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## Chapter 5

# Pedagogic judgement

### Introduction

Teachers make judgements all the time. They also make and take decisions, issue instructions, negotiate, react, respond and listen. Often they are doing these things in rapid succession over a long period of time and that is why teaching can be so exhausting but also exhilarating. To be caught up in the flow with young children and adults who are learning with excitement is an endorphin packed ride. Research about these activities comes from a variety of perspectives. Sometimes a sociological perspective can reveal issues about the structure and dynamics of classroom spaces such as the hidden but pernicious influence of class, gender, and race on the lived experience of those participants in this form of social life, and classrooms are quite curious places when viewed anthropologically. Psychologists may be more concerned with individual functioning such as the role of character, theories of learning, and particularly fashionable at the moment is the growth of educational neuropsychology - theories of learning that emphasise the role of the brain. Where philosophers differ from these types of empirical researcher, that is research that emphasises the role of observational evidence in constructing arguments, is that philosophers are also concerned with the *normative*. Normative argument is prescriptive rather than descriptive; it concerns what we *ought* to do rather than merely describe what it *is* that we do. The philosopher David Hume identified that the gap between what is the case and what ought to be case is not straightforward. For example, we know from evidence that there are different outcomes in the schooling system depending on what type of school you attend. Those attending private schools tend to go on to have very different types of career and life experience than those attending state schools. This is a statement of what is the case. What ought we do about it? Well we could advocate for the common school or we might adopt an acadamisisation programme, such as that recently embarked upon by Michael Gove and the Conservative Government of 2010-2015. What we ought to do

does not proceed automatically from what is the case.

In this chapter I examine three philosophical paradigms of what may count as ‘good’ judgement. The implication being that we ought to aspire to making these types of judgment as often or as well we can. I go on to show how each of these forms of judgement can be recognised in good P4C practice but how that there are tensions between the forms. It is simply not possible to be like this all the time and sometimes different forms may work against one another. In the same way that tackling inequality in the school system comes down to competing value systems worked out in the political arena, so the professional teacher must reconcile different values - of herself, her children, her school and wider context - and this will influence what types of judgement at which she tries to arrive. Having conscious choice that there is more than one way might be liberating and this chapter provides a framework for reflective and reflexive deliberation and scope for further reading. The first model, *Judgement as wise action*, draws on the philosophy of Aristotle and practitioners will recognise the description of the practically wise teacher-as-judge. Kant informs the second model, *Judgement as truth*, where we focus on how truth in the form of truthful statements or propositions underpin much of what is valued in educational research and policy discourses. Here we also understand the value based upon so-called ‘objective measurements’ such as school attainment league tables. Dewey is a controversial figure in education, often wrongly identified with the ‘progressivism’, and the section on *Judgment as inquiry* describes Dewey’s belief in the value of inquiry in underpinning good educational action. If we do not teach according to the children’s *interests*, then why should we expect them to be *interested* in their and our world?

The final section of the chapter considers the relationship between these three models and the critical difficulties this might throw up for the practitioner. I draw on recent developments in philosophy that are controversial and still being actively worked out by philosophers but when we consider *Judgement as negotiation / exploration* then we are invited to consider a radically revised understanding of our ethical relationship to children as beings and how we might facilitate their encounter with the world and each other. Here the assumption is that we live in a world of plurality and difference and helping children navigate that is the best thing we can do as teachers. I conclude by addressing how each of these models can be found in P4C practice and theoretical literature and future directions for the interested reader to consider.

## Judgement as wise action

The model of the wise teacher has its roots in the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle (c. 384 c. 322 BCE). Of course other wisdom traditions trace their sages back far further than these dates, but for our purposes Aristotle is a

key figure. Aristotle not only taught across the field of human endeavour known at the time, for example as tutor to the young aristocrat who would become Alexander the Great, but also developed a vast body of knowledge that includes philosophy that still has considerable influence on our thought today. To understand Aristotle we need to focus on two key ideas: that his work is *teleological* and *empirical*. By *teleology* I mean that for Aristotle everything unfolds or develops or is caused according to its proper function or reason for being. Aristotle is trying to provide explanations based on the observable facts, that is *empirical data or observation*, upon which he then inductively builds a more abstract philosophy. For example, he draws on empirical work in what we now call physics, astronomy, and biology to develop a metaphysical<sup>1</sup> theory of causation. The relevance of this is that Aristotle sees everything unfolding according to rules and laws and necessity. Children must become adults because that is their potential and education will help bring them to that state (Stables, 2008, For a fuller critical treatment of this see). This also applies to knowledge and understanding in what Aristotle called the practical arts. One can have theoretical knowledge of the world *theoria*, for example through mathematics (think Pythagoras' theorem); one can also have technical knowledge or technique, called *techne* if one has a determinate object such as a vase or a poem that one wishes to construct or make; however, there is a third class of knowledge called *phronesis* or practical wisdom. Some fields such as politics require more than a technical knowledge of not just *how* to arrive at a determined end but also require the wise practitioner to reflect on the ends themselves; thus to act well or virtuously the practitioner must consider *what* they are working towards as well as *how* they are accomplishing it.

It has been argued by philosophers of education that much contemporary professional educational practice over-emphasises technical concerns at the expense of deliberative and considered practical wisdom. David Carr, for example, argued that educational professionalism that is based on technical efficiency (we might consider teaching to the exam to be such an example) is a reductive or restricted idea of what it means to be a professional teacher (Carr, 2000). Dunne (1993) argued in 'Back to the Rough Ground' that *phronesis* is characterised by an immediate and specific understanding of what is the case *here and now*. Technical and theoretical knowledge is meant to apply universally (Smith, 1995, :210) but practical wisdom pays attention to the specific case at hand. The latter requires a particular sensitivity or understanding that goes beyond the theoretical. It explains why an experienced teacher may choose not to apply a rule that a novice teacher might enforce rigidly. When an experienced teacher hears a classroom noise that their ITE student ignores, maybe because the latter does not yet know how to respond through lack of experience, the former may peer over their glasses and quietly enquire 'Everything OK, Abbie? What do you need to help you concentrate?'.<sup>2</sup> Simply put, the wise judge of Aristotle's philosophy, sees more, reflects, considers and deliberates more, and acts better as a result of their unique type of

judgement. There is a normative element to this as well. Judgement that is of the type recognisable as *phronesis* is a desirable quality; we should prefer that our teachers are capable of exercising this type of judgement as much as is deemed appropriate by the *phronimos* themselves. At the end of the chapter I will consider how much P4C practice encourages the development of *phronesis* in the facilitator.

## Judgement as truth

Aristotle's impact on the ancient European and, via Rome, the subsequent medieval worldview cannot be underestimated. Apart from doctrinally significant borrowings from Plato such as the realm of forms standing outside of the world, Aristotle's systematic philosophical worldview is allied with medieval christian doctrine and used to explain how the world *is*. This worldview is able to sit comfortably for a while with the growth of scientific methods of understanding and explanation