called earlier⁴ an "impressive" dialogue.

a. Five year olds discussing *Elfie*.

The discussion is impressive in that it shows the competence of these very young children in discussing the classical philosophical problem of personal identity, after reading an especially

written novel for the teaching of philosophy called *Elfie* (Lipman, 1988a). I will be focusing on some of the interventions the facilitator – Catherine McCall – makes in order to assess her role in the discussion.

McCall published a shorter version of this dialogue, but with different comments in the *Stevenson Lectures in Citizenship* – a series of lectures McCall held at the University of Glasgow in 1991. My analysis is of both versions of the transcript, and the facilitator’s comments.

Elfie is a story about a young girl, who is afraid to ask questions, in case people find out her secret – the secret that she does not know anything. According to a boy in her class, *Elfie* is not ‘real’, because she hardly ever talks. *Elfie* disagrees: she might not talk a lot, but she is thinking all the time (even when she is asleep).

At the beginning of the enquiry one of the children, Jaclyn, asks: “If, if she wasn’t a real person she wouldn’t – be – if she wasn’t a real person how can she think or talk? (McCall, 1990, p. 25). McCall comments: “The children reason about an abstract concept which they introduce: the concept of a person. What is interesting about this is that ‘person’ does not appear in the text they are reading ... Jacqueline’ introduces the concept of person...” (McCall, 1991, p. 3).

However, she also claims that “The procedure of contrasting a robot with a person is initiated by the children”, namely “in the form of a counter-example from Owen who says that a robot could fulfil those conditions, thinking, moving, etc., Kristin states that robots are not people.” But looking at the transcript of the actual dialogue (McCall, 1991, p. 7), between Owen’s counter-example and Kristin’s statement, there are crucial interventions by McCall:

Owen: Well I disagree with Jordan because of- well he wouldn’t- What do you mean he wouldn’t like to be able to move any part of his body? Maybe- What if like it was a robot?

McCall: Well that’s an interesting question.

First intervention: McCall highlights the importance of this contribution, therefore, making it more likely that he will continue, or, that other children will build on this idea. As it happens Owen continues:

Owen: A robot can move every part of his body and a robot isn’t real!

McCall: Now, is a robot a person? (chorus, No! No!)

Second intervention by the facilitator: McCall – not the children! – connects Jaclyn’s original question about persons with the present topic of discussion, i.e., whether *Elfie* is real or not.

Justifying this intervention, McCall writes:

“Owen’s statement, that a robot isn’t real, could have served to introduce the topic of the nature of reality for discussion. I might have asked him what he meant by ‘real’. However, I chose not to for two reasons: first, because we had discussed the meaning of ‘real’ in the previous P/C dialogue ... and secondly and more importantly because the lines of argument advanced so far by the children concerned the definition of person and the nature of personhood. So my question to the class was intended to draw attention to the implicit challenge to their conditions of personhood presented by Owen’s counterexample. Here I am following up on an issue raised by the children, rather than introducing a new issue” (McCall, 1990, p. 27).

I agree with McCall that her question may facilitate a further enquiry about the conditions of personhood put forward by the children. However, it is worth bearing in mind that this is the philosopher's 'hidden agenda', i.e., to focus on classical philosophical topics. Knowledge and awareness of the history of philosophical ideas and the attitude and skills to ask the relevant questions is crucial here.

As often is the case in philosophical enquiry, the next child, Laura, ignores the facilitator's question, and continues the topic. If more children continue to ignore the facilitator's intention to steer the enquiry into a particular direction, the facilitator will have to drop the 'probing', or the children will get bored with the subject. In this case, Kristen picks up the issue (the difference between a person and a robot – see below), but McCall's claim that "The procedure of contrasting a robot with a person is initiated by the children" (see above) is misleading.

Laura: I agree with Jordan because if you weren't *real* then you couldn't talk. You would just be still, and you wouldn't be able to hear and talk and move at all.

Matthew: Well if, if- I agree with [looks at Laura]

McCall: Laura.

Matthew: Laura. Because if, if you weren't *real* you wouldn't be able to, to like move around. And you would be, you would- You wouldn't be able to *think*, you wouldn't be able to *hear* and you wouldn't be able to do *anything*.

Like Laura, Matthew continues the discussion about what it means to be real. It is only now that Kristen addresses McCall's question about the distinction between robots and people.

Kristen: A ro- a robot isn't a person because it's- it's a robot it's not a person.

McCall: Well lets think about this for a minute. Supposing something came in through the door right now and it looked just like a person, and it talked and it moved, how would we know whether it was a real person...
(chorus ooh! ooh! ooh!)

McCall: ...or a robot that looked like a person?
(chorus oh! oh!)

McCall: Could you tell whether it was a robot or a person?

Third intervention: by asking the children to think about Kristen's statement and not on, either Laura's or Matthew's contributions, McCall emphasises its importance for the discussion and directly influences the course of the enquiry. She also introduces the philosophical distinction between 'reality' and 'appearance' by saying "it looked just like a person" and "a robot that looked like a person".

Matthew: Yeah, you could because if, if you like- maybe like, just- Well no! Because if, if it looks *just* like a person then you wouldn't be able to. Because you can't, you can't rip off- you can't like do something to it because *what if it's a real person?* You never know which, if it's a real person or not,...

Influenced by facilitator's third intervention, Matthew now follows the new direction of the enquiry.

McCall: Now that's an interesting thing you said Matthew. You could do something to it if it was a robot, but you couldn't do something to it if it was a person.

I believe McCall misinterprets Matthew here. He says very clearly that you can never *know* if it is a real person or not (my emphasis). It is important to find out what he really means here, because McCall claims that Matthew “raises a new consideration, that persons are owed moral consideration – you cannot hurt a person”, and she adds “Again this is not suggested by a question from an adult, it is raised by the children themselves” (McCall, 1991, p. 4).

I do not think Matthew raises an ethical issue here at all, by raising the question of whether you cannot do something to a person, that you can do to a robot. The clue lies, I believe, in the longer version of this dialogue⁶ – a remark Matthew makes *before* McCall asks: “Could you tell whether it was a robot or a person?”

Matthew says: “Well on this, on this movie this person, this par- this father made a robot. But you always can put like materials over it to make it look like skin and make it look like a real person so it could go to school and everything. And then, and then its robot brain could learn so much it would be like a perfect robot”.

Matthew’s unexpected response is so typical of philosophical enquiries with very young children. He first of all picks up the concept of a ‘person’ but not in its philosophical sense, it refers to this concrete individual, the father. He then speculates *imaginatively* about how a robot could be made the *same* as a person.⁷

To continue my analysis, I believe Matthew’s interest in the question was not ethical, but *epistemological*. He picks up the distinction McCall makes between ‘appearance’ and ‘reality’, and then concludes that you cannot *tell* the difference, since you can always put skin over a robot! This interpretation seems plausible, for Matthew later says: “You never know which, if it’s a real person or not,...”, and then in the longer version of the transcript on the dotted line he adds: But you *would* know if, if it didn’t have skin on it and everything. If it was just plain and you could see its parts and everything. Then you would know it is a robot” (McCall, 1990, pp. 26, 27).

So, it is the facilitator who introduces the moral dimension here by misinterpreting the “can’t” in “you can’t rip off”. It seems as if Matthew does not use “can’t” in the sense of “shouldn’t”, but in the sense of you *physically* can’t.

Then after McCall asks: “Now that’s an interesting thing you said Matthew. You could do something to it if it was a robot, but you couldn’t do something to it if it was a person”, Matthew does say: “Yeah, You can’t rip stuff of it. Because then, because then, because if it was a real person you’ll *hurt* it. You’ll hurt the person then.”

However, despite this intervention the children continue with their *epistemological* enquiry into why you could, or could not, tell the difference between robots and persons with different hypothetical cases. Scott speculates that you could paint the robot skin colour, but Matthew objects that you could *see* it. The reason he offers is that “...they would have to put metal over it, over the parts. So when you paint it it looks like a round arm and it would have to bend and everything” (McCall, 1990, p. 28).

Owen continues by saying that you *could* be able to distinguish between a person and a robot by throwing a *needle* at it, and if it does not go through then it is a robot.

The facilitator then pursues her efforts to get to the moral side of the issue (although she claims they have been doing this all along; McCall, 1990, p. 28) in the following way:

McCall: You could throw a needle at it?

Child: No, but...

McCall: Supposing it was a person?

Child: No, but...

Matthew: That's what I'm *saying*!

McCall: Marsha, supposing it was a person, could you throw a needle at it?

Marsha: No.

McCall: Why, why couldn't you throw a needle at it?

Marsha: Because, because if it's- if it sticks you really deep then you would bleed. And to a robot it would- wouldn't bleed.

McCall correctly comments that "Marsha introduces a more specific physical differentiation between robots and people: that people bleed" (McCall, 1990, p. 28).

Only now, and after many interventions by the facilitator, does the moral dimension come to the fore, when Matthew comments that: "... *if* it was a real person, wherever you threw it, it would start bleeding. And, and if it was a rusty needle it could, it could hurt them 'cause it would have rust on it and everything" (McCall, 1990, p. 29).

I conclude that the facilitator's interventions have been crucial in determining the direction of the enquiry – a direction very much informed by traditional philosophical distinctions (e.g. 'appearance'/'reality'), problems (e.g. 'personal identity') and questions (e.g. 'Is a robot a person?') – important when one is claiming to teach *philosophy*. A facilitator with no background in philosophy will most likely not be able to introduce the children to the philosophical problems and questions, so closely connected with what they are saying.

However, a background in academic philosophy can also be a hindrance to actively listening to what the children are saying – as my critical analysis of the dialogue demonstrates. I conclude, that it is a necessary condition for facilitators to have a sound background in academic philosophy in order to recognise philosophical distinctions, problems, and questions when they arise in an enquiry, and to help children build on each other's ideas philosophically. However, this knowledge should not be used as a 'hidden agenda' to force an enquiry into a particular direction. What the children are *actually* saying should be guiding facilitators, and *not* what facilitators hope they are saying.

Implications for the adequate preparation of PwC facilitators will be addressed in the next section.

3. Preparing facilitators of Philosophy with Children

I concluded in the last section, that, to help the children to raise philosophical questions, and to see the philosophical problematic of what they are saying and thinking, the facilitator needs, not only training in philosophical enquiry with children, but also a background in philosophy.

However, not everyone in PwC is happy with facilitators asking probing questions informed by the traditional subject of philosophy. British teacher, Mark Scofield, wonders what exactly it is we assess when assessing PwC (Scofield, 1995, p. 8). He is "...sceptical about the position held by Sharp and Splitter, which appears to blend *philosophising* (what happens during a session of philosophy with children) with *philosophy* (the history and canon of philosophers)". Scofield believes that this could lead to confusion about the place of philosophy in the primary curriculum. It is *philosophising* that encourages "a *critical* acquisition of knowledge...", and philosophical dialogues that continue as "internal monologues after the teaching event" that are so powerful in educational settings, he claims (Scofield, 1995, p. 9).

But if philosophical questioning, i.e., the asking of open and *substantive* questions is one of the necessary conditions for the building of a community of *philosophical* enquiry, then the kind of questions asked and the sort of problems raised by the facilitator will be determined by the discipline of philosophy. The facilitator will have to be familiar with philosophical thinking, but also with the procedures and the *ethos* of a community of enquiry. Otherwise, s/he will not be able to help the children build on their ideas philosophically.

When philosophy is taught *properly*, students in philosophy will acquire the skills and attitudes necessary to ask philosophical questions, analyse concepts, etc. As French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard has pointed out, reading is not philosophical just because the texts being read are philosophical – they could equally have been written by artists.

A reading is, Lyotard continues:

"only philosophical when it is autodidactic. when it is an exercise in discomposure in relation to the text... Teaching philosophy is not the transmission of a 'body' of knowledge, knowledge of how things should be done or what to feel – but simply that it is in action" (Lyotard, 1992, pp. 115, 117).

Students in philosophy should study the history of philosophy, by a re-thinking of this history in genuine enquiry form. Only then will philosophy teach 'epistemological modesty', and an openness to letting (in a responsive sense) thinking occur, forced upon us by the unknown.⁸

This kind of education will greatly help the facilitator to transform a community of enquiry into a community of *philosophical* enquiry. Of course, philosophical training does not guarantee that someone is 'a good philosopher', just as much as having a medical degree is no guarantee that someone is a good doctor. However, it would be absurd to argue that therefore doctors do not need to go to medical school. Dropping the requirement of philosophical training entirely would be like throwing the baby out with the bath water!

When teaching philosophy, the specific context is the concept- and problem structure of philosophy. "That is to say philosophical questioning and concept formation are interdependent" (Leeuw & Mostert, 1987, p. 98), and philosophical concepts are complex, in the sense that they are not "...general categories of which a number of logically equivalent specimens exist (e.g. the concept 'person', cannot be understood by pointing at concrete individuals)". On the contrary, they can only be understood by the "...theoretical structures in which they participate and which give them their specific meanings" (Leeuw & Mostert, 1987, p. 98).

Whether teachers need a background in philosophy when teaching philosophy to children is the recurrent subject of debate among PwC practitioners. I believe that most facilitators of philosophical enquiry without a substantial philosophical background, even when using the educational material especially designed to teach young children philosophy, will be more likely to teach *critical thinking*, rather than philosophy. If so, this endorses Kitchener's standpoint that children are not doing philosophy at all (Kitchener, 1990, pp. 423, 424). Children *can* do philosophy, but they need 'scaffolding' by a competent facilitator – it depends on her/his skills and attitude. Despite the fact that McCall made mistakes in interpreting what the children were saying – and this is not surprising considering the speed of most thinking-moves in an enquiry – her interventions helped the children to build on their ideas *philosophically*.

It is deceiving to claim that a shift in power in communities of enquiry lead to the teacher staying 'outside' the content of the discussion. For example, teacher Annette Berrian claims that her "role is to guide the discussion but not to get involved", and she continues:

"With me as listener, the students are free to interact with each other. That's exactly what I want them to do. I want them to forget that I'm there. The important thing is for them to express their opinion and give a reason for their point of view" (Berrian, 1985, p. 44).

The view that a facilitator stays out of the content, and influences only the form of an argument in communities of philosophical enquiry, comes across often in PwC literature. For example, in an interview, Catherine McCall compares the facilitator's role to that of a football referee. The game keeps stopping with an inexperienced referee, but with a good one it flows and players can play well because of the referee's skill and judgement (Wojtas, 1994, p. iv).

However, the analogy fails in one important respect – a facilitator does more in philosophical enquiries than making sure that the players stick to the rules of the game. ° S/he also asks *substantive* questions informed by the discipline of philosophy, and thus considerably changes the content of the discussion – an issue I will readdress below. The role of the facilitator in communities of enquiry is more like a referee who, through the timing of his/her whistling, encourages the players to play on the best part of the field (better grass, less soggy, etc.).

Also, the content of an enquiry is influenced, not only by *what* a facilitator says, but also through the facial expressions, gestures, etc.; in short, how a facilitator *is* in an enquiry. In an important sense, the facilitator *models* the kind of behaviour s/he would like the children to internalise. (In his teaching Socrates represented not only intellectual enquiry, but also "a mode of being" [Abbs, 1994, p. 20].)

Another criticism I have is that teaching philosophy is more than just encouraging people to give "a reason for their point of view", as Berrian claimed (see quote above). Philosophical questioning is the linguistic expression of a wondering about ourselves, the world, and other people – a being perplexed about the world as it *is*. This enables the philosopher to *find* problems, not just *solve* problems, because nothing is taken for granted (no presuppositions).

Van der Leeuw writes, "Philosophising is, in important respects, not a set of skills at all, but an attitude" (Leeuw, 1993, p. 35). He criticises Matthew Lipman's increasing emphasis on reasoning skills as the ultimate specification of doing philosophy in the classroom (Leeuw, 1993, p. 34). Van der Leeuw explains why:

"In my opinion, this is too narrow a conception of what philosophy is doing in the classroom, a conception moreover in which Lipman's earlier opinion

development of formal skills never can be separated from the discussion of contents is partly neglected” (Leeuw, 1993, p. 34).

Although Van der Leeuw is correct in pointing out that Lipman’s terminology is increasingly like those used in the critical thinking movement, as for example in his book *Thinking in Education*, Lipman clearly resists the equation of ‘philosophy’ with ‘critical thinking’. He insists that when properly reconstructed and taught, philosophy brings about ‘higher order thinking’ in a better way than any alternative approach (Lipman, 1991, p. 3).

Lipman writes:

“Education involves more than skill development. We may acquire a skill but may misuse it. For example, we may learn to use a knife skilfully and then proceed to employ it anti-socially. When surgeons acquire the identical skill, they acquire it in the context of the discipline of medicine, and insofar as that entire discipline is committed to healing, learn that their skills are never to be used inhumanely. The lesson is that thinking skills too should be taught in the context of a humanistic discipline to guard against the skills being misused. The most appropriate discipline, in this case, would be one that is committed to the furthering of humanistic enquiry into significant but problematic concepts. Thus it is the humanities discipline of philosophy and not reasoning skills alone that should be taught as an integral part of the elementary and secondary school curriculum. Philosophy is to the teaching of thinking what literature is to the teaching of reading and writing” (Lipman, 1991, pp. 29, 30).

So Lipman objects to the sharpening of isolated thinking skills. For him, the context is of crucial importance. The context is that of philosophy – a discipline that is “representative of the heritage of human thought” (Lipman, 1988, p. 40).

We can learn from philosophy, since:

“Philosophy does not cannibalise its past but holds the thought of any philosopher ever available for re-inspection and re-interpretation. It is thus in philosophy that the values and ideals of the past may be reconsidered for their relevance to the present and the future” (Lipman, 1988, p. 40).

Splitter and Sharp feel the special role of philosophy is:

“...to provide a framework in which fundamental questions of how we think and know are raised and considered alongside equally fundamental questions of how we ought to treat one another and the world itself” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 3).

Of relevance to the role of the teacher, the teaching of thinking skills often does not require a change of setting or pedagogy. The teacher can remain the epistemological authority: with the children sitting silently in rows doing paper and pencil tests (Lipman, 1991, pp. 41, 42). Dan Kirby and Carol Kuykendall warn educationalists not to “dehumanise thinking” by separating cognition from feeling when teaching thinking.

Although attractive to curriculum planners, they argue, thinking should not be taught mechanically for:

“To us, thinking is just that, meaning making, nothing less and any attempt to teach thinking in some disembodied, decontextualised way when knowledge

makers are isolated from the messy processes of knowledge making is inevitably doomed to failure” (Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 18).

Philosophy with children is not often regarded as a viable educational enterprise, either by critical thinking teachers, or by academic philosophers.

Judy Kyle explains:

“Reciprocal reconstruction both of Philosophy itself and of the pedagogical methodology with which it is ‘delivered’ to children is often missed. Over time this relation is not only itself recursive but also transformative in that those involved in the ‘doing’ of Philosophy with children (both teachers and children) are transformed by the experience” (Kyle, unpublished).

This transformation of not just the pupils but also of the teacher will happen solely by a change in the concepts used (Abbs, 1993a, p. 1). It is essential for teaching the art of questioning, but, at the same, it is often the most resisted aspect of changing a ‘normal’ classroom in that of a community of philosophical enquiry. The role of the teacher is strikingly put by David Kennedy, when he evaluates a conversation of five year olds.

He writes that the teacher’s interventions:

“tend to invite, but never force, recapitulation, integration, and self-correction. They act to coach the participants in the reflexive, meta-cognitive moves which afford glimpses of the argument’s emerging structure, and to crystallise its implicit drive toward judgement. Such moves are not easily learned – they don’t just consist of calls for summarisation. The teacher must give herself to the play of the argument as much as the students, but she acts as a representative of the implicit logical structure of the discourse tradition in which the group operates. She represents the conscious application of the critical moves which the children are making more spontaneously, less consciously” (Kennedy, 1996, p. 39).

Those teacher’s interventions, Kennedy claims, are “essential to the emergence of the argument”, but he qualifies that it is not the teacher who constructs the arguments. Teacher’s intervention is “more in the nature of scaffolding for moves the children make spontaneously” (Kennedy, 1996, p. 29). So the teacher does not have to model the moves, but s/he has to provide the right environment for the children to make the moves themselves.

This is true especially when children are used to the procedures and the ethos of a community of philosophical enquiry. It is then that philosophical enquiries emerge with a minimum of intervention by the teacher.

I conclude that when assessing communities of philosophical enquiry, how the facilitator sees her own role in the enquiry is crucial. If the facilitator aims to bring about *philosophy*, then she needs to gently move the enquiry forward by asking the ‘right’ kind of questions, informed by (but not determined by) the discipline of philosophy, with an attitude that is the result of practice with philosophising in communities of enquiry. On the other hand, if a facilitator is more concerned with, for example, developing speaking and listening skills among her pupils, then ‘scaffolding’ will not be necessary, but one would have to give up the pretence that one is teaching philosophy.

4. Assessing the facilitator's role in communities of philosophical enquiry

Facilitators in communities of philosophical enquiry are faced with the following dilemma. In order to keep the enquiry philosophical, the teacher will have to intervene by asking the 'right' kind of questions. On the other hand, minimal intervention is often the secret to the kinds of discussions that are most meaningful to the children. They will set the agenda, follow the enquiry where it may lead, and they will feel proud and responsible for its outcome.

It is possible to *combine* a philosophical enquiry *and* minimal teacher's intervention, but only when pupils have internalised the procedures and the ethos of such enquiries. Teachers find this one of the hardest aspects of communities of philosophical enquiry – to intervene only when it is absolutely necessary. This is confirmed by educational research in Section 6. Teachers find it hard:

- to help the children discuss their own ideas, or
- to resist the temptation to ask closed questions, or
- to resist the temptation to answer questions for them.

But unless teachers give up clear teaching plans (with prescriptive aims, objectives and content) a community of enquiry will not establish itself. This is clear in the following transcript of a philosophy session, whereby the teacher fails to let go of her wanting to control the content of the discussion.

The children are discussing the picture book, *Doctor de Soto* by William Steig. The part of the story line relevant for understanding the discussion is as follows:

Doctor de Soto is a mouse – but also a dentist. Helped by his wife, he treats all sorts of animals, except those dangerous to mice. One day, he makes an exception for a fox in terrible pain. He extracts a bad tooth, and the fox leaves. Doctor de Soto is then faced with a moral dilemma: should he continue to treat the (now even more dangerous) fox, and make a false tooth for him, or should he 'play safe', and not let the fox in again?

S: How did Dr De Soto make the tooth? He spinned it out of gold.

Teacher: Do you think it was a wise thing to give him a new tooth, or do you think they should have left him without a tooth, just a gap?

C: What's a gap?

Teacher: You know when you have a tooth that comes out and there's a gap, do you think they should have left it like that?

P: Then another would have grown.

Teacher: You think another would have grown do you? But when you're grown-ups and if you've had a baby tooth and that comes out and then you have a new one and if that comes out than you won't have another one, you'll have a gap. Do you think they should have left the fox like that?

Yes, No (Chorus)

M: Yes because if Dr Soto was in his mouth and the fox tried to eat him it wouldn't be able to eat him because there was no trap there.

Teacher: Oh, I see, well, shall we go onto the next question.

(Reported in *Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project*, Final Report, 1994, pp. 27, 28)

The enquiry was clearly neither *communal*, nor *open-ended*, let alone philosophical. This is in contrast to the philosophical enquiries transcribed in the previous chapter.

I will now return to those transcripts. By visually representing them, the difference in structure between communities of enquiry and normal conversations becomes clearer.

When discussing the picture book *Where The Wild Things Are*¹⁰, the participation of each individual *child* was as follows:

Joanne-1x, Kieron-21x, Krystina-0x, Darren-3x, Claire-0x, Anthony-5x, Kelly-5x, Gary-4x, Gemma-4x, Christopher-12x, Tammy-0x, Michael-6x, Gemma 2-10x, Stuart-0x, George-18x, Tommy-8x, Russell-14x, Kevin-0x, Jake-2x, Phillip-9x, Nathan-11x, Andrew-0x((New to the school).

Participation of the *teacher* (=KM): 27x

This is diagrammatically represented in Figure 8.

If we compare this with more common ways of teacher/group of pupil interaction, for example, the *tutorial* structure (Figure 9), or the *didactic* structure (Figure 10) (Fisher, 1990, p. 164), the 'power shift' is clearly visible.

Figure 9

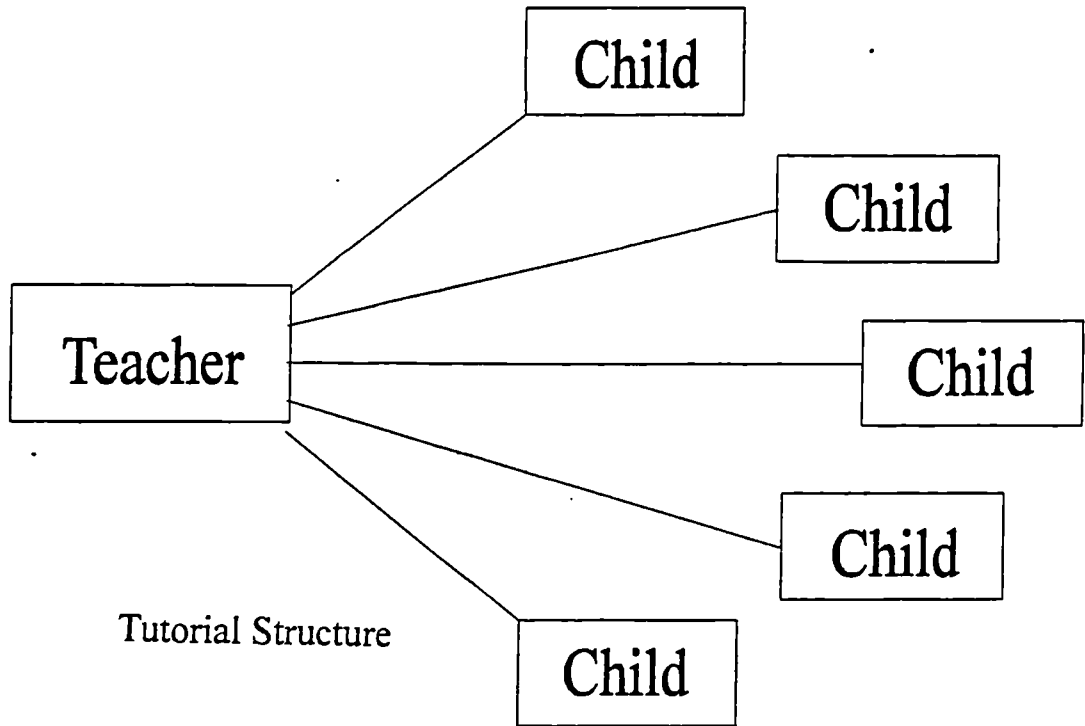
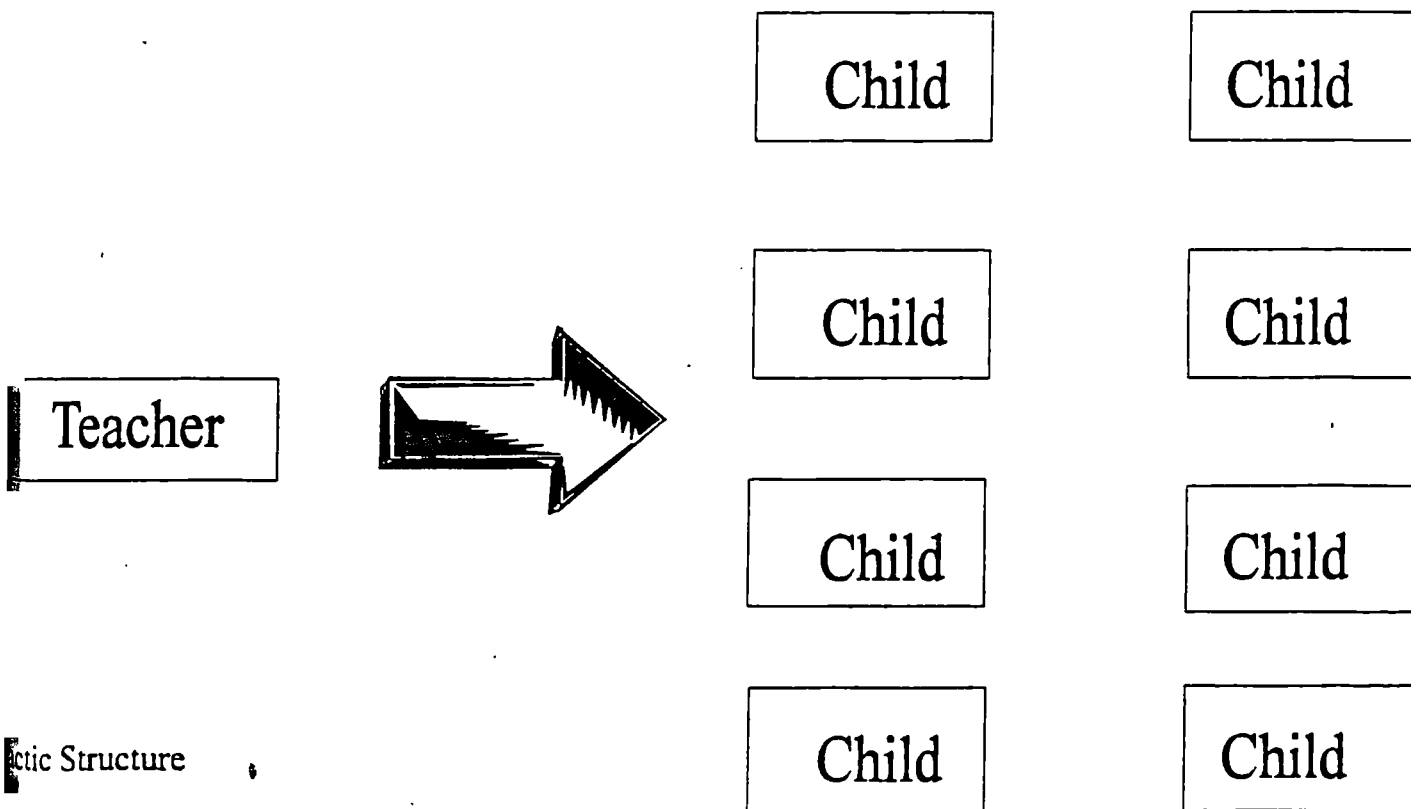


Figure 10



In communities of enquiry, the teacher is less dominant than in other kinds of teacher/pupil interaction. Kieron, for example, had almost as many turns as me, the facilitator. The representation illustrates that the children 'owned' the discussion, they discussed what they found puzzling, and they were directly responding to each other.

The visual representation of the discussion about the picture book *The Island of the Skog* is similar. The diagram shows a clear 'community of enquiry' structure (see Figure 11).¹¹ It is worth noting that, not only the teacher's contribution is less than that in 'normal' classroom interaction between teacher and pupil, but also the *kind* of questions asked by the teacher differ. In a community of enquiry, the teacher does not ask 'rhetorical' questions, but the kind of questions that are either 'open procedural' or 'open substantive'¹².

Ten year olds discussing Steven Kellogg's *The Island of the Skog*.

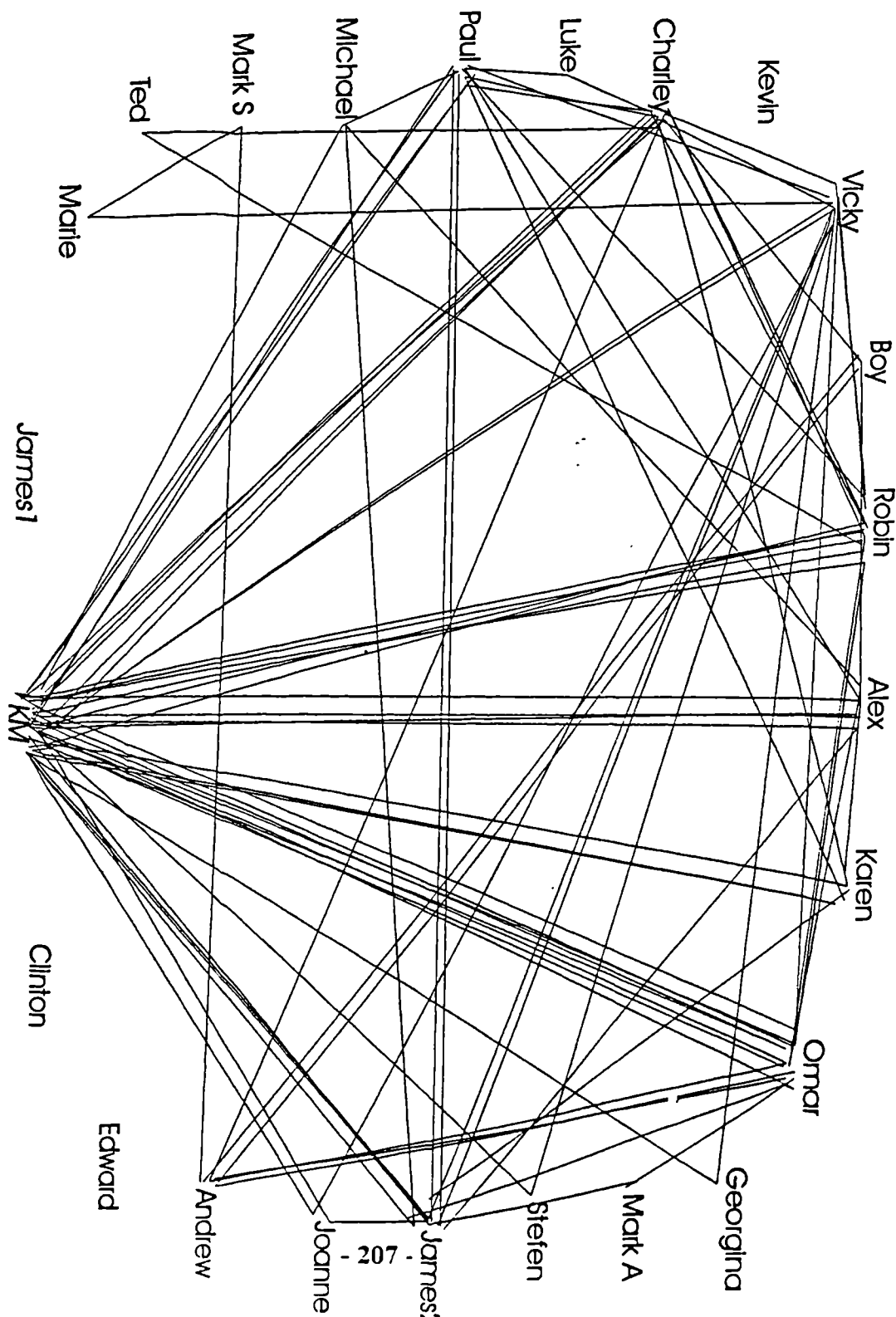
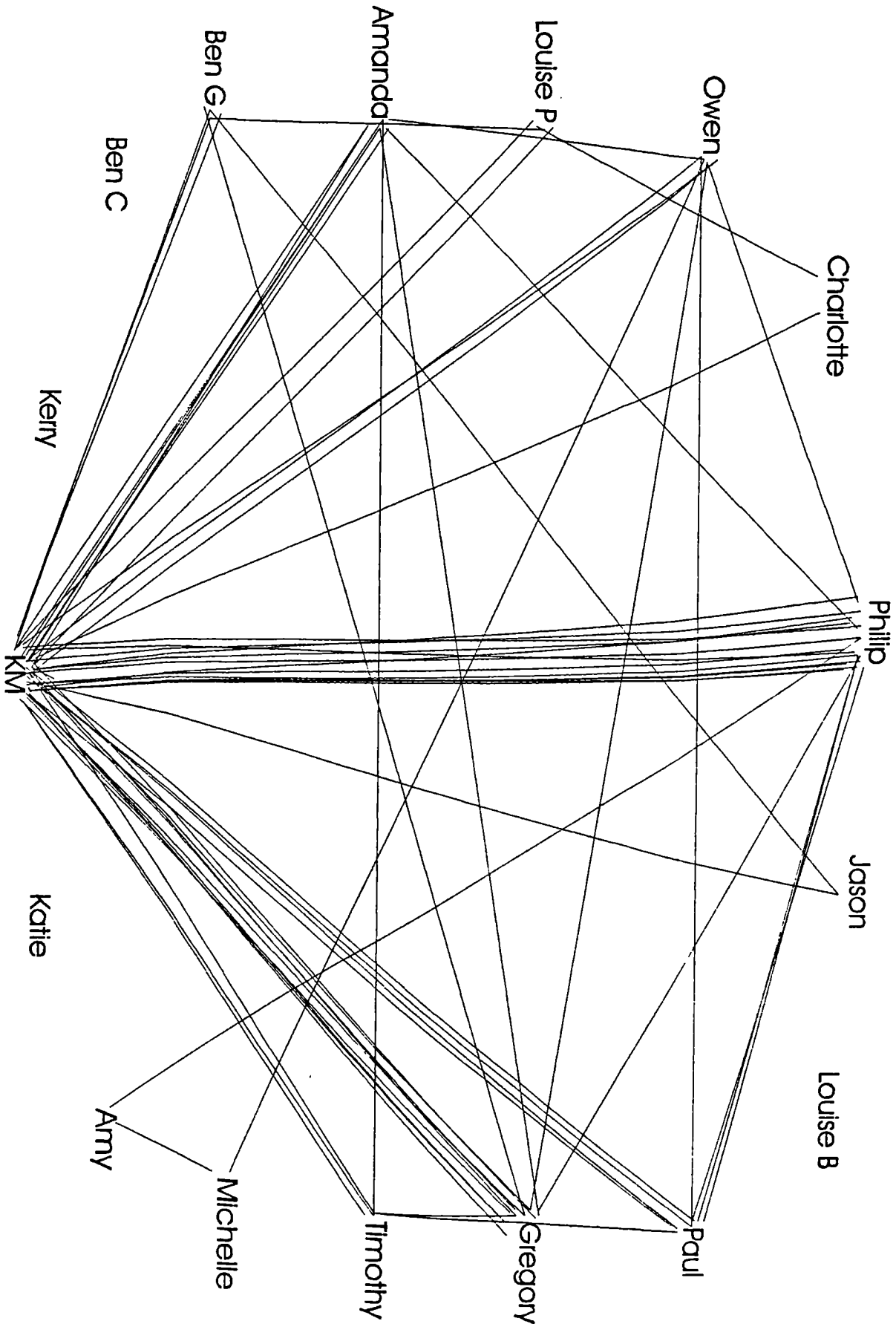


Figure 11

However, the philosophical enquiry with the infants¹³, shows a greater resemblance to traditional teacher/pupil interaction (See Figure 12).

Figure 12
Four to six year olds discussing Anthony Browne's *Bear Hunt*



Although the kinds of questions asked by the teacher were ‘open procedural’ and ‘open substantive’, and the children were using each other’s ideas as building blocks, and were very much following *their* enquiry were it may lead, the facilitator was more directive than in the other two enquiries.

I am well aware now, that this difference can be explained by the facilitator’s urge to *change* the children’s discourse to be more like that of older children and grown-ups. It was based on the belief that an overriding criterion of *philosophical* discourse is the analysis of abstract concepts, the asking of general, abstract questions, with the ideal of decontextualised, or disembodied rationality in mind.

As I have argued in the previous chapter, respect for the different way in which very young children think, i.e., more imaginative, synthetical, and metaphorical, should involve less and not more teacher involvement by the facilitator. So, the thinking of very young children does not only have consequences for what we mean by ‘rationality’, but also for what we mean by ‘philosophy’.¹⁴

5. Evaluating Philosophy with Children

What is it that children (and teachers) learn when they do philosophy? Or, put differently, what kind of progress do they make when engaged in philosophical enquiries over a period of time?

Before answering these questions, clarification of what I mean by at least the following three concepts is needed, that is, 'evaluation', 'progress', and 'philosophy'.

All facilitators have to answer for and by themselves the question of what it is they are teaching when they teach philosophy, and to make this explicit. To recapitulate, by what I mean with 'philosophy' is more than critical thinking or problem-solving.

Philosophy is also:

- a. problem-creation, because it is a thinking about *concepts* that are:
- **common** – that is, we all (incl. children) use them all the time;
 - **central** – that is, we use them to structure reality with (they help us to make sense of the world we live in, ourselves, and others);
 - **contestable** – that is, there are no generally agreed definitions (always other concepts are needed; people keep on disagreeing about them).

Philosophy is no luxury, for these concepts are implicit not only in our *thinking*, but also in our *actions*. Also, the process of concept-analysis generates the making of *meaning* – the making of connections and distinctions between concepts.

- b. more than acquiring certain thinking or social skills. This requires an *attitude* of open engagement imbued with a sense of the unknown.

What I mean by 'evaluation' is a reflective stance towards one's own performance as facilitator, the group as a whole and the individuals within the group, bearing in mind what constitutes a philosophical way of life, or, more specific what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for calling a discussion a 'community of philosophical enquiry'.¹⁵

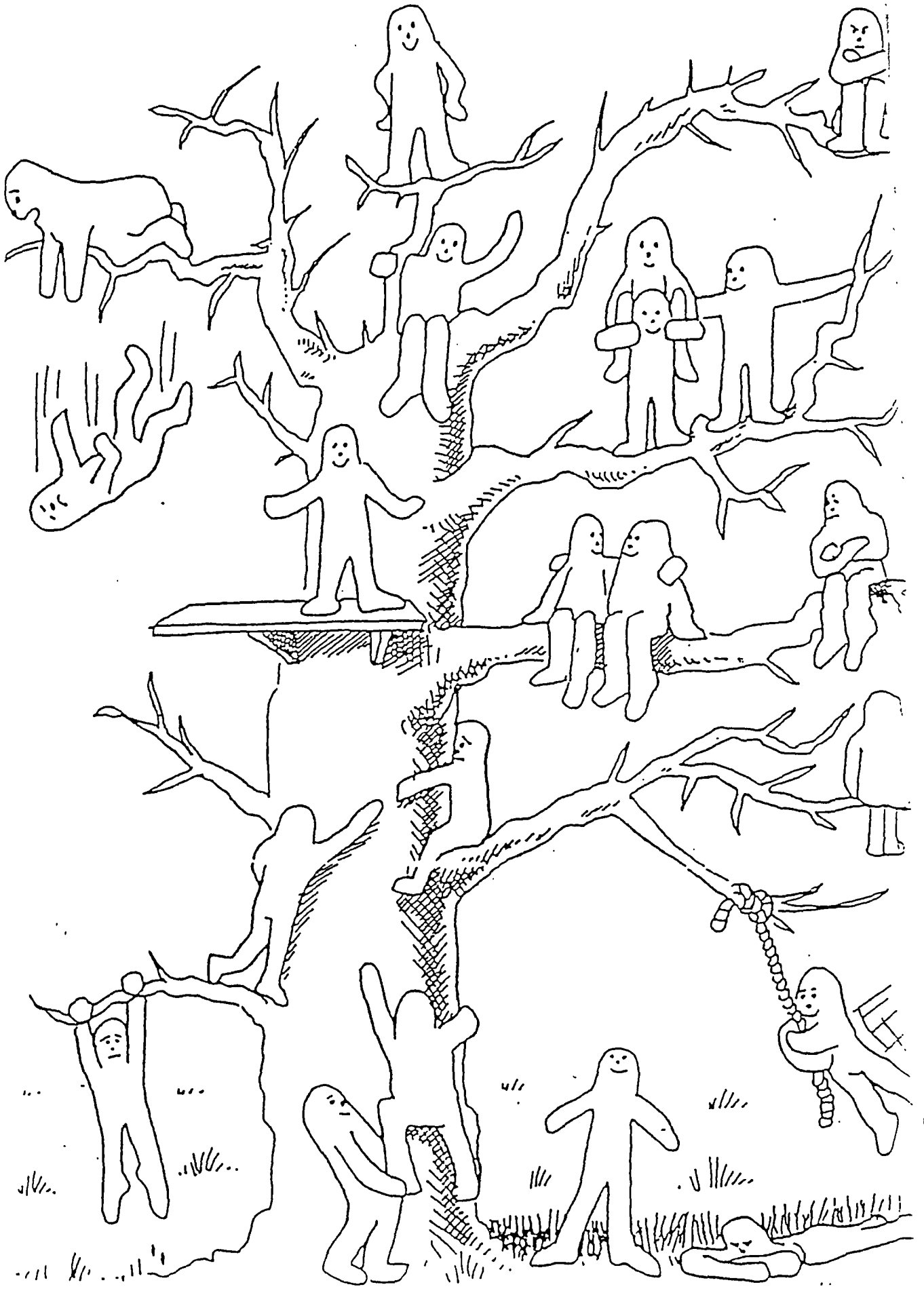
Some possibilities:

a. self-evaluation by the participants.

The members of the group can reflect upon their functioning as a *group*, for example, by asking questions, such as, 'Are we actively listening to each other?', 'Are we building on each other's ideas?'. But the group members can also reflect upon *themselves* in the group, by asking questions such as 'What was my role in the discussion?', 'How am I participating?', 'Can I improve my contributory role to the discussion?', 'What have I learned?', 'How I have learned more?' (see, for example, Section 6).

One imaginative and useful way for children's self-appraisal and/or group appraisal, is Sue Atkinson's *The Blootree* (Atkinson, 1988, fig 26.1)¹⁶ (See Figure 13).

Figure 13



After a session, children are asked to 'place' themselves somewhere in the tree, and if no 'blob' is adequate they can draw their own 'blob'. Alternatively, the children can make such a tree, and hang it in the classroom. Loose 'blobs' can be stuck on the tree after a session with blue tack to evaluate either individual or group performance. It allows for imaginative monitoring of changes over time of either individual, or group performance.

b. self-evaluation by the facilitator.

The sort of questions you could ask yourself as facilitator are, for example, 'Was I listening to each contribution?', 'Was I helping the group to uncover hidden assumptions?', 'Did I ask for clarification when necessary?', 'Did I intervene too much?'. An excellent way of evaluating one's own performance is by audio or video taping of sessions, and critical reflection upon the transcripts of those tapes.

It is important that evaluation is not carried out exclusively by 'outside' authorities, such as teachers or OFSTED inspectors. Part of the ethos of PwC is to give individuals responsibility, not only for their own learning, but also for the cognitive and affective functioning of the whole group.

c. evaluation of the facilitator by the participants.

This is not commonly practised in PwC – in contrast to Socratic Dialogue¹⁷. This is surprising, because this follows logically from the egalitarian character of a community of enquiry and from the role of the teacher as co-enquirer.

d. assessment of the group by the facilitator.

I use a method that emphasises the importance of *group* interaction for children's thinking and learning. An example of an evaluation form teachers can use, has been taken up at the end of this chapter.¹⁸ It values the *process* of learning, and does not focus merely on the *product* of learning/teaching. Unlike many other kinds of assessment, it does not test children *individually* at different points in time. After all, many benefits of PwC become visible when (and only when) an individual is participating in a group.

I suggest that the evaluation sheets are best used in combination with video-taping sessions at regular intervals. It allows for the possibility of evaluating the tapes, either with others (especially the pupils, or perhaps colleagues), or at different points in time.

The evaluation sheets consist of 20 questions, a teacher can ask him/herself about the group. Under (a), with each question, one can find the kind of answer appropriate to most of the group when they have just started to do philosophy. Under (b), however, is the answer one can expect after children have been doing philosophy regularly one hour a week, for at least half a year.

This kind of evaluation monitors the kind of *progress* children make when doing philosophy, or, in other words, what they learn when they are engaged in communities of philosophical enquiry.

Mark Scofield points out the reason it is important to evaluate over a certain period of time (say half a year). He argues that there will be a point at which the children will feel *less* confident *before* they regain confidence to a level higher than before. The reason being that "...questioning one's knowledge and experience can be a traumatic ordeal" (Scofield, 1995, p. 44).

Gareth Matthews, on the other hand, argues that it is not just difficult, but perhaps even impossible, to agree upon what counts as progress in philosophy (Matthews, 1990, p. 38).

He writes:

“...philosophical progress, measured by any plausible yardstick, is not a standard development among people in any age group, whether 5-12 years, 25-65 years, or whatever” (Matthews, 1990, p. 38).

I agree, but it is possible to approximate more the ideal of that of a community of philosophical enquiry by, for example, listening better to each other, feeling more confident to voice own points of view, etc., in other words, by internalising the ethos and the procedures of PwC.

The need to have a method of evaluation consistent with the pedagogy of PwC is probably the reason why the most widely reported test in PwC – the New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills – has never been totally accepted by PwC practitioners (Palsson, 1993, p. 5). The test was used extensively in the 1970s to evaluate the P4C Programme. Its results were impressive, indicating a significant improvement in formal reasoning and creative reasoning, and a statistically significant improvement in reading and mathematics. There was also a notable improvement in social skills, interpersonal relationships; and the pupils had become more educationally motivated (Kitchener, 1990, p. 42; Lane & Lane, 1986, p. 265).

In the USA, the test was carried out at fifth-grade level, that is, around the age of 10. The main problem with testing younger children along the lines of the New Jersey Test, is the difficulty in distinguishing between reading ability and logical ability. An alternative way of monitoring progress is to look and listen to children when they reason verbally by, for example, videotaping as I suggested above. Another possibility is to use a mixture of tests as was the case in the *Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project* – the focus of the next section.

6. Evaluating *Teaching Philosophy with Picture Books*

Dyfed Local Education Authority – assisted by the Welsh Office – carried out an eighteen month research project called *Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project* evaluating the use of *Teaching Philosophy with Picture Books* (Murriss, 1992b) with Year-1 children involving eighteen schools in South-West Wales.

The research funding was specifically linked to improving reading standards in primary schools following controversy created by publication of the first SAT's results.

The *Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project* evaluated two teaching approaches referred to as “The thinking skills programme” (i.e., *Teaching Philosophy with Picture Books*), and “The Reading Activity”. The aim of the project was to evaluate the efficacy of an early intervention strategy in the prevention of reading difficulties, by using a thinking skills programme (philosophy) (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 1). The “Reading Activity” was part of the research to “assist the transfer of thinking skills into the reading domain”, and involved small groups (4-6) of children reading together for 20 minutes, three times a week. The project report (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 1) summarises as follows:

1. The Thinking Skills Programme resulted in gains for Year 1 pupils in:

- thinking and reasoning
- listening skills
- expressing language
- discussion and debating skills
- confidence and self-esteem

2. The Reading Activity resulted in gains for Year 1 “at risk” readers in:

- reading
- reading comprehension
- attitude to reading

The project was classroom based and both intervention approaches were delivered by the class teacher. The Project Team comprised an educational psychologist and two peripatetic special needs teachers, all of whom worked two days a week on the project. The main thrust of the intervention was to offer early support for children who had been ascertained as at risk of developing reading difficulties and who were just entering Year 1 of the National Curriculum.

The report justifies the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate the intervention, by pointing out the limitations of assessing quantitatively only as follows:

“Although quantitative measures can demonstrate by statistical means the significance of any change in performance between testing before and after intervention, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to control the many additional factors present in classroom life in order for statistical comparisons to be meaningful. It is also important for any measures of performance that form the basis of these comparisons to be valid and reliable. This is particularly difficult when testing very young children. For example emergent reading behaviour is difficult to measure reliably particularly in numerical terms. This is reflected in the very few tests of children's reading that record prior to a reading age of six or seven. Those that do tend to be word recognition tests and many would

question the validity of these tests as tests of reading” (Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report, 1994, p. 5. and Appendix II).

Recognising those difficulties the project team decided to also include – as part of the project’s assessment – non-standardised tests, observation and questionnaires.

Not only the ‘at risk’ readers, but all children were assessed before and after intervention. The following tests were used:

- British Ability Scales (BAS): Similarities
Matrices
Social Reasoning
- BAS Word Reading Test:

Dyfed County Council has a bilingual policy with more than half of its primary schools being Welsh medium. The project included, therefore, both English medium and Welsh medium schools. As a consequence, translated into Welsh were part of the teacher’s manual *Teaching Philosophy with Picture Books*, and twelve picture books featured in the manual. Also, a Welsh soundtrack was made of each of the videos of the picture books used (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report, 1994, pp. 11, 12*).

In total eighteen schools participated in the project – randomly chosen. Six schools delivered both the thinking skills and reading interventions; six schools delivered only the reading activity and six schools delivered no additional intervention in order to act as a comparison group (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report, 1994, p. 13*).

As far as philosophy with picture books is concerned, the report states that:

“[t]he children enjoyed the approach from the outset. They quickly realised when suggesting an idea for inclusion on the flip-chart that posing a question often produced the best discussion. Typically the earliest sessions found children very tentatively stating facts or making statements about the content of the story...[but] Very shortly children began to ask questions (Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report, 1994, pp. 16, 17).

At the end of the period of intervention some of the children had developed the capacity to ask – what the report refers to as – “sophisticated” questions, for example:

“Why were the robbers nasty at the start but kind at the end?” (*The Three Robbers*)

“Why did the hens want to know who was the most beautiful?” (*The Most Wonderful Egg in the World*)

“Was the bear really alive?” (*Bear Hunt*)

“Was it the girl’s dream?” (*Corduroy*).

However, the report identifies that already after one or two sessions:

- The children “were beginning to recognise that the teacher was adopting a different role from her usual one as teacher and seized upon the opportunities that this presented”.

- The children “were observed listening with interest to what other children said and appeared to relish the opportunity to listen to the ideas of other children” (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project Final Report*, 1994, p. 17).

Their progress continued according to the report. In consecutive stages it was observed that the children:

- continued to become better listeners (possibly because “the discussion progressed via other children’s ideas so the children began to value listening to the contributions made by others” (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 17).
- were “able to give reasons to support their views”.
- were directly responding to each other (the discussions became increasingly less teacher centred).
- were able to review different criteria, e.g., for ‘being alive’, and offer alternative arguments (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 19).
- could ‘move away’ from the book content to “an area of real philosophical interest”.
- were supplementing and helping each other in developing their arguments (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 22).
- were “developing the ability to make distinctions and connections between ideas” (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 23).

Moreover, the report identifies that

“Over the course of the period of intervention it was evident from observations of all groups that there was a growth in the quantity and quality of ideas expressed. As the period of intervention continued more and more children participated verbally in the discussion. In the community of enquiry children contribute when they feel ready and able. By the end of the intervention period only a very small number of children remained who did not contribute verbally. However, it should not be assumed that the children who did not speak were not participating. It was evident from the nature and quality of their contributions that children who were at first quiet but later became verbal had not only been listening but had been actively thinking. As groups settled in to their community of enquiry verbal participation became increasingly widespread and a wealth of lively thoughts and ideas was observed” (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 22).

With regards to children’s *self-esteem*, the report states a significant gain. It says:

“The children’s enthusiasm for the process, their increasing participation and the increase in quality and quantity of ideas were all evidence of the children’s growth in their belief in themselves as thinkers. The children’s growth in self-esteem was most obvious in those who at the outset were either withdrawn or unfocused in their participation but who by the end were joining in with confidence and making relevant contributions respectively” (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project Final Report*, 1994, 24).

The report also identifies the “growth in trust between members”, expressed, for example, in a “willingness to discuss feelings” (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 24).

The report also provides five brief case studies of children with special educational needs, who in particular benefited from PwC. The ‘flourishing’ of this group of children is often reported by teachers of PwC, in the sense that the children change from sometimes tearful, restless, or very passive and withdrawn (“invisible”) to becoming more cheerful, outgoing, active participants being able to concentrate better on tasks in hand.¹⁹

All six teachers who implemented the philosophy approach felt it has resulted in positive improvements in their pupils. The areas of progress attributed by the teachers to the intervention are given in Table 1.

Table 1

SHOWING PROGRESS IN PUPILS ATTRIBUTED BY TEACHERS TO PwC

Progress (N=6)	No. of Teachers
Expressing ideas more	6
Questioning own/other people’s ideas more	6
Increased confidence/reduction in shyness	6
Improved language skills	5
Improved reading skills	4
Increased interest in books	4
Increased self-esteem	3
Improved written expression	2
Children more able to ask questions	2
Improved relationships with peers	2
Improved reading comprehension	1
Improved school work in general	1
Better able to solve problems	1

The report states that:

“Teachers in Welsh medium schools were broadly of the opinion that it was beneficial in helping second language speakers” (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 44).

Also:

“Most teachers felt that the children’s reading had benefited directly from experiencing the approach. One teacher felt that because the stimulus for discussion was a picture book: “*the children now use story books independently and make more use of illustrations to help them in their understanding of the text.*” Other teachers felt that by writing up the children’s questions, and because children looked, read, re-read and thought about them, this had added to the children’s drive to read for themselves (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 44).

The following table identifies what teachers found the most valuable (if any) in PwC. It is worth noting that only *half* of the teachers valued the centrality of the children’s own ideas during the

enquiry. This confirms my argument in Section 4: that teachers find it difficult to intervene only when strictly necessary, and difficult to help children to discuss their own ideas. Without such a 'shift of power' in the classroom, *philosophical* enquiry with children is impossible.

Table 2

SHOWING FEATURES OF PwC THAT TEACHERS VALUE

Whole class can participate	5
The 'Community of Enquiry'	4
Uses story books	4
Is of value to other areas of the curriculum	4
The centrality of children's ideas	3

The report mentions that the teachers liked the use of books as the basis for discussions as they gave opportunities for them "to generalise the method into other areas of the curriculum that use stories, for example, Religious Education, or History, and the children generalised their critical thinking skills into other stories they encountered" (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 45).

Out of all the children, 90% had enjoyed philosophy, and 87% wanted to continue with it (see table 3).

Table 3

SHOWING REASONS GIVEN BY PUPILS FOR LIKING PwC

Reasons	No. of pupils (N=71)
The videos	41
The stories	33
Thinking about questions	28
Talking	25
Listening to other children talk	20
Hearing other children's ideas	9
It's fun	7
Having ideas	6

Around 85% of the children felt that philosophy had "helped me in some way" (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project Final Report*, 1994, p. 47). The different benefits given by the children are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

SHOWING THE BENEFITS OF PwC AS GIVEN BY PUPILS

Benefits	No. of pupils
Thinking of more ideas	15
Helps me with my reading	12
Helps me with my writing	10
Helps me with my school work	8
Helps me to learn new things	8
Helps me to know more words	6
Helps me with my spelling	4
Less shy	2

Listen to others more	2
Learning all different things people think	2
Talking about problems	1

The report cautions when drawing conclusions from the research results. The reason being that “the intervention lasted for two and a half terms before the post intervention assessment commenced [and] [t]his was a relatively short period to expect measurable changes in children’s thinking to occur, particularly as the pupils were very young (Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report, 1994, p. 61).

However, the report clearly identifies the following “positive changes” in the pupils:

- In the area of *thinking* and *reasoning*:

The children had more ideas as a result of the intervention, not only in philosophy sessions but also in other areas of the curriculum (for example, one headteacher reported feedback from parents indicating that their children were thinking and questioning more at home). Confronted with a problem situation they were better “able to grasp more than the immediate consequences of the problem and could see issues relating to one side of the problem” (Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report, 1994, p. 61).

- In the *language* area:

The report states that “Observations carried out by the project team recorded that most of the 5-6 year old children became better listeners as the project progressed, sustaining concentration and an interest in the views of others for up to an hour” (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 62). The children were also observed to increase their discussion skills and grow in confidence.

- In the area of *confidence* and *self-esteem*:

The report states that “Both observation and questionnaire data testify to the enthusiasm that the children demonstrated for engaging in discussion [and this] enjoyment was born out of growing confidence in themselves as thinkers (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 62). As contributing factors to this effect are identified the taking of the children’s ideas seriously and the placing of them at the centre of classroom discussion – an experience many pupils were new to. The report also mentions that teachers “reported many instances of children confidently presenting ideas and counter arguments and trying to start a “community of enquiry” at other times in the classroom”. The report stipulates the importance of confidence and “belief in oneself as a thinker” for educational success (*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report*, 1994, p. 62).

- In the area of *reading*:

Pupils who had done philosophy made more gains in reading age than the pupils who had not. However, these gains did not reach a statistically significant level. The report identifies the following possible (methodological) reasons to explain this outcome:

Emergent reading behaviours are difficult to measure when children have just started to read.

The test used did not allow for measuring context based reading and comprehension. The report points out that since the stimulus for the philosophical enquiries was picture books, a test that would have measured reading in context would have been more appropriate
(*Improving Reading Standards in Primary Schools Project – Final Report, 1994*, p. 63).

The report concludes that philosophy “was found to encourage thinking, listening and language skills as well as enhancing children’s self-confidence particularly when discussing ideas”.

I will continue with giving empirical evidence for the benefits of philosophy with children in the following section. This time in the form of comments and stated benefits by the children themselves.

7. Children evaluating Philosophy with Children

Ten year olds were asked what they thought of philosophy. The following were some of their comments:

I think philosophy helps
me have more thoughts and
imagination

philosophy helps me on subjects bec
some of our subjects we've
discussed at philosophy and we
understood it so
well

I think philosophy has helped me because before philosophy
started I couldn't express my words, but now I can.

I think infants should keep there
philosophy because
it will help them explain
things in detail.
and they will be able to
speak to people in a sensible
manner & without arguing
it will also give them larger brains

philosophy is helpful for children to speak their thoughts because
before philosophy I was so shy that I didn't speak to my
mums or dads friends so I think philosophy dose help other
children

I also think that the infants should stay with philosophy because I think that it will improve their education and they won't argue as much. I think that they won't argue as much because philosophy makes them listen more to other people's thoughts.

The Reason I like Philosophy:

- ① It's fun
- ② You can argue without getting told off
- ③ You can express your feelings about something
- ④ You can get ideas from other people
- ⑤ You can watch a video
- ⑥ You can have a nice conversation with the rest of the class
- ⑦ You can argue or agree with others

Long Effect on infants

At the end of all this they will be able to have a conversation without arguing with each other and they will have bigger brains

The reason I think philosophy is good is because it helps us express our feelings, and it's important that we can do this because it might be useful later on life. It's good that the infants can have six years of this because it might make them calmer, and they can talk without having an argument.

In November 1994, Channel Four filmed nine and ten year olds from Manorbier Primary School in Wales. A transcript of the interview follows between the journalist of the Channel Four *Class Action* programme and six pupils, who (when they were interviewed) had been involved in philosophical enquiries for about four months, one hour a week. They are evaluating philosophical enquiry with children.

Through what these children are saying they are a testimony of the previously claimed aspects and benefits of PwC, such as increased *self-esteem* and *confidence* (Lisa), the *open-endedness* of the exploration of *their* ideas (Louise, Lucy, Claire), the development of more *reasonable judgements* by allowing one's ideas to be challenged and changed (Louise, Andrew, Lucy), the acknowledgement of *trust* and *care* in the group so that a sincere expression of feelings is possible (Claire, Louise), and finally, the realisation that philosophy involves hard work (Lucy, Claire) for the brain (or mind?).

- Lisa: I think philosophy is interesting, because it- it- it helps me a lot, and it's really interesting, like the stories we've heard and things... I think, it's really good, and it helps me and things.
- Journalist: How does it help you?
- Lisa: Well, it helps me to- like- helps me to talk in front of all of our class really, and it's really interesting to learn about the stories and things and how to do philosophy.
- Journalist: What were you like, before you were doing philosophy? Did you dare to talk in front of people then?
- Lisa: Not really, no, I found it hard.
- Journalist: Sorry, could you say... "before you were doing philosophy" in case people don't hear my question.
- Lisa: I found it hard to talk in front of people in my class.
- Journalist: Why was that?
- Lisa: 'Cause, there's quite a lot of people and I get embarrassed and things.
- Journalist: Why can you do it in philosophy?
- Lisa: Because its..., because...when I do it quite a lot it helps, it helps me. We do philosophy quite a lot and it helps me a lot.
- Claire: I think it helps us to...like if we wanted to share a problem with someone you could do it in philosophy, because like if someone didn't agree with you they are not right, and neither is anyone else if they agree with you...so I find it easier to talk in philosophy.
- Andrew: The thing I like about philosophy is that you think again about things. You don't just think that's that. and you stop thinking about it. You think about trivial things and you go into it.

- Claire: Well, it's different things you talk about. Hum...one of them is stealing. But others can be, like if someone who is really close to you dies, how you're coping with it and everything like that, and that's really helping.
- Lucy: This morning we were reading the story about the three robbers, and I thought this is not going to be a good story...[can't hear]...it's just...we took a long time on it...two questions, I think, or three...it took two hours to do them. It was really good. I came up with a lot of ideas.
- Claire: When we were doing philosophy this morning on the three robbers, I thought the same that we wouldn't get very far with it, because it's such a short story, and not really much to go on, but we started it yesterday and it took us ages on one question, and then we moved on, because we had to, because we were taking so long on the first question, and it was really interesting all the things that we came up with, and Lisa came up with one, and it took at least half an hour to get of the subject of what she said.
- Louise: In philosophy sessions we do... especially this morning we had people that were disagreeing with someone, when they said something else they were kind of thinking...oh, well...actually I've changed my mind. In philosophy you don't have to stick to the same. There's never a time were you got to stick to what you said first. You can always change your mind.
- Journalist: What is good about changing your mind?
- Louise: Right, because...It's that good when you change your mind, because it's like you think of different ideas when you're changing your mind. Like, I can remember this morning one time I was doing something about stealing about the book and I thought, Oh it's wrong to steal, all the time, whatever happens, but then Andrew next to me said something, and it changed my mind, and it made me think of something else – more ideas. I think it helps sometimes when you change your mind.
- Andrew: I liked it as well, because...when you get really into it, I started changing my mind quite a lot as well, and...there were some things at the beginning and I didn't really think it was important, this is how it was, and as it went through, I thought maybe it's not just like that. Maybe, this is right as well.
- Lucy: In philosophy, there is a lot of people changing their minds and everything, 'cause there was one question which I got really puzzled on and I thought about it for a bit. After I think, 'cause I don't like going straight to the questions straightaway. If I've got an answer to it, I will, but otherwise I just wait and see what other people say, and think and put my hand up and either agree or disagree, and then..., or, I say... a different point.
- Louise: In maths and...you don't really get to talk as much. You don't. like, can't give your feelings to people. Like, what you want to say about...you can't say 'Oh, I love this sum', but in philosophy you can like take out your feelings, and it's different in philosophy, because like you're all together and you're all talking together, and there is not much writing or anything.
- Claire: I hate maths. because...you're not allowed to talk at all when we're doing it. so philosophy you can talk to anytime apart when someone else is talking, but like in

English and things, I enjoy writing and doing art and everything, but philosophy is one of my favourite subjects to do it in.

Journalist: But don't you come to school to learn, to listen to..., not to...?

Claire: Well, you *are* learning. Well, it's like a lesson, but just different – not writing, or drawing or anything. The only time when you're drawing it, is when you're drawing it in your mind.

Lucy: I think maths is just as hard as philosophy, because..hum...you might think maths is really hard and philosophy is really easy, because you just have to say things, but you have to use your think, you have to use your brain. Well, both of them really, you think a lot.

8. Summary and conclusion

In Section 2, I addressed the question of how 'directive' a facilitator can be in a community of philosophical enquiry, and conclude that the extent of the facilitator's involvement is crucial in making the enquiry *philosophical*. I argued my case by critically examining a philosophical enquiry with five year olds. I had deliberately chosen this particular dialogue, because of the children's age (not many transcripts feature five year olds), the high philosophical quality of the dialogue, and the extensive commentary by the facilitator.

By comparing her commentary with what the children are *actually* saying, I made the following observations:

- The facilitator errs at times when interpreting the children's remarks. This is not surprising for at least two reasons. First, when taking into consideration the speed in which contributions in communities of enquiry are usually made, it is difficult not to keep pursuing one's own philosophical 'hidden agenda'. Secondly, as also seen in the previous chapter young children's remarks are so more often difficult 'to place'. Since it is harder to understand their contributions, I have made some suggestions for improvements, but also identify the practical difficulties involved in the remedies.
- The facilitator claims that the *children* generate the philosophical ideas and concepts. Careful analysis shows that this claim is misleading, and that the role of the facilitator is more central, than generally admitted in the generation of philosophy.

This has implications for the adequate preparation of PwC facilitators – not only adequate training in building communities of philosophical enquiry, but also a sound knowledge of the history of philosophical ideas are necessary conditions. However, even the more traditional teaching of the history of ideas should be taught in genuine enquiry form, for it is only then that philosophy will teach 'epistemological modesty', and an openness to let thinking occur ('forced' upon us by the unknown).

If teachers do not *model* this kind of attitude, pupils will not adopt it either. In an important sense, the facilitator *models* the kind of behaviour s/he would like the children to internalise – like Socrates, who not just represented intellectual enquiry, but also a mode of being, a way of life. Transformation of the children will only take place if a transformation of the teacher has already taken place first, and this will be the case through philosophy if only by a change in concepts used. This prior change of the teacher's role and attitude is often the most resisted aspect in teaching philosophy to children.

At the same time it highlights the dilemma facilitators in communities of philosophical enquiry face when, on the one hand, they have to keep the enquiry philosophical by intervening and asking the 'right' kind of questions, and on the other hand, they will have to try and keep intervention to a minimum in order to have enquiries that are most meaningful to the children. Many teachers find it hard, either to help the children discuss their own ideas, or to resist the temptation to ask closed questions, or to resist the temptation to answer questions for them, as I illustrated in Section 4, by giving an example of a transcript, in which the teacher closes down the enquiry almost from the outset. I contrasted this with teacher interaction with the more open-ended, communal, and philosophical enquiries in Chapter Five, by making it visible in Figures 8-12.

I concluded that the visual representations show that the children 'owned' the discussion, they discussed what *they* found puzzling, and they were directly responding to each other. Also, the *kind* of questions asked by the teacher differ. In a community of enquiry, the teacher does not ask

'rhetorical' questions, but the kind of questions that are either 'open procedural' or 'open substantive'.

In contrast to the enquiries with the older children, the enquiry with the infants showed more of a traditional teacher/pupil interaction (see Figure 12 – the facilitator was more directive than in the other two enquiries. The explanation being the facilitator's urge to *change* the children's discourse to be more like that of older children and grown-ups, i.e., more abstract, disembodied and decontextualised.

In Section 5, I summed up different ways of evaluating PwC, either by the group, or by the facilitator, by reflecting upon what we mean by 'evaluation', 'progress', but also 'philosophy', followed by a summary of the outcome of a large-scale Welsh research project in the educational benefits of PwC for Year 1 pupils, especially with regards to raising their reading standards.

The results of the Welsh project seem to indicate that further research would be desirable to monitor the efficacy of the approach over a longer term (longitudinal research), although short term effects are already powerful in themselves. Positive changes occurred in the assessed pupils in the areas of not only thinking and reasoning, but also, language, reading, confidence and self-esteem. These research findings were confirmed in Section 7, with evaluations written by children, and a transcript of an interview with children having done philosophy for four months.

Those children are a testimony of the claimed aspects and benefits of PwC, such as increased self-esteem and confidence, open-ended exploration of ideas, development of more reasonable judgements, and trust and care in the group.

So far, I have argued for, and provided empirical evidence for my claim that children can do philosophy. I will continue now by assessing different existing educational materials for I will claim that the benefits will even be greater if the right kind of materials are being used.

EVALUATION — PHILOSOPHY WITH CHILDREN

Class:

Date:

Relevant information:

QUESTIONS

1. Can they formulate questions?
 - a. Find it difficult to formulate questions
.....
 - b. Able to formulate a stimulating question
.....
2. How well do they stay with the discussion?
 - a. Restless
.....
 - b. Interest sustained for longer than 40 min
.....
3. Do they show respect for the process?
 - a. Questions not always taken seriously
.....
 - b. More cooperation/issues taken seriously
.....
4. How many children participate in the discussion?
 - a. Few children talk often and long
.....
 - b. Majority of children talk
.....
5. Do they understand the questions?
 - a. Often no understanding of what is said/asked
.....
 - b. Better idea of what is expected
.....
6. Do they give individual answers?
 - a. Questions often answered with a chorus "Yes"/"No"
.....
 - b. Sense of responsibility for giving individual answers
.....

7. Do they give original answers?
 - a. Often a repetition of what others have said
.....
 - b. Without intervention original answers are being given
.....
8. Do they give reasons for their beliefs?
 - a. Without the teacher asking "why?" beliefs often expressed without justification
.....
 - b. Almost all children justify their beliefs
.....
9. Do they use each other's ideas as building blocks?
 - a. Ideas expressed—not picked up by others
.....
 - b. Use each other's ideas in order to generate new ideas
.....
10. Do they give abstract answers?
 - a. Often tell anecdotes
.....
 - b. Answer as abstract as original question (eg "Can rabbits think?" — "Yes, rabbits can think, because they can find their way home")
.....
11. Do they have a feeling for the philosophical?
 - a. Satisfied with empirical discussions/anecdotes
.....
 - b. Developing intuitive sense for philosophical issues
.....
12. Do they stay with the subject?
 - a. They do not stick to the subject
.....
 - b. More inclined to stick to the subject
.....
13. Do they make conceptual discoveries?
 - a. Not interested in making conceptual discoveries (eg, the difference between dreaming/daydreaming)
.....
 - b. Increasingly excited about discoveries
.....

14. Do they form a particular point of view?
- a. Not very capable in formulating a point of view
.....
 - b. More willing and capable to hold a particular viewpoint without fanaticism
.....
15. Are they critical?
- a. Not very critical of characters in story/ideas others
.....
 - b. More critical of story/ideas and others (incl. teacher) — often by means of counter example
.....
16. Do they argue their case?
- a. No effort is being made to answer when criticised
.....
 - b. Better in defending or adjusting beliefs, or argue by using other examples
.....
17. Are they willing to change their minds?
- a. Hold onto ideas dogmatically/ideas seen as personal possessions
.....
 - b. Getting used to criticise/being criticised in friendly atmosphere/ideas seen as public objects in need of testing through discussion
.....
18. Do they refer to the ideas of others?
- a. No reference to other people's ideas
.....
 - b. Reference to the ideas of others — sometimes explicitly (eg, "I dis/agree with...")
.....
19. Do they address other children?
- a. All look at the teacher when talking
.....
 - b. Often speak directly to classmates and look them in their eyes
.....
20. Do they have an autonomous conversation?
- a. Not capable of continuing a discussion on their own
.....
 - b. Older juniors can discuss among themselves (though usually only a minority; the rest listens)
.....

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Six

1 See the transcript and my comments in Section 6 of Chapter Five.

2 See Chapter Five, Section 6.

3 Chapter Five, Section 3.

4 See Chapter Five, Section 2.

5 Note that the name is written differently in the two publications. I have taken them up as they were published, for I do not know which one is correct.

6 Again, this show how important it is to publish *complete* transcripts of dialogues.

7 See my comments Chapter Five, Sections 6 and 7.

8 See my comments Chapter Five, Section 5.

9 Socratic Method fits more the description as the facilitator does not ask philosophical questions.

10 See Chapter Five, Section 4.

11 For the transcript of the actual discussion, see Chapter Five, Section 5.

12 For the distinction between 'rhetorical', 'open procedural' and 'open substantive questions', see Chapter Five, Section 3.

13 For the transcript of the actual discussion, see Chapter Five, Section 6.

14 See Chapter Five, Sections 6 and 7.

15 See Chapter Five, Section 3.

16 This was of evaluating was brought to my attention in 1994 by one of my students Mark Scofield, and I have worked successfully with it since.

17 See Chapter Four, Section 3.

18 This method of assessing the group was inspired by Barry Curtis, who teaches philosophy in Hawaii. He was interested in listing points significant for monitoring 'progress' in philosophical discussions. His list was translated into Dutch by Berrie Heesen – who brought it to my attention –and published in the teacher's manual *Filosoferen op de Basisschool* (SLO, 1992), distributed by the *Centrum voor Kinderfilosofie* at the University of Amsterdam. My adaptation is from the Dutch, and not from Curtis' original list.

Many children with special educational needs ‘flourish’ in philosophical enquiries. There are different explanations for this depending on their special needs. The rise in self-esteem as a result of being listened to and having their thinking taken seriously by peers helps to integrate withdrawn children into the community of thinkers by making them more confident. They dare more to take risks. Others who get easily bored in normal classroom settings enjoy the pace of an enquiry. They can shine by making ‘quick thinking moves’ and are not held back by having to write anything down. When they have to write their thoughts down (e.g., during ‘thinking time’) or make a drawing after the discussion, they clearly resist this. Children with literacy problems enjoy enquiries with audio-visual material as a stimulus. More visual thinkers and dyslexic children like the fact that philosophy is not yet another subject that starts with something they are not good at, that is, reading a text out loud. Of course this is true only when philosophy is taught by *not* reading texts together and this is unfortunately the norm in PwC (see Chapter Seven). I also noticed that often pupils who were doing well academically found philosophical enquiry frustrating. A possible explanation is that those children are used to being rewarded for giving the ‘right’ answers, and praised by the teacher for doing so. In communities of philosophical enquiry, constructing the ‘right’ answer is a team effort, and ‘bright’ children are often individualistic in their approach to learning. This is confirmed by the empirical findings of Australian PwC practitioner Clive Lindop in an interview with the *Independent Monthly*, but he is convinced that this would be resolved when they feel the excitement of a community of enquiry (in an interview with Mary Rose Liverani, 1992). This is not always the case, in my experience.

Chapter Seven

WHAT ARE SUITABLE STIMULI FOR PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY WITH CHILDREN?

STRUCTURE

1. Introduction.
2. Different stimuli for philosophical enquiry.
3. The Narrative Mind.
4. The Philosophy for Children Programme.
5. Using existing (children's) literature.
6. Why picture books?
7. Which picture books are most suitable for philosophical enquiry?
8. Other reasons for using picture books and the importance of metaphors.
9. Summary and conclusion.

1. Introduction

Matthew Lipman has argued that children can do philosophy if “reconstructed in ways that suit their talents and their interests” (Cam, 1995, p. 13). After all, philosophy was originally embodied in aphorisms, poetry, dialogue, and drama. However, as Lipman points out, “...this variety of philosophical vehicles was short lived, and philosophy became that which, by and large, it has remained – an academic discipline, access to which was limited to college and university students (Lipman, 1988, p. 11).

A pioneer of philosophical enquiry with children, Matthew Lipman and colleagues developed the Philosophy for Children (P4C) Programme – especially written material for the teaching of philosophy to children. It is published by their own Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) which is based at Montclair State College in New Jersey, USA. The IAPC organises training courses twice a year for teachers, philosophers, and teacher-educators from all over the world.

This training consisted for decades solely in acquaintance with the P4C programme, enabling participants to set up a centre in their own country to disseminate the programme. Despite initial hostility to introduction of other philosophy with children materials, the IAPC attitude has gradually ‘softened’ during the last five years – possibly as a result of the sheer quantity of other kinds of educational (especially Australian) material published, and the increased criticism of the P4C Programme. Another reason might be that, since 1992, the institution accrediting ‘teacher-educator’ status is no longer the IAPC, but the more independent and democratically organised International Council for Philosophical Inquiry with Children (ICPIC).

With the exception of some minor practical concerns, on the whole the P4C ‘community of enquiry’ methodology receives very little criticism in P4C literature. The specially-written philosophical novels and accompanying teacher manuals that constitute the P4C Programme, on the other hand, are a continuous source for discussion (Section 4) – mainly instigated and maintained by relative ‘newcomers’ to the movement.¹

In this chapter, I will critically assess the P4C Programme, and put forward alternatives. My main criticisms of the P4C Programme are that it is pedagogically and philosophically inconsistent, and that the content of the philosophical novels neglects the imaginative ‘side’ of the child’s mind. I will conclude that there is an urgent need to open up a philosophical enquiry into more appropriate material as a starting point for philosophical enquiry with children.

As I will argue in Section 3, stories are very suitable indeed as stimuli – especially picture books (Sections 6 and 7). Other stimuli can be used as well, the advantages and disadvantages of which I will weigh up in Section 2.

I will put forward practical, educational benefits of using picture books (Section 6), but also literary (Section 6), and other (Section 8) justifications for the use of this medium. I will also put forward criteria for the selection of suitable picture books (Section 7), and I will finish by revisiting the ‘imaginative playfulness’ so characteristic of the way children make sense of stories.

2. Different stimuli for philosophical enquiry.

Generally speaking, stories are used as stimuli for philosophical enquiry. However, even P4C proponents Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp admit that:

“More or less any text, from comic books and ‘Mills & Boon’, to Shakespeare and Henry James (not to mention films and television) can function as a stimulus for systematic thinking and enquiry. As long as these materials are used critically and with rigour” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995).

In my practice as a teacher, and teacher-educator, I have come across some of the following other possibilities:

1. The use of *objects* brought into the classroom by the teacher or a pupil: for example, a stuffed teddy bear, a cauliflower² or a photo. You could, for example ask: What is the difference between a *real* bear and a teddy bear? Can cauliflowers think? Is this person on the photo a *real person*?
Gareth Matthews’ book *Dialogues with Children* is a real inspiration when looking for examples.
2. The use of *pictures*: For example, a page of a picture book, or works of art³ (Figures 14 from Anthony Browne’s *Zoo*, and Figure 15).
3. Playing *games* in the classroom: for example, by using Robert Fisher’s *Games for Thinking*; also the IAPC instructional manuals are a rich source even when used independently from the philosophical novels they accompany. By way of illustration, I have taken up the following exercise from *Looking for Meaning – the Instructional Manual to Accompany Pixie* (Lipman & Sharp, 1984). I have used this philosophical exercise successfully with 8-12 year olds:

What is real and what only seems to be real (Lipman & Sharp, 1984, p. 4).

Prepare cards for four different desks or tables.

The cards say:

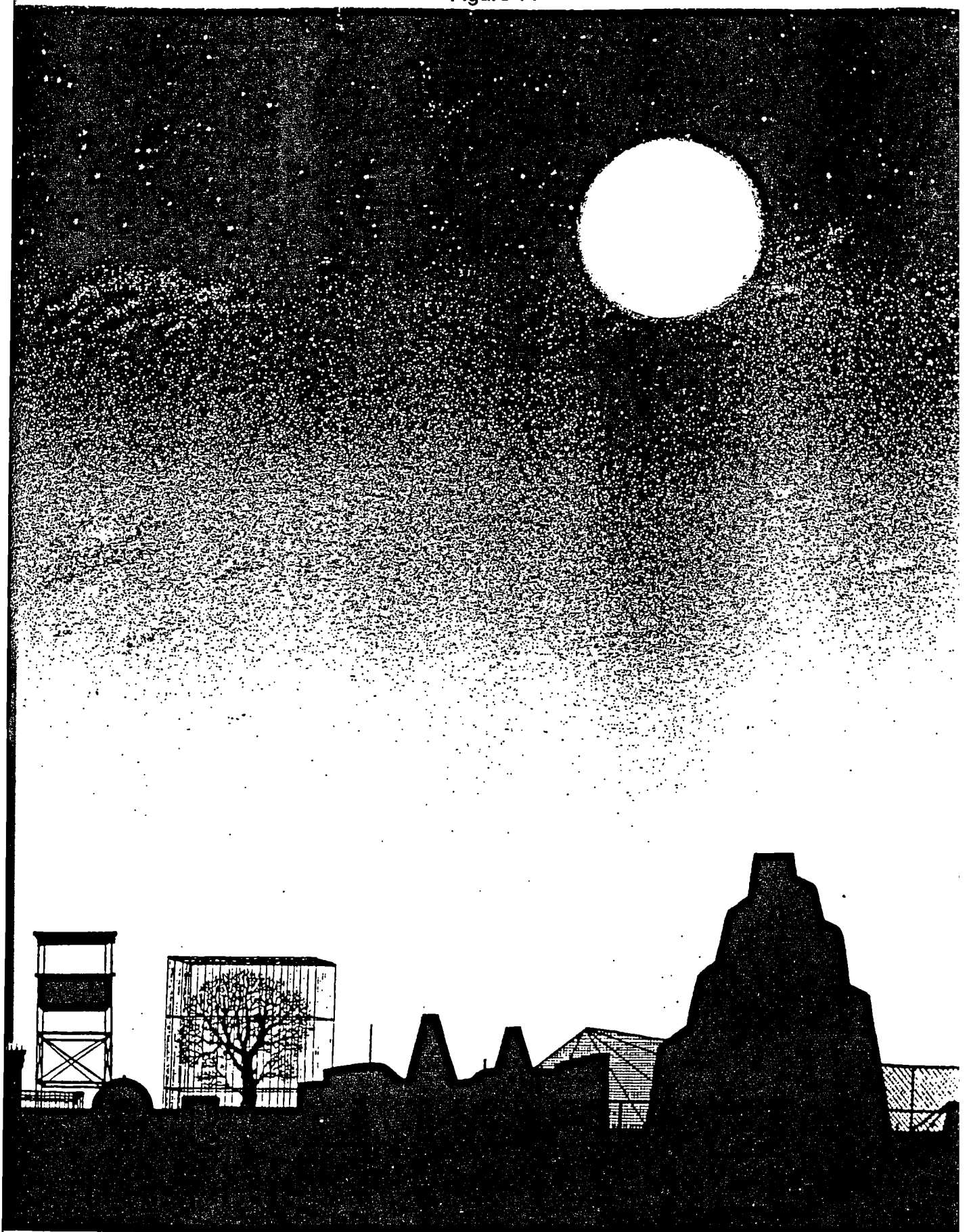
1. Things that seem to be real, but aren’t.
2. Things that seem to be real, and are.
3. Things that don’t seem to be real, but are real.
4. Things that don’t seem to be real, and are not.

Now each person is to bring an item into class and put it on one of the tables. Here are some suggestions:

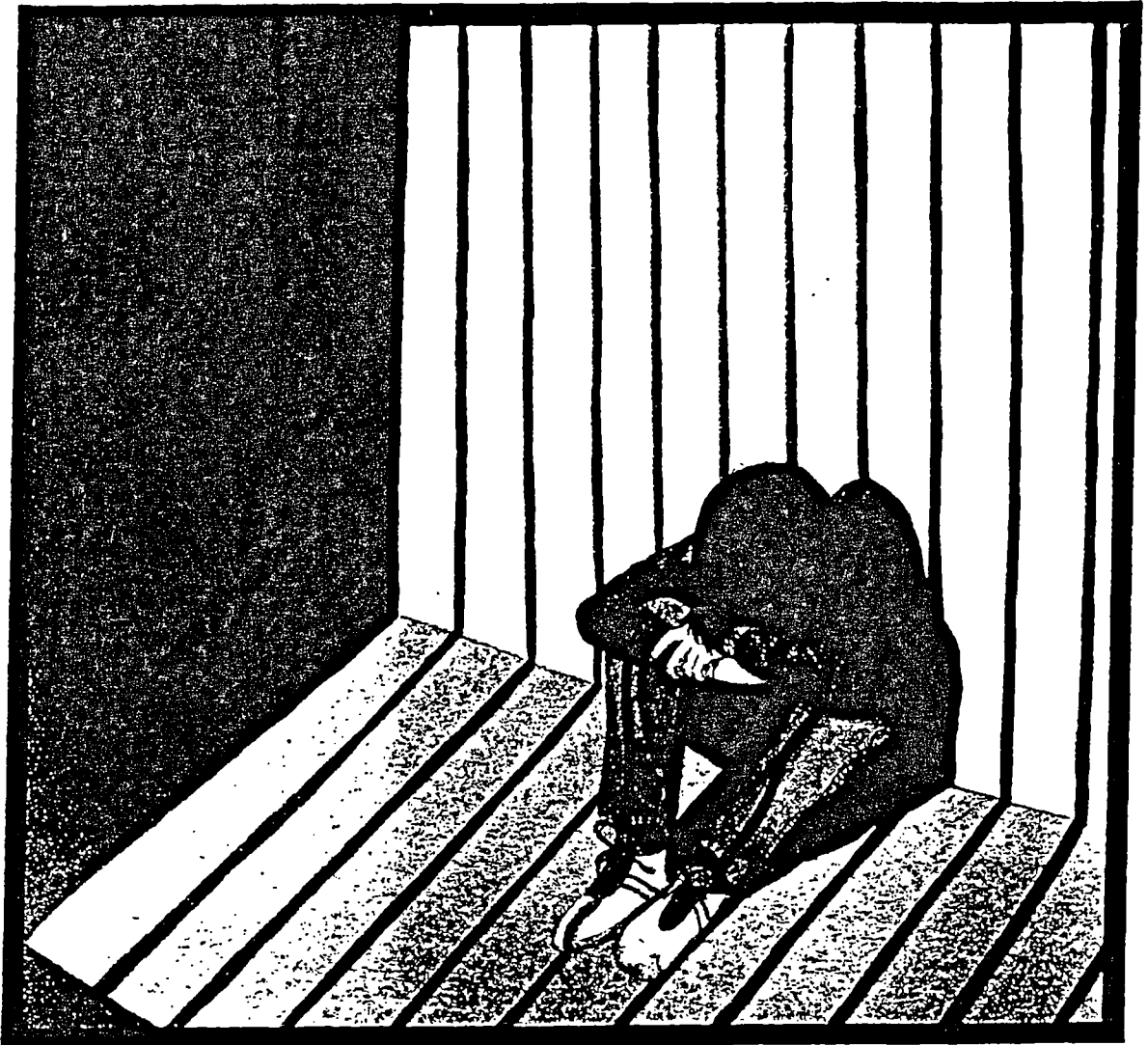
- a. an artificial flower;
- b. a toy automobile;
- c. a book of fairy-tales;
- d. a coke bottle filled with water;
- e. a potato carved in the shape of a cat;
- f. a paper aeroplane;
- g. a photograph of a member of the class;
- h. a small mirror.

Go around the room, and each person, in turn, must challenge someone else to give the reason for putting that person’s object on that particular table.

Figure 14



That night I had a very strange dream.



Do you think animals have dreams?

Figure 15



4. **Clippings of newspaper articles.** Often articles appear in newspapers or magazines that are so controversial that they need to be discussed. One's choice depends, of course, on factors such as the educational objective, age, and interest of the group. For example, the newspaper clipping in Figure 16, could be used with adolescents and adults.
5. **Drama or role-play:** acting out of a story (or part of it), either by the children, or by the teacher, followed by generating philosophical questions and discussion (See Toye, 1994).⁴
6. **Music:** either
 - a. playing a CD, tape, or your own instrument. Ask the children to listen to it, and to generate questions from what they hear.
 - b. music lyrics: for example, *The Wall* by Pink Floyd.⁵
7. **Videos:**
 - a. taped by the teacher of non-fiction (e.g., a nature programme), or of philosophy documentaries.
 - b. own tapes of television series: for example, 'Neighbours'.
 - c. bought in a shop: for example, 'Pingu', 'Mr Bean'.
8. **Philosophical 'Experiments':** for example, 'The Paper in the Fridge Experiment'⁶: children are asked to put a small piece of paper in an empty jar in the fridge. They are asked to look at the jar each day and make notes of what they observe. After a week at the beginning of an enquiry they are asked what they thought the paper must have felt, seen, heard, thought, etc.. in the fridge. This is subsequently used as a starting point for a philosophical enquiry.
9. **Moral Dilemmas:** for example, imagine finding a ten pound note in the school corridor. What would you do? Would you keep it, or hand it in, and what are your reasons?
10. **Meditation:** children in the class could generate questions after a meditation session (e.g., Are you thinking when you're meditating?).⁷
11. **Computer games:** e.g., *Super Mario Brothers*. In this game, Super Mario jumps on, kicks and shoots fireballs. His victims are, not only skeletons, but also beetles and turtles. The purpose of the game is for Super Mario to release other captured animals. Pupils could take turn in playing this game in the classroom after which they would be invited to reflect upon what they have been doing by asking questions (e.g., What is play?, What constitutes a game?, Was Super Mario justified in hurting the beetles and turtles?).
12. **Children's own written work, pictures, or story beginnings** (Matthews, 1994, p. 5). You can use, for example, children's own work from the children's journal *Classroom Philosophers* (Geschwindt, 1994) written for and by children involved in PwC; or the similar, but on a European scale, *Journal 100: European children think together*.

Penis test for deviancy keeps lifers behind bars

David Rose
Home Affairs Correspondent

LIFE prisoners are being forced to undergo a test for sexual deviancy in which they watch explicit videos wearing electronic sensors around their penises before they can be considered for release.

The test, known as the Penile Plesythmograph or PPG, detects minute changes to the penis blood supply, which may occur when the men are shown scenes of naked children, consensual sexual intercourse, rape, and a woman being strangled. It was developed in the former Communist Czechoslovakia to weed out bogus homosexuals seeking to exploit a ban on gay men doing military service.

After experiments in the Seventies, it began to be widely used in Britain to assess convicted sex offenders in 1991. In recent months, the Prison Service has applied it to lifers with no sex convictions, who have served the 'tariff' period set by the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and have been about to be moved to open prison or released. The policy was introduced after discussion by officials with Mr Howard.

The Observer has details of two cases in which 'model' prisoners, who had been prepared for freedom with home leaves and outside work after 15 years in jail, were abruptly transferred to high-security prisons. No court has

heard evidence they carried out sex attacks, but after PPG testing they have been told they must do the year-long Sex Offender Treatment Programme, normally reserved for rapists and child abusers.

Dr David Thornton, the Prison Service psychologist in charge of the PPG programme, said it could make 'an important contribution' in testing lifers whose cases had 'unresolved concern'. For example, a murderer might have killed a teenage girl, stabbed a woman in the genital area, or a female victim might have been found to have genital bruising. While there was no hard evidence of a sexual motive, the PPG might determine if the prisoner 'had an interest in children or violent sexual fantasies'.

Murder and manslaughter have an extremely low rate of recidivism — about 0.25 per cent.

However, Dr Thornton said it was possible some released lifers had committed sexual offences which had never come to light. 'Ministers have placed great emphasis on protecting the public,' he said. 'We should err in favour of the public, not the prisoner.'

Dr Thornton said that prisoners might be taken unexpectedly for assessment to prevent them trying to deceive the equipment by masturbating beforehand. Then they would be asked to remove their trousers to fit a

'Barlow gauge', a band around the shaft of the penis with a U-shaped part across the tip. This was 'extremely sensitive', Dr Thornton said. 'It does not require full erection, but can detect minute changes in penile size.'

In the general population, about 5 per cent of men — many times the number who commit rape or murder — revealed a 'deviant' response to the PPG.

The Observer has a copy of the leaflet given to prisoners before they do the test. It says: 'It is important for us to know if you are aroused inappropriately, as it will best help us to tailor the treatment to help you . . .'

'The equipment is made to very high standards and is regularly tested. It would be impossible for it to give you a shock — even in the unlikely event of something breaking down, the voltages used are very low and are quite safe. The equipment is fully sterilised every time it is used so no diseases can be passed on.'

Dr Thornton said the scientific literature agreed the test was 'valuable'.

However, a prison psychiatrist with long experience of dealing with sex offenders, who asked not to be named, denounced it as a 'gross abuse of human rights'. He added: 'This programme is designed to cut away whatever might be left of a prisoner's dignity and self-esteem. If you treat people like animals, they will behave like animals on release.'

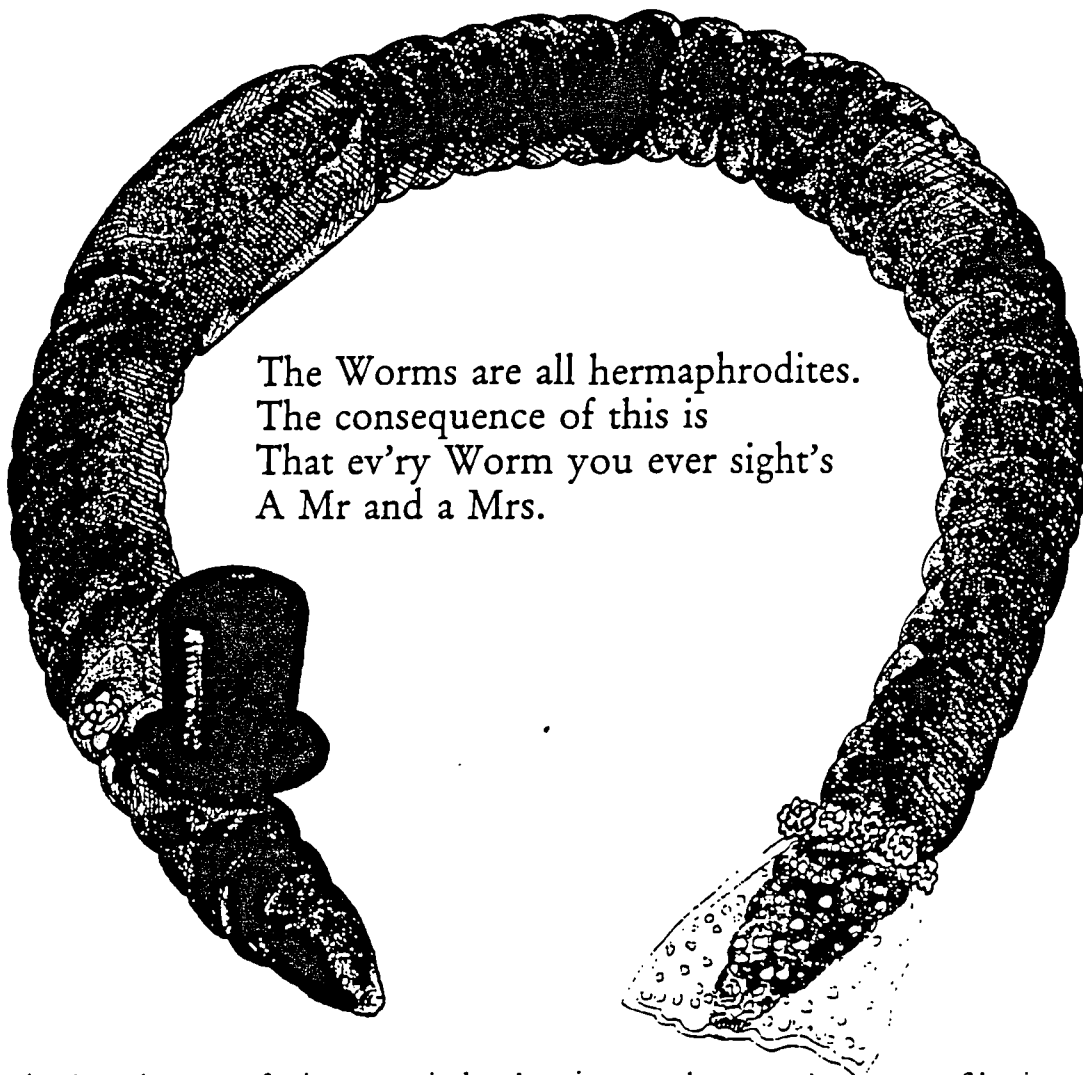
From the *Observer*, 28 May 1995.

Compared with specially-written material, the main *disadvantages* of these stimuli is that philosophical ideas and questions are not always obvious, and more intervention from the teacher is necessary than with specially-written material. A logical continuation of the philosophical topics discussed is unlikely. The stimuli do not model philosophical dialogue or community of enquiry values.³ Another disadvantage is that the teacher has to spend a great deal of time in searching for appropriate material. There is none of the kind of support provided by specially-written teacher-manuals to help identify and unfold philosophical ideas. This search for the right kind of material is especially difficult for teachers with no background in philosophy.⁹

Similar disadvantages apply to the use of *poems*. Although I have used successfully poems written by Dick King-Smith, Margaret Mahy, and Roald Dahl, there was little continuation of the philosophical topics discussed.

The main *advantages* of using poems are that they are often short, gripping, and funny (e.g., Raymond Briggs' *The Mother Goose Treasury*, Babette Cole's *Slimy Book*, or Rolf Harris' *Catalogue of Comic Verse*). They invite philosophical enquiry. Take, for example, the following by Dick King-Smith (King-Smith, 1990, p. 21):

His and Hers



Another advantage of using poetry is that there is no need to go to the expense of buying special material that can be used solely for teaching philosophy – such a financial investment might be difficult to justify for teachers, especially when they are just exploring the subject. Also, the immediate relevance for the National Curriculum is obvious to (head)teachers, parents and

governors since the material used is relevant for teaching English, because using poetry connects easily with existing teachers' practice, and reduces the risk of possible hostility from the rest of the staff.

3. The Narrative Mind

Although it is possible to use material other than stories for teaching philosophy to children, almost all existing educational material is in story form. The author of one of the latest additions to the growing stock of PwC material, Robert Fisher, justifies the choice of the story medium as follows:

“By telling stories we not only discover about ourselves and the world, we also learn how to change and create ourselves and the world” (Fisher, 1996b, p. 2).

But how is it possible that stories can help us to discover, change and create ourselves and the world?

An important cue is Jerome Bruner’s distinction between two modes of thinking, that is, the ‘logico-scientific’ and the ‘narrative’¹⁰. They deserve attention in their own right, though they cannot be separated, in the sense that they cannot function independently. I will elaborate on this distinction below.

The power of stories lies in the fact, as Lipman claims, that in a sense “Every life is ... a story in which one connects one’s present with one’s past and one’s future with one’s present” (Lipman, 1993c, pp. 257, 258). Through the writing or telling of stories we create other possible worlds. Apart from helping us to escape from the actual world we are living in, Lipman continues, stories can, at the same time, help to bridge the gap between one’s actual life and one’s ideals.

If it is true to say that our life has a narrative structure, then an appropriate metaphor of the mind would be the mind as a *narrative*. The reason being, according to philosopher Mark Johnson, that:

“Not only are we born into complex communal narratives, we also experience, understand, and order our lives as stories that we are living out” (Johnson, 1987, pp. 171, 172).

It is the narrative structure that makes our life intelligible, with its beginning (birth), middle (maturity), end (death), and the need for coherence within one’s own story (life). It was Kafka who wrote: “The meaning of life is that it stops” (Kafka quoted in Egan, 1988, p. 102). All events, actions, and behaviour acquire meaning because of their place in the story which is our life, and our feelings about, for example, death, birth, and maturity provide a pattern for narratives (Egan, 1992, p. 70).

Julian Jaynes argues that “we are always seeing our vicarial selves as the main figures in the stories of our lives” (Jaynes, 1990, p. 63). This has consequences for how we ascribe meaning to new events and situations. Jaynes claims that:

“New situations are selectively perceived as part of this ongoing story: perceptions that do not fit into it being unnoticed or at least unremembered. More important, situations are chosen which are congruent to this ongoing story, until the picture I have of myself in my life story determines how I am to act and choose in novel situations as they arise” (Jaynes, 1990, p. 64).

If this is true then it follows that the so-called objective, logical reasons we give for our beliefs and actions are in fact embedded in a narrative structure created by ourselves. It is in that sense that the logico-scientific mode of thinking is possible only because of the narrative mode of thinking. Jaynes explains:

“The assigning of causes to our behavior or saying why we did a particular thing is all a part of narratization. Such causes as reasons may be true or false, neutral or ideal. Consciousness is ever ready to explain anything we happen to find ourselves doing. The thief narratizes his act as due to poverty, the poet his as due to beauty, and the scientist his as due to truth, purpose and cause inextricably woven into the spatialization of behavior in consciousness. But it is not just our own analog “I” that we are narratizing; it is everything else in consciousness. A stray fact is narratized to fit with some other stray fact. A child cries in the street and we narratize the event into a mental picture of a lost child and a parent searching for it” (Jaynes, 1990, p. 64).

The ‘life-is-a-story’ metaphor involves understanding one’s life in terms of *stages*, *causal* connections among the parts, and *plans* to achieve a goal or set of goals. An overarching aim is to achieve *coherence* in one’s life in order to give it meaning and significance (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 172-174). If stories help us fit events into a meaningful, coherent whole, that is, help us create our own sane life story (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 175), then this would explain why stories are such successful starting points for philosophical enquiry.

But the importance of story-creation goes beyond its educational value in that it is essential for being a moral person, according to philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre. He argues that presupposed in being a moral agent, that is, asking ourselves the fundamental ethical question, “What am I to do?” we have to be able to answer the prior question “Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?”. MacIntyre explains:

“We enter human society, that is, with one or more imputed characters – roles into which we have been drafted – and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses are apt to be construed. It is through hearing stories about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, wolves that suckle twin boys, youngest sons who receive no inheritance but must make their own way in the world and eldest sons who waste their inheritance on riotous living and go into exile to live with a swine, that children learn or mislearn both what a child and what a parent is, what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are. Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words” (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 216).

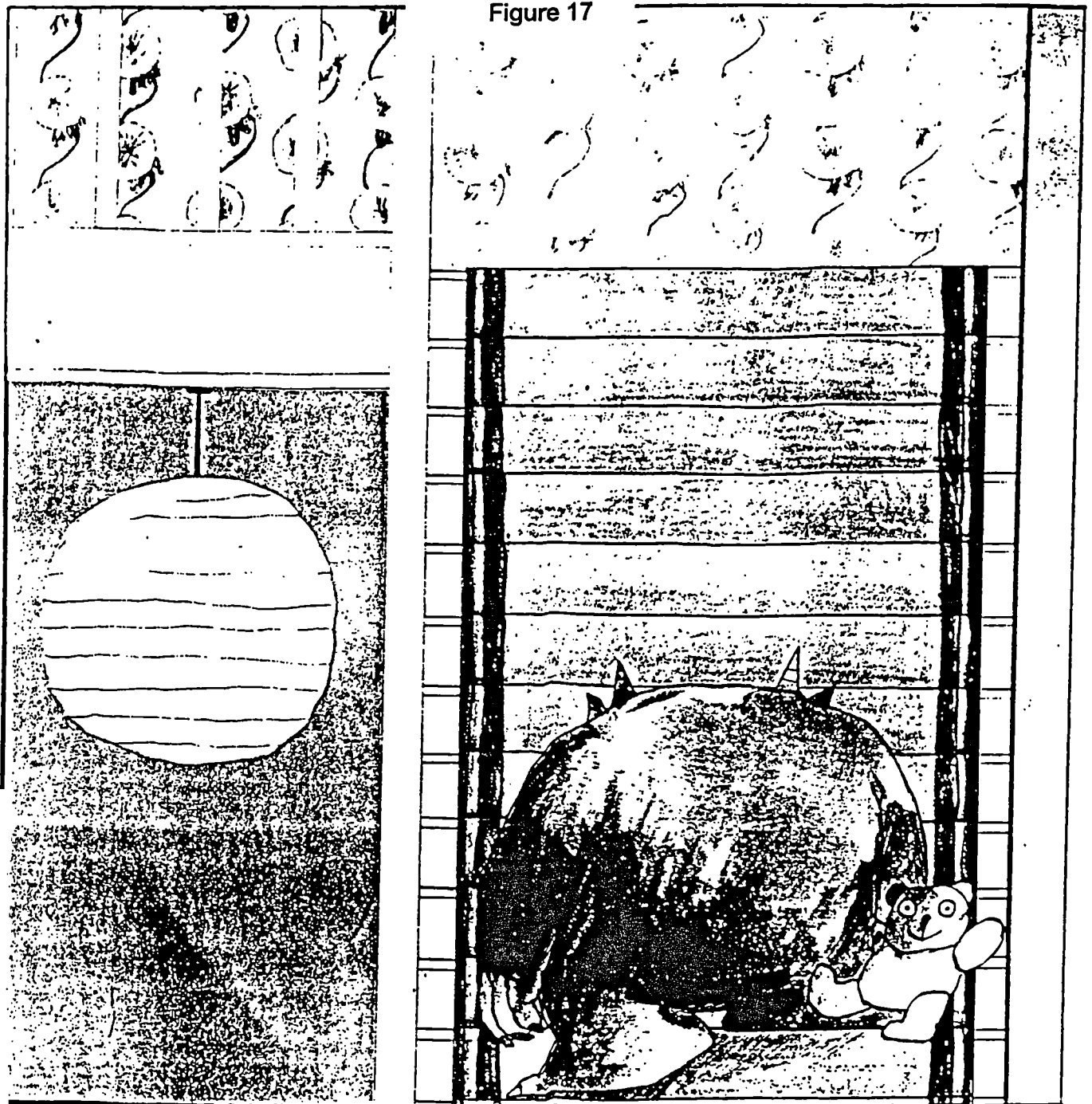
Attributing such an important meaning-making role to stories is relatively new in the history of ideas. For centuries it has been assumed that the productive and properly functioning mind works with abstract concepts in a logical manner (Egan, 1992, p. 62). However, there is a growing awareness that logical operations themselves are “grounded in and growing out of narrative and metaphoric bases” (See also Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

What Egan means is that our *whole* mind – not just the logico-mathematical part of the mind – is involved when making sense of stories. Rationality cannot be reduced to a set of skills, to be trained like muscles, but is intrinsically “tied up with all these hitherto neglected attics, basements, and hidden rooms of the mind, in which emotions, intentions, metaphors, and the imagination cavort” (Egan, 1992, p. 63), and as such Bruner’s two modes of thinking cannot function separately.

As opposed to Lipman, who emphasises the power of logic in making sense of stories (see, for example, Lipman, 1980, pp. 17, 18), Egan emphasises that an integration of the cognitive and the affective is needed in order to understand the causality which holds stories together. As an example he uses Cinderella in which the reader has to make an affective “jump” in the story from when Cinderella’s sisters have left for the ball until the Fairy Godmother arrives. Egan explains:

"Following a purely logical causal sequence we might have to witness some dish-washing or dusting or coal-heaving or whatever. but the affective causality makes the connection between the two scenes immediate and directly comprehensible" (Egan, 1992, p. 63).

The need to make these affective, causal connections is even stronger the case in picture books. Take, for example, the picture of the monster in David McKee's *Not Now, Bernard* (Figure 17) climbing the stairs holding his teddy in one hand. Ascribing meaning to this picture is directly related to feelings, such as loneliness, sadness, and vulnerability; and in turn these emotions are always imbedded in a story or story fragment, that sets the context and gives the picture meaning.



The monster went upstairs.

Similarly, just the positioning of the girl's hands behind her back in Anthony Browne's *Gorilla* (Figure 18) describes the relationship with her father and ignites in the mind hope and desire for what could be possible.

Figure 18



Any meaning ascribed by the reader is directly connected to her emotions and *her* story, that is, connected to the life she is living. As Jerome Bruner succinctly put it:

“The artist creates possible worlds through the metaphoric transformation of the ordinary and the conventionally ‘given’” (Bruner, 1986, p. 49).

What he means is that in order to make sense of stories in particular, and, more generally, to make meaning of any kind of experience, people need to use their imagination. This is not a separate faculty or function of the mind – something distinct from reason – but “it is what gives reason flexibility, energy, and vividness” (Egan, 1992, p. 65).

The educational value of developing the narrative mode of mind is not understood properly, Egan claims, since it is less productive than developing logico-mathematical skills. However, listening to and reading stories will stimulate and develop the imagination – the narrative mode of the mind and its sense-making, meaning-making capacities.” (Egan, 1992, p. 63). An added educational value is that the story-form aids memorisation. Egan offers two reasons for this: items can be re-called in narrative structures better than in logically organised lists; but also, we code more profoundly knowledge in our memories by affective than by logical associations.

My conclusion has far reaching consequences for the selection of appropriate material for teaching philosophy to children. If the imagination gives reason its flexibility, vividness, and energy, and the imagination is more stimulated by content that engages children's emotions than by content that does not engage their emotions, then the most appropriate materials are indeed stories, since they engage the emotions. After all, an event in itself has no meaning, it needs a context; and it is the context of a story that raises emotions, attitudes, etc. But, in particular we will have to concentrate on stories that, as Kafka powerfully put it: work like an "axe that crushes the frozen sea within us" (Kafka quoted in Chambers, 1985, p. 17).

Stories become part of us, and it is in this sense that we create ourselves and the world we live in (see the beginning of this section). In listening to stories and in reading them we actively construct meaning, and in doing so construct ourselves.

Bruner puts it as follows:

"Stories of literary merit, to be sure, are about events in a 'real' world, but they render that world newly strange, rescue it from obviousness, fill it with gaps that call upon the reader. in Barthes's sense, to become a writer, a composer of a virtual text in response to the actual. In the end, it is the reader who must write for himself what he intends to do with the actual text" (Bruner, 1986, p. 24).

Bruner continues by quoting Wolfgang Iser, who has said: "the reader receives it by composing it". Bruner adds that a text has 'two sides': "a verbal aspect that guides reaction and prevents it from being arbitrary, and an affective aspect that is triggered or 'prestructured' by the language of the text". This prestructure, however, is "underdetermined", in the sense that texts do not formulate meanings themselves, but invite the reader to 'communicate' with the narrative which involves participation in the production and the comprehension of a text (Bruner, 1986, pp. 24, 25). The text is relatively indeterminate, in that it does not formulate meanings itself. The meaning of the text has to be constructed by the reader out of a variety of possible meanings.

In summary, stories are the most appropriate catalysts for philosophical enquiry with children. The content of these stories should engage children's emotions in such a way that their imagination is triggered, and their reason is at its most powerful. In the following section, I will analyse the oldest, most extensive, and widely used specially-written material, the Philosophy for Children Programme, and assess (among other things) the extent to which it meets the above criteria, that is, engages children's emotions and triggers their imagination.

4. The Philosophy for Children Programme

In the late Sixties, Matthew Lipman – Professor in Philosophy at Columbia University in USA – was struck by his college students’ incapacity to think and express themselves creatively, critically, and with confidence. In an interview Lipman says:

“...when my own children were about 10 or 11 years old, the school they were attending did not give them the instruction in reasoning that I thought they needed. I was teaching logic at the college level at the time, and I felt that I wasn’t accomplishing very much with my students because it was too late; they should have had instruction on reasoning much earlier. So I decided I would do something to help children...” (Lipman interviewed by Brandt, 1988, p. 34).

He decided to devote the rest of his career to ‘reconstruct’ philosophy in such a way that it would be accessible to children, in the form of his *Philosophy for Children Programme*. For the primary and secondary age range, the programme consists of the following seven novels and accompanying teacher manuals.

PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN PROGRAMME (IAPC)

Age	Children’s novel	Teacher’s manual	Philosophical area	Educational area
6/7	<i>Elfie</i>	Getting thoughts together	Reasoning about thinking	Exploring experience
7/8	<i>Kio & Gus</i>	Wondering at the world	Reasoning about nature	Environmental education
8/10	<i>Pixie</i>	Looking for meaning	Reasoning about language	Language & arts
10/12	<i>Harry*</i>	Philosophical enquiry	Basic reasoning skills	Thinking & logic
12/13	<i>Lisa</i>	Ethical enquiry	Reasoning in ethics	Moral education
14/15	<i>Suki</i>	Writing: how & why	Reasoning in language	Writing & literature
16+	<i>Mark</i>	Social enquiry	Reasoning in social studies	Social studies

* *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery*

From: Fisher, R. *Teaching Children to Think*, p. 171.

The idea behind the P4C Programme is to strengthen the child’s capacity to enquire (Lipman, 1988b, p. 144). The philosophical novels are, for this reason, deliberately ambiguous and vague. By working on children’s questioning, reasoning and discussion skills, they will be able to cope “with

the perplexing aspects of natural language that they are bound to encounter in daily life” (Lipman, 1988b, p. 144).

In practical, educational terms, what is involved is that children read aloud together from specially-written *philosophical novels* targeted at different age groups. These novels are *not* a narrative version of the history of philosophy. Instead, classical philosophical ideas, themes and questions have been ‘injected into’ the text, but without technical, philosophical jargon. For example, in the philosophical novel *Elfie*, six-year olds are introduced to Cartesian dualism in the following way:

“Last night I woke up, in the middle of the night, and I said to myself, ‘Elfie, are you asleep?’ I touched my eyes, and they were open, so I said, ‘No, I’m not asleep.’ But that could be wrong. Maybe a person could sleep with her eyes open. Then I said to myself, ‘At this moment, am I thinking? I really wonder’. And I answered myself, ‘Dummy! If you can wonder, you must be thinking! And if you’re thinking then, no matter what Seth says, you’re for real!’” (Lipman, 1988a, pp. 4, 5).

After reading together an episode like the above, the children are asked to raise questions from the text. The teacher writes their questions on the blackboard, and the children subsequently discuss what they (and not the teacher) find puzzling and interesting in the story.

The teacher’s role is to help the children to build a community of enquiry – in line with the belief that children should not *learn*, but *do* philosophy. Each community of enquiry is unique in that it constructs its own rules and procedures. However, it is successful only when all contributors work together in their search for understanding, or, more specifically, when they all use each other’s ideas as building blocks to form beliefs that are more accurate or balanced.

This community of enquiry structure is modelled by the fictional characters in the philosophical novels. This is one major *advantage* of the P4C Programme. There is an ongoing dialogue between the fictional children and their peers and between those children and adults. The importance of dialogue for the teaching of philosophy is emphasised by philosopher Martha Nussbaum. She argues that:

“Real philosophy ... as Socrates saw it, is each person’s committed search for wisdom, where what matters is not just the acceptance of certain conclusions, but also the following out of a certain path to them; not just correct content, but content achieved as the result of real understanding and self-understanding” (Nussbaum, 1993, pp. 299, 300).

The real value of philosophising, she continues, “lies in the response of interaction of teacher and pupil, whereby the teacher guides the pupil by questioning to become more aware of his own beliefs and their relationship to one another”.

Philosophical textbooks should set up a dialectical activity with the reader in which the reader is invited to think critically about the issues and arguments raised in the text (Nussbaum, 1993, p. 300). It is in that sense that dialogues cannot be memorised, but can be found only “inside ourselves” (Nussbaum, 1993, p. 300).

So, when reading and discussing the philosophical novels, the children should become a part of the community of enquiry, reflected in the novel. The fictional characters are also quite unlike ‘normal’ children. They are ‘thinkers’, not ‘doers’. Lipman explains:

“...they are fictional models of children who are intrigued by what is problematic in their experience and sufficiently provoked by it to want to inquire

into it. And yet, delicious as the acquisition of the sought-for knowledge may be, it is the process of inquiry itself to which the fictional children find themselves committed, by virtue of their huge enjoyment of it, rather than to incidental outcomes in the form of knowledge increments. Moreover, the portrayal of the children in the novel is of thinking children, children engaging in mental acts and wondering about those very acts, so that what is characterized is the life of thought itself – or the life of youthful thought, at any rate – in all of its dialogical complexity and with a fair amount of its illogicality and irrationality” (Lipman, 1988b, p. 147).

The teacher’s difficult task is to help the children to achieve this. She does have at her disposal instructional manuals consisting of exercises, games and discussion plans, for extending the children’s thoughts and arguments – not by providing answers, but by raising even more questions. They are designed to “maintain the inquisitive momentum to which the novel gave the initial impetus” (Lipman, 1988b, p. 148). For example, to help the children explore the above episode from *Elfie*, the teacher has the following aids (Lipman & Gazzard, 1988, pp. 35-39):

- **Leading Idea: Touching** – giving a two paragraph philosophical background information to the teacher on the reliability of our senses to test what is ‘real’.

Exercise: Is touching the best way to tell what’s real? – giving examples of eleven cases in which the children have to decide what the best way is to tell whether it is real (e.g., the colour of the sky), and they have to make a choice between ‘you can best tell by *touching*’, by *looking*, by *thinking*, or I’m not sure/I don’t know.

Exercise: Touching – an activity in which the children are asked to touch an object and describe it with the following distinctions in mind ‘hard’/‘soft’; ‘smooth’/‘rough’; ‘cold’/‘hot’; ‘light’/‘heavy’; ‘even’/‘uneven’; ‘thin’/‘thick’; and they are encouraged to use similes when describing their objects.

Another Leading Idea: **Wondering, thinking and reality**, in which the teacher is introduced to Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am”. Followed by four Exercises:

- How is wondering related to thinking? (seven open-ended questions).
- Is Elfie right, that if you’re thinking, you’re for real? (six open-ended questions).
- Does thinking imply a thinker? (eight open-ended questions).
- Do some things *have* to cause other things to happen? (10 open-ended questions).

After another discussion plan on **Thinking**, there is again an exercise on **Thinking**, and the episode is finished off with a Mother Goose Nursery Rhyme followed by nine questions.

In short: there are many exercises and discussion plans for only a few paragraphs of the novel. In all fairness, the idea is to read only short passages each time, but one may wonder then how one will ever finish off the novel in time to move to the next one – especially important in a sequenced curriculum.

Not surprisingly, many teachers tell me that they experience the sheer volume of the manuals as daunting and complain about the time it takes to work their way through them. Also, when not wholly dedicated to philosophy it is difficult to justify, in the present educational climate, the expense of purchasing educational material for the sole purpose of teaching philosophy – a subject not directly covered by the National Curriculum.

However, Lipman emphasises the importance for teachers to use those instructional manuals in order to guarantee the philosophical quality of the enquiry. He writes:

“Would-be classroom teachers of philosophy need models of doing philosophy that are clear, practical and specific. They need to be able to distinguish essentially decidable concepts from essentially contestable concepts, if they are to understand why only the latter are truly philosophical” (Lipman, 1997, p. 1).

He continues that exercises and discussion plans should be “integral parts of the elementary level philosophy curriculum, and without a curriculum of some kind, the chances that one will be able to do philosophy at all are greatly reduced” (Lipman, 1997, p. 1). The exercises in the manual will help “to sharpen and strengthen cognitive skills, as well as to promote precision and specificity”. Whilst the emphasis of the discussion plans is more on improving “concept-formation ... with such tools as criteria, reasons, arguments and definitions” (Lipman, 1997, p. 1).

These exercises and discussion plans in the different manuals are sequenced *logically*, and as such the P4C Programme is a *logically* and not an *empirically* sequenced curriculum. Lipman explains that an empirical sequence would involve a correspondence “to already existing stages of cognitive development derived from descriptions of children’s behavior in non-educational contexts” (Lipman, 1988b, p. 147). Bypassing the need for any psychological stage-theory of children’s cognitive development, the P4C Programme sequences, *not* competences, but practice in certain thinking skills.

For example, *Elfie* concentrates on distinction-making, connection-making, and comparison. In *Pixie* they return in a more sophisticated form (‘classification’). Similarly, in *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery* they are revisited by discussing ‘class’, ‘relationship’ and ‘rule’ (Lipman, 1988b, p. 146).

Although an advantage in one sense, this aspect of the P4C Programme touches upon a deep concern I have about the entire programme.

Some *objections* to the P4C Programme:

1. The P4C Programme is *pedagogically inconsistent*.

There is a ‘tension’ between the pedagogy of a community of enquiry and the didactically constructed P4C curriculum. In a community of enquiry the children set the agenda themselves by raising their own questions and philosophical problems, and take responsibility for the course of the enquiry. Especially with young children the likelihood that questions from the manual can be ‘injected’ into the dialogue without disrupting the children’s enquiry is slim. I have often experienced that children simply ignore a question I have asked, even if I thought it would help them further philosophically.¹¹

Aware of this problem, Lipman suggests that teachers should be discrete in utilising discussion plans and exercises, and his advice is to employ them “sparingly”, for it could “restrict ... [the discussion’s] ... open flow” (Lipman, 1997, pp. 8, 9). On the other hand, they can be useful to “channel and discipline” an enquiry that is not going anywhere (Lipman, 1997, p. 9).

The delicate balance a facilitator of philosophical enquiry has to find between ensuring the philosophical quality of the discussion and giving power and trust to the children is definitely endangered when discussion plans are used often. This raises the question of how often they have to be used in order to ensure the logical sequence of the curriculum. Which concepts and philosophical problems do the children have to have discussed in order to proceed to the next ‘stage’?

Also, Lipman stipulates that “the sequence of questions in a discussion plan generally proceed from *simple* to *difficult* and from *clear-cut* cases to *fuzzy* cases” (Lipman, 1997, p. 6). It means that a

whole series of questions has to be asked by the teacher, while meanwhile possibly ignoring where answering one question (for example, the first) may lead the children's enquiry. It would seem especially important to get to the last questions in the discussion plan, for "the questions towards the end seek greater impartiality and generality" (Lipman, 1997, p. 6) as clearly demonstrated by the following exercise from the manual designed to help teachers to explore the above episode from *Elfie*:

EXERCISE: Does thinking imply a thinker?

1. If there's a painting, must there be a painter of that painting?
2. If there's a book, must there be a writer of that book?
3. If there's smoke, must there be a smoker around?
4. If it's raining, does that mean there's someone making it rain?
5. If it's snowing, does that mean there's a snowmaker causing the snow?
6. If there are puddles, does that mean it rained?
7. If there was a sound, does that mean there was a listener?
8. If there are thoughts, does that mean they were made up by a thinker?

The exercise, and in particular the last question, is aimed to explore Descartes' dictum "I think, therefore I am". Can we justifiably conclude from the fact that there are thoughts that there must be *someone* having those thoughts? In order to arrive at the last question of this exercise, the teacher will have to be directive, but this presupposes a teacher/pupil interaction diametrically opposed to the pedagogy of a community of philosophical enquiry (see Chapter Four, Figure 3).

Australian PwC teacher-educator Philip Cam admits that most teachers need discussion plans (Cam, 1995, p. 56). I do indeed know teachers who, instead of asking the kind of philosophical questions directly related to the children's discussion, ask the questions from the exercises and discussion plans one by one, and one after another. This is the great danger of concentrating too much on specially-written material in the preparation of teachers for the practice of philosophical enquiry with children.

What is happening is that many teachers have had insufficient philosophical practice to help the enquiry philosophically without the help of purpose written material. But if the teachers' need contradicts the very ethos of the pedagogy, I believe we should be concentrating on teacher's philosophical training *prior* to their practice as teachers of philosophy to children, rather than on developing material that teachers can use with no or hardly any philosophical training.

As Lipman himself says:

"What makes a question philosophical rather than non-philosophical may lie not in the verbal form of the sentence but in the circumstances under which it is uttered, and it is only through the repeated exposure to the doing of philosophy that such circumstances come to be recognized" (Lipman, 1997, p. 1).

Therefore, providing teachers with lists of philosophical questions in itself is insufficient. Instead teachers should be made familiar with seeing the problematic in what normally speaking is taken for granted. Being a good philosopher involves the ability to ask the 'right' questions at the 'right' time in appropriate circumstances.

To abandon the use of teacher's manuals and to concentrate on the thorough training of teachers and philosophers in philosophical enquiry has been the route taken by Scottish psychologist and philosopher Catherine McCall, director of the Glasgow based European Philosophical Inquiry Centre (EPIC). She has written philosophical novels in IAPC style, for example *Changes*, and *Laura and Paul*, but deliberately without any instructional manuals for teachers.

McCall believes the best way to have children taught philosophy is by a teacher having done an MPhil in Philosophical Inquiry (PI) at EPIC, or by a similarly trained peripatetic philosopher visiting the school.¹²

My second objection to the P4C Programme is that:

2. The *content* of the philosophical novels neglects the imaginative side of the child's mind.

The IAPC novels contain text only – there are no illustrations. So, when using the P4C Programme the first stumbling block for children is the written word. The facilitator and children either read the text aloud together (with infants)¹³, and with older children it is advised to take turns in reading aloud – taking a paragraph each – as a manifestation of a communally shared reading experience. However, this can be a daunting experience, not only for children, but also for many teachers I have worked with. Although when their turn they are allowed ‘to pass’, the attention is all on them, and this can be unpleasant for poor readers, who again, will be seen to fail.

Patrick Costello identifies, too, the problem shared reading causes for poor readers. He then asks:

“How then are we to overcome this difficulty and to enable pupils to focus on what is, in my view, the central task of a philosophy session, namely the discussion and development of ideas?” (Costello, 1996, p. 51).

His solution is for the teacher to read a story to the children, who follow the printed text. My objection to this is that already so much of education consists of listening to the teacher. Consistent with the community of enquiry pedagogy, ideally a starting point should be used that is not teacher-focused.

Videos meet this criterion. Videos of good quality picture books are short, powerful, contain plenty of philosophical ideas, and easily engage poor readers. Children are familiar with the medium of television, and it enables them to focus, as Costello stipulated, on the “discussion and development of ideas”. Bruner acknowledges that television can be used as “an ancillary to the teaching of reading” (Bruner quoted in Graham, 1990, p. 110). The main disadvantage is that children cannot browse through it at their own pace, as they can with a book. At the end of this section the many advantages of using audio-visual material are listed.

Since the children themselves have to raise questions and have to be puzzled by the starting point of a philosophical enquiry, it is an important criterion that the catalyst the teacher uses to start off the enquiry is liked by the children.¹⁴ It should trigger their imagination, since it is then that reason is at its most powerful – as I argued in Section 3 of this chapter.

Lipman explains the necessity of writing special stories, rather than using existing children's literature by saying that:

“Most children's stories involve fictional children who are happy or sad, beautiful or homely, obedient or disobedient, but seldom are they portrayed as thoughtful, analytical, critical, or speculative” (Lipman, 1988b, p. 186).

It is true that portraying children who are thoughtful, and in dialogue with their peers and the adults around them will greatly help as a model of philosophical enquiry with children. But we should not neglect the emotions, and the imagination, i.e., the “the other side of the child's mind” – as Egan put it (Egan, 1993).

Lipman puts a great deal of emphasis on logic in the process of meaning-making. George MacDonald Ross correctly observes: "...logic ... is restricted in its proper scope to the construction and evaluation of formal systems, such as mathematics, computing, scientific theories, and so on. Perhaps it is a mistake, dating from Aristotle, to conflate formal logic with the art of reasoning well" (MacDonald Ross, 1988, p. 214).

When choosing material from the vast history of Western philosophy one may wonder why it should be Aristotelian syllogisms children should be introduced to first, as is the case with *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, Lipman's first philosophical novel.

Lipman acknowledges that any specially-written material must "produce excitation of a kind that invites reflection and inquiry". The intellectual challenge must be presented such that it is "emotionally stimulating" and the philosophical novels, Lipman claims, meet this requirement (Lipman, 1988b, p. 147).

I will argue in the next section that they do not. I will argue that existing children's literature meet this requirement far more effectively than the IAPC novels, but first, I will turn to my third objection to the P4C Programme.

3. The P4C Programme is *philosophically inconsistent*.

This criticism is related to the dismissive attitude by the makers of the P4C Programme towards children's literature, and, in particular, the use of illustrations when teaching philosophy to children. In the book that justifies the programme – *Philosophy in the Classroom* – the authors distinguish between children's yearning for *literal* meanings (scientific explanations), *symbolic* meanings (fairy-tales, fantasy and folklore), and for *philosophical* meanings, which they claim are neither literal, nor symbolic. This, they say, makes existing children's literature unsuitable for teaching philosophy to children. Their main criticism of existing children's literature is summed up in the following quote:

"...children's literature is generally written for children rather than by children... The parent who invents stories for children ... runs the risk of so indulging his own imagination as to pre-empt the child's imagination. We find delight in the creativity with which we express ourselves in such stories (and in the illustrations that go with them). But to what extent do we rob children of their creativity by doing their imagining for them? ...we have resisted putting illustrations in the children's books we publish because we feel that to do so is to do for children what they should do for themselves: provide the imagery that accompanies reading and interpretation... There is something unwholesome, even parasitical, in the thought of adults seeking to hold on to their own creativity by pre-empting the creativity of their own children" (Lipman et al. 1980, pp. 35, 36).

My criticism consists of two distinct, but related points. The first one is an exposition of the traditional theory of meaning presupposed in the programme. The second criticism relates to the confusion of equating 'imagination' with 'imagery'.

(a) The first criticism concerns the emphasis the programme puts on pupils' ability to reason better through acquiring increasingly sophisticated logical skills: 'Since to a great extent what a statement means consists in the inferences that can *logically* be drawn from it' (Lipman et al, 1980, p. 16; my emphasis), and, 'Inference is reasoning from what is given literally to what is suggested or implied' (ibid, p. 17). But what is it that makes 'what is given literally' meaningful to us? This seems to be the crux: do we receive *passively* literal input and then construct meaning by making logical connections, drawing inferences, etc.? Or do we *actively* construct meaning when the 'literal is

given to us' as, for example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest? And what is the role of the imagination at this basic level of giving meaning to our experiences?

Traditional semantics focuses only on the meaning of *words* and *sentences* – a reflection of some deeply rooted dichotomies in the history of Western thought: the split between mind and body, reason and imagination, science and art, cognition and emotion. Especially this last decade, in linguistics and philosophy, there is a growing demand for a theory of meaning in a broader sense – one that would embrace the narrower kind that tries to explain why only linguistic utterances are meaningful. Such a theory would need to explain why *anything*, whether it is an event, or an object, or a person, or a narrative, or a picture, is meaningful to a person (Johnson, 1987, p. 1). I will readdress this issue in the next section.

(b) This brings me to my second, but related criticism of the above quote. The authors reject the use of illustrations when teaching philosophy to children, on the grounds that, in order to be imaginative, children must, 'provide [themselves] the *imagery* that accompanies reading and interpretation' [own emphasis].

It is assumed that, presented with illustrations, people do not have to *actively* construe meaning, but instead are spoon-fed by ready-made products, which are creations of other people's imaginations. Meaning, in this view, is something that only words and sentences have.

The widely held belief that imagination is nothing more than the capacity to form images, has strong roots in the Platonic tradition, which has carved up 'reality' into the rational and the irrational. For example, the Greek *logos* was the term used not only for 'reason', but also for 'word' or 'speech'. Rational understanding takes place when we can 'articulate' it in words (Egan, 1988, p. 47).

In this view, children look (passively) at pictures in books. They are like the people in Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave' (see Chapter Three, Figure 2), forced to see mere shadows of what things are in 'reality'. Only contemplative, rational, theoretical knowledge gives us true knowledge (*episteme*), and this is the result of a disengaged, rational attitude, totally unaffected by our wishes, hopes, fears, desires, or intentions (Egan, 1988, pp. 47, 48). And so a tension was created between truth and art in Western culture. Philosophers in search for the truth rejected art as a means for arriving at, or showing the truth. This explains, for example, John Locke's contempt for figurative speech, which he saw as an enemy of the truth (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 189, 190).

Plato's epistemology explains his lack of respect for the artist, which seems analogous to the P4C Programme's disrespect for the authors of children's books. It is a direct result of cutting reality up into two different realms, that of *appearances*, and that of *reality*. Pictures in books belong to the world of appearances – they are corporeal, visible, and can be perceived by our senses. This contrasts with the realm of the intellect: invisible and unchanging. As Anthony Flew puts it:

"The former is the illusion to the latter's reality. the shadow to its substance. the falseness to its truth" (Flew, 1971, p. 66).

So, the faculty of the imagination can only *mimic* the truth. Images are mere copies of what things 'really' are. Creating pictures in books is an inferior activity, for these artists are interested only in what things *look* like, and not in what they *really* are (Egan, 1992, p. 14). For example, when David McKee painted pictures of the house in the picture book *Not Now, Bernard* (Figure 17), he was copying a particular house, which is far removed from *knowing* what a house is, that is, the knowledge we need in order to recognise something *as* a house.

This presupposes the metaphor of the mind as a 'mirror' (see Chapter Two). It is responsible for understanding imagination as imagery: "imagining as 'seeing' a mental image or quasi-picture with the 'mind's eye'" (Egan, 1992, p. 27). However, acquiring knowledge does not consist simply of

“mirroring what is outside the mind”, whether it is a picture, or a sentence, or a whole story. Its meaning has to be actively constructed, that is, fitted into one’s existing complex of meaning-structures (Egan, 1992, p. 51).

The more popular understanding of imagination as visualisation is imbedded in our inherited language – imagination as the faculty of the mind to create pictures ‘in’ the mind. However, imagination and rationality can no longer be understood as opposites, despite the engrained habit of thought, that the imagination, because it is not restricted within the boundaries of the ‘real’, is an enemy of truth and rationality. It is an equating of imagination with fantasy, that is, a freeing of oneself from reality and a creation of ideals. But, as pointed out by philosopher, Alan White, the imagination is the capacity to *think of* something possibly being so (Egan, 1992, p. 36). Imaginative rationality is thinking that is creative, flexible, passionate, and metaphorically structured.

Similar to my conclusion after my analysis of young children’s thinking in Chapter Five, I conclude here that current philosophical, educational, and linguistic research suggests the need for an enriched and expanded notion of rationality based on different assumptions about the mind – an issue I will return to in the next section.

This is especially important, because the philosophical assumption of PwC’s methodology is that the mind is not an empty vessel that must be “stuffed with information or content in order to be ‘educated’”. It assumes that children learn through active involvement with their environment (Lipman *et al*, 1980, p. 83). Intelligence is not something that “takes place in the ‘mind’, as if it were a separate ontological entity, but displays itself in all kinds of human behaviour” (Lipman *et al*, 1980, p. 162).

Yet, at the same time, the authors of *Philosophy in the Classroom* (including Matthew Lipman, creator of the P4C Programme) assume that children’s minds are *passive* when they look at illustrations – that they do not have to actively construct meaning when they see a picture, that the meaning is ‘given’ without having to think imaginatively. This position assumes a dichotomy between concept (the written word) and image (illustrations), and between rationality (meaning-making) and imagination (visualisation).

I conclude that the P4C Programme is philosophically inconsistent, since the theory of meaning implicit in the ‘community of enquiry’ approach assumes that meaning-making is a dynamic social, historical and linguistic *activity* (Sharp, 1991, p. 34). But this is inconsistent with the belief that children’s minds *passively* absorb the meaning of illustrations, without the need for the *activity* to fit the meaning of the picture into their meaning-structures.

P4C’s methodology and content (philosophical novels) have their philosophical heritage in two opposing discourses, one is modern, the other is post-modern. In traditional, academic philosophy we see a crisis of rationality and of the rational subject. Postmodernism has put this crisis on the agenda, with serious implications for what it means to think and the role of the imagination in making sense of whatever we read, see, or hear. Teachers of philosophy to children should put this crisis on their agenda too. The human embodiment of the rational subject has consequences, not only for *how* we teach philosophy, but also *what* we teach.

Many teachers value the imaginative and cognitive potential of existing children’s literature for the teaching of philosophy; and, as I will argue in the next section, there are good philosophical reasons for this.

5. Using existing (children's) literature

As seen in the last section, Lipman claims that educational material should *model* thoughtful children if the aim of education is to 'produce' thoughtful children, and he claims that therefore existing children's literature is excluded.

Lipman speculates that publishers and editors deliberately "exclude thoughtfulness from their depiction of fictional children... [because, in contrast to adults] ... children are thought to inhabit a world whose security is ensured by adults, a world into which the threat of problematicity does not intrude, with the result that, under such circumstances, active thinking on the child's part is hardly necessary" (Lipman, 1988b, p. 187). This is his justification for writing more appropriate stories which "portray the thought process itself as it occurs among children...[and]...depict fictional children giving thought to *their* lives as well as to the world that surrounds them (Lipman, 1988b, pp. 186, 187).

Lipman is not alone among academics in not taking children's literature seriously. Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, for example, has called children's literature "poetic rinsewater", since it does not encourage children to enquire, or to think for themselves (Kierkegaard in Lipman, 1993c).

Joseph Bristow argues that this criticism is unjustified, because "...the intellectual problems posed by the analysis of [for example] picture books are just as demanding as those to be found in the handful of worthy classics...", and he gives as an example Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (Bristow, 1993).

In the last two decades there have been significant changes in the kind of children's literature published – a development many philosophers are not aware of – which could explain why Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp have been so dismissive about the possibility of using children's literature when teaching philosophy to children. In their introduction to an article (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, pp. 268, 269), where the author, Ann Diller, analyses a passage from Salinger's "Down at the Dinghy", Lipman and Sharp comment:

"...the Salinger she analyzes is not a philosophical essay but a work of fiction. Ordinarily, this might be a very hazardous combination. But Diller handles the matter very deftly and, without doing violence to the aesthetic surface of the story, probes beneath that surface so as to get at the underlying network of emotional and moral relationships. It is likely that not many works of literature lend themselves as readily as this work to being demonstration pieces for purposes of moral education."

This is in stark contrast with Gareth Matthews who argues that it is not as much psychologists or educational theorists that are sensitive to philosophical thought in young children, but children's authors, or at least some of them (Matthews, 1980, p. 56). For decades Matthews has focused our attention on the philosophical themes in existing children's literature through his books and his regular column 'Thinking in Stories' in the journal *Thinking*.

Matthews has always very much focused on classical philosophical themes in existing children's books. By comparing the issues raised by professional adult philosophers and those raised by children, he has provided what he calls 'evidence' that children *can* do philosophy and enjoy doing it (Matthews, especially 1994, but also 1978, 1980, 1984, 1993a/b). For example, in Frank Tashlin's *The Bear That Wasn't*, he identifies at least four classical philosophical themes: 1) dreaming and scepticism; 2) being and non-being; 3) appearance and reality; and 4) the foundations

of knowledge (Matthews, 1993b, pp. 275-276). This, he maintains, is “...not at all unusual in children’s literature” (Matthews, 1993b, p. 276).

Matthews claims that the philosophical content of the stories he mentioned reflects a way of thinking that is natural to at least some of the children who read it or hear it (Matthews, 1993b, p. 278). Matthews’ message is that academics should not look down on children’s literature. Very good children’s poems and stories contain perplexities that “...demands to be worried over, and worked through, and discussed, and reasoned out, and linked up with each other, and with life” (Matthews, 1993b, p. 279).

Klaus Doderer argues that children’s authors not only recognise children’s ability to ask philosophical questions, but also provide answers in the form of stories.¹⁵ Doderer claims that stories give children a rich understanding of why people live their lives as they do and that it will help them to develop their own philosophy (Doderer, 1993, p. 40).

Eva Brann identifies the problem in defining exactly what it is about literature that makes it *children’s* literature. “Wherever we look”, she says, “it does not seem that any set of criteria infallibly picks out children’s literature (Brann, 1993, p. 289). Neither by looking who it is for¹⁶, nor by looking who it is written by¹⁷, nor by what it is about.¹⁸ Brann claims that ‘real’ authors believe in their story quite as much as they expect the readers to believe in it (Brann, 1993, p. 291). If authors are sentimental or preach, this is because they have lost “...in word mirror vision by which a grown up sees the child within observing the grown up without” (Brann, 1993, pp. 291, 292).

Michael Ende claims that the division of literature into two classes, one for grown ups and one for children, is a serious mistake (Ende, 1993, p. 282). He argues against the writing of specific children’s literature. This trend is only a recent phenomenon confined to Europe and America, and Ende believes that children do not wish to be consigned to a world separate from that of grown ups (Ende, 1993, p. 283). He continues by saying that this division between grown up world and child world is non-sensical. Ende explains:

“...there is no topic within human experience. the basic idea of which would not be interesting or understandable for children. It depends. however on the way in which one speaks about it. from the heart – or just from the mind” (Ende. 1993. p. 282).

So, whether a book is classified as a *children’s* book seems not to be relevant when judging its appropriateness for the teaching of philosophy to young children. Instead, the story’s potential to trigger off a philosophical enquiry should be focused upon.

Michael Ende refers to Milan Kundera, who has put forward the idea that what makes a novel philosophical is that it is an investigation into ‘existence’. It is when a narrative serves to illuminate man’s concrete being (Ende, 1993, p. 282). This criterion, rather than the identification of classical philosophical themes as Matthews does, would make many more existing stories suitable for philosophy with children.

Fairy tales are such philosophical tales (Opie in Lipman. 1993c, p. 275; Chesterton, 1993). Gilbert Chesterton claims that the heart of ethics is the heart of fairy tales in that peace and happiness exist only on some condition. In that sense, the morality encountered in fairy tales is like that in the legal system, he argues. As examples, Chesterton gives Cinderella who can wear a beautiful dress, but when she is not back on time things go wrong. Bluebeard’s wife can open all doors but one. Adam and Eve are put in a garden on condition that they do not eat one fruit (Chesterton, 1993, pp. 97-110). Similarly, “[t]he boy eating someone’s apples in someone’s apple tree should be a reminder that he has come to a mystical moment of his life, when one apple may rob him of all others”. He

concludes: “Not only can these fairy tales be enjoyed because they are moral, the morality can be enjoyed because it puts us in fairyland, in a world at once of wonder and war.”

Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre identifies the importance for concrete everyday experiences for (moral) philosophy, and how literature can help philosophy, in this respect, by adding, not only the concrete, but also the insight (MacIntyre, 1985). Florence Hetzler agrees that the union of philosophy and literature is the perfect blending of the abstract with the concrete, the theoretical with the practical.

Philosophy is seen, traditionally, as the epitome of abstract thinking. Underlying the primary school curriculum, on the other hand, is the Piagetian assumption that young children’s thinking is very concrete. So, it is not surprising that teaching philosophy to nursery and primary school children may sound impossible for many educators and educationalists.

However, as described in Chapters Four and Five, when philosophy is taught in communities of philosophical enquiry, there is a continuous movement between the concrete and the abstract. For example, during a philosophical enquiry, children will talk about the dreams they have had (the concrete), after which the group investigates what these dreams have in common, and what it is that makes a ‘dream’ a ‘dream’ – for example, as distinct from ‘reality’ (the abstract).

Also, not all educationalists agree that young children are not capable of abstract thinking. Like Vygotsky and Bruner, Egan argues that the early childhood curriculum should be not only full of concrete experiences, but, in order to make the concreteness meaningful, it is important to tie the concrete to particular abstract concepts. Also, the abstract should be continuously ‘tested’ by giving concrete examples.

Egan claims that the importance of this dialectical process for meaning-making has been ignored in education. Modern education uses knowledge of local environments and familiar experiences as the starting point (Egan, 1992, p. 72). For example, when teaching geography, teachers start with the children’s home, village, etc., gradually working ‘outwards’. This is the so-called ‘Expanding Horizons’ curriculum – i.e., children’s learning is organised in such a way that they move from “...the concrete to the abstract, from the known to the unknown, from active manipulation to symbolic conceptualization, from perception dominated thinking to conceptual freedom” (Egan, 1989, pp. 2, 4).

This curriculum design has been influenced by John Dewey (Dewey, 1978). In a sense, the IAPC novels, including Catherine’s McCall’s *Laura and Paul*, were written for the Deweyan child. Dewey observed that education should start with the experience children already have. Similarly, the novels start with children’s familiar everyday experiences and the fictional children are puzzled by them. For example, *Laura and Paul* opens as follows:

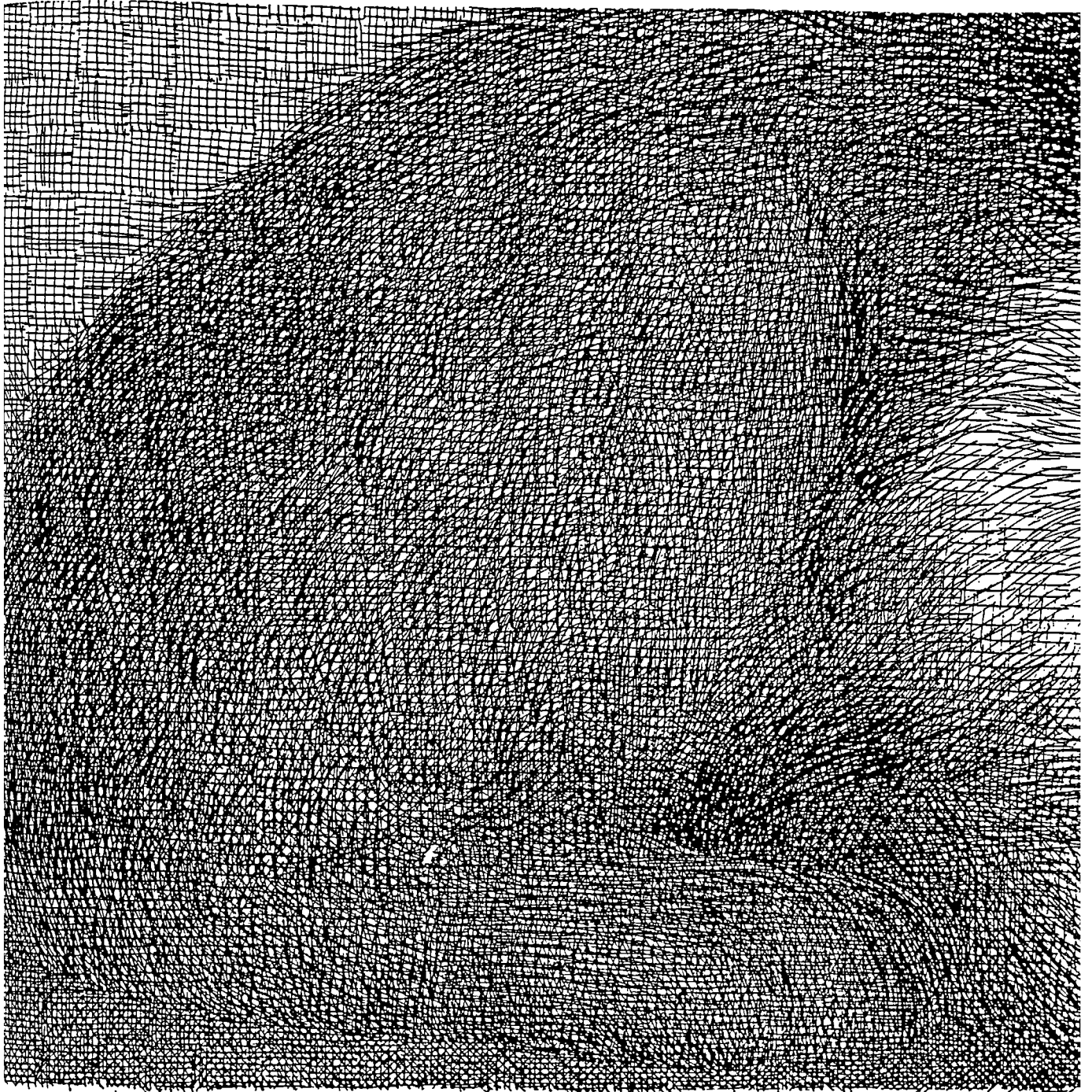
“Something was moving. Slowly. It was shiny and sort of round but long. Laura tried to make her eyes look harder. A raindrop? For a minute she wondered where it was. “Silly, it must be where you are” she said to herself. “But where am I?” (McCall. 1992. p. 1).

Like the IAPC novels, this specially-written philosophical novel presupposes the ‘expanding horizon curriculum’ in that it starts with the familiar. Raindrops are part of children’s everyday experience. Puzzling about them, is perhaps not. In any case, it is Cartesianism *par excellence* – the *self* as the starting point for any epistemological enquiry. What it senses and thinks is the ground for achieving objective knowledge.

A symbol for this kind of philosophy is the dog John Brown in Jenny Wagner’s *John Brown. Rose, and the Midnight Cat* (Figure 19). Faced with an ethical dilemma, John Brown – with his nose on

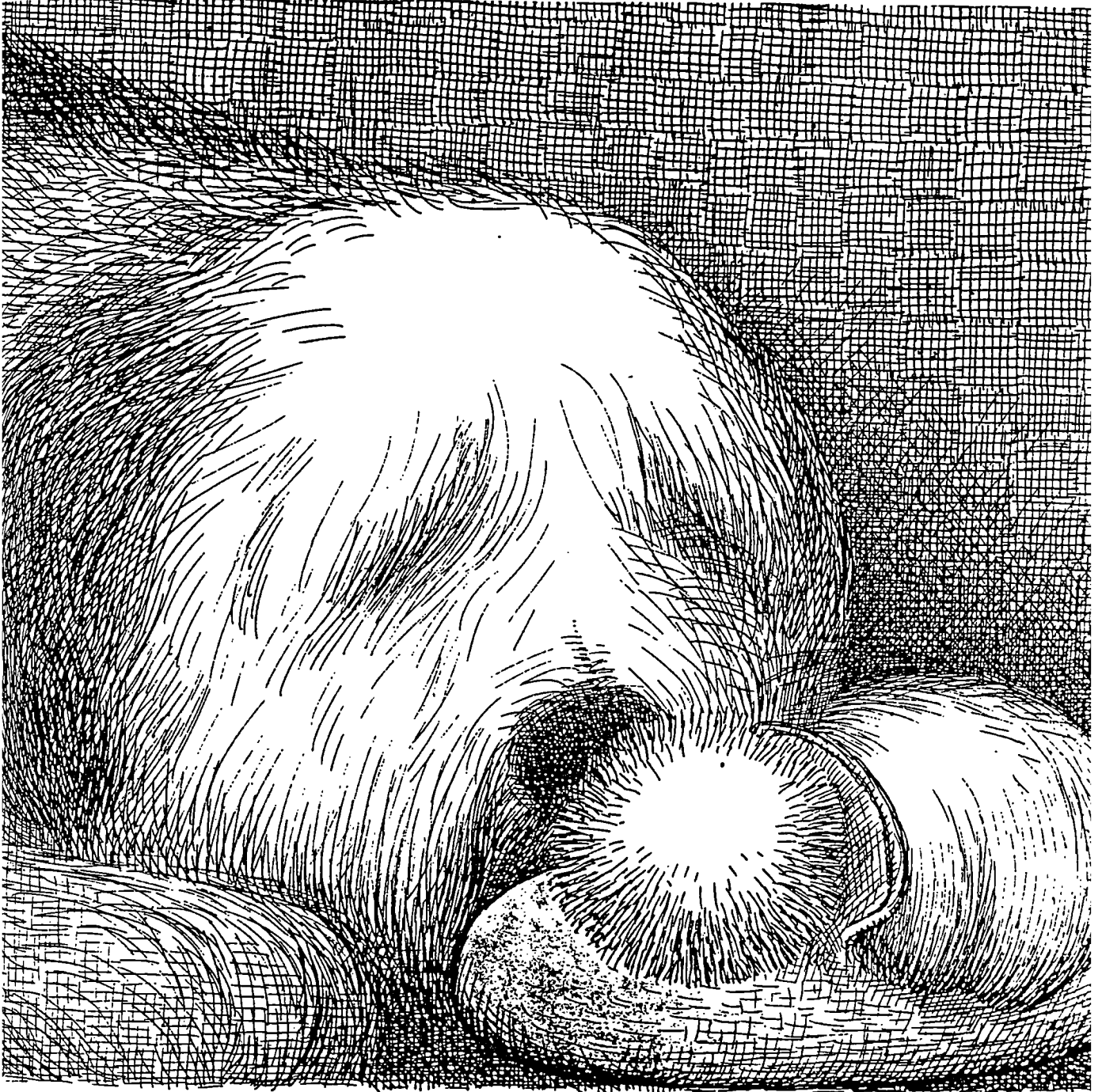
Rose's slipper – “thought all through lunch time and when supper time came, he was still thinking”. He symbolises the typical philosopher: male, European, middle-class, white, ably-bodied, and heterosexual. John Brown is thinking, that is, his *mind* (or brain) is thinking, but not (the rest of) his body. This leaving out of the body in reason and rationality, and therefore feelings, emotions, and imagination, is *disembodied* rationality, which is clearest expressed in Cartesian dualism, i.e., by mere *thinking* one knows one exists.

Figure 19



John Brown thought.
He thought all through lunch time

Figure 19 cont...



and when supper time came, he was still thinking.

The root of the problem of (always) starting with the familiar in curriculum design is a misinterpretation of John Dewey, according to Egan. Dewey's use of the concept 'experience' has been interpreted as the 'everyday practical world of children's lives', but then as *seen by the adult*. Egan argues, that, instead, we should focus on the world as the *child* sees it, i.e., 'transfigured by fantasy' (Egan, 1988, pp. 19, 20)! As a result, the imaginative side of children's thinking processes has been ignored (Egan, 1992, pp. 163, 164; 1989). The 'Expanding Horizons' curriculum assumes, according to Egan:

"...that what children can best make sense of begins with their immediate experience and works outwards... [but] we see students' imaginative engagement with reality beginning at the limits and borders. This strategy seems perfectly sensible: if we want to make sense of something, we begin by establishing its limits, finding out what is the context within which the knowledge exists" (Egan, 1989, p. 4).

Everyday experiences, Egan argues, are not unimportant for stimulating the imagination, but the starting-point should be as distant and different from students' everyday experience and environments as possible, since it is then that the imagination is most engaged (Egan, 1992, p. 73). Judith Graham would agree. She writes: "Children normally are attracted by images which reflect both their immediate world and unknown worlds to them" (Graham, 1990, p. 7). So, paradoxically, by focusing on the extremes and limits of experience, and the bizarre and the strange, the familiar world around us becomes more meaningful (Egan, 1992, p. 78).

It is this 'wider' context that many stories provide. They are often *unlike* our experience or environment – they are often bizarre and strange. Literature offers possible readings that are life-like, but which, at the same time, are different in order to highlight aspects of 'reality'. Anne Wilson argues that this difference "is part of the point: the familiar is made to seem strange, so that we see it again" (Wilson, 1983, p. 21).

In order to find out what it is that captures children's imagination through centuries and across cultures, Egan studied many common features in stories, fairy-tales, folklore, games, toys and television, and not surprisingly concluded that children are attracted to the spine-tingling, the spooky and the scary (Egan, 1992, p. 80). Such stories contain images that "Clothe inner instinctual needs" (Britain quoted in Graham, 1990). That emotional engagement which is central to the process of meaning-making is evidenced by the fact that children "...read and re-read such books as *Not Now Bernard* (David McKee), where the substitution of child by a monster goes unnoticed by the parents..." (Graham, 1990, p. 14-15).

What captures children's imagination are the kinds of stories in which the characters and settings are exotic, distant, or strange, that is, *unlike* their everyday experience; characters and narratives are built on binary opposites, such as life/death, nature/culture, strong/weak, brave/cowardly, bad/good, big/little, etc. (Egan, 1988, p. 25; Egan, 1992, p. 105).

So, concrete, everyday experiences become meaningful when they can be understood in terms of the abstract binary concepts present in so many children's stories. Whether or not these stories have been created by adults seems irrelevant. Children use those concepts to make sense of their experiences, although they do not know them in the sense that they can define them. But, they share that with adult philosophers, as, for example, St. Augustine, who asked: "What is time?: If I am not asked, I know; if I am asked, I know not" (St. Augustine quoted in Sim, 1992, p. 307).

I summarise that children's literature (with or without pictures) is ideal as a starting point for philosophical enquiry. These stories are often very different from children's everyday life, their knowledge and their experiences, and they feed on extremes and limits. The stories have to make sense, not only *logically*, but also *emotionally* (see Section 3); and the tension between binary opposites helps in this respect to make a story more meaningful and engaging to children.

This has far reaching implications for the teaching of philosophical thinking and reasoning. The stories used in philosophy class should contain abstract, binary concepts such as bad/good, big/little, brave/cowardly, and the kind of creatures that mediate between those opposites, such as ghosts (mediating between life and death), talking teddy bears (mediating between nature and culture), monsters (mediating between human beings and animals).

Using those kind of stories for philosophical enquiry has several advantages. Educational materials used for the teaching of philosophy, and in particular the P4C Programme, presupposes philosophy as a rational, cognitive activity, and, as such, neglects the emotional, imaginative 'side' of the child's mind. Stories containing abstract, binary concepts, inhabited by creatures that mediate between those opposites have an affective appeal to children, and thus helps to readdress this imbalance. The story content makes it possible for children to make their concrete, everyday experiences meaningful to them with this wider context of abstract concepts. For example, the abstract 'what is and is not possible' is poignantly present in all fantasy stories, and helps children to explore the limitations, not only of their teddy bears and model trains, but also of their own actions and thoughts.

I conclude that not just any stories, but particular kinds of stories, are most appropriate as a catalyst for philosophical enquiry. They should:

- engage the emotions in order to trigger off the imagination that renders reason its most powerful;
- deal with the extremes and limits of reality;
- cover binary opposites and creatures that mediate between them.

So far, I have not sufficiently addressed what the role is of illustrations in the process of meaning-making, and what its possible place could be in the teaching of philosophy to children. Could pictures on their own, or as an integral part of the story, be good stimuli for philosophical enquiry? I will focus on answering these questions in the next section.

6. Why picture books?

The dismissive attitude towards illustrations by the makers of the P4C Programme was rejected in Section 4. It is encouraging to notice that the attitude towards pictorial material is gradually changing. Within the last five years, especially written material for the teaching of philosophy to children has been published *with* illustrations (e.g., Cam, 1993b, 1994b), or using existing picture books (e.g., Murriss, 1992b; Sprod, 1993).

British educational psychologist Mike Lake is very much in favour of thinking skills programmes with a strong visual component, since our educational system fails more visually spatially intelligent children in that "...the minority group of 'significant over-visualisers' accounts for 44% of those whose reading and/or spelling levels fall into the bottom 5%." (Lake, unpublished).

Another justification Lake offers for promoting the use of visual material concerns the active engagement of imagination and the mode of thinking which Bruner classifies as 'narrative' (see Section 2). It is the kind of thinking displayed by the infants in the transcript in Chapter Five, Section 6, constructing hypotheses like little stories (in the same way as many scientific hypotheses are created, according to Bruner).

The educational importance of pictorial material is highly underestimated in the present curriculum. Illustrations are still seen by many educationalists as "Cobwebs to catch flies", that is, help to develop children's reading abilities. But as soon as they are literate, the illustrations gradually disappear out of books (Graham, 1990, pp. 8, 9; Moss, 1988, p. 4). Judith Graham strongly disagrees. She argues that the act of reading is not "...a mechanical unpicking of the written code and relies much more on what's in our heads already in terms of knowledge about language and life" (Graham, 1990, p. 13). Essential in the process of making sense of the written word is the ability to "picture it in your mind"¹⁹ This is widely recognised. But, like Lipman, many people believe that it is better that children do this themselves – to add illustrations would obstruct this process. Bruno Bettelheim, for example, says:

"Illustrated storybooks ... do not serve the child's best needs. The illustrations are distracting rather than helpful. Studies of illustrated primers demonstrated the pictures diverge from the learning process rather than foster it because the illustrations direct the child's imagination away from how he, on his own, would experience the story. The illustrated story is robbed of much content of personal meaning which it could bring to the child who applied only his own visual association to the story, instead of those of the illustrator" (Bettelheim quoted in Graham, 1990, p. 17).

It would follow that picture books, that is, books in which the text and the pictures are *interdependent*, are a poor second choice, since children will be prevented from creating their own images, and, as such, from creating their own meanings. Graham admits that with *some* picture books that could be the case, but cautions not to generalise. She gives examples of picture books (e.g., Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*), whereby text and pictures are so interdependent that it would be like "...giving a performance of a concerto without an orchestra" (Graham, 1990 p. 17).

Moreover, in some picture books there is a deliberate contradiction between text and illustrations, and as such essential to the meaning of the story. For example, in Jenny Wagner's *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat*, on one page we read "We don't need a cat, etc.", but on the picture we see mice running around (Figure 20).

Figure 20



'You don't need a cat,' he said.

Figure 20 cont...



'You've got me.'

But even without deliberate contradictions, readers are not empty of images when they open a picture book any more than they are empty of ideas when they open a text. Graham points out that, like words, pictures mean “because readers bring meaning to them...children filter art as they do all life experiences through their own perspectives” (Graham, 1990, p. 18).

Jane Doonan, who deals explicitly with the aesthetic quality of the pictures in picture books, explores the idea of how pictorial art, as she calls it, ‘communicates’ (Doonan, 1993). She points at the expressive powers of pictures which enables the book to function as an art object: “Something which gives form to ideas and to which we can attach our ideas” (Doonan, 1993, p. 7). Doonan argues that:

“By playing with the ideas provoked by a work of art, we create something of our own from it. And in that play we have had to deal with abstract concepts logically, intuitively and imaginatively” (Doonan, 1993, p. 7).

She points at the impossibility of contemplating pictures *passively*, and compares it to reading a poem by gazing at the printed page without reading it. Making sense of pictures requires an attitude that is “...dynamic, restless, searching, testing, less attitude than action: creation and recreation” (Doonan, 1993, p. 77). Graham argues that the addition of the illustrations gives access “...to deeper levels of meaning making” (Graham, 1990, p. 21). Through illustrations of a high quality, a great deal can be inferred about the character or personality of the characters in a book, Graham points out. As an example, she gives the snowman in Raymond Brigg’s *The Snowman* – a picture book entirely without text. Graham claims that the illustrations inform us that the snowman is: “polite, naive, incorrigibly curious, generous and imaginative, and we know this simply through the line of his mouth, the movement of his head and the use of his arms”. The illustrations make the reader care about the characters and it is only then that the reader will grow curious about what is going to happen to the characters next (Graham, 1990, p. 34). (Figure 21).

Through facial expression, bodily stance and clothing, the illustrator conveys information to the reader about the characters in the story (Graham, 1990, p. 43). And, because of the emotional involvement, the child will want to continue with the story.

Giving pictures meaning is not so much the process of finding out what they denote or literally represent, but, as Doonan points out, how the pictures “... express and metaphorically display what cannot be pictured directly – ideas, moods, abstract notions and qualities... we are interpreting all the time” (Doonan, 1993, p. 8). Doonan continues by saying that reading picture books means “*doing* something: being active rather than passive”. She explains:

“Unfortunately for art, there is a widely held notion, that visual contemplation somehow doesn’t engage our brains, but being able to make a “deeper meaning” from a picture, rather than just settling for impressions or for what it represents, involves us emotionally and cognitively. Since they cannot tell us directly or exactly what their science means, pictures present something of a puzzle, and our attitude to them must, above all, be open minded” (Doonan, 1993, p. 11).

I would like to urge PwC practitioners to take this call for open-mindedness to heart, especially when so many modern picture books set, in Doonan’s words, our hearts knocking and always set[s] our brains ticking” (Doonan, 1993, p. 12).

The main difficulty is that it would involve a change of engrained habits of thought as Nelson Goodman recognises, since “...we do not part easily with the idea that art is in some way more emotive than science or that the aesthetic experience is somehow emotive rather than cognitive”. He calls this a “domineering dichotomy”, which “causes us to place sensation, perception, inference.

conjecture, investigation, fact and trust one side and pleasure, pain, interest, satisfaction, or branches of spontaneous effective response on the other". It prevents us from appreciating sufficiently that in "an aesthetic experience the emotions function cognitively" (Goodman quoted in Doonan, pp. 77 & 78).

Since the Ancient Greeks, there has been this tension between truth and art in Western culture. Plato, for example, banned poetry from his utopian *Republic*. Plato's metaphor *Allegory of the Cave*²¹ has dominated Western philosophy ever since (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 189, 190).

Picture books contain powerful images with which to think (Chambers, 1985) and to feel. Through philosophical enquiry, children can play with the many ideas contained in those pictorial other-possible-worlds. And, as Doonan points out, the "more skilful we are, and the more ideas the picture book contains, the more the ideas go on bouncing. And in the process we create something of our very own" (Doonan, 1993, p. 21).

So, picture books are rich in thought-provoking, sensuous images and powerful ideas. Literature offers us possible readings that are life-like, but which, at the same time, are different in order to highlight aspects of 'reality'. This difference, according to Anne Wilson, is part of the point: the familiar is made to seem strange, so that we see it again (Wilson, 1983, p. 21). Much of the power of picture books lies in what they leave out: all the sorts of details of, for example, a 'real' family in David McKee's *Not Now, Bernard*, which makes Bernard's family look strange in comparison. But in making it extreme, by leaving out 'the real', one particular aspect of 'the real' – parental neglect – becomes more powerful.

Using picture books also offers easier access to ideas for a greater number of children, especially those with special educational needs.

I will now summarise the other advantages mentioned of using picture books for the teaching of philosophy (mainly of a practical and educational nature):

- they are pictorial (ideal for young readers, or children with reading problems);
- they are often funny and imaginative;
- they are short, entire stories (ideal for one-hour discussions).

I conclude that picture books are ideal as starting points for philosophical enquiry with children. Authors of good children's picture books have a rare talent of combining artistic skills with an ability to engage children's sense of fun and imagination. Text or illustrations or both are often, not only entertaining, but also very thought provoking. Picture books easily provoke philosophical discussions about philosophical concepts, such as, 'life', 'death', 'freedom', 'friendship', 'time', 'space', 'good' and 'bad'.

Picture books make stories readily accessible. Television may offer even easier access. Fortunately, many picture books are available in *audio*-visual format, which adds the following advantages to merely using the book:

- *all* children in large mixed-ability classes are easily involved (partly due to the added dimensions of sound and movement, and the larger size of the visual image);
- despite different reading abilities all children can share a story-experience;
- it is ideal for children whose intelligence is more visually orientated;
- children may get used to being more thoughtful about what they watch on television:

- it may encourage reluctant readers to pick up the book the video is made of, and read it by themselves afterwards.

The main disadvantage of using audio-visual material is that the speed in which ideas are presented to the viewer is determined by the speed of the medium – the child cannot slow it down, as s/he can with a book.

Some picture books are more stimulating for philosophical enquiry than others. In the next section I will suggest some criteria useful in the selection of suitable picture books. Also, philosophical reasons will be offered for why I believe picture books work so well as catalysts in communities of philosophical enquiry.

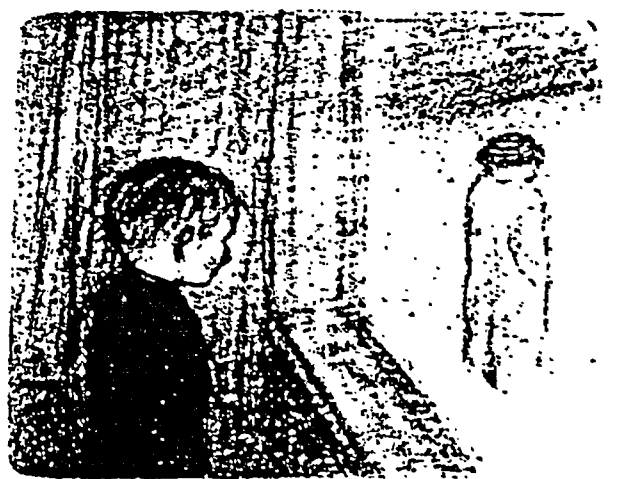
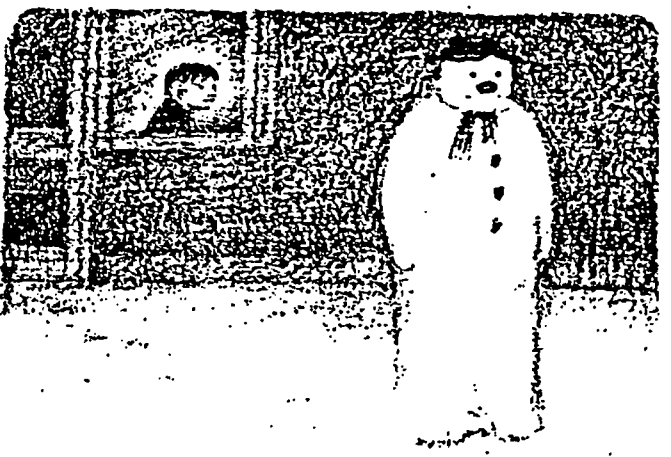
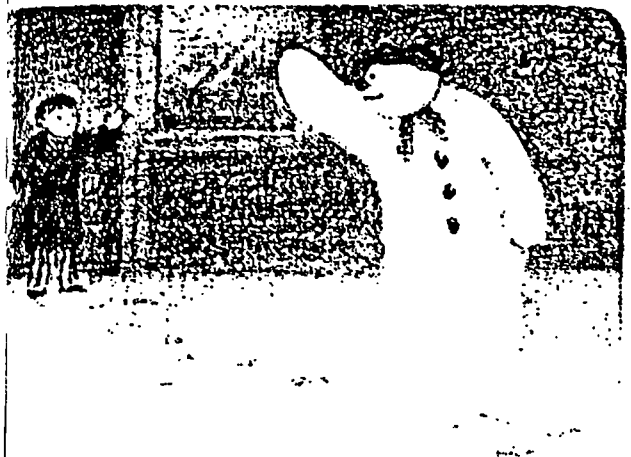


Figure 21

7. Which picture books are most suitable for philosophical enquiry?

Not all picture books trigger off philosophical enquiry as well as others do. I will try and point to some criteria that may be useful in selecting suitable picture books. In addition to the practical justification for the use of this material, I will also offer a more philosophical explanation of why picture books work so well.

Philosophical enquiry encourages children to make knowledge more meaningful to them. Therefore, when deciding whether a picture book is suitable it is important to think about the *human importance of the topics* the story raises, or in Kundera's words – it should be an investigation into human existence (see Section 5).

Philip Cam offers a useful criterion. He suggests that any story used for philosophical enquiry should *explore* “any general question, issue or problem that doesn't look as if it could be settled simply by observation, by calculation, or by reference to established fact” (Cam, 1995, pp. 23, 24). Another important criterion is that the story should function like “an axe that smashes the frozen sea within us” (see Section 3), because it is then that reason is at its most powerful.

The picture books chosen should also represent a wide variety of aesthetic styles, and represent different cultures, in order to give children a rich and varied source of ideas to think and feel with. Also, the aesthetic quality of the book enhances the power with which ideas are ‘transmitted’ – the better a book is written and/or illustrated, the more thoughts, feelings, and images the reader can work with.

To ensure that the starting point of the enquiry does not contradict the ethos of the community of enquiry, the picture book should be used to ‘trigger’ the enquiry only. Children themselves will generate their questions from the story, and the teacher should concentrate on helping the children to take the enquiry wherever it may lead, and resist the temptation to unnecessarily return to the text, or to the ideas, themes, or morals, the author deliberately put into the text, but which may be of no concern to the children.

Using picture books in this way is very different from the way in which they are normally, more didactically, used in the classroom, although things are changing. Judith Graham warns for example, that it is not the role of the teacher to do the children's ‘gap-filling’ for them. Teachers should not *tell* children what the story is about (Graham, 1990, pp. 114-115). Meanings will grow if, and only if, we give children plenty of time. “All the taped and videoed evidence is that teachers intervene too much and do not allow literature to do its own work” (Graham, 1990, p. 115).

For philosophical enquiry, picture books work really well when they contain plenty of exploratory dialogue. Such dialogue could be between children and adults, or, as many PwC practitioners prefer, between children and their peers – as an appropriate *model* for the kind of dialogue one tries to establish in communities of enquiry. However, I believe that in picture books the role of another child or an adult is often taken over by all sorts of other creatures, such as talking animals, monsters, witches, robots, or teddy bears.

To illustrate this, here are two examples. The first one is *Sam's Worries*, a delightful picture book, by Maryann MacDonald. The story is about a little boy, called Sam, who is worried about everything. He is worried about volcanoes under his house, losing his library books, cobras in his garage, dinner ladies being witches, and he is scared of vampires, monsters, and bogeymen. On top of all of that, he is also worried that he might not go to heaven, since he often steals biscuits from the biscuit tin. His mother tries to reassure him, but he is not easily fooled – the problem with mothers, he tells his bear, is that they “don't know everything” (Figure 22).

Figure 22



In dialogue with his bear, Sam rejects his mother's reassurances by giving good reasons (perhaps cobras only live in India – that is what his Mum had said – but they “might swim here from India”, etc.). This story gives excellent opportunities to explore epistemological questions, such as, ‘How do we know our beliefs are true?’, ‘What is knowledge?’, ‘What is truth?’.

The second example, is the dialogue between a man and a dinosaur in Michael Foreman's *Dinosaurs and all that Rubbish*. Living out his dream to reach a star, a man builds a rocket and leaves the earth. In the meantime, the dinosaurs come back to life and tidy up the mess he has left behind him. Disappointed that there is nothing to admire on the star – no trees, no flowers, no grass — he returns to earth, without realising it is the same planet he once left behind him, for the dinosaurs have since turned it into a paradise. Then the following dialogue emerges:

“At last,” he said, “I have found my paradise.”

“Whose paradise?” said the biggest dinosaur.

“Mine,” said the man.

“RUBBISH!” said the dinosaur.

“What do you mean by rubbish?” said the man. “You can't talk to me like that. Why, with a head as small as yours you can't possibly have enough brain to look after this star.”

“Our heads are the same size,” said the dinosaur, “but my heart is much bigger than yours. If you had been ruled by your heart instead of your head you would not have destroyed this paradise before.”

After discovering the planet he so much admires is Earth, he asks for a small part back (Figure 23). The dinosaur replies: “No, not a part of it, but all of it. It is all yours, but it is also all mine. Remember that. This time the earth belongs to everyone, not parts of it to certain people but all of it to everyone, to be enjoyed and cared for.”

Figure 23

"I destroyed it?" said the man. "You mean this is *Earth*?"

"Yes, it is," said the dinosaur.

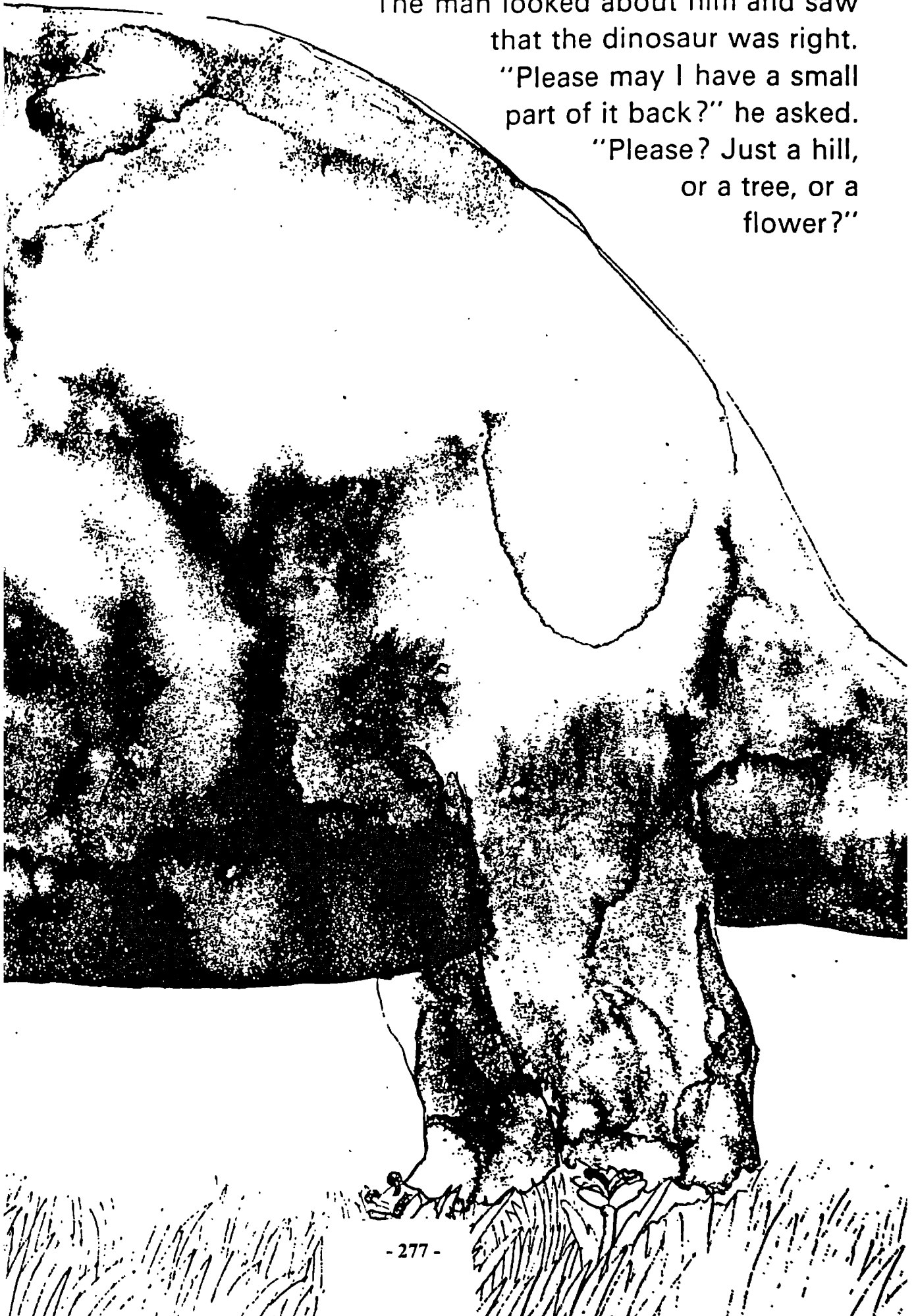
"But it can't be," said the man.

"It is," said the dinosaur.



Figure 23 cont...

The man looked about him and saw that the dinosaur was right. "Please may I have a small part of it back?" he asked. "Please? Just a hill, or a tree, or a flower?"



The dialogue invites the exploration of many philosophical questions and problems, some of which are central to environmental ethics. For example, ‘Who does the earth belong to?’, ‘What does it mean to be ruled by your head instead of your heart?’, ‘Why do we have private property?’, ‘What is ‘rubbish?’’, ‘How do we resolve conflicting interests?’, ‘Can I do anything I like with what is mine (e.g., land, toys, pets, children)?’.

The dialogical structure of such picture books is helpful as a model for a community of enquiry. But exploratory dialogue should not be understood as a *necessary* criterion for deciding the appropriateness of a stimulus for philosophical enquiry, since it would exclude excellent picture books, or pictures that easily could stimulate powerful dialogue, as, for example, in Anthony Browne’s *Zoo* (Figure 14).

As far as the *content* is concerned, like all literature, picture books are saturated with *implicit* ideology (Hunt, 1992; Stephens, 1992) – children’s authors of course express (unknowingly) the social, moral and political values of their society. Peter Hunt argues that all literature is “necessarily saturated by the larger workings of the culture out of which any author writes” (Hunt, 1992). For example, most picture books display a middle class environment, hardly any featuring of ethnic minorities, and two thirds of the main characters in the illustrations are male (Graham, 1990, p. 116).

John Stephens adds that ideology is also sometimes *explicitly* present in children’s literature. This is, for instance, the case when the authors are deliberately trying “to mould audience attitudes into desirable forms” (Stephens, 1992, p. 3), as, for example, is the case with picture books specially written to combat implicit ideology (environmental pollution, and gender, age, or race bias). Graham rejects those “formula stories” about “children of mixed race marriages whose mothers work and whose unemployed fathers happily child-mind, awaiting the West Indian milkman and entertaining the Asian neighbour before mother arrives home bearing a present of a non-sexist doctors’ dressing up outfit” (Graham, 1990, p. 116). The main problem for children is the lack of possible identification with the fictional characters. The story will become so unlike their everyday experiences that it runs the risk of being irrelevant and meaningless to them, because conventional sexual stereotyping is still an intricate part of the fabric of everyday life.

However, sexism can be made a theme in picture books in such a way that the stories are still extremely powerful and meaningful by triggering children’s imagination. For example, two popular picture books with this theme are Anthony Browne’s *Piggybook*, and Babette Cole’s *Prince Cinders*. In *Piggybook*, the house gradually turns into a pigsty after Mum has left husband and two sons.(Figure 24).

In *Prince Cinders*, the prince is turned by the fairy into a hairy monster by mistake. When arriving at the ball, he is too big to be allowed in, and when arriving at the bus stop to return back home, the clock strikes midnight. A princess waiting at the bus stop mistakenly believes the hairy monster has been scared away (rather than turned back into) by the prince, and marries him. (Figure 25).

Figure 24

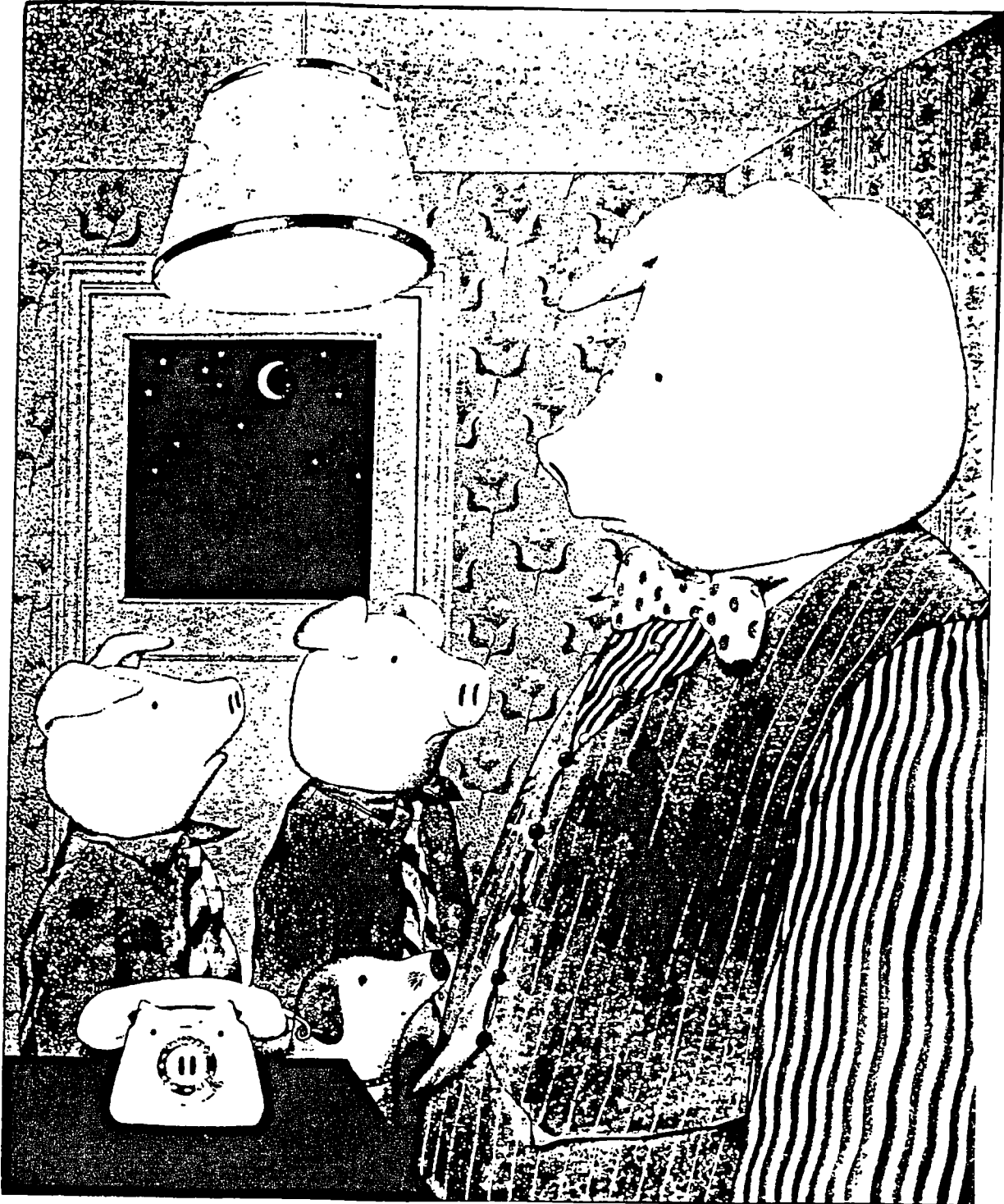


Figure 25



When his work was done he would sit by the fire and wish he was big and hairy like his brothers.

Both stories, children find amusing and thought provoking. This is because the settings are strange, distant, and magical. The stories are built on binary opposites, such as big/little, bad/good, hairy/bald, dirty/clean, love/hate, human/animal, and the creatures (princes, fairies, monsters, talking pigs) mediate between these opposites. It is in this way that stories, paradoxically, *can* be unlike everyday experiences, but still be meaningful.²² The more meaningful, the better they have been written.

This position 'bridges' the schism between the so-called "child people", who emphasise a book's social and political values – or, to the so-called "book people", who emphasise more the literary merit of a book. A book will bring about social or political change even more so, when children's imagination is taken into account, and the story is well written and illustrated.

Another way of dealing with ideology in picture books is to accept its inevitable presence, so rather than trying to control it, one could try to understand it, and encourage others – including children – to be aware of it and to question it (Hollindale, 1988, p. 10). Often stories tempt the reader to draw certain morals from a story. In philosophy class one can ask questions – as a facilitator – to encourage children to make up their own minds, and to possibly disagree with implicit assumptions of the story.²³

I summarise that when deciding whether a picture book is suitable for philosophical enquiry, asking the following questions may be helpful:

- What is the human importance of the topics the story raises?
- Can the issues, questions or problems raised, be solved simply by observation, calculation, or by referring to facts?
- Is the story like an axe that smashes the frozen sea within us?
- What is the aesthetic quality of the book (pictures and text)?
- Is there plenty of exploratory dialogue?
- What is the implicit and explicit ideology in the story?
- Is the story representative of a particular culture?
- Is the setting exotic, strange, or bizarre, and do the characters mediate between the extremes and limits of our experience (binary opposites)?
- Does the story try to teach certain morals?

8. Other reasons for using picture books and the importance of metaphors.

Judith Graham argues that picture books may be especially appropriate for very young children. She claims that with certain picture books, such as John Burningham's *Granpa*, adults can understand certain aspects of the story only "if one is close to the world of the child" (Graham, 1990, p. 112). This is because children use their own experience of imaginative play when interpreting illustrations in picture books. Graham explains:

"The life of the imagination, of make-believe, which merges with reality so easily in childhood, gives direct access to the understanding of: for instance, the double page spread in Granpa where the Grandfather's quite reasonable assumption that the brown soil which he is 'eating' is chocolate ice-cream draws severe correction from the small girl: 'It's not chocolate, it's strawberry'" (Graham, 1990, p. 112) (Figure 26).

From the fact that, in pretend play, the girl is using brown soil, Granpa is tempted to imagine that he is eating *chocolate* ice-cream; but, within the child's imaginary world, there is no logical reason why the brown soil cannot be strawberry ice-cream.

Figure 26

This is a lovely chocolate ice-cream.



- Claire: Bernard wanted to be eaten by the monster, because his Mum and Dad were ignoring him all the time.
- Russell: He did suicide, because nobody loved him. He thought: That's it...I'm killing myself.
- Anthony: He could have done it in a less painful way! (laughter)
- KM: What does that mean: suicide?
- Kelly: Suicide means that you really want to kill yourself, 'cos something went wrong really badly.
- Phillip: Committing suicide is actually when you kill yourself, and he didn't kill himself, because he got eaten. Also...suicide is against the law, but there is no point, because when you're dead, how can you be punished?
- KM: Is killing yourself always suicide?
- Gemma 2: Killing yourself isn't always suicide, because you might be a baby or something fiddling with electricity without your Mum seeing... you might not want to die, but you might electrocute yourself, without yourself want to die.
- Kelly: I agree with Gemma 2, because you can have a car accident and you can get killed, and we wouldn't know whether you crashed yourself into a brick wall.
- Darren: Bernard might have been pretending, making it up...to get attention.

In a very short space of time, the children raised some interesting philosophical issues, the sort of conceptual distinctions adults are introduced to when they do a philosophy course at university (see, e.g.: Campbell & Collinson, 1988). Gemma distinguished between 'suicide' and 'killing yourself': those who commit suicide kill themselves, but not all self-killings are suicide. Suicide is a deliberate or intentional self-killing (Campbell & Collinson, 1988, p. 1). Phillip, on the other hand, emphasised the special kind of killing involved. In suicide, killer and killed are the same, but in Bernard's case it was the *monster* who killed Bernard, so Bernard did *not* commit suicide.

For Phillip, the means of killing yourself was more relevant for calling a self-killing suicide, than intending your own death, for Bernard put himself knowingly in the position of being eaten. Darren questioned whether Bernard really did believe he was going to be eaten up. In that case Bernard's death would have been the *result* of his going into the garden, and not Bernard's *aim*. Phillip also pointed out the absurdity of making suicide against the law. The essence of legal systems is to enforce punishment, so what's the point when you are dead? Of course this does not solve the moral issue, whether suicide is morally reprehensible or not.

This short transcript shows how children discuss philosophical issues when they interpret a story *literally*. They created their own philosophical problem, because they could not understand why Bernard went into the garden if he knew the monster would eat him up.

My findings stand in sharp contrast with those reported by Gareth Matthews (Matthews, 1992, p. 1). He argues that most children in his sample of six to eight year olds instinctively recognise that *Not Now. Bernard* is a fable, for the simple reason that they do not ask questions such as 'Did the monster really eat Bernard up?', or 'Why didn't the mother see that it was really the monster in bed

Similarly, in the delightful book, *Mister God, This is Anna*, Anna's teacher asks her to do a sum:

'You have seven sweeties in one hand and nine sweeties in your other hand. How many sweeties have you got altogether?'

'None,' said Anna. 'I ain't got none in this hand and I ain't got none in this hand, so I ain't got none, and it's wrong to say I have if I ain't.'

Brave, brave Miss Haynes tried again.

'I mean pretend, dear. pretend that you have.'

Being so instructed, Anna pretended and came out with the triumphant answer, 'Fourteen.'

'Oh no, dear,' said brave Miss Haynes, 'you've got sixteen. You see, seven and nine make sixteen.'

'I know that,' said Anna. 'but you said pretend, so I pretended to eat one and I pretended to give one away, so I've got fourteen.' (Fynn, 1974, pp. 122-123).

This imaginative playfulness is so characteristic of young children, when making sense of what they hear, read, or see. Graham believes that their imagination better equips young children to understand those kind of illustrations – in two different ways. Influenced by Vygotsky, she believes that children learn to “sever thought from object” (indirect application of imaginative play), and then act according to the meaning, so that two-dimensional pictures in a book (e.g., brown soil), can “mean” something else (e.g., *strawberry* ice cream) – just as Vygotsky's stick can “mean” a horse (direct application of imaginative play). I agree with her that this needs further investigation (Graham, 1990, p. 113).

It is especially important, since imaginative playfulness also manifests itself in children's thinking when interpreting (aspects of) stories. In my experience, they very often interpret stories *literally*. Not because they are not capable of symbolic readings, but because they stick to the rules of what they see as a game. The story presents another possible world, and they immerse themselves in the story with the help of their imagination. Within this context they take the process of making sense of what they see or read seriously, as if they were playing a game, and point out physical (e.g., animals cannot talk), or logical impossibilities (e.g., you cannot be in two places at once).

To illustrate this, I give a short transcript of a whole class of mixed-ability nine-year olds discussing the story *Not Now, Bernard* written by David McKee (see also Chapter Four, Section 2). In this story, Bernard's parents are too preoccupied with their own affairs to give Bernard any attention. His questions are constantly greeted with the same standard response “Not now, Bernard”, without even looking up. Even when Bernard warns: “There is a monster in the garden, and it's going to eat me!”.

After ten minutes or so in the dialogue, one pupil introduced the topic of suicide – though not explicitly at first – in the following way:

Gary: He said that there is a monster outside that wants to eat me, so he wouldn't have gone to the monster.

KM: That's a very good point. If Bernard knew he was going to be eaten by the monster. why did he go in the garden?

Nicholas: I agree, why did Bernard actually want to be eaten by the monster?

Phillip: Because his Mum and Dad don't want him, because they don't pay any attention to him.

Gemma 1: They are not listening to him.

instead of Bernard?’ Matthews concludes that children seem willing to interpret the story in a symbolic way.

Throughout the primary age range, my pupils did *not* ask the latter question, because the mother could not – literally – see that it was not Bernard, but the monster who was lying in his bed. They asked, for example: “Why did she have her eyes closed?”. As far as the first question is concerned – they accepted the fact that the monster ate Bernard up, and wondered why he wanted to be eaten up.

The children in the above transcript took the information in the book seriously, but in a playful manner. They knew the story was not ‘real’ life – expressed in remarks like: “It’s just a story”, or “They did that, ‘cos otherwise there would be no point to the story”. However, *within* the context of it just-being-a-story, they were very capable of expressing their wonder in philosophical questions.

Their questioning was also very logical. A picture in the book (Figure 27) shows the monster and Bernard as two physical entities at the same time. How could Bernard *turn* into a monster, when there were two entities and not one! This logical impossibility was the major obstacle preventing my pupils from interpreting the story symbolically.

Figure 27



"Hello, monster," he said to the monster.

The tension between fact and fiction makes picture books such effective stimuli for philosophical enquiry – the tension between what is possible or real, and what is not. It is as if, in the dialogues, the children would like to have confirmed what they think they know. Other examples include, children questioning how wooden dolls can think with a wooden brain (when discussing Pat Hutchins' *Changes*), how pigs can sit on clouds even when they are in love (so they enquired into the essence of water after watching Helme Heine's *Pig's Wedding*), and how chickens can lay square eggs (so they discussed whether it was in the chicken's genetic make-up to lay oval shaped eggs after reading *The Most Wonderful Egg* by the same author).

Do my findings support Plato's claim in *The Republic* that:

"Children cannot distinguish between what is allegory and what isn't, and opinions formed at that age are usually difficult to eradicate or change; it is therefore of the utmost importance that the first stories they hear shall aim at producing the right moral effect?" (Plato quoted in Sim, 1992, p. 16).

I will argue that they do not, because the distinction between the literal and the symbolic reading of texts is not as straightforward as most people think. Feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti calls us all "epistemological orphans" (Braidotti, 1991, p. 2), in the sense that *post-modern* wo/man feels epistemologically (how we know) and ontologically (what we know) insecure about how it is that words, sentences, and narratives have meaning to the listener or reader. This in turn is related to the dichotomy between mind and body, and between mind and 'external' reality – a relationship we are not sure about anymore either.

As I have shown in Chapter Two, much of our so-called literal language is metaphorically structured by 'deep dualism', that is, we understand the mind as if it were a physical entity. The consequence of this dichotomy is that rationality is associated with what 'happens in' the mind in relation to what is 'out there' ('reality'), therefore with truth. It is superior to imaginative thinking, which, since Plato, has been associated with the body, that is, perception (imagery) and feeling, and therefore with art.

As a result, Mark Johnson argues "...both nonpropositional and figuratively elaborated structures of experience are regarded as having no place in meaning and the drawing of rational inferences" (Johnson, 1987, p. xxv). Pictures in books are non-propositional, and this description of a 'modern' point of view could explain the resistance I have encountered, when using such material for teaching philosophy to children.

Children's imaginative way of thinking – often associated with the fantastical, the fanciful and the emotional – should not be seen as inferior to logical, rational thinking. Instead it should be encouraged. I have already quoted Bruner, who points out the importance of the imagination for creating scientific hypotheses, i.e., 'little mini-stories'.

Egan argues that the imagination is: "...one of our major tools in the pursuit of objective knowledge, and indeed as establishing the very conditions of objectivity" (Egan, 1992, p. 59). He refers to the "imagination's capacity to inhibit, as it were, the external objects with which it engages, to think what it might be like to be stone or wood being carved", that is, the historian, scientist, mathematician, sculptor, "...becomes in a curious sense one with the materials he or she is working" (Egan, 1992, p. 59).

Ridding ourselves of mind-body dichotomies – understanding our-selves as Heidegger's *Dasein*²⁴ – would mean that we can 'extend' ourselves imaginatively into the objects and other selves 'out there'. In that sense, the imagination functions, as Herder, put it "... as the knot that ties body and mind together" (Egan, 1992, p. 22, 166).

Underlying the distinction between literal and figurative readings of texts is 'deep dualism', because it assumes that there are words ('inside') that correspond to how things 'really' are ('out there'), that without this assumption there is no truth.

However, if even literal language is metaphorically structured then it becomes an educational imperative to stimulate and encourage imaginative thinking. The imagination is the faculty that enables us to see one kind of experience in terms of another, and therefore, as metaphor. As Aristotle observed:

"But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars"
(Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459a).

The practical implications for education are to raise awareness of the metaphors we live by as described in Chapter Two, and the subsequent assumptions about children's thinking. Also, it is urgent to emphasise the importance of asking, and trying to answer, philosophical questions like 'What is mind?', and to encourage pupils and educators to construct their own new metaphors.

9. Summary and conclusion

After mentioning other possible classroom stimuli for philosophical enquiry with children, I have argued that stories are by far the best educational material. The reason is the way we live our lives through the *life-is-a-story* metaphor. Stories help us fit events in meaningful, coherent wholes. Similarly we create ourselves, others, and the world we live in, by creating our own (sane) life story. As such the mind is understood metaphorically as the narrative mind.

Story-creation is also fundamental to being a moral agent, and therefore, for moral education. Each person has to know what story they are living out, and possibly create another they prefer more.

When making sense of stories, the whole person is involved – not only the rational, logico-mathematical, but also the affective, metaphorical, imaginative ‘part’ of the mind. The imagination gives reason its flexibility, vividness, and energy, and the imagination is more stimulated by content that engages children’s emotions than by content that does not engage their emotions. I concluded, therefore, that the most appropriate educational material for the teaching of philosophy is indeed stories, since they engage the emotions, and it is then that reason is at its most powerful.

I have described the most widely used educational material for the teaching of philosophy to children – the Philosophy for Children Programme. The stimuli of this programme are specially-written philosophical novels in which not only classical philosophical ideas, themes and questions have been ‘injected into’ the text, but also the community of enquiry structure is modelled by the fictional characters, who unlike ‘normal’ children are ‘thinkers’ and not ‘doers’.

The P4C Programme is a *logically sequenced* curriculum. The way the novels have been sequenced, but also the organisation and content of the instructional manuals for teachers that accompany the novels, make the P4C Programme *pedagogically* inconsistent. Teachers sometimes use the manuals didactically, so I have urged more focus on adequate training of teachers, and not so much on the use of certain specially-written material.

Not only is the P4C Programme pedagogically inconsistent, it is also *philosophically* inconsistent. The programme makers explicitly reject the use of pictorial material, since it amounts to spoon-feeding children with ready-made projects without the need left for children to do their own imagining. The theory of meaning implicit in the ‘community of enquiry’ approach assumes that meaning-making is a dynamic social, historical and linguistic *activity*. However, this is inconsistent with the belief that children’s minds *passively* absorb the meaning of illustrations, without the need for the *activity* to fit the meaning of the picture into their meaning-structures. I have argued that we have to actively construe meaning, not only when reading words, but also when looking at a picture, or listening to sounds. Also, the imagination is more than the capacity to form images. It is not an enemy of truth, but the faculty that makes rational thinking creative and flexible, since it is the capacity to think of something possibly being so. Imaginative thinking – so strongly present in young children, as shown by the transcript of a dialogue – complements rational thinking, and should therefore be stimulated and encouraged.

Finally, I have criticised the P4C Programme on the grounds that the *content* of the philosophical novels neglects the imaginative side of the child’s mind. Children’s imagination is not stimulated by the everyday and the immediate, but by the extremes and limits of experience, by binary opposites such as life and death, nature and culture, bad and good, and by characters that mediate between those extremes, such as monsters, talking teddy bears, giants and witches. Children’s literature – including picture books – meets those criteria and is therefore ideally suited for the teaching of philosophy to children.

The kind of picture books used should be an investigation into existence. Philosophy and literature is a perfect blending of the concrete and the abstract, the theoretical and the practical. This blending

reflects the dialogical movement of philosophy, when taught through communities of enquiry. Such a movement is essential to make both the abstract and the concrete more meaningful. In contrast, underlying the existing educational system is the assumption that curriculum design should (always) start with the concrete. This is based on a misinterpretation of what Dewey meant with 'experience'.

The kind of stories most appropriate as a catalyst for philosophical enquiry should:

- make sense not only logically, but also emotionally;
- engage the emotions in order to trigger off the imagination that makes reason at its most powerful;
- cover binary opposites and creatures that mediate between them, since they engage the emotions the most;
- deal with the extremes and limits of reality.

Picture books meet those criteria, and they also have the practical, educational advantages that they are pictorial (ideal for young readers, or children with reading problems), often funny and imaginative, and that they are short, entire stories (ideal for one-hour discussions).

Some picture books are more suitable than others for philosophical enquiry. I have summarised the questions a teacher can ask when deciding on the suitability of a particular book.

The added advantages of using videos of picture books I summarised as follows:

- *all* children in large mixed-ability classes are easily involved (partly due to the added dimensions of sound and movement, and the larger size of the visual image);
- despite different reading abilities all children can share a story-experience;
- it is ideal for children whose intelligence is more visually orientated;
- children may get used to being more thoughtful about what they watch on television;
- it may encourage reluctant readers to pick up the book the video is made of, and read it by themselves afterwards.

By examining further children's imaginative playfulness, I concluded that there is another reason why picture books are such effective stimuli for philosophical enquiry, and that is because of the tension between fact and fiction – between what is possible or real, and what is not possible or real. The pupils I taught tend to interpret stories literally. However, in Chapter Two, I pointed out that what we call 'literal' language is, in fact, metaphorically structured.

Only by encouraging children and adults to develop the imaginative, metaphorical 'side' of their minds, can we rid ourselves of deep dualism. This means incorporating, accepting and respecting both 'sides' of the mind, without one being inferior to the other. Some educational changes will have to be made in order to understand our-'selves' holistically as *Dasein*.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Seven

¹ For example, in January and February 1997, a lively discussion on the possible use of picture books as starting points for philosophical enquiry with children took place on the Internet P4C list.

² The idea of using a cauliflower, I have taken from Dutch philosopher, Karel van der Leeuw.

³ The idea of using an Esher print was one of my student's – Mark Scofield. For more ideas, see: Robert Fisher. *Pictures for Thinking*. Oxford, Nash Pollock, 1994.

⁴ Children need to act stories out much more than adults. The reason being, according to Robert Louis Stevenson, that children experience stories in a different way than adults do. He points out that adults can read a book, or listen to a story "...all the while sitting quietly by the fire or lying prone in bed". As opposed to a child, who when a story, for example, comes to "...fighting, he must rise, get something by way of a sword and have a set-to with a piece of furniture, until he is out of breath. When he comes to ride with the King's pardon, he must destroy the chair, which he will also harry and belabour and on which he will so furiously demean himself, but the messenger will arrive, if not bloody with spurring, at least fiery red with haste. If this romance involves an accident upon a cliff, he must clamber in person upon the chest of draws and fall bodily upon the carpet, before his imagination is satisfied". Stevenson explains this difference by pointing at children's incomplete knowledge and experience. By trying things out bodily, the child learns what people feel in certain circumstances. Stevenson concludes: "And so it is, that although the ways of children cross with those of their elders in a hundred places daily, they never go in the same direction nor so much as lie in the same element." From: Robert Louis Stevenson. "Child's Play"; In: Lipman, Matthew (ed). *Thinking, Children and Education*. Montclair. Kendall/Hunt, 1993, pp. 267-273.

⁵ Written rock music can be used like poems as a starting point for philosophical enquiries. They have a great appeal to children. Take, for example, Pink Floyd's *Another Brick in The Wall*:

"I don't need no arms around me
I don't need no drugs to calm me
I have seen the writing on the wall
Don't think I need anything at all
No don't think I need anything at all
All in All it was all just bricks in the wall
All in All you were all just bricks in the wall."

⁶ Visiting PwC facilitator from Brazil, Rigoni Soares, gave this as an example of his work when visiting the Centre for Philosophy with Children in December 1993.

⁷ This starting point was the idea of one of my students at a Level 2 course at the Centre for Philosophy with Children, December 1994.

⁸ See Section 3 of this chapter.

- 9 This argument is often used against the use of non-specially written materials. I have argued, however, that all teachers of philosophy to children *should* not only have a background in philosophy, but also adequate training in philosophical enquiry, in which case the argument is superfluous.
- 10 See Chapter Five, Sections 6 and 7.
- 11 See, for example, my comments on my questioning the infants ignore, in Chapter Five, Section 6.
- 12 Apart from practical, and financial constraints (e.g., the difficulty to finance a visiting philosopher on a regular basis), my main objection to her policy is that ‘normal’ teachers are less likely to change their habitual, more authoritarian and less questioning style when someone else is teaching philosophy. Philosophy with children will work only when teacher’s break old patterns of behaviour and teaching, and become more sensitive to the philosophical – it will change them significantly as persons, and therefore modify their teaching. If classroom teachers have had sufficient training in philosophical enquiry with children, either in-service, but preferably pre-service, the benefits for teacher and child will not be restricted to the one hour philosophy lesson a week, but will permeate throughout the curriculum.
- 13 When reading aloud each child holds a book or a copy of the book. The main disadvantages are the expense of purchasing so many copies of the novel, but also the amount of noise that the rustling of paper in the children’s hands produces can distract the children (and teacher) from the enquiry itself.
- 14 For example, each time I have used the first episode of *Kio & Gus*, an IAPC philosophical novel, the children were fascinated by the haunted house featured in the story. They wanted to talk about ghosts – whether they exist and how we could possibly find out. In the manual *Wondering About The World*, accompanying the novel, there is no mention at all of ghosts as a possible source for enquiry. But these kinds of issues matter to children – they engage them imaginatively and emotionally, for ghosts are creatures that mediate between the binary opposites life and death. See also Sections 5 and 6.
- 15 Klaus Doderer gives the following four stories as examples: a Grimm Brother fairy tale called *Lucky Hans*, Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, Antoine de St. Exupery’s *The Little Prince*, and Michael Ende’s *Mo-Mo*. Doderer argues that the fictional characters in those stories “...interpret our world, that is the world of the young reader”. They are “...secret interpreters, secret critics and secret messengers of our life... little philosophers with different points of view”. From: Klaus Doderer, “Children as Little Philosophers in Children’s Books”; In: *Critical & Creative Thinking: the Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Volume 1 No. 2, 1993, pp. 35-40.
- 16 One way of going about it would be to say that children’s books are those written for children. However, there are some books, such as *Alice in Wonderland*, which are more appreciated by adults than by children.
- 17 Not all children’s stories are exclusively written by adults. Anne Frank’s *Diary* would be such a counter-example.
- 18 The *content* is not a distinguishing feature of children’s books either. In adult books too, we find children or heroes, as main characters. Fantasy plays often a role in adult books too (e.g., Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*), and children’s books are not less sad, cruel, or sadistic.

- ¹⁹ I quote Claire here, when she was evaluating PwC. See Chapter Six, Section 7.
- ²⁰ See, for example, my comment on the dialogue in Chapter Five, Sections 6 and 7.
- ²¹ See also Section 4 of this chapter, and Figure 2, Chapter Three.
- ²² See also: Sections 5 and 6.
- ²³ For example, when using Tomie de Paola's *Strega Nonna*, I encourage the children through questioning, not to assume (just because the narrator would like us to believe it) that Anthony should be hanged by a string of spaghetti.
- ²⁴ See Chapter Two.

Chapter Eight

WHY SHOULD PHILOSOPHY WITH CHILDREN BE PART OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM?

STRUCTURE

1. Introduction.
2. Philosophy and Primary Education.
3. Philosophy with Children: More Basic than the Basics.
4. The Epistemological Presuppositions of Philosophy with Children.
5. Academic Philosophy, Philosophy with Children, and Non-Sexist Education.
6. Philosophy with Children and Moral Education.
7. Summary and Conclusions.

1. Introduction

In previous chapters I have provided empirical evidence and theoretical justifications for the claim that young children can indeed do philosophy. However, it could still be argued that, despite the fact that children *can* do philosophy, it is not *desirable* for them to do so. It could be argued, for example, that children should have more experience or factual knowledge first, before being encouraged to question and to construct their own answers in communities of enquiry. In this chapter, I will set out theoretical justifications for the integration of philosophy as a separate subject in the curriculum.

The more practical, educational justification for wanting to make Philosophy with Children (PwC) an integral part of the school curriculum can be made in the following ways: first, by referring to results of research projects evaluating philosophy with children (see, for example, Chapter Six); or to refer to Cross-Curricular Themes in the National Curriculum (e.g. 'Education for Citizenship', or 'Moral, Spiritual, Social, and Cultural Education'). It is also possible to look for assumptions implicit in many National Curriculum documents, and look for a link with PwC.

In 1992, I made numerous links between PwC and the Attainment Levels and Programmes of Study of the subjects English, Science, Mathematics, Technology, Geography, History, Art, and Education for Citizenship (Murriss, 1992b, Booklets *Links with the National Curriculum I, II*). I concluded that if we want to teach the National Curriculum properly, we *need* philosophy at school, because without it, children will most likely not learn to, for example, "advocate and justify a point a view" and to "recognise those of others" or to "discuss increasingly complex issues".

The link with National Curriculum English Attainment Target 1, that of *Speaking and Listening*, is very straightforward. Philosophy can easily be seen as one of those activities that "help to develop in pupil's speaking and listening, their grasp of sequence, cause and effect, reasoning, sense of consistency, clarity of argument, appreciation of relevance and irrelevance..." (Murriss, 1992b, Booklet *Links with the National Curriculum I*, p. 6).

When using existing children's literature as a starting point for philosophical enquiries – as defended in the previous chapter – it is easily justifiable to teach philosophy in English lessons. This is also because of the empirical evidence suggesting that teaching philosophy through picture books improves children's reading². With other subjects the connections are more easily made by pointing at the presupposed underlying thinking skills, such as the recognition and use of criteria or the making of valid inferences, distinctions and connections (Murriss, 1992b, booklet *Links with the National Curriculum II*, p. 2).

However, I will not focus here on showing how desirable philosophy is in meeting the demands put forward by a particular government. This has been done elsewhere (Andrews, *et al*, 1993; Fisher, 1990; Hatcher, 1992; Lane & Lane, 1986; Murriss, 1992b). Also, despite being very convincing for (head)teachers, governors and parents, it does not address the more fundamental issue of whether the curriculum design by various national governments is educationally and philosophically sound.

Instead, I prefer to give an overview of the more theoretical justifications for introducing philosophy with children. As Gillian Pugh has pointed out – children have a right to "...have access to a curriculum that relates to *their needs*, rather than to the national curriculum" (Pugh, 1992, p. 10; my emphasis). Because of this, I will focus on the philosophical, political, social, and moral reasons for the need of philosophy as a separate subject in the nursery and primary school.

I will start in Section 1 by concentrating on the benefits of philosophy *per se*: followed by putting forward additional benefits when philosophy is taught in communities of philosophical enquiry.

However, what exactly these additional benefits amount to, depends on the facilitator's philosophical assumptions about concepts such as 'understanding', 'knowledge', 'meaning', and 'mind'. An overview of the different epistemological positions connected with some common arguments and reasons for the desirability of PwC will be given in Section 4.

I will continue by pointing out the emancipatory value of PwC, not only for children, but also for traditional, academic philosophy, and immediately following from that, also for women (girls), because of an expanded ('female embodied') notion of rationality, and more of an emphasis on cooperative talk.

I will finish by showing the appropriateness of PwC for moral education and conclude that PwC encourages intellectual and moral autonomy. PwC is a powerful vehicle for moral education, since the process of developing communities of ethical enquiry is in itself a moral model of how individuals (including the teacher) *ought* to behave.

2. Philosophy and Primary Education

Some philosophers speculate that resistance to the introduction of philosophy in schools is a plot by the Establishment (Matthews, 1994, p. 3; Bernstein, 1991). Richard Bernstein argues that it is not only the questioning spirit of philosophy that is threatening for the established order, but also the power of philosophical themes and ideas in shaping our lives (Bernstein, 1991, p. 3). Gareth Matthews points at society's reluctance to reward any sustained questioning that cannot be given a "useful response". Instead, schools encourage the kind of wonder that leads to "useful knowledge" (Matthews, 1993b, p. 279).

Matthews acknowledges that the underlying reason could be the subversive nature of philosophical questioning. Philosophical questions are the kind of questions neither parents, nor teachers can give definite answers to. So what is philosophy's use if it cannot supply definite answers?

Perhaps one may hold the view that philosophy does not require 'external' justification (Heidegger, 1968)³, and is "its own reward" (Matthews, 1994, p. 4). But this is unlikely to convince politicians to change educational practice.

What sets philosophy apart from other disciplines, according to Richard Bernstein, is that philosophy keeps "...alive the spirit of restless questioning..." (Bernstein, 1991, p. 3). He continues:

"The cliché is that it is easy to ask questions but hard to give answers. But the truth is that it is the art of questioning that is difficult and fragile. Serious questioning requires knowing what to question and how. That which has always distinguished the greatest philosophers is their ability to question what no one else had thought to question, and thereby to challenge the pre-judgements and prejudices of which most of us are unaware, even though we hold them" (Bernstein, 1991, p. 4).

If philosophy encourages one to ask the right kind of questions then the relevance of philosophy for other disciplines becomes clear. As Splitter and Sharp point out, being educated in the disciplines means, perhaps above else, "knowing how and when to ask questions" (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 59).

The value of philosophical questioning, according to Bernstein, is that it sheds "doubt on the final vocabularies themselves – the cherished convictions we live by. At the same time, of course, it opens new vistas, new freedoms of the mind. We are less than fully human when we cease the art of questioning" (Bernstein, 1991, p. 4), and he concludes:

"Philosophy struggles to keep alive the questioning thinking that compels us to reflect on what we are doing and how we live. It is in this sense that philosophy makes a difference. Today, when there is so much ambiguity, confusion, anxiety and uncertainty about what we do and how we live, the philosophical task of questioning/thinking matters more than ever" (Bernstein, 1991, p. 4).

It is not just this post-modern confusion about how we should live our lives that has consequences for how and what we teach at primary level. Also rapid changes in information technology have meant that new beliefs are out of date more quickly than ever before. Different scientists already disagree, for example, about the existence and possible causes of the greenhouse effect. Children should not be presented solely with the *results* of scientific enquiry – they will not have the tools necessary to evaluate them. It is more effective to encourage children to reflect on the *concepts* involved in those theories, for example, by questioning what it means to be *alive*, what *pollution* is, where it is that animals or humans *belong*, or how we should treat *natural resources*.

David Kennedy points out the implication of a world of “exploding technology” on today’s child:

“...each generation inherits a future which is constantly outdistancing its parents, the child becomes better adapted than the adult. If children will inhabit a world which their parents can only imagine, how can adults prepare them for it?” (Kennedy, 1992, p. 3)

In the long run, it will be much more effective to teach children the kind of skills and attitudes that will help them to think for themselves, to analyse new knowledge as it is acquired and to make decisions based on good reasoning (Lowrey, 1983, p. 37; Fisher, 1990).

What role philosophy could play in this process is often not understood or appreciated. There are people who object to Socrates’ oft-quoted phrase that “the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being”. Their criticism can be summarised by saying that “we should not *analyse everything all the time*. You have to *live* life, not just *think* about it” (Wilson, 1996, p. 60). John Wilson argues that in order to decide whether their claim is true (and any claim to truth for that matter) a distinction has to be made between:

- a. the area of *cognition*, which concerns itself with what is true, wise, sensible, or appropriate, and presupposes an attitude of doubt, an ability to take criticism, etc.
- b. the area of the *will*, which concerns itself with getting something done, where, therefore, an attitude of doubt will not be constructive.

The appropriateness of either a. or b. depends on judging the context. Wilson perceptively points out the vicious circle involved here. This whole exercise in itself (rejecting this criticism of philosophy) is philosophical, for it involves our critical judgement, reasoning and reflection, with an attitude of open-mindedness. He concludes that philosophy at least as a *part-time* activity is justifiable, since we are as human beings bound to engage in *some* amount of examining, which includes a philosophical examination of our fundamental moral, political and religious beliefs (and this includes an epistemological consideration of what we really know) (Wilson, 1996, p. 62).

However, it is possible to make a convincingly stronger claim for philosophy, as does Karel Van der Leeuw. He argues that philosophical problems concern our conception of reality as a whole and our way of life in that reality. Living our lives is impossible without giving *implicit* answers to philosophical questions. From the moment children can talk, they acquire the sort of concepts that they use to explain the reality in which they live, and that is why philosophy should start from the moment children begin to talk (Leeuw, 1993, p. 36).⁴

So although *chronologically* it might be possible to distinguish – as Wilson did – between thinking and actions, in fact our thinking (or lack of it) is reflected in our actions. For example, to drive a certain car, to have a particular job, to live in a particular place, is a way of life that reflects one’s choices and therefore one’s way of thinking. Philosophical thinking is not reserved to an armchair ‘activity’. Wilson’s modernist distinction between thinking and actions reflects Cartesian presuppositions about the mind and the body. We find ourselves living our lives *in* the world; we cannot sit back and think *about* the world. His analysis presupposes disembodied rationality⁵.

Besides, even if reasoning skills themselves are involved when reflecting upon the value of philosophy – the core of Wilson’s argument – it still has to be argued that reasoning about *philosophical problems* is of any value.

The value of philosophy is that it helps to ‘break’ habits of thought, or as Peter Abbs puts it “to catch and destroy the vermin of received opinions” (Abbs, 1994, p. 19). In a sense it is an

'unlearning' of what we have learnt driven by a desire to clarify our own conception of reality. According to Abbs, especially when teaching Socratically, what takes place is an:

"..onslaught on those internalised opinions, internalised ideologies. internalised half truths. around which the human ego, and all the defensive emotions of the ego, has crystallised" (Abbs, 1994, p. 19).

It is clear that this kind of teaching makes great demands, not only on our cognitive processes, but also on our emotional capacities (Scheffler, 1983, p. 20), and it forces us to look at rationality in a new, 'embodied' light.

For example, Socrates held the opinion that the educated mind is one that can cope with living "in a state of creative ignorance", inner perplexity and the emotional unease such perplexity created" (Abbs, 1994, p. 17). His teaching method had, not only an intellectual component, but also a very strong emotional component. Peter Abbs describes it as:

"Emotionally, the elenchus [= Socrates' teaching method, KM] began with smug ease ('I know what I think') that dissolved into unease, then into anguish. then into concern and finally, into collaborative and reflective curiosity" (Abbs, 1994, p. 17).

The educational results of this are critical self-reflection and autonomous thinking. But note that the teaching method is quite unlike that in most primary schools (the result of modernist habits of thought – Chapter Two). It is personal, dialectical, indirect, and has little immediate prescriptive content (Abbs, 1994, p. 17). However, this "existential perplexity" is the precondition for what Abbs calls "authentic education" and he claims that it is *intrinsically* valuable (Abbs, 1994, p. 18).

The value of this kind of teaching lies more in the *process* than in the outcomes – metaphorically, playing a football match is more important than merely being interested in the result (Boele, 1997a, p. 42). Its value is *moral*, because all educational practice is ethical, Abbs claims, for "the term 'education' denotes an activity we value" (Abbs, 1994, p. 18). The moral advance when teaching philosophy Socratically is that it purifies the mind from rock solid beliefs and opinions that hinder learning. It is philosophy at its best. A more modest view of what we (really) know will be the result.

One can practice philosophising only for oneself. Philosophers strive for autonomous thinking – thinking without so-called 'epistemological authorities', such as priests, professors, scientific evidence, encyclopaedias, that people use to justify their beliefs without further questioning. This demands that philosophers have an open-minded attitude – one that never takes anything for granted.

To encourage people to think for themselves seems more urgent than ever. People increasingly distrust their own judgements and turn to 'experts' to seek answers in many areas, including parenting, education, health care and counselling. The result, according to Richard Bernstein, is that "practical wisdom and life experience are pushed aside..." (Bernstein, 1991, p. 3) ⁶, and with it a reluctance to take moral responsibility for our decisions and actions.

Children's author Michael Ende would agree. He writes:

"Again and again I hear and read that modern man does not believe in authority. But I believe we live in a century where people believe in authority to a degree such as has never before been the case in the entire history of man. The sentence starting with "science has found out..." is sufficient to arouse awe

and readiness to believe and to silence any kind of impertinent objection”
(Ende, 1993, pp. 284, 285).

He continues:

“The church of science claims orthodoxy, and this claim is universal, pitiless and exclusive” (Ende, 1993, p. 285).

Ende points out that scientific thinking does not produce values out of itself, and for people to feel at “home again in the world”, a human way of thinking needs to be established. He says poetry can point to the direction in which change has to take place. His very general interpretation of ‘poetry’ could easily be a description of philosophy: “...different ways of life and explanations of the world which can be experienced and understood” (Ende, 1993, p. 286). Like philosophy, poetry is highly personal. Both practices are – in Ende’s words – “an expression of a creative ability of humans to see and recognise themselves in the world and the world in themselves” (Ende, 1993, p. 286).

For children to feel safe and capable of thinking for themselves, drastic educational changes will have to be made, not only regarding pedagogy – especially the way a teacher perceives his/her role when teaching – but also changes in the content of the school curriculum, and the way schools are organised. Mike Bottery, for example, suggests an approach to education “which is tolerant and responsive to differences of opinion” and thus it is important that the teacher is not “all-knowing or infallible” (Bottery, 1990, pp. 238, 239). This shift in teachers’ attitude would be an expression of a different kind of “attitude to epistemology in general, one which is aware of its tentativeness and changeable nature, is tolerant of criticism, is open-minded, and aware of its fallibility” (Bottery, 1990, p. 238).’

Bottery describes this changed role of the teacher:

“As children develop in understanding, so they come to see that teachers, like themselves, are only seekers after the truth as well. The teacher may be further along the journey, and can thus point to some of the paths the child may take, and some of the pitfalls to avoid. But the teacher like the child, is still travelling” (Bottery, 1990, p. 241).

In his paper, Bottery makes, not only an epistemological point, but also an *ethical* one. He argues forcefully that:

“It is the child’s right to be made aware of the differences of opinion, to know that an ‘authority’s’ judgement is not the only one, and the acknowledgement of this right must inform the teaching of all subjects” (Bottery, 1990, pp. 240, 241: *my emphasis*).

Such educational change, Bottery points out, would also have political consequences – for example, the child’s right to participate in the democratic management of schools.

One way of ensuring that this educational change will take place is to convince politicians and educationalists that education and philosophy have a common goal. This common goal, according to Lipman, is the establishment of “reasonableness”. In his later writings, Lipman prefers to use the term ‘reasonableness’ in place of ‘rationality’ for it is “in closer touch with the whole person rather than with just the intellect”, and “it is more representative of the spirit and outcome of shared enquiry” (Lipman, 1988b, p. 42).

Philosophical practice, Lipman continues, is the embodiment of reasonableness and “If both philosophy and education are seen to share reasonableness as the same goal, it might not seem at all outrageous to contend that fundamentally all true philosophy is educational and all true education is philosophical” (Lipman, 1988b, p. 43).

The danger here is that even if this common goal were acknowledged by all relevant parties, a truly holistic approach to thinking is rare. Modernist presuppositions are subtly ‘hidden’ in our everyday language, especially when we talk about the mind, the imagination, and argument.⁸ Therefore, it is more important that an awareness grows that thinking involves not only our head, but our entire body, including our wishes, desires, emotions and hopes.

A start would be to make philosophy, taught properly⁹, a substantial integral part of all teacher training, including philosophical reflection upon the metaphors we use when we think and talk about children’s thinking. Kieran Egan urges educationalists and philosophers to shake off “nineteenth-century positivist notions of rationality, especially in education” (Egan, 1992, p. 167). I agree with Egan in that the modernist conception of rationality has had a detrimental influence on valuing the imagination in education.¹⁰

In similar vein, Bitting and Southworth criticise schools for not given children sufficient opportunity to “construct ideal imaginings...” (Bitting & Southworth, 1992, p. 14). Instead schools “...truncate playful imaginative thought in children by labelling and abstractions, use of narrowly defined toys, and scientific explanations given prematurely”. After quoting Blake’s “Don’t let it fly, give it a name. Nail it down and it’s dead then.”, they continue: “...schools are likely to nail down the coffins of their minds with further words and names that bring closure to all playful imagination, the very foundation of freedom and creative thought” (Bitting & Southworth, 1992, p. 14).

Egan argues that taking education seriously means taking the development of the imagination seriously; and that this has been acknowledged as an important aim of education by the greatest educational thinkers. But he identifies the problem that this will rarely sit comfortably with settled conventions, because the imagination enables pupils to transcend conventional ideas, and to think of things as possibly being so (Egan, 1992, pp. 46-48). Egan admits that education is necessarily tied up with factual knowledge, but that, at the same time, it is more than that. Bitting and Southworth argue that knowledge in schools is reduced to information (dead and trivial), but what should not be forgotten is that many ideas can be understood only by using one’s imagination (Bitting & Southworth, 1992, p. 14). They refer to John Dewey, who has pointed out that, for example, the idea of a ‘whole’ (world or person) is an “imaginative projection”. It is only *parts* of ourselves or the world that we can perceive through our senses.

Egan agrees that the imagination is vital in making knowledge *meaningful*. Without it, pupils fail to make knowledge their own (Egan, 1992, pp. 48, 53)¹¹. Egan argues that educationalists seem to forget that knowledge exists only in minds. Books serve merely as a kind of external mnemonic for knowledge. Knowledge is made meaningful by connecting it “with our hopes, fears, intentions, and with our imaginative lives”, and therefore, it should be the teacher’s job “...to reconstitute the inert symbolic codes into living human knowledge” (Egan, 1992, p. 86). When using our imagination we rearrange what (we think) we know, we make new connections, and as such create new meanings. This links in with a possible definition of philosophy as “the self-correcting examination of alternative ways of making, saying, and doing” (Lipman, 1988b, p. 173). Many teachers confirm this. For example, Wanda Lowrey has observed, during the 28 years that she has been teaching, how children that master ‘facts’ are unable to apply them. As an example she gives children who can read well but do not grasp the *meaning* of anything that they have read (Lowrey, 1983, p. 37).

So, teaching philosophy will help children to think more imaginatively. It is, therefore, peculiar that the pioneer of the Philosophy for Children programme – Matthew Lipman – dismisses fantasy as a hindrance to rationality¹². This is in direct contrast to Egan, who sees fantasy as an early form of

imagination with its creation of ideals and a freeing oneself from reality. Egan believes that the imagination is crucial in making education meaningful, and that we have to concentrate on this faculty when designing curriculum materials; that they must 'trigger' children's imagination (Egan, 1992, p. 49).¹³

This is an important connection – the connection between philosophy and freedom. Not only can philosophy free us *from* the deceiving information that enters through the senses, but philosophy also helps us resist thoughtless acceptance of tradition, fashion, and authority. Apart from this so-called 'negative' freedom, philosophy makes us feel free *to*, for example, formulate ideals. In this sense, philosophy is highly imaginative thinking. One example is how we could, in this society, or other societies, live or behave in a different, perhaps better way.

The imagination is often stimulated by the emotion I referred to before as 'reverence', which is more than mere scientific wonder¹⁴. It generates and informs philosophising. Reverence is "evoked by the perception that beyond or behind or beneath the real, tangible world around us we are adrift in an ocean of mystery" (Egan, 1992, p. 78). Expression of scientific wonder involves, for example, being perplexed about the capacities of my computer. Reverence, on the hand, would be the expression of a bewilderment that my computer and I exist at all. This – what Abbs calls "existential perplexity" (see above) – derives "ultimately from facing the mystery of why there is existence rather than non-existence" (Egan, 1992, p. 78).

One of the justifications Ann Sharp and Matthew Lipman offer for introducing children to philosophy in schools is that, unlike other school subjects, philosophical ideas will help them to find meaning in their lives. They write:

"Children are curious, and we can show them an enormous amount, in ways they can understand, that will fascinate them and train their curiosity to work constructively. To children's impressive capacity for wonder, philosophy can add awareness of the fundamental enigmas of existence that most children unaided can only suspect... Explanations of the physical world are not enough: children need a context in which the explanation is meaningful and which includes the sorts of concerns that they are curious about. The child's persistent "Why?" expresses a profound need to get at whatever meanings the world has to offer. This is why the child cannot make do with less than philosophy" (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p. 8).

This fascination for philosophical ideas is very apparent when teaching philosophy. Young children's enthusiasm, originality, and authenticity are a joy to experience. When given the chance many children talk and think about issues that really matter to them, and they often involve philosophical concepts, such as 'death', 'fairness', 'suicide', 'perfection', or 'beauty'. Philosophy is the only discipline that attempts to clarify concepts that are so generic that no scientific discipline is equipped to deal with them. The importance of discussing these kind of concepts is perhaps best illustrated by a seven-year old's drawing directly made after a philosophical enquiry (see Figure 28).

Figure 28



by Victoria Wood

Apart from discussing philosophical concepts, children's need to do philosophy stems often from a desire to have their profound questions answered. So, whether it is through concept-analysis, or the attempt to answer philosophical questions, philosophy makes education more meaningful to children – a benefit that should not be underestimated. It can help, Sharp and Lipman point out, “to provide what all students need: their own sense of the importance of learning” (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p. 9).

Because philosophy deals with the kind of concepts other subjects use, but not make a subject of an enquiry, philosophy is not a luxury, but “part of the total picture and can be ignored only at the price of settling for a superficial, shallow investigation” (Evans, 1978a, p. 172). When evaluating an ethical enquiry with a group of children, Clyde Evans observes that

“even in everyday, concrete, practical concerns, they [the children] are unavoidably driven to consider the underlying philosophical substratum and thus see that there is the philosophical dimension to even the most practical of problems” (Evans, 1978a, p. 172).

It reminds me off Bertrand Russell's oft quoted description of philosophy:

“Philosophy, if it cannot answer so many questions as we could wish, has at least the power of asking questions which increase the interest of the world, and show the strangeness and wonder lying just below the surface even in the commonest things of daily life” (Russell, 1982, p. 6).

In an ‘answer-and-factual’ based curriculum it is understandable that the value of a subject such as history is never questioned. But it is extraordinary that a society does not value its own history of *ideas* sufficiently to make its young citizens familiar with them. George MacDonald Ross points out the political implications. He argues that philosophy is important in schools to show pupils that “ideas matter”, and “...that it is important for all citizens to have a basic understanding of the ideas on which the political structure of their nation is based” (MacDonald Ross, 1988, pp. 208, 211).

Egan sees the curriculum as a recapitulation of human experience through its great stories (Egan, 1988). History is one of them, but so is philosophy (though not mentioned by Egan). Mark Scofield points out that philosophy is one of those stories with its themes of “eternal human concern” (Scofield, 1995, p. 58), and should therefore not be excluded from the curriculum.

Russell admits that the value of philosophy is only “indirectly”, namely, “through its effects upon the lives of those who study it”, and this is mainly because of the nature of the kind of questions philosophers asks. In the last chapter of his book *Problems with Philosophy*, he urges the need to value the importance of those questions, and “to examine all the approaches to them, and to keep alive that speculative interest in the universe which is apt to be killed by confining ourselves to definitely ascertainable knowledge” (Russell, 1982, pp. 89-91).

Despite the fact that philosophical questions have no easily established answers, and therefore are a ‘bad fit’ in a mainly answer driven primary school curriculum, I believe one of the most powerful arguments for the introduction of philosophy at nursery and primary level is Bottery's reference to children's *moral right* to have their philosophical questioning to be taken seriously. Bottery argues:

“Much more is at stake than deciding between giving a quick ‘yes’ or ‘no’, which disposes of the question, or spending time on a more detailed answer. More important is the teacher's art and the child's autonomy – can he or she deal with this question in a manner which does not leave the child feeling marooned and adrift in a sea of uncertainties, but rather deals with the question in a way which begins to open up for the child the huge areas of human

knowledge – some would say all knowledge – where no answer can be final and definitive, which introduces to the child the infinite wonder and variety, the uncharted depths of the mystery of human enquiry and existence. In all curricular areas where the subject under discussion is capable of different interpretations – in literature, in history, the social sciences, and the sciences themselves – this element of individual interpretation can and should be introduced at the start, and not as some top-dressing, once the ‘facts’ are known” (Bottery, 1990, p. 240).

Bottery acknowledges that not only children’s rights to a particular kind of education are at stake here. Ultimately, the choice of what kind of education is desirable is a *political* choice, informed by the kind of society we aspire to (Bottery, 1990, p. 241).

So we find ourselves in a ‘Catch 22’ situation. Changing primary education to incorporate philosophy depends upon a critical, creative and caring stance towards education and the society we live in. At the same time philosophy very much stimulates this kind of thinking, and encourages people to speculate about other possible (perhaps better) ways of doing things, including the way we educate our children. So we already need philosophical skills and a philosophical attitude in order to see the necessity to incorporate philosophy in the primary school curriculum.

I conclude that the resistance to introduction of philosophy at primary level is related to philosophical presuppositions about childhood, the aim of education, and what knowledge is. If it is seen to be important that children make their own learning meaningful to them, then philosophy will help children to ask the right kind of questions tentatively. Unlike any other subject, the concepts philosophy explores will prepare children for life in school (and beyond)¹⁵ at a personal, intellectual, social, moral and political level.

Apart from the desirability of philosophy *per se* in the primary school, the distinctive pedagogy of Philosophy with Children adds even more educational, social, political, and moral benefits – the subject of the next section.

3. Philosophy with Children: More Basic than the Basics

Matthew Lipman developed his Philosophy for Children Programme because he was concerned about the following two problems in education, according to PwC proponent Ronald Reed:

- a. Children do not think as well as they are capable of, and a truly democratic society demands children to think well.
- b. Children's original curiosity, sense of wonder, and enthusiasm for intellectual enquiry dramatically diminishes, when they progress through school (Reed, 1992, p. 147).

Lipman's solution to these problems rests in the teaching of philosophy through the 'community of enquiry' pedagogy. The significance of searching for the problematic in communities of enquiry is that it *generates* thinking (Lipman, 1988b, p. 33).

The generation of thinking can be attributed, according to John Daly, to the 'conflict' present in communities of enquiry. A student of Catherine McCall, Daly explains this distinctive feature of communities of enquiry – a feature very much emphasised by McCall as the 'engine' behind any dialogical movement. In an enquiry, the facilitator manages the conflicting views of the group, by playing them out against each other. By focusing on the disagreement in a community, members will respond by 'digging deeper' in their own thinking in order to provide reasons for their claims, opinions or points of view. The dialogue will develop its own dynamic when others respond in turn either agreeing or disagreeing with views expressed before. In this way, participants will find themselves "moving towards the framework of their thinking, uncovering the basis of their ideas". As a result, participants will either change their mind in the light of stronger, more coherent idea, or else the belief or idea they have will be strengthened by the lack of good opposition (Daly, 1994).

However, most schools are not communities of enquiry. Therefore, dramatic changes in education will have to be made if education fails to nourish children's natural intellectual curiosity.¹⁶ The goal of education should be 'thinking' rather than 'knowledge acquisition'.

The main justification for such an educational shift lies in what is meant by the concept 'knowledge' (see, for example, Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 207). Lipman argues that the statements of which human knowledge is said to be composed are, in fact, answers to questions by now long forgotten (Lipman & Sharp, 1985, p. 158). What we now call factual knowledge is the general accepted outcome of previous enquiries. According to Lipman the implications for education are:

"...one cannot become educated oneself unless one relives and re-enacts the struggle that mankind went through to find the so-called answers that we accept today. The good teacher is one who recognises that the child is unable to take a statement for granted. Such a teacher knows that a reliving or re-experiencing of the entire inquiry process to arrive at the truth of the statement is essential in coming to appreciate meaningful knowledge" (Lipman & Sharp, 1985, p. 158).

The relevance of philosophy is that one of philosophy's educational aims is that every student should become (or continue to be) an enquirer. As Lipman points out:

"We cannot educate for enquiry unless we have education as enquiry – unless, that is, the qualitative character we desire to have in the end is loaded into the means" (Lipman, 1991, p. 245, footnote 3). Lipman attributes to Dewey the realisation that education is failing because the product of enquiry is being confused with the process. Education is too often "...to learn the solutions

rather than investigate the problems and engage in enquiry for themselves
“(Lipman, 1991, p. 15).

Even John Locke pointed out that teaching children how to reason is best achieved by engagement in practices that call for reasoning behaviour rather than teaching particular rules or procedures (Locke, 1978).

Not only should philosophy’s pedagogy reflect the critical and inquisitive behaviour that is its aim, the enquirer should also focus on the kind of concepts that are used not only to structure our everyday life experiences, but also underlie other disciplines (e.g., ‘time’, ‘space’, ‘causality’, ‘means’/‘end’). Philosophy reflects upon this thinking in the disciplines, while at the same time encouraging the enquirer to reflect upon her/his own thinking.

Enquiry is stimulated and driven by what Laurance Splitter and Ann Sharp call ‘open procedural’, and ‘open substantive’ questions¹⁷. This is in contrast to common educational practice in which the teacher asks most often *rhetorical* questions, i.e., the kind of questions the teacher already knows the answer to. Splitter and Sharp point at the detrimental effect this kind of practice has on children’s confidence to think for themselves. They say that asking too many rhetorical questions may “...induce a sense of impotence on the part of students” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 51).

Who asks the questions determines to a great extent who is in power and control in a classroom – a power 48% of teachers interviewed in a recent survey did not want to part with (Crossman, unpublished). In such a disempowering situation for pupils, the emphasis is placed on the answers that have been seen to be important by the teachers. In that sense the education children get is very close to indoctrination, Sharp and Splitter claim, “...since many of the answers insisted upon are, in reality, open to question but are, in practice, rarely questioned” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 51). To answer those kind of questions children do not need to construct the answers themselves, but merely play the game of ‘guessing-what-the-answer-is-in-the-teacher’s-head’.

The inter-connectedness of dialogue and thinking is largely ignored in the present day British National Curriculum. An awareness of the importance of talking when teaching for thinking is essential for appreciating the value of PwC, which necessarily involves a deconstruction of many dualistic metaphors we live by¹⁸. So, in order to see the importance of dialogue for the teaching of thinking, one has to already have post-modern assumptions about the mind.

Philosophy teaches for *better* thinking *through* enquiry. It is what Richard Paul calls ‘multi-logical thinking’, since enquiry involves the interweaving of different perspectives and points of view. He points out that children need to explore and assess their original beliefs to develop insight into new ideas (Paul quoted in Splitter & Sharp, 1995).

Philosophy *is* dialogue. Dialogue with oneself, with others, with text books, philosophical writings, or visual images. The procedures of dialogue will be internalised over time, which is the key to internalising the dialogue itself (Morehouse, 1993, p. 8; Cam, 1995; Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1980, pp. 22-25). The Vygotskian influence is clear in PwC¹⁹. It sees thinking as ‘internal’ dialogue. The internalisation of the variety of voices in a community of enquiry will lead to a richer, more varied ‘inner’ dialogue, and as a result a better thinking. In ‘inner’ dialogue, self-correction takes place by reflecting upon one’s beliefs, one’s actions, the connection between the two, and consequently one’s responsibilities.

Of course, dialogue is impossible without *active listening*, that is, a kind of listening with an openness to have one’s own cherished beliefs and opinions challenged and possibly changed. PwC encourages children to carefully listen, not only to others, but also to themselves – what they say and how they say it. This can be effectively taught only when the teacher models this virtue. So, the teacher, too, has to actively listen to the children, and her/himself in an enquiry.

PwC accepts the importance of a particular social structure for the teaching of thinking. For example, Australian PwC practitioner, Philip Cam, originally thought that cognitive skills “happen in the head”, but is convinced now that “cognitive skills are things that develop in conversation with [one’s]...peers” (Cam interviewed by Liverani, 1991.)

So, effective *communication* is essential for teaching thinking. As Nicholas Burbules and Suzanne Rice point out, this requires educational change, since educational contexts as they are now foster aggressive styles of communication, and do not foster communicative virtues such as ‘tolerance’²⁰ and ‘respect across differences’. Differences, Burbules and Rice continue, should be understood as providing educational opportunities, and not be seen as intimidating barriers. Respect across differences can only be developed when mirrored in the pedagogy, they argue, because:

“We learn by making connections between what we know and what is new to us: this cognitive process is paralleled and fostered developmentally, by the communicative relations in which we are engaged from a very early age”
(Burbules & Rice, 1991, pp. 412-413).

Such a change is difficult to initiate, as it requires new metaphors to live by. As argued previously²¹, new metaphors of ‘talk’ and ‘argument’ need to be created in order to make a convincing claim for the educational benefits of being a member of a community of enquiry, for example, understanding argument in terms of ‘dance’ rather than ‘battle’. The ‘argument-is-war’ metaphor is responsible for the fact that little educational value is attached to collaborative enquiry in individual knowledge acquisition, and why the emphasis is on the answering of teacher’s questions by pupils rather than on pupils’ own questions. Also, the argument-is-a-journey metaphor explains why educators and educationalists feel uncomfortable with discussions that have non-specific pre-determined learning outcomes, because they do not proceed in a linear fashion.

It is often suggested that the educational value of teaching through philosophical enquiry is that it will make knowledge and learning more meaningful (see also Section 2). When children have the genuine opportunity to generate their own questions, not only will what they learn be more meaningful, they will remember it better too. And, as Laurance Splitter and Ann Sharp emphasise, making sense of things which matter is “a paramount goal of education” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 65).

Through their own questioning, children will, they argue, progress “beyond the boundaries of...[their] own experience by building relationships which expand these boundaries...” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 65). According to Dan Kirby and Carol Kuykendall, thinking *is* the making of meaning, and ‘making’ is meant here in its most literal sense, as in ‘making sense’ and ‘making up my mind’. They explain:

“We are convinced that every mind creates its own understanding by putting things together in its own way, and ‘thinking’ is what we call that process”
(Kirby & Kuykendall, 1991, p. 18).

In PwC, children’s personal opinions are starting points for the enquiry. They set the agenda, and are responsible for the content and direction of the dialogue. They shape and reshape the concepts through which they understand themselves, others and the world. Splitter and Sharp point out the Deweyian character of this link between meaning and personal experience (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 84, footnote 6). They explain the importance of such a link:

“Generally speaking, we can say that to find meaning in something - a word, story, concept, statement, activity, event, or even a life - is to locate that item in

a framework which is connected to something in our own experience, something which already makes sense to us” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 68).

This connectedness is essential to keep the child interested and motivated in her own education, without the need for more ‘external’ motivation, such as pleasing the teacher, rewards or degrees. It will also nourish and extend the child’s intellectual curiosity.

How one views the role of human understanding in knowledge acquisition and the making of meaning is central when putting forward arguments and reasons for the desirability of PwC. In the next section, I will point at the link between a PwC practitioner’s philosophical assumptions and the reasons given for the desirability of philosophy in the school curriculum.

4. The Epistemological Presuppositions of Philosophy with Children

In a fascinating paper (Rollins, 1995), Maughn Rollins argues that justifications given by PwC practitioners for introducing PwC in the school curriculum very much depends on their epistemological presuppositions. Different assumptions about, for example, the relationship between ‘understanding’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘meaning’ explain the various positions among practitioners.

Rollins’ main distinction is between *realists* and *non-realists*.

REALISM AND THE BENEFITS OF PWC

He then further distinguishes between realists that are ‘dogmatic’ and those that are ‘reasoned’. *Dogmatic realists* believe that children should know the *truth* about the world. *Reasoned realists* agree, but believe that this should be a result of open enquiry. Moreover, this should be a matter of *understanding* and not of mere *belief*. So they share a confidence in truth, but also in the process of reasoning or rationality (Rollins, 1995, p. 32). This modernist conception of rationality is apparent in Matthew Lipman’s earlier writings, and would classify him as a reasoned realist²².

Non-realists, on the other hand, separate ‘reality’ from ‘human understanding’. Human understanding is fallible, therefore ultimately always contestable. Conceptual frameworks are relative, because meaning is derived via language, and thus a social phenomena.

Rollins then continues by distinguishing between *first-order* non-realists and *second-order* non-realists.

FIRST-ORDER NON-REALISM AND THE BENEFITS OF PWC

Most PwC practitioners, including Laurance Splitter and Ann Sharp²³, fall into this category. Characteristic of first-order non-realism is the belief that, although conceptual frameworks limit human understanding, they do not distort it. So, objectivity is still possible, but it is always partial (Rollins, 1995, p. 33).

This epistemological scepticism results in ‘epistemological modesty’ – considered a virtue in PwC – and manifests itself practically in a community of enquiry search for viewpoints not yet considered (Rollins, 1995, p. 36). The metaphor Rollins uses to describe this philosophical position is that such conceptual frameworks are like ‘windows on the world’.

It presupposes that in order to be knowledgeable one has to be open, tolerant and flexible. Such a person will frequently engage in *self-correction*, which is the ‘movement’ in dialogue from a personal, partial *opinion* to a broader, more public *point of view*²⁴. Such a reasonable person aspires to comprehensiveness, despite knowing that *complete* comprehensiveness is impossible.

First-order non-realists have faith in *reason* as the tool to transform persons into more reasonable individuals committed to the creation of a reasonable world (Sharp, in press).

First-order non-realists also believe that conceptual frameworks are commensurable, that is, compatible, in the sense that they reveal the *same* reality, but only a part of it, and, therefore, can be true at the same time. It follows that an exchange of the different conceptual frameworks offers more ‘windows on the world’, and, therefore, provides a more comprehensive picture of reality (Rollins, 1995, p. 34).

Therefore, for first-order non-realists, communities of philosophical enquiry have the task of 'building bridges' among different points of view by looking for a common ground resulting in a more unified, comprehensive point of view. Here is where the value of dialogue becomes clear. Through talking, meaning is 'enlarged' – a process that Sharp and Splitter call 'translation' – and this is what happens when children build on each other's ideas in communities of philosophical enquiry.²⁵ However, Rollins correctly wonders how much meaning may get lost in this process of translation (Rollins, 1995, p. 35).

Rollins says this is related to a characteristic of first-order non-realism – an intolerance of pluralism. Since comprehensiveness is a necessary condition of reasonableness, there is a continual pressure to find or create commonality. The common factor is that we all speak a language, and, therefore, share meanings. Privately constructed languages have no place, since there are no commonly shared meanings. Therefore, radically original understanding is impossible – as is clearly argued by Ludwig Wittgenstein²⁶.

For first-order non-realists there is no absolute truth. Truth is understood as the relationship between statements in a particular language-game. There is not just one meaning to a concept (its correspondence with 'reality'). Its meaning depends on the context in which the concept is used. Therefore, answering questions with 'yes', 'no', 'right', 'wrong' is insufficient. The value of PwC, therefore, is to empower children by offering them practice in sound reasoning – essential to the justification of their beliefs, and the analysis of the different contexts that give concepts their meaning (e.g., 'right' in 'the right action', or 'the right question').

Consequently, first-order non-realists will emphasise the importance of children submitting their own views, and those of others, to critical enquiry, but also the thinking skills practised in PwC, such as finding good reasons for their beliefs, making connections and distinctions, using good analogies, perceiving relations, making valid inferences, discovering assumptions, and giving counter examples.

Realists and first-order non-realists justify PwC by arguing that real democracy demands the kind of *open-mindedness* necessary for, not just being a member of communities of enquiry, but also being one of the goals of the enquiry. 'Open-mindedness' means "...a willingness to construe knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to one's own values" (Sharp, in press).

Reasoned realist, Matthew Lipman, sees communities of philosophical enquiry as necessary conditions for changing existing political structures into 'real' democracies, since "it intermixes the critical concern with justice and the creative impulse toward caring". Lipman argues that communities of enquiry provide a "model of democracy *as* inquiry", because it produces respect for those principles (justice, caring) and for persons (Lipman, 1991, p. 254; my emphasis). This includes that children should have the opportunity and the encouragement, for example, to develop their own conception of what 'justice' is.²⁷

Referring to specific characteristics of communities of philosophical enquiry in relation to democracy, Daly argues:

"If philosophical enquiry empowers the individual, enhances good social interaction, articulation of ideas, clear, creative, and critical thinking powers, then for any democracy worthy of the name, citizens and educational establishments, should be encouraged to develop these skills. Indeed, many would argue, democracy demands it" (Daly, 1994).

This line of argument is also taken by Catherine McCall, who argues that "democracy requires effective active citizens" and "in order to be effective and active as citizens, people need to have the

disposition to enquire, and the skills both to enquire and to be effective at putting forward ideas and arguments” (McCall, 1991c, p. 34).

First-order non-realists, too, believe that communities of philosophical enquiry are essential for the preparation of children as citizens of a true democracy. Ann Margaret Sharp clearly states that knowledge is a social construction, and that members of communities of enquiry are encouraged to become conscious of how they come to their knowledge and to reflect upon their values, in order to be accountable for how and what that know and value (Sharp, in press).

My first concern with arguments put forward to justify PwC by using democracy as a premise is the unquestioned assumption that a democratic conceptual framework is the best political framework. In order to be convincing, arguments will have to be put forward why democracy is superior to other political frameworks such as, for example, socio-anarchism.²⁸

Also, as David Kennedy has pointed out, the justification of PwC by referring to the democratic Enlightenment ideal of having ‘critical’ adults – “governed by Reason”, does not do justice to the “wild, Romantic narrative” – characteristic of PwC – “which seeks to empower children and thereby transform adulthood as well” (Kennedy, 1992, p. 2). It ‘expands’ reason by including the emotions, feelings, hopes, desires, etc. (Kennedy, 1992, pp. 4, 5).

His objection is related to another concern I have with first-order non-realist epistemological assumptions, and that is the difficulty and perhaps the impossibility of creating new metaphors to live by. I have argued in previous chapters for the necessity of deconstructing existing deep dualistic metaphors we think with, in particular when thinking about children’s thinking. I concluded that an awareness of existing metaphors should be followed by creating a new metaphorical understanding of what it means to think and to talk, and the relationship between the two, in order to counteract the reductionist, materialistic emphasis on the logical, mathematical and scientific ‘side’ of the mind (the result of metaphorically understanding the mind as a physical object in space). So, following on from my research, my own position tends towards second-order non-realism.

SECOND-ORDER NON-REALISM AND THE BENEFITS OF PWC

For second-order non-realists, divergent conceptual frameworks are not necessarily commensurable, that is, compatible. The metaphor Rollins uses to describe this epistemological position is that of people wearing different glasses. However, his metaphor works only if the necessary condition is added that no one can take off their glasses, otherwise one and the same ‘reality’ could in principle be perceived by everyone, that is, when everyone at the same time takes their glasses off.

An example of a second-order non-realist is Richard Rorty, who argues that language is inadequate as a medium to describe an unframed or pre-conceptual world (Rollins, 1995, p. 36).

Rollins characterises second-order non-realism as follows:

- A distrust of reason, since reason is seen as a game played by various cultures. The status of reason is understood as normative, rather than objective, in the sense that “these are the rules we play by”, and they are useful for a particular purpose, i.e., in the context of a particular game (Rollins, 1995, p. 37).
- The impossibility of full communication. While communicating, something of the private view gets lost, especially “the loss of concrete, particular, individual experiences” (Rollins, 1995, p. 37).

- The possibility of radical relativism, as there is no way of choosing between conflicting conceptual frameworks. There is no universal validity, and there should be a tolerance for pluralism. This includes an acceptance that a *democratic* view of the world is just one of those frameworks.

Rollins points out the implications for communities of philosophical enquiry:

- a. A different kind of commitment to reason, if reason is just one way of analysing belief systems that has no final authority.
- b. No urgency to translate private understanding if there is a possible danger of loss of private meaning. The integrity of private meaning is central, therefore a facilitator might deliberately leave a private understanding partially articulate (Rollins, 1995, p. 39).
- c. Leaving open the possibility that no consensus can be reached even when incompatible points of view have been articulated sufficiently.
- d. An openness to radical scepticism as the possible outcome of the enquiry, that is, a realisation that “there are no authoritative or even any very reliable answers to some of our most burning questions” (Rollins, 1995, p. 39).

An example of a second-order non-realist in PwC would be David Kennedy, who argues that adult rationality has failed (e.g. the holocaust, nuclear proliferation, ecological catastrophe). What he thinks PwC has to offer is “[t]he concept of an expanded reason through a recovery of childhood”, expressed “in the more post-modern notion of the child as an excluded voice” (Kennedy, 1992, p. 5) – a position children share with other groups such as women and blacks.

Kennedy concludes:

“So in Philosophy for Children the West, now facing up to its own failed rationalism, turns to children for something we have not heard before. When we do philosophy with children, we listen for an excluded knowledge ... To ‘remember’ childhood is to accept both the culture of childhood and the child within oneself ... Lipman’s child is the child reintegrated into adult forms of discourse, for whom we have a new respect” (Kennedy, 1992, p. 5).

Respect for this new image of the child would express itself in a willingness to let the (disempowered) children speak, but can adults *hear* what they have to say if the two conceptual frameworks are incommensurable?

Rollins points out that when points of view between members of a community of philosophical enquiry are incommensurable, the enquiry should be either ceased, or continued in – what he calls – “non-rational ways”, i.e., “imaginative representations of intuition” in the form of exchanging metaphors. If effective, such an exchange of metaphors could at times *cause*, rather than be the *reasons*, for changes of belief (Rollins, 1995, p. 39). As such, for second-order non-realists, exchanging and creating metaphors is an important activity of communities of philosophical enquiry.

As with first-order non-realists, for second-order non-realists the meaning of a word cannot be traced by looking for a correspondence with an ‘external reality’. Definitions of concepts do not capture the inherent properties that experiences and objects *have*. Meaning of concepts cannot simply be looked up in a dictionary, because dictionaries do not use metaphors to explain the meaning of concepts (e.g. “love”). So, second-order non-realists will emphasise the importance of

communities of enquiry constructing their own (metaphorical) understanding of the concepts involved.

Although also not mentioned by Rollins, probably another importance of PwC for its members is not as much the development of 'rationality', or knowing more 'truths' about the world, but an increase in *self-esteem*. Of course, self-esteem is a necessary condition for reasonable, reflective and autonomous thinking, not only in children, but also in adults (See, for example, Lane & Lane, 1986, pp. 263, 266, 269 point 1).

PwC increases children's self-esteem, partly because communities of philosophical enquiry offer opportunities for people to have their ideas valued, and to explore ideas without the fear of ridicule or the need to be right. Also, philosophical ideas themselves open up new ways of looking at things. Children will become used to the procedure and spirit of philosophical enquiry. When one idea is expressed, this automatically triggers many others which are created and explored in the process. An awareness will grow that many possible points of view are possible, and that it is not necessarily the one tied up with one's culture, parents, etc., that is the one to live by. Children will then feel more confident to develop their own ideas and values which can be created in, and tested by, the community during an enquiry.

This effect on self-esteem will be most powerful on children because their beliefs are still less fixed than those of adults. In philosophical enquiries, children open themselves to what is essentially beyond their own self. They gain both a better perception of others and of themselves, and an awareness of the possibilities for change (Glaser, 1994).

For second-order realists a growth of self-esteem should be one of the most important values of PwC, as it will empower children to articulate a personal, private understanding through metaphors in their own unique, imaginative way.

I conclude that a facilitators' epistemological presuppositions about, for example, 'knowledge', 'truth', or 'understanding' give information about what the goal is of an enquiry, and, therefore, what the possible benefits are for the members of such an enquiry. It follows that it is of the utmost importance that facilitators of communities of philosophical enquiry answer for themselves at least the following questions to find out about their epistemological assumptions:

1. How do I justify *democratic* procedures in an enquiry, and do I leave other possibilities open?
2. Are there *better* answers to philosophical questions, and what are mine/the community's criteria for saying that one answer is better than another?
3. What do I mean by being *rational* or *reasonable* in an enquiry?
4. What constitutes good *reasons* when asking members of a community of enquiry to justify their beliefs?
5. How can I encourage *imaginative representations of intuition* (e.g., metaphors, art, poetry) as a means of respecting and extending private understanding non-communicable through rational means?

PwC's liberating potential is limited not only to the educational domain, but, as argued throughout this chapter, extends to the political, moral and social domain as well. In the next section I will focus on the emancipatory function of PwC for women (girls), but also on the effect PwC has, or will have, on traditional, academic philosophy.

5. Philosophy with Children, Academic Philosophy, and Non-Sexist Education

Robert Mulvaney points out the differences between Philosophy with Children and Academic philosophy. He claims that PwC has not only *democratised* philosophical enquiry, but also *deprofessionalised* philosophy – with its lack of philosophical jargon. Moreover, instead of focusing on the atomic and *silent individual*, PwC focuses on the *dialogical community* (Mulvaney, 1993a, p. 347).

In addition, a recurrent criticism of the academic tradition in philosophy in PwC literature is its emphasis on abstract thinking (Redshaw, 1994, p. 12; Leeuw, 1993). Karel van der Leeuw emphasises that it is a meaningless exercise to think about philosophical concepts without any reference to our concrete experience (Leeuw, 1993, p. 36).

Also, PwC could help in the deconstruction of traditional philosophy's deep dualistic presuppositions through the creation of new metaphors. This dualistic 'cleansing' will have educational consequences, since the influence of deep dualism is also visible in how we organise education. Underlying all of these dualisms, according to Fernando Leal and Patricia Shipley, is the model of the master and the slave, or, more generally interpreted, "the relation of oppressor and oppressed" (Leal & Shipley, 1992, p. 37). Leal and Shipley "blame" philosopher Aristotle, for he explicitly states that:

"...he who is wise should rule over he or she who isn't" (Leal & Shipley, 1992, p. 37).

They refer to Aristotle's First book of his *Metaphysics*, in which he claims that:

"...the master is master over the slave, can be master over the slave and indeed should be master over the slave because he is wiser, knows more, has a higher consciousness and awareness, so to speak a more extended and deeper cogito and is thus less subject to external determinations, than the slave" (Aristotle quoted in Leal & Shipley, 1992, p. 38).

They point out that the master/slave relation is also obvious in schools: the relation between teacher and pupil, headteacher and teachers, teachers and caretakers, etc. Apart from this hierarchy, everyone is constrained to a less or greater extent by the school rules, although it would be difficult to answer the question "Who has invented those rules?" (Leal & Shipley, 1992, p. 37).

Examples of dualisms in education are boy/girl, men/women, but it is also less explicitly present in the way curriculum subjects have been separated. Subjects involving the 'head' (e.g., Mathematics, Science) are strictly separated from subjects involving the 'heart' (e.g., Religious Education, Personal and Social Education), the 'hands' (e.g., Art), or the whole 'body' (e.g., Drama, Physical Education).

Also, subjects such as Science and Mathematics are taught without taking the ethical or other aspects of the subjects into account. Not surprisingly, practising scientists are often uncomfortable and sometimes hostile when confronted with the ethical implications of their work. Coinciding with post-modern deconstruction of those dualisms in business and medicine an awareness is now growing of the ethical dimensions of their practice.

How and to what extent could PwC help in this post-modern deconstruction of deep dualistic presuppositions? Can philosophical dialogue indeed 'synthesise' – in the Hegelian sense of the word – the relation of oppressor and oppressed? Or could dialogue itself become a tool of oppression?

Judy Kyle is confident in the radically emancipatory nature of PwC in the way it reconstructs the concept of children as thinkers and social beings. She emphasises the transformative qualities of communities of enquiry, and urges us to understand dialogue as *action* – metaphorically speaking. Not understanding talk as action is another dualistic presupposition, since – as Kyle points out – it has to do with the common distinction people make between physical and mental activity (Kyle, unpublished).

It follows that if we change how children *talk* in classrooms, we will influence how they reason and how they act. San McColl argues that it is in this sense that PwC could have a dramatic influence on traditional Western philosophy, within which the ideal rational person is portrayed as European, middle-aged, white, male, and middle class, and in which the personal, the body, and the anecdotal continue to be ignored (McColl, 1994, p. 7).²⁹

Such a new ‘embodied’ conception of rationality would embrace not just the ‘body’ (i.e., emotions, feelings, sex), but also the *female* body (i.e., reproduction, mothering).

Disembodied rationality is characterised by ideals of objectivity, neutrality, and sexlessness. Feminist philosophers (e.g., MacColl, Slade, Sharp) argue that this ‘neutral’ mask of rationality hides its real subjectivity, that is, its masculinity. The kind of talk and reasoning celebrated by traditional (i.e., modernist) philosophy is combative, aggressive, and defensive (MacColl, 1994, p. 7).

McColl continues:

“The extent to which philosophical practice has separated questions of the acquisition of knowledge from those of values and responsibility is artificial and unhealthy” (MacColl, 1994, p. 7).

Women’s form of life is generally speaking different from that of men, namely more personal, family-orientated and centred around social connections, and reproduction. This may explain why women talk differently from men. Christina Slade summarises some clear differences when overviewing Jennifer Coates’ *Women, Men, and Language*, Robin Lakoff *Language and Women’s Place*, and Deborah Tanin’s *You Just Don’t Understand*.

To sum up the research in this area, some of the differences between men and women’s conversational strategies are:

- Women use far more ‘tag questions’ in statements than men. When asking questions women are more inclined to finish off with ‘isn’t it?’, or ‘hasn’t it?’. This final tag points at a request for confirmation (Slade, 1994, p. 30). Christina Slade wonders whether this shows that women need more confirmation.
- Women’s attitude towards questions differs – they use and interpret questions as “facilitating the flow of conversation” (Slade, 1994, p. 30). As opposed to men who tend to regard questions as direct requests for information.
- Women interrupt less in conversations and tend to acknowledge the previous contributions and listen to others when taking turns (Slade, 1994, p. 30).
- Women are more cooperative in their talk and less aggressive and competitive. They are less interested in dominating conversations than men are (Slade, 1994, p. 30).

- The subject of women's talk differs too – women more often prefer self-disclosure.

If this is true then it would follow that boys dominate classroom discussions. Research findings confirm that boys in general, not only talk more, but also talk in a more aggressive manner. Also, primary school teachers give boys more attention – positive and negative, and teachers respond differently to boys and girls when asking questions (Slade, 1994, p. 30). This is confirmed elsewhere (Turgeon, 1997, p. 2). Slade specifies that teachers ask girls more closed questions, and boys more open questions, and concludes that “passive feminine behaviour is already implicit in the style of interaction of the primary school” (Slade, 1994, p. 30).

Teaching through the pedagogy of a community of philosophical enquiry could significantly change the way men talk and encourage a more ‘feminine’ way of interacting, especially when introduced to PwC when young. San MacColl and Ann Margaret Sharp point out that communities of philosophical enquiry embrace virtues such as participation, equality, listening, sharing, co-operating and collaborating. At the same time, the additional traditional philosophical virtues of PwC – independent thought, conceptual clarity and reasoned judgement – greatly help to enhance girls’ self-esteem (MacColl, 1994, pp. 7, 8; Turgeon, 1997, p. 3).

Wendy Turgeon criticises so-called “self-esteem” programmes, for offering “empty exercises and stroking (Everybody is wonderful and excellent just as they are...)”, and they often “promise panaceas to the larger and more pervasive underlying issues or simply ignore them altogether” (Turgeon, 1997, p. 3). She recognises the limited value of such programmes when young girls are faced with “powerful societal forces that define ... [her] ... by her body and her willingness to be pliable”.

Instead, Turgeon recommends PwC, for it helps children to:

“gain a sense of importance, integrity and self worth through active participation in the search for and construction of important ideas of thinking and acting. The focus is upon the child as reflective, feeling person, not as body image. The resulting rise in ‘self-esteem’ is grounded in genuine productivity (the creation and discovery of ideas) and not in the empty and false praises of nice sayings” (Turgeon, 1997, p. 3).

Philosophy with Children could aid deconstruction of the masculine, dualistic metaphors we think and live with.³⁰ It creates an environment in which a number of the traditional gender dualisms (reason/intuition, emotion/logic, self/public, etc.) break down (Glaser, 1994, p. 15), not only in everyday life, but also within the discipline of philosophy itself.

Topics for discussion in a community of philosophical enquiry are generated by the participants themselves, and not classical philosophical texts. It reflects the interests of the participants and is therefore not ‘externally’ imposed either by the teacher or by the canon of classical philosophical texts. Children *do* discuss familiar problems in philosophy but they conceptualise them in their own way, which makes the learning process not only more personal but also more meaningful. Those values of participation, relatedness and relevance might open up traditional philosophy, and, as San MacColl points out: “...mesh well with feminist demands for the recognition of women’s experience and political action” (MacColl, 1994, p. 8).

I conclude that PwC is desirable, not only as a liberating non-sexist education³¹ for young children, but the community of enquiry pedagogy could also change traditional academic philosophy to be more relevant, accessible to all, and non-elitist. PwC could also change the traditional philosophical ideal of the passive, solitary, rational thinker, to include dialogue, embodiment, and the imagination. Slade acknowledges the necessity of a reflective enquiry about the principles of reason itself, and points at the moral duty to make that reflection available to all students (Slade, 1994, p. 31).

Whether such an educational change would be desirable depends upon our political commitment, and this in turn depends on the kind of society we want to live in.

Ann Sharp argues that a just society has to be non-sexist and non-racist. She is optimistic about PwC as the instrumental tool for children's liberation and the establishment of an egalitarian just society. Ultimately such an ideal is based on a non-religious *faith*. Sharp explains:

“Attempting to construct such a society is pursuing transcendence ... it requires honest and collaborative inquiry, involving communication between women and women, women and men and women and children. It requires a faith in the potential reasonableness of all. This faith does not have to claim that some of us have a privileged access to the truth, or that truth has been attained and may be imposed on others, but a faith that a constant attempt to eradicate errors, prejudice and injustice through reasonable means is the only way to avoid their growth. One does not need to be committed to a grand narrative. [Karen] Green reminds us, to think that the education of reasonable children is one of the most important means for creating a non-sexist, non-racist society” (Sharp, 1997, p. 1)

There are also gender differences in people's *moral* reasoning. In the next section, I will take a closer look at the role of PwC in children's moral education.

6. Philosophy with Children and Moral Education

In the previous section I focused partly on gender differences in relation to PwC. There are also gender differences in people's *moral* reasoning, according to Harvard psychologist Carol Gilligan, with women less interested in the competition of rights, and more aware of conflicting responsibilities (Sharp, 1994; Slade, 1994). Nell Noddings, who has built on the work of Gilligan, highlights the importance of a more feminine, moral vision. She values a kind of thinking that is more sensitive, relational, caring and contextualised. It would replace the more prevalent masculine kind of moral reasoning with its emphasis on rules, principles and concern with individual autonomy and rights (Sharp, 1994, p. 26).

According to Gilligan, the female 'voice' is more centred around caring, and the male 'voice' around separation (Haynes, 1994, p. 21). She tries to reinstate the value of caring to operate reciprocally with the masculine logic that emphasises separation rather than relation and caring. Gilligan claims that to focus on one voice is to suppress the other.

The implications for communities of philosophical enquiry are that there should not be just an emphasis on logic (analytic thinking), but also on connectedness (synthetic thinking). Ann Margaret Sharp has published extensively on this topic, especially because the procedures of the community of enquiry put into *practice* many faculties, values, and virtues seen as important by feminist philosophers. She points out that PwC values:

"...tolerance, trust, compassion, benevolence, seeing things from various perspectives, understanding the different world views of those in the group, listening to one another attentively, taking the ideas of each other seriously and being disposed to self correct in a public fashion when one realises that one is wrong" (Sharp, 1994, p. 27).

Sharp concludes that PwC lays the *practical* behavioural foundation of raising children in an egalitarian, non-sexist environment, because participants will:

"learn how to overcome distrust of others, to work co-operatively with people of the same and different sexes, learning how to read people and understand the world view behind the words, learning how to both discover and construct meaning in a communal context, learning how to respect each other as persons and trust each other as enquirers" (Sharp, 1994, p. 28).

However, there are substantial disagreements about the appropriateness of moral education for young children, and, related to concerns about age, there are concerns about the right *content* and *form*. Moral philosopher Bernard Williams has made some conceptual distinctions that help clarify the disagreements (Williams, 1993). He distinguishes between:

- moralising, i.e., a transmission of moral truths that people are forced to acknowledge.
- morality, i.e., a teaching of how one ought to behave (clearly separated from 'moralising').
- moral philosophy, i.e., the sum total of all systematic, theoretical ethical frameworks.
- moral reflection, i.e., a reflection upon one's actions, thoughts, and their relationship to other aspects of one's life.
- moral philosophising, i.e., a making of conceptual distinctions and connections, an application of ethical principles, etc.

Williams believes that young children probably *can* be engaged in moral reflection and philosophising, but that they are *not* capable of moral philosophy – a belief PwC proponents could agree with. Since formulated the way Williams does, ‘moral philosophy’ is not what is taught when doing PwC – children are engaged in open-ended moral or ethical *enquiry*. They are not encouraged to ‘build’ entire ethical theories or frameworks, but to reflect upon moral issues, and think communally about ethical questions.

However, if like all philosophical questions, there *are* no clear, generally agreed answers to ethical questions, how can moral enquiry be of any *practical* use? Even the central question in ethics, posed by Socrates in Plato’s *Republic* (352 D), “How should one live?” has no universally accepted satisfactory answer. It is even possible that the question itself is outdated. It has been argued that it is no longer plausible to believe that there could be an answer to Socrates’ question, which is valid for *everyone*. For example, when introducing Habermas’ moral philosophy, Thomas McCarthy writes:

“Matters of individual or group self-understanding and self-realisation, rooted as they are in particular life histories and traditions, do not admit of general theory; and prudential deliberation on the good life, moving as it does within the horizons of particular lifeworlds and forms of life, does not yield universal prescriptions” (Habermas, 1990, pp. vii, viii).

Bernard Williams admits that it is no longer plausible to believe that philosophy itself can answer this question (Williams, 1985, p. 1). Richard Hare, however, would disagree with Williams, for he argues that, although there are no “determinate unique right answers” to moral questions, if we continue to discuss the issue long enough and familiarise ourselves with all the relevant evidence, *practical* agreement can be reached in what he calls a “clear, fair, and careful discussion” (Hare, 1978, p. 388). Answers could be *theoretically* refutable, but he is not too concerned about that, since the aim of moral education should be to teach children *how* to think, not *what* to think (Hare, 1978, pp. 388, 389). Moral questions are indispensable for living a life, and people will always have to answer those questions for themselves, Hare argues.

Hare puts much emphasis on rationality and logic in moral philosophy, and almost ignores the importance of self-esteem for being a moral agent. This is apparent in the way he writes about pupils. For example, he says that now:

“class teachers are not normally allowed to thrash their pupils physically. I see no reason why they should not thrash them verbally if they are guilty of rambling off the point, or going on too long when others are wanting to speak, or appealing to prejudices, or using rhetoric when argument is required. It may be that if these disciplines were practised more in schools, we should have better students in universities” (Hare, 1978, p. 389).

He completely ignores the possible emotional and therefore intellectual damage caused by ‘verbal thrashings’, and therefore to children’s moral autonomy.

Differences of emphasis put by various PwC proponents on the benefits of engaging children from an early age in communities of philosophical enquiry (in Hare’s case emphasis on logic/rationality rather than self-esteem) depends on their epistemological presuppositions about the relationship between language and reality – as I pointed out in Section 4 – and this is relevant for moral philosophy too.

First-order non-realists often refer to the development of the kind of moral values and virtues in PwC, which are essential for a true democracy to work, i.e., the cultivation of tolerance, respect for others, self-control, self-criticism and self-correction.

The idea is that group identification is an element in the formation of personal identity – the recognition that one’s self is a member of different sub-communities simultaneously (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 404). The advantage of multiple group identifications for a society is that individuals tend more to negotiate, co-operate, and pursue common interests, which in turn promotes mutual tolerance and a non-violent resolution of conflicts (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 413).

Because PwC is democratic in spirit for first-order non-realists, moral education should not have a pedagogical approach that relies primarily upon external authority and fear of punishment (Sharp, in press). Instead, classrooms should model a democratic social structure, with social control coming from within the group, and not from without.

As pointed out in Section 4, first-order non-realists believe that different conceptual frameworks reveal different parts of the *same* reality, and, thus, can be true at the same time. The more ‘windows on the world’, the more comprehensive the picture of reality becomes. The consequences for moral education are that communities of enquiry focus on the *procedure* of how we arrive at our beliefs, and not on the transmitting of substantive values. The latter is the aim of *realists* – *discovering* objective values (values have factual status), either by telling (dogmatic realist), or by reasoning (reasoned realist).

For first-order non-realists the tool of transforming persons into more ethical, that is, reasonable individuals, is also *reason*, but *open-ended*, ethical enquiry is central. The answers to ethical questions, or the meaning of ethical concepts is not given in advance. The community has to *construct* its own meaning of concepts via consensus, and has to give its own answers to ethical questions.

Through ethical enquiry, the community constructs its communal meaning of ethical concepts, such as ‘justice’, ‘fairness’, ‘bad’, ‘good’, ‘right’, and ‘wrong’. First-order non-realists believe that there is not one, absolute meaning to those concepts, therefore children cannot be *told* what they mean. Ethical enquiry will empower children by giving them the opportunity to practice sound reasoning.

For first-order non-realists the practice of certain *thinking skills* is an essential part of effective moral education. Such an approach to moral education goes beyond the more common approach of *values* clarification, in which the teacher helps pupils to articulate their values and respect their beliefs in a non-judgmental manner. For first-order non-realists what is missing in values clarification is the possibility of distinguishing between better and worse values. Therefore, they prefer a community of enquiry setting for moral education that aims to embody moral values in its process – the kind of values that make a democracy possible, based on the presupposition that all knowledge is fallible. This whole process will eventually be internalised by the pupils – not only the procedure of how to make ethical decisions, or how to construct ethical values, but also the thinking ‘tools’ (see below) at one’s disposal to evaluate one’s own moral thinking and behaviour, and those of others.

The model of the community of enquiry is itself a moral model. The teacher models the kind of behaviour and thinking presupposed by this pedagogy as the sort of behaviour and thinking that belongs to being an ethical, and therefore reasonable, person, i.e., with morally committed thoughts and action. In that sense, the philosophy teacher has no choice, according to Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp: “...students are being shown how they *ought* to live” (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p. 272), and the teacher should *be* and *do* what s/he is teaching (Williams, 1993).

I agree with Patrick Costello that in that sense the community of enquiry does not just espouse *procedural* values – as sometimes claimed by PwC proponents – but also *substantive* values. Costello points out that values such as ‘mutual respect’ or ‘readiness to reason’ are not just procedural values, i.e., appropriate to the *way* a person thinks, but are substantive, i.e., influence *what* a person thinks (Costello, 1996, p. 50).

However, according to Lipman and Sharp, the modelling aspect of the community of enquiry pedagogy puts constraints to the extent to which PwC can be justified to the sceptic of PwC. They explain:

“...teachers of philosophy can convey by their stance a serious commitment to rationality and a profound sense of care with respect to both people and ideas. If they succeed in communicating this attitude to their students, then in effect the question “Why philosophy for children?” has been answered. The value of philosophy for children will either be demonstrated in practice in classrooms, and thereby justified – or it will not. But reasoning alone cannot establish such a value” (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p. 272).

This raises the urgent question of to what extent underlying community of enquiry values, such as egalitarianism, can be questioned, and if so how? How could a community of enquiry enquire into its own presupposed values without already expressing those values (e.g., respect for persons, giving of reasons)?

Although first-order non-realists understand reasoning to be limited in establishing the *value* of PwC, reasoning is seen as a powerful tool in moral education by first-order non-realists. They emphasise the practice and importance of the following ‘thinking tools’:

THINKING TOOLS in COMMUNITIES OF ETHICAL ENQUIRY³¹:

1. Recognising one's own responsibility (circumspecting).
- e.g., Do I have a choice to make?
2. Recognising one's own feelings (introspecting).
- e.g., What do I want to do?
3. Imagining consequences (hypothesising).
- e.g., What will happen if I choose this?
4. Imagining other's feelings (empathising).
- e.g., How will others feel?
5. Recognising the importance of singular contexts (contextualising).
- e.g., Does it perhaps depend?
6. Recognising the importance of repeated behaviour (universalising).
- e.g., What if everyone did that?
7. Projecting an ideal world (idealising).
- e.g., How do I want things to be?
8. Projecting an ideal self (practising).
- e.g., Are my actions consistent with my beliefs?
9. Considering other ends (reviewing).
- e.g., Are there any reasons otherwise?
10. Considering other means (speculating).
- e.g., What else could I do?
11. Weighing up alternatives (prioritising).
- e.g., What are the priorities?

Second-order non-realists, on the other hand, distrust reason. Using reason is seen as a normative game played by a particular culture, useful for a particular purpose (the purpose of the game), but it has no objective status. A second-order non-realist would argue that there are no objective, universal criteria to distinguish *better* from worse ethical theories. They are just useful tools for our particular way of life. For example, the nuclear family is a social structure that is useful in a capitalistic society, with women working at home looking after the children, and with the men's workplace often far away from the home. Without this supporting and unpaid social role of women, capitalism in its present form would be impossible. It is for this reason that the nuclear family is a prevalent moral value.

Referring to an existing political system one lives within is, by itself, not a justification for accepting its values. Similarly, the values underpinning a *democratic* political system cannot be presupposed – as first-order non-realists do.

Also, for second-order non-realists, *fill* communication between members of a community of enquiry is impossible, which does not imply that members should not work hard toward understanding each other across differences. The communicative virtues and skills that make this possible are tolerance, patience, and a willingness to listen (Burbules & Rice, 1991, pp. 405-413). Nicholas Burbules and Suzanne Rice point out the moral benefits of dialogue:

“As a process, dialogue requires us to re-examine our own pre-suppositions and to compare them against quite different ones; to make us less dogmatic about the belief that the way the world appears to us is necessarily the way the world is” (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 405).

They continue:

“It heightens our sensitivity to the diversity of human cultures, and to how the ‘same thing’ might look and feel quite different to members of different cultural groups. It prepares us for the possibility of radical misunderstanding, and should make us extremely modest and cautious about imposing an interpretative frame from one group onto another... Both as individuals and groups, we can broaden and enrich our self-understanding by considering our beliefs, values, and actions from a fresh standpoint. ...[it can give us] opportunities for deeper self-understanding and a release from the common-sense assumptions that typically frame our daily existence” (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 405).

Second-order non-realists also believe that members of the community have the moral right to voice their private view in their own unique way (e.g., through metaphors), and to be actively listened to. The community leaves open the possibility that consensus between members cannot be reached, and the second-order non-realist facilitator will encourage members to be tolerant towards pluralism, and aid members to express, construct and develop their own metaphors.

One of the most important values of PwC for second-order realists should be a growth of *self-esteem*, as it will empower children to articulate personal, private understanding through metaphors in their own unique, imaginative way. The importance of the creation of personal metaphors for self-understanding (and therefore self-esteem) is emphasised by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. They argue that:

“..in self-understanding we are always searching for what unifies our own diverse experiences in order to give coherence to our lives.... so we seek out personal metaphors to highlight and make coherent our own pasts, our present activities, and our dreams, hopes, and goals as well. A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives. Self-understanding requires unending negotiation and re-negotiation of the meaning of your experiences to yourself. In therapy for example, much of self-understanding involves consciously recognising previously unconscious metaphors and how we live by them. It involves the constant construction of new coherences in your life, coherences that give new meaning to old experiences. The process of self-understanding is the continual development of new life-stories for yourself” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 233).

So, metaphors are essential for self-understanding, but also for developing the kind of thinking skills highly valued by first-order non-realists. For example, we use metaphors when thinking about what sort of person we would like to be, in what sort of world we would like to live, or when we empathise with others. We also use them when answering the central ethical question ‘What is the good life?’. It is important to become aware of the kind of metaphors we use in this process as they may obstruct new ways of thinking about what is possible, since most metaphors are used habitually and unreflectively.

The imagination is central in deconstructing old metaphors, and the creation of new ones. Also, the capacity to think of different possibilities is connected with the power to make choices, and that in

tum is directly correlated with moral agency, in the sense that the greater our imaginative power is the greater our moral autonomy, and therefore, freedom (Egan, 1992, p. 165). This will help children to stand up against peer pressure. Egan points out that:

“To go along with the crowd, to fit in, to do the conventional, is in part due to not realizing the possible alternatives open to us” (Egan, 1992, p. 165).

Self-esteem is the well out of which the courage and imaginative competence stems to develop one's own metaphors and create one's own life. PwC can greatly help children to develop their imagination necessary for metaphorical creativity, speculative thinking, and the thinking of other possible worlds. For example, through the asking and answering of questions such as “What if... (e.g., we were all made of paper)?”, or “Suppose that... (e.g., there were only children in the world)?”, which will encourage them to speculate and think about other possible worlds, and, therefore, other possible (perhaps better) ways of doing things. Facilitators in philosophical enquiry can also explicitly encourage children to create metaphors by asking specific questions such as “What does your mind make you think of?”, or focus more generally on practising children's thinking about what is similar or different about two events, things, or concepts, and in what sense, metaphors highlight similarities.

So, self-esteem is not only beneficial for intellectual autonomy, but also for moral autonomy. Quoting Adorno, Helmut Schreier states that the very first obligation for moral education should be that Auschwitz never happens again. Schreier points out the importance of dialogue to reach this goal. Following Hannah Arendt, he argues that reflective thinking may support the development of conscience and thereby become a cornerstone of moral education. It has to do with the relationship between consciousness (“*Wissen*”) and conscience (“*Gewissen*”) (Schreier, 1993, p. 25). When thinking reflectively there is a dialogue with oneself. The ‘other’ self is a representative of one's community, and it is this thinking with the ‘other’ self that we call conscience.³³ As Schreier puts it: “Thinking builds conscience out of consciousness” (Schreier, 1993, p. 25). This kind of individual and reflective thinking was often absent in the case of the Nazis.

It is a kind of thinking, Schreier points out, that requires the individual to have a great deal of self-esteem, and he disagrees with Hannah Arendt that this takes place at the level of reason. He argues that thinking for oneself requires a *mental* disposition, since:

“It presupposes a disposition that lies to a large degree beyond our control and education, namely, that of a mind not destroyed and made to feel inadequate by failures, but one that is secure enough to be curious and excited about life. It is not easy to have our own thinking cross-examined by others. It is therefore important to start when children are very young, before they start to feel themselves as personal failures, before they despise themselves and in consequence distrust their own judgement” (Schreier, 1993, pp. 26, 27).

He supports this claim by referring to Eric Hoffer who has depicted the typical followers of mass movements as thoroughly frustrated individuals who feel themselves to be a failure and despise their own self. Such individuals will not function properly in an open-ended philosophical enquiry.

So, Schreier argues that children should start young with doing philosophy, before they may feel too insecure, or inadequate to have their “thinking cross-examined by others”.

I tend to support Schreier's view that increased self esteem, generated by being a member of a community of enquiry, underpins the courage to uphold actions and opinions that are not solely resultant from the use of reason. First-order non-realists' faith in reason limits the scope of what individuals can or should be able to express in communities of enquiry.

However, not everyone agrees that ethical enquiry is suitable for young children. There are some who would argue that, although it is desirable to teach philosophy to young children, some branches of philosophy should be left until adolescence. Joseph Flay is such a philosopher. Influenced by Aristotle, he argues that moral education for young children is in itself immoral, because:

“the introduction of reason into the value decisions of those still under the influence of the authoritative world of the adult causes a fragmentation of the child’s existence that is more destructive than the fragmentation that in fact exists in the world shaped by the adults... the introduction of reason into morals should be in response to a felt need brought about by contact with that world, rather than as an initiative to cause that world to crumble” (Flay, 1978, p. 156).

Similarly, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Bk I: Ch. 3), Aristotle gives two reasons why young people cannot be taught ethics. First, children’s lack of experience in the “actions that occur in life” renders them unsuitable for doing moral philosophy. Secondly, they have the tendency to follow their passions.

If Aristotle (and Flay) are correct, then there would be serious implications for the teaching of philosophy through the community of enquiry method, for the open-ended character of the pedagogy makes it impossible to leave moral questions (when asked by the children) outside the enquiry. Moreover, children will transfer the kind of skills and attitudes encouraged in philosophy class to other domains, including the moral. So, if moral philosophy is undesirable, then so is PwC as a whole.

This possible rejection of PwC necessitates a closer examination of the criticisms³⁴. Following Aristotle, Flay claims that the study of ethics presupposes:

- a. that the individual has adequate experience in life.
- b. that the individual is no longer governed on the whole by passion and whim but by a desire to act according to some rational principles” (Flay, 1978, p. 149).

Flay continues:

“Without the experience, the discussion of ethics has little or no relevance to the real content of life; without the desire for rationality, the principles and distinctions of ethics will have no relevance” (Flay, 1978, p. 149).

Flay seems to presuppose about *experience* that:

- people all have the same *kind* of experiences,
- that experience can be *quantified*,
- children have *some*, but *inadequate* experience in life,

In his view, children have less of whatever it is that adults have a great deal of. My concern is that this leaves no space for the possibility that children may have different *kinds* of experiences³⁵. Other questions that immediately spring to mind are, for example, how much experience is “adequate”. or sufficient to deserve reflecting upon? Who decides, and what are the criterion used? Also, are there *individual* differences that need to be taken into account, for example, based on gender or age?

Saying that children's experience is not adequate is in itself not an argument for saying that these experiences are not worth reflecting upon. However, Flay (following Aristotle) argues that this reflection is not possible for children, because only adults are not "governed ...by passion and whim", and have a "desire to act according to some rational principles".

What is interesting here is his use of the concepts 'passion', 'whim', and 'desire'. Why is it that children are "governed by passion and whim", but have no *desire* to act rationally? Is it not possible to inflame such a desire in children by, for example, doing philosophy? Is it possible that Flay presupposes that the process of growing up (including the development of reason) is a necessary, *biological* process that should not be interfered with socially?

Flay's concern is with children's possible use of reason in ethical matters. He argues that in ethical enquiry children use reason to challenge all authority simultaneously causing radical fragmentation of the child's psyche. The problem with every value system, he continues, is that no matter how sound, they are vulnerable when critically evaluated through reason (Flay, 1978, p. 155).

This disintegration should not be forced "...before the time is ready for it" (= the ancient Greek notion of 'kairos'), that is, the time when "reason is demanded by the natural collapse of the authoritative, serious world. To deliberately engineer the collapse ... is morally indefensible, because it leads to cynicism, boredom and alienation" (Flay, 1978, pp. 153-156).

Flay's fear of moral relativism lacks empirical backing. Transcripts from classroom ethical enquiries, and anecdotal evidence from teachers and classroom assistants does not show that children become cynical, bored, or alienated when involved in ethical enquiries. On the contrary, empirical evidence suggests that children find the enquiries meaningful, interesting, and that they are helpful when trying to make sense of their own feelings and thoughts and those of others resulting in more care and trust. Young children *can* use reason with sensitivity to context and other people's feelings and thoughts – given the right kind of environment and education.³⁶

Flay, himself, admits that there is no clear criterion to determine 'kairos', that is, the appropriate time for moral education. So, even if he is correct, his criticism is not *practically* helpful when deciding the appropriate timing of moral education in schools. Moreover, presenting children with a false, that is, unproblematic picture of the world is in itself immoral, for it is untruthful. Children are faced daily with ethical decisions and moral dilemmas. They can include sticking up for their friend who is being bullied, to inform the teacher there are drawing pins on his chair *before* sitting down, to help an animal in need, but also coming to terms with a divorce, physical or mental abuse by their parents, or having a parent in prison. Children, too, experience a world in which values are mutually exclusive of each other (e.g., their father must be a bad person, because he is in prison, however, *he* believes there is nothing wrong in stealing from people who are well off).

The belief that this fragmentation is not present in children's lives, and that it should remain "hidden behind the authority of the adult world" (Flay, 1978, p. 155) is not only deceitful, but also gives an inaccurate and sentimental picture of children's lives.

Moreover, even if it were true that children's experience is the same, but of a lesser quantity of that of adult's, it does not follow that children do not have *sufficient* experience to reflect upon, and that such a reflection will not help them to make sense of that experience.

We can encourage them to explore a variety of moral issues, we can stimulate their moral imagination, and we can offer opportunities for reflection upon their thoughts and actions, and the connection between the two.

Against Aristotle's claim that children have the tendency to follow their passions, one can argue that this in itself does not constitute an argument against PwC. Until children from an early age have

been taught philosophy systematically, and have been given the practice and the tools to make ethical judgements, not only lead by passions, but also based on reason, one cannot claim that children are solely lead by their passions. Further evidence or arguments will have to be offered to demonstrate why the basis assumption is true, i.e., why children (even when properly trained in ethical enquiry) cannot make ethical judgements based on reason. Also, the underlying assumption that *adults* do *not* have the tendency to follow their passions in ethical matters needs to be substantiated.

Often not made explicit, but underlying the arguments for or against moral education, are philosophical presuppositions about the moral nature of children. Children are often presupposed to be either 'little savages', and, therefore, in need of taming, or domestication, or they are 'little angels' with impulses which are already moral and virtuous – providing they are given the right environment (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p. 339).

In between those two extremes, Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp offer their preferred presupposition, which is that:

"...native to the child are innumerable dispositions which, if encouraged, could lead to any kind of human behaviour... We just have to provide the right environment for children to encourage self-constructive behaviour and to discourage self-destructive behaviour" (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p. 339).

The "right environment" is that of communities of ethical enquiry, in which children will raise the kind of ethical questions and problems as appropriate to their situation and the context in which it is raised. Empirical evidence suggests that it will help children to make more reflective and balanced ethical decisions – the kinds of decisions they have to make on a daily basis anyway. By sharing their thoughts and concerns with others in a caring and trusting communal environment they will be helped to understand themselves, but also others better, which in turn aids empathy and moral decision making – based not only on passions, but also on reasons.

Other arguments against Flay can be found in a paper by Martin Benjamin (1978). He claims that there is a general misconception about the cognitive status of ethics, expressed, for example, in the 'fact' (science) – 'value' (ethics) dichotomy. Benjamin claims that ethics is more like science than generally acknowledged. This epistemological misconception is based on how science and ethics are usually *taught*. Science is taught as a collection of incorrigible scientific facts – the *products* of scientific reasoning and not the *process*. Ethics is usually taught by using very difficult to decide ethical dilemmas, such as euthanasia, or abortion – clouding, according to Benjamin, the many ethical truths we all take for granted, such as truth telling or promise keeping.

Instead, Benjamin argues that the proper comparison between science and ethics is one that concentrates on how controversies within each discipline are resolved (Benjamin, 1978, p. 313). Resolving controversies takes place in dialogue, and in both ethical and scientific enquiry there has to be, for example, conceptual clarity, drawing relevant distinctions, formulating cogent arguments, continual testing, and refining, or changing of previously held beliefs (Benjamin, 1978, p. 321).

Benjamin points out three important similarities between ethical and scientific thinking.

1. Ethical, but also scientific knowledge is always provisional, since "our scientific beliefs can never form a closed and finished system" (Benjamin, 1978, pp. 316, 317).
2. New insights or experiences may necessitate major changes in theories.
3. One framework can be rejected only if it can be replaced by a better one (Benjamin, 1978, pp. 319, 320).

Benjamin strongly rejects the claim that in ethical enquiry 'anything goes'. There are "clear, though not fully determinate, boundaries rooted in the overall framework that is, at that time, judged most adequate". For example, even if participants in an ethical enquiry do not agree whether capital punishment is justifiable, they can agree on the fact that if it were justifiable that the punishment should not be "deliberately humiliating or torturous" (Benjamin, 1978, p. 321).

Benjamin does admit that there are also important differences between ethics and science. Ethics is more concerned with what *ought* to be the case, and is, therefore, connected with emotions, attitudes, and dispositions to behave in particular ways (Benjamin, 1978, p. 321). Also, the frame of reference for ethical enquiry is comparatively unrestricted. As a result, many more skills, capacities and knowledge of a psychological, historical, and sociological kind are required; a highly developed moral imagination.

The development of moral imagination should be central to moral education, because it is essential for empathising (imagining being...), for projection into the future (imagining what will happen if...), and for imagining other possibilities than the options given (Williams, 1993).

I conclude that Benjamin's comparison between ethics and science is helpful to argue against Flay's claim that although it is desirable to teach *philosophy* to young children, that it is not desirable to teach them *moral philosophy*. By pointing out that *all* knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is always provisional, the fact-value dichotomy fades, as does, consequently, the distinction between ethical and philosophical enquiry.

However, there are others who argue that not just moral philosophy, but that *any* branch of philosophy is unsuitable for children.

In *The Republic*, Socrates argues that "only men of steady and disciplined character shall be admitted to philosophical discussions" (539d), and even then only over the age of thirty. The reason being that:

"...young men, after their first taste of argument, are always contradicting people just for the fun of it; they imitate those whom they hear cross-examining each other, and themselves cross-examine other people, like puppies who love to pull and tear at anyone within reach" (Plato, 1987, p. 353).

Too early an introduction to 'dialectic' could result in an abandonment of values such as 'honour', 'right' and 'good', but also diminish respect for authority in general, and obedience in particular. The young person will turn into a rebel, rather than be a conformer, and s/he will be tempted to live a life following her/his desires (Plato, 1987, p. 352).

Although Plato is often quoted by traditional academic philosophers against PwC, Lipman believes it is a mistake to think that Plato was against the idea of doing philosophy with children. He points out that Plato was against *dialectic* for young people, however, philosophy cannot be reduced to argument (Lipman, 1988b, p. 14). Dialectic was introduced into Athens by the sophists, and he admits that its effects on children can be "devastating and demoralising" (Lipman, 1988b, p. 15), because of its separation of technique and conviction.

Dialectical training is useful, for example, for the training of lawyers, who should be able to argue any case regardless of their own convictions. Lipman stipulates that it should not be a model for the rest of education (Lipman, 1988b, p. 14). This is because:

"The breeding ground of amoralism is the training of technicians who assume that ends are given (or do not matter), so that their concern is merely with

means, with tactics, with technique. If children are not given the opportunity to weigh and discuss both ends and means, and their interrelationship, they are likely to become cynical about everything except their own well-being, and adults will not be slow to condemn them as "mindless little relativists" (Lipman, 1988b, p. 14).

As opposed to dialectical argumentation, in communities of philosophical enquiry the goal is *insight*, and not *victory* (Liverani, 1991; Lipman, 1988b, p. 14).

Lipman admits that when technique is separated from conviction, dialectical training can be very dangerous. Instead, children should be given practice in discussing the sort of concepts they take seriously and they care about, otherwise we create citizens, Lipman points out, who "...neither discuss what they care about nor care about what they discuss" (Lipman, 1988b, p. 14).

7. Summary and Conclusion

Philosophy's source and energy is 'existential perplexity' – a precondition of what Peter Abbs calls "authentic education". Such perplexity has the *intrinsic* intellectual and moral value of epistemological modesty – a more modest view of what we (really) know. This is consistent with the post-modern view that all knowledge is fallible. Unlike most teaching in primary schools, teaching philosophy through dialogue has no prescriptive content, is personal, and is indirect.

Its value lies especially in the *process* of care-full³⁷ thinking, and not so much in the outcome of this process. The focus is not on giving right answers to teacher's questions, but on the empowerment of children to ask questions themselves. Those questions often surprise teachers as they question the cherished convictions we (adults) live by. In that sense, PwC is not an exercise in problem-solving – problems thought out by adults – but more one of problem-finding. It is a questioning of what hitherto has been taken for granted.

When children have the skills, the confidence, and the opportunity to generate their own questions, knowledge and learning will be more meaningful for them, since they continuously have to (literally) *make* connections between new thoughts and what they already (think they) know. Concept-analysis often involves making explicit what one intuitively means with a concept when using it, but in talking and thinking communally about the concept one's presuppositions are clarified and put to the test for intersubjective validity. By setting their own agenda for the discussions, children shape and reshape the concepts through which they understand themselves, others and the world, and such self-knowledge will help them "to feel at home in their own lives", which is the aim of philosophy, according to Dutch philosopher Dries Boele (Boele, 1997a, p. 45), but also will aid their learning.

Not all PwC practitioners emphasise the same benefits of PwC, or arguments for educational change. It depends on how they view the role of human understanding in knowledge acquisition and the making of meaning. Inspired by Maugh Rollins' paper, I distinguished between the different benefits and related those to practitioners' epistemological presuppositions.

Both 'reasoned realists' and 'first-order non-realists' have faith in *reason* to transform people and the world. They see communities of philosophical enquiry as necessary conditions for changing existing political structures into 'real' democracies, and, therefore, value highly the kind of virtues necessary for a true democracy to work, such as tolerance, respect for others, self-control, self-criticism and self-correction.

For first-order non-realists a distinction needs to be made between 'human understanding' and 'reality'. In dialogue there is an exchange of different conceptual frameworks that 'glued together' will provide a more comprehensive picture of reality. This is in contrast to realists, who believe that moral values exist objectively, and can be 'transmitted', since they leave the possibility open that one can have a *whole*, not just always a *partial*, picture of reality.

For first-order non-realists moral education should be through engagement in communities of ethical enquiry, in which the community constructs its own intersubjective meaning of ethical concepts, and individuals 'shape' and 'sharpen' their own values by practising sound reasoning ('thinking tools') and internalise certain enquiry attitudes, such as open-mindedness, empathy, and flexibility. The process of a community of enquiry aims to embody the kind of moral values that make a democracy possible, based on the presupposition that all knowledge is fallible. In ethical enquiry, first-order non-realists focus on the *procedure* of how we arrive at our beliefs, and not on the transmitting of substantive values.

I criticised reasoned realism and first-order non-realism on the following grounds:

1. democracy as a political ideal needs to be argued for, and cannot merely be presupposed.
2. empowering children, and thereby transforming adulthood, demands an 'expanded' notion of reason to include emotions, feelings, hopes, desires, etc.
3. assuming that full communication is possible leaves little space for private understanding or 'unique voices', and makes it difficult and perhaps impossible for individuals or groups of people to create new metaphors to live by.

These criticisms are met by second-order non-realism – a position I tend to prefer because it accepts that conceptual frameworks can be incommensurable, leaving space for exchanging metaphors as non-rational means to communicate. Members of the community should do their utmost to understand each other, but at the same time accept the possibility that full understanding may be impossible. Communicative virtues, such as tolerance and respect across differences are highly praised by second-order non-realists.

Self-esteem should be the most emphasised benefit of PwC for second-order non-realists as it empowers the individual with the confidence to express private understanding through metaphors, the importance of which should not be underestimated for intellectual and moral autonomy. We use metaphors in self-understanding, but also when developing the kind of thinking skills so highly valued by first-order non-realists. Since even what is normally regarded as 'literal' language is metaphorically structured³⁸, metaphorical language is often used habitually and unreflectively, and this may obstruct new ways of thinking about what is possible.

Development of the imagination should be especially high on the educational agenda for second-order non-realists, since the imagination is necessary for:

1. Metaphorical creativity; the deconstruction of old metaphors, and the creation of new ones.
2. Critical, creative and caring thinking; empathising, universalising, thinking of the consequences of one's actions, giving counter-examples, hypothesising – to mention just a few, all require imagination.
3. The thinking of other possible worlds; the greater our imaginative power, the greater the capacity to think of different possibilities, and the greater our moral autonomy – resulting in a personal moral responsibility and confidence to shape one's own life.

PwC's emancipatory function is not restricted to children only. I have also pointed out that PwC could also change significantly traditional, academic philosophy in that PwC: does not use philosophical jargon; encourages abstract thinking, but always in the context of concrete, everyday experiences; focuses on the dialogical community, and dialogue is *action*; creates an environment in which a number of the traditional gender dualisms (reason/intuition, emotion/logic, self/public, etc.) break down.

I also addressed the substantial disagreements about the appropriateness of moral education for *young* children. I rejected Aristotle's and Neo-Aristotelian arguments taking three 'routes':

1. By examining what is meant by *experience* when it is argued that young children have insufficient experience to engage in communities of ethical enquiry.
2. By pointing out the lack of empirical support for the claim that:
 - a. children are merely led by their passions in ethical matters, and cannot reason about them.

b. adults do *not* have the tendency to follow their passions in ethical matters.

3. By arguing that *all* knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is always provisional, therefore the fact (science)-value (ethics) dichotomy fades, as does, consequently, the distinction between ethical and philosophical enquiry.

I also rejected Plato's argument that philosophy is inappropriate for people under the age of thirty, because it undermines authority, on the grounds that PwC cannot be reduced to *dialectic*, i.e., arguing one's case without necessarily believing in what one is arguing for with the main aim of gaining victory over one's opponent. In PwC a very different kind of talk and interaction is sought for. Members of communities of philosophical enquiry discuss what they care about, and care about what they discuss.

I conclude that no convincing arguments or empirical evidence have been brought forward to show that young children should neither be engaged in communities of philosophical enquiry in general, nor, in ethical enquiries in particular. On the contrary, many arguments show the possible benefits, educationally, socially, politically, intellectually, or morally, especially when children start PwC from the moment they can talk.

However, I would like to urge PwC practitioners to examine their own epistemological presuppositions when putting forward their most favoured benefit(s), since it will have implications for the kind of interventions they make when facilitating a philosophical enquiry. For example, when a facilitator particularly wants to develop children's self-esteem, there could be occasions where persisting in asking a child to give reasons for a belief would be inappropriate.

There are also implications for the kinds of material a facilitator might choose, and for the 'direction' of the dialogue. For example, a second-order non-realists will focus on material that stimulates children's imagination, and will intervene to allow private understanding to be expressed. Also, letting children think about existing metaphors and to encourage them to construct new ones could guide in lesson preparation.

To help PwC practitioners to examine their own epistemological presuppositions I suggested they could ask themselves and try to answer at least the following questions:

1. How do I justify *democratic* procedures in an enquiry, and do I leave other possibilities open?
2. Are there *better* answers to philosophical questions, and what are mine/the community's criteria for saying that one answer is better than another?
3. What do I mean by being *rational* or *reasonable* in an enquiry?
4. What constitutes good *reasons* when asking members of a community of enquiry to justify their beliefs?
5. How can I encourage *imaginative representations of intuition* (e.g., metaphors, art, poetry) as a means of respecting and extending private understanding non-communicable through rational means?

FOOTNOTES

Chapter Eight

¹ Teacher Caroline Nickel touches on the problem when philosophy is not a compulsory subject. When children can choose for philosophy as an after-school activity, the title 'philosophy' can be intimidating and hardly strikes the imagination. She says: "In competition with tennis or calligraphy, the immediate attraction of learning to think more skilfully pales a little". Additionally, it takes time to establish a community of enquiry, and only when such a community is established do children become amazed and excited. If it is not compulsory they might have already given up. From: Caroline Nickel. "Analytic Thinking as an Elective" ;In: *Thinking*, 1983, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 34. An important argument for having philosophy as a separate subject in the curriculum would be to secure a place for it, in which its distinctive didactics could be well established and developed. See, for example: Philip Cam. *Thinking Together; Philosophical Inquiry for the Classroom*. Australian English Teaching Association & Hale and Iremonger, 1995; Laurance J. Splitter and Ann M Sharp. *Teaching for Better Thinking; The Classroom Community of Enquiry*. Melbourne, Acer, 1995; Helmut Schreier. "The Role of Stories in Philosophising with Children"; In: *Critical & Creative Thinking: the Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 24-33, 1993.

² See Chapter Six, Section 6.

³ See Chapter Two, Section 2.

⁴ The importance of starting philosophy at an early age is also stressed by Gareth Matthews. He writes: "My hypothesis is that, once children become well settled into school, they learn that only "useful" questioning is expected of them. Philosophy then either goes underground, to be pursued privately, perhaps, and not shared with others, or else becomes totally dormant". In: Gareth Matthews, *The Philosophy of Childhood*. Cambridge (Mass), Harvard Univ. Press, 1994, p. 5. The lack of appreciation of philosophical questioning we see even with authors such as Margaret Donaldson. She writes: "Where does 'now' begin or end? Or again, is a ball that has just rolled under the sofa to be regarded as 'present' to us, though we cannot actually see it? There is no sense in struggling with such questions". However, she does admit in the footnote following this statement that "the close scrutiny of unclear cases may sometimes be critical in the formation of theory". From: Margaret Donaldson, Margaret. *Human Minds; An Exploration*. London, Penguin, 1992, pp. 31 & 275, footnote 1. Children should start doing philosophy in communities of enquiry as soon as they speak a language. David Kennedy gives the following reason for this: "[The] child, like the adult, constructs, even with the onset of language, native or common-sense theories about the world in order to make sense of it, and, through a process of cognitive change suspiciously similar to the process of theory change in the history of science, ends up with a universal, if culturally-nuanced, ontological framework". From: David Kennedy. "Why Philosophy for Children Now"; *Thinking*, Vol. 10, no 3. p. 4. The need to do philosophy with pre-school children is backed up empirically by Gillian Pugh in *An equal start for all our children?*. Times Educational Supplement / Greenwich Lecture 1992. Research suggests that in the first five years, not only a high percentage of children's learning takes place, but also that the human brain is developing most rapidly, attitudes are formed, first relationships are made, concepts are developed, the foundation for all skills and later learning are laid, and that children begin to realise who they are; develop a concept of the self, self-value, and self-esteem (for example, by the age of three children distinguish between skin colour and attach different value to them). Especially with this age group, teachers need to involve parents. According to Gillian Pugh, extensive research studies

emphasise the importance of parental involvement in children's learning, and also report that "...parents are anxious to become involved but don't always know how to go about it".

5 See especially Chapter Two, Section 3.

6 See also Chapter One, Section 4c.

7 See Chapter Four about Post-Modern Education.

8 For the metaphysical assumptions of everyday educational language, see especially Chapter Two, and Chapter Four, Section 5. For those assumptions in existing educational material for the teaching of philosophy to children, see Chapter Seven.

9 See Chapter Four, Section 4, and Chapter Five, Section 3.

10 See Chapter Two, Section 6; Chapter Four, Section 6; Chapter Five, Sections 6, 7; Chapter Seven.

11 See especially Chapter Seven.

12 See Chapter Seven, Section 4.

13 This difference between Kieran Egan and Matthew Lipman has proved to be fundamental when deciding what sort of stimuli to use when teaching philosophy to children – as I argued in Chapter Seven.

14 See Chapter One, Section 4.

15 The importance of working collaboratively in contemporary business, science, technology, medicine and government is pointed out, for example, by Dan Kirby and Carol Kuykendall. In order to develop "collaborative thinking" the social structure of "a community of thinkers" is essential. As examples to support their claim, they give the Japanese car industry and the *ad hoc* project teams of innovative American corporations. They see this is one good reason why classrooms should become a community of thinkers. They write: "...thinking flourishes within a classroom structure that encourages students to learn from each other, not just from teachers and text books. Within a collaborative classroom, young people support and extend one another's thinking. They discover the social value of being able to ask good questions, look at all sides of an issue, and make careful judgements. In the process, they are socialised into a disposition to behave in more thoughtful ways". From: Dan Kirby, and Carol Kuykendall. *Mind Matters; Teaching for Thinking*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Boynton Cook publishers, 1991, p. 27.

16 Apart from the educational value of teaching philosophy to children, Helmut Schreier puts forward a hedonistic argument for the teachers involved. He argues that most adults have lost an appreciation for the paradoxical, the absurd, the quizzical, that is hidden in our languages, and he refers to Gareth Matthews who has pointed out so well that "He who never has engaged in philosophising with a child or with a group of children has missed one of the best things that life holds in store for us". From: Helmut Schreier, "The Role of Stories in Philosophising with Children": In: *Critical & Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 24.

17 See Chapter Five, Section 2.

18 See Chapter Two, and Chapter Four, Section 5

- 19 See also Chapter Four, Sections 2 and 4.
- 20 Using literature when teaching philosophy to children has an additional benefit in connection with a social virtue such as tolerance. Literature helps us to see the possibilities in the beliefs of others, and offers us other possible worlds and a way of doing things. What produces the tolerance is the power of detachment in the imagination, where things are removed just out of reach of belief and action.
- 21 See Chapter Four, Section 5.
- 22 For example, in *Growing up with Philosophy*, Lipman suggests that the justification for teaching philosophy to young children cannot be given by philosophy itself. He argues on pages 273 and 274 that philosophy is a commitment to truth and rationality, a commitment to the importance of giving reasons for one's beliefs. Anyone who questions why children should do philosophy is in fact saying "Why should they be rational?" – which is a questioning of giving reasons itself, so however we answer the question "Why philosophy with children?", no reason will suffice, because reasoning itself is under scrutiny.
- 23 For example, in their book *Teaching for Better Thinking*, Sharp and Splitter argue that, despite the fact that thoughts and feelings are by definition private and personal to their owners, interpersonal communication is possible (p. 66).
- 24 This difference between 'opinion' and 'point of view' is from *Teaching for Better Thinking* written by Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp, 1995. When opinions are expressed in communities of enquiry they are critically reflected upon by the members of the community resulting in a more reflective and balanced point of view. This is the difference between philosophy and school activities such as circle time, in which children express *opinions*, and not *points of view*.
- 25 See especially Chapter Four, Section 4.
- 26 See Chapter Two, Section 2.
- 27 Despite having classified Matthew Lipman earlier as a 'reasoned realist' regarding his view on what 'rationality' is, his views on children constructing their own meanings of concepts is distinctly 'first-order non-realist'. Many PwC proponents have one foot in modern discourse, and the other in post-modern discourse as, for example, shown in Chapter Seven, when pointing out the pedagogical and philosophical inconsistencies in the Philosophy for Children Programme.
- 28 One could, for example, start with questioning to what extent individual freedom is sacrificed in a democracy by the will of the majority. The pitfalls of democratic systems should be investigated and alternative political systems reflected upon. For the treatment of *anarchism* as a serious political philosophy, see: George Woodcock. *Anarchism; a history of libertarian ideas and movements*. Penguin Books, 1962
- 29 See also Chapter Four, Footnote 22.
- 30 See Chapter Four, Section 5.
- 31 It is difficult to generalise, for each community of philosophical enquiry is unique. that is, constituted by a particular group of participants. However, it is fair to say that the kind of talk generated in communities of philosophical enquiry is neither feminine nor masculine –

there is an emphasis on active listening and a building on each other's ideas. Without respect for each other as co-enquirers and each other's ideas there is no community of enquiry. Therefore, typical men's talk could not dominate in a true community of philosophical enquiry.

³² The list of thinking tools was originally given by Ann Margaret Sharp at a P4C course in Horsham, UK, in the Winter of 1994, and subsequently adapted by Roger Sutcliffe, chairperson of SAPERE (Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education).

³³ This inner dialogue will become 'richer' when frequently being a member of communities of philosophical enquiry, as 'external' dialogues become 'internalised'. See Chapter Four, Sections 2 and 4. Also, there is another reason why the epistemological presuppositions of the community of enquiry pedagogy may help in combating intolerance, war and persecution. Human fallibilism is one of its major presuppositions – the belief that there are no objective truths (worth being killed, or to kill for).

³⁴ A rejection of Flay's and similar arguments is also important, since it is often used by traditional, academic philosophers as, for example, by Anthony O'Hear when presenting his paper *Philosophy and Knowledge* on 15 April 1997 at an International Philosophy for Children Conference at King's College, London. In contrast to Flay, however, O'Hear also argues that children should not be allowed to challenge *epistemological* authority, since children have neither knowledge, nor experience.

³⁵ See Chapter Five, Section 2, and Chapter Six, especially Section 7: a transcript of children evaluating an ethical enquiry.

³⁶ See, for example, Chapter Seven.

³⁷ This term I have taken from an unpublished paper by Loma Crossman called *Philosophy for Children – Changing Images of Teachers and Children* as it powerfully expresses two core ideas of PwC – the care for others, but also the care for intellectual rigour.

³⁸ See especially Chapter Two.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that, in order to examine the benefits of Philosophy with Children (PwC) on children academically and personally, one has to examine one's own philosophical assumptions about what is meant by concepts such as 'mind', 'understanding', 'meaning', 'knowledge' and 'argument'. The importance of talking in communities of philosophical enquiry when teaching for better thinking will become apparent only when one has post-modern beliefs about the mind, the body, and the relationship between the two. An important benefit of a subject such as philosophy is that it opens up new ways of asking questions appropriate to subject and circumstances. Philosophy questions our cherished convictions, and, thus, the metaphors we habitually think with and live by. Also, by encouraging children to question their epistemological authorities, i.e., to reflect upon the sources on which their beliefs rest, they will become self-reflective, autonomous thinkers. This will enable them to evaluate information more critically and creatively by learning certain skills and attitudes, especially important in a technological age in which information (knowledge of 'facts') is more rapidly out of date than ever before.

I have also argued that philosophy is not a luxury, and deserves to be an educational priority, since one cannot live one's life without giving (most of the time) implicit answers to philosophical questions – not only at the level of thought, but also of action. So, in that sense we are doing philosophy all the time, but it matters greatly that we do it well. Philosophy with children helps children to analyse the kind of (philosophical) concepts they use to make sense of their experiences and the world they live in, and should, therefore, start from the moment they can talk.

In communities of enquiry, there is a link between meaning and personal experience: children shape and reshape the concepts through which they understand themselves, others and the world. This connectedness is essential to keep the child interested and motivated in her own education, without the need for more 'external' motivation, such as pleasing the teacher, rewards or degrees. It will also nourish and extend the child's intellectual curiosity. Moreover, children have the moral *right* to have knowledge presented to them as it *is*, i.e., the *products* of previous enquiries, and therefore tentative and fallible.

An unexpected outcome of my research was my growing awareness of the possible deconstructive role of young children's thinking on what we mean by 'rationality'. The kind of thinking dominant prior to the internalisation of literacy is 'embodied' – i.e., embedded in children's lifeworld. Literacy enables and encourages children to think abstractly and disembodiedly (dissociated from their lifeworld), i.e., to examine concepts out of the context in which they are used.

Since the Enlightenment, this kind of de-contextualised thinking, or disembodied rationality, so clearly expressed in Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am', has been reinforced by our modernist society to such an extent that the 'other side' of our mind – the imaginative, the metaphorical, the poetic – has been undervalued in its role in rationality. Childhood should not be understood as an immature stage to something cognitively better, but as a period with its own perfection; and that, therefore, the kind of thinking so strongly present in young children, should be appreciated as an end in itself.

But, there is another reason why this kind of thinking deserves more respect. Young children's typical search for connectedness when thinking is also an important, albeit neglected, part of adult's thinking. It gives thinking its life and energy. One example is this thesis – without this urge to connect what is not yet connected, my own research would never have been possible. It is a search for a connection that one knows needs to be made (although one does not know yet what it will be), and a sense of frustration until it is made. My possible reading, for example, of the dialogue with infants, needed an open engagement made possible by an acknowledgement and respect of the

difference. Without the similarities, of course, that would never have been possible. There are differences between young children's thinking and that of adults, but they would be two 'sides' of the same mind. However, the imaginative, metaphorical, and affective side has been 'forgotten' in the process of growing up and becoming a 'rational' adult.

This is especially true in a society that rewards an analytic, strategic approach to thinking. Thinking has become a resource, to be used as a tool in order to control. Implications for PwC are a greater emphasis on metaphorical understanding and imaginative, syncretical thinking and less focus on logical explanations. It is not coincidental that philosophy courses are often advertised in education under headings such as 'developing children's critical thinking' or 'critical and creative thinking'. But, the focus on critical and creative thinking assumes 'deep dualism' – an understanding of the mind as a person, manipulating the world. The metaphor highlights thinking as an instrument, a tool to manipulate ourselves, others, and our world. At the same time, the metaphor hides the extent to which our intuition, and the unknown, provokes thinking. Openness to the unknown, and a seeking for what-is-not-yet are necessary conditions for the kind of thinking I believe good philosophy teaching should be about. Socratic methods of teaching do justice to the very heart of the philosophical enterprise, and therefore ought to be the philosophical form of life – as the authentic environment for reasoning. In this methodology, *form* and *content* are consistent, because philosophy *is* dialogue – with oneself, with others, with textbooks, philosophical writings, or visual images. What will be taught is 'epistemological modesty', but also 'reverence', i.e., an awareness that the world (including ourselves) is very mysterious indeed, and that 'real' thinking takes place only when we let the unknown 'press upon' us.

So, the thinking of very young children does not only have consequences for what we mean by 'rationality', but also for what we mean by 'philosophy'. The role of imagination in their thinking extends the boundaries of what we mean by 'philosophy' and 'rationality'. An expanded notion of rationality – one that includes people's imaginative side, coincides with an urge within philosophy itself to embed our thinking in our everyday lifeworld. Such a move will not only change philosophy, but also one's everyday life as a thinking and feeling being, and will result in a more holistic way of teaching and learning for all age groups.

PwC's emancipatory function is not restricted to children only. I have also pointed out that PwC could also change significantly traditional, academic philosophy in that PwC does not use philosophical jargon; encourages abstract thinking, but always in the context of concrete, everyday experiences; focuses on the dialogical community; creates an environment in which a number of the traditional gender dualisms (reason/intuition, emotion/logic, self/public, etc.) break down.

Dialogue in communities of philosophical enquiry could change the masculine talk and disembodied rationality of traditional philosophy to include the feminine, therefore, to be more caring and nurturing, and also to encourage talk that is more constructive, and less aggressive or defensive. The implications are that knowledge and moral responsibility can no longer be separated. Members of communities of enquiry discuss what they care about, and care about what they discuss.

My research has the following implications for the teaching of philosophy with children. In traditional, academic philosophy, we see a crisis of rationality and of the rational subject. Post-modernism has put this crisis on the agenda, with serious implications for what it means to think and the role of the imagination in making sense of whatever we read, see, or hear. Teachers of philosophy to children should put this crisis on their agenda too. The human embodiment of the rational subject has consequences, not only for *how* we teach, but also *what* we teach. The most widely-used, educational material for philosophical enquiry with children, the P4C Programme, however, is not only philosophically, but also pedagogically inconsistent, and does no justice to children's imagination.

Stories are, indeed, the most powerful stimuli in PwC – the reason being that we live our lives through the life-is-a-story metaphor. However, the P4C Programme’s *philosophical novels* neglect the imaginative ‘side’ of the child’s mind.

Children’s imagination is not stimulated by the everyday and the immediate, but by the extremes and limits of experience, by binary opposites such as life and death, nature and culture, bad and good, and by characters that mediate between those extremes, such as monsters, talking teddy bears, giants and witches. Children’s literature – including picture books – meets those criteria and is therefore ideally suited for the teaching of philosophy to children.

Philosophy and literature is a perfect blend of the concrete and the abstract, the theoretical and the practical. This blend reflects the dialogical movement of philosophy, when taught through communities of enquiry. Such movement is essential to make both the abstract and the concrete more meaningful. In contrast, underlying the existing educational system (including the P4C Programme) is the assumption that curriculum design should (always) start with the concrete. This is based on a misinterpretation of the concept ‘experience’.

By examining further children’s ‘imaginative playfulness’, I concluded that there is another reason why picture books are such effective stimuli for philosophical enquiry, and that is because of the tension between fact and fiction – between what is possible or real, and what is not possible or real. (However, teachers should not rely too heavily on resource materials. A background in philosophy and training in communities of enquiry are necessary conditions for the preparation of teachers.)

Educators and educationalists should be made aware of the philosophical assumptions of the language they use when thinking about children’s thinking, in the hope that they will start to appreciate children’s imaginative thinking as an asset to (adult) rational, philosophical thought, rather than as a hindrance. They are both ‘sides’ of the ‘same’ mind, though imaginative, metaphorical thinking flourishes less ‘in’ adult minds. I suspect our educational system is partly to blame for this, in the way it affirms deep dualistic assumptions in its language and its curriculum design.

Although urgently needed, changing ‘modernist’ educational practice will be difficult. Deep dualism in contemporary thought and action makes it very difficult to accept the view that metaphors not merely *describe*, but *construct* our conceptual system, and as such, create realities; and that we can change these realities by constructing new metaphors. I have pointed out that educational change to value dialogue (when teaching for better thinking) generally, and the generation of questions by children themselves, in particular, will be possible only by deconstructing metaphors – the kind of metaphors that make it difficult to see the educational benefits of PwC (e.g., ‘conduit’, ‘mind-is-an-eye’, ‘growth’, ‘argument-is-war’, ‘argument-is-a-journey’).

Such a change is difficult to initiate, as it requires new metaphors to live by. As argued previously, new metaphors of ‘talk’ and ‘argument’ need to be created in order to make a convincing claim for the educational benefits of being a member of a community of enquiry, for example, understanding argument in terms of ‘dance’ rather than ‘battle’. Outworn vocabularies are responsible for the fact that little educational value is attached to collaborative enquiry in individual acquisition of knowledge, and why the emphasis is on the answering of teacher’s questions by pupils rather than on pupils’ own questioning. Also, the argument-is-a-journey metaphor explains why educators and educationalists feel uncomfortable with discussions that are not pre-determined, and which have unspecified learning outcomes – because such discussions do not proceed in a linear fashion.

Post-modern thinking has enabled a critique of such outworn vocabularies, and through its critique offers an alternative. Dialogue is action – metaphorically speaking – and through dialogue in communities of philosophical enquiry, children can be encouraged to construct new metaphors.

They seem most suited for the task, as their thinking is highly imaginative, and because metaphorical thinking requires the use of the imagination.

The imagination is one of the major tools in pursuit of *object-ive* knowledge. Through the imagination it is possible, as it were, to inhabit the external objects with which it engages. A sculptor, a mathematician, a scientist are, in a sense, at 'one' with the materials with which they are working. They extend themselves into the objects and other selves. The imagination is the 'knot that ties body and mind together'. We can only understand our-selves in such a way – e.g., as Heidegger's *Dasein* – when we rid ourselves of mind-body dichotomies.

Only by encouraging children and adults to develop and use the imaginative, metaphorical 'side' of their minds, can we rid ourselves of deep dualism. This means incorporating, accepting and respecting equally both 'sides'. This justifies urgent research focusing on young children's imaginative and metaphorical way of making meaning, and will almost certainly result in the need for major changes to educational curriculum design and organisation.

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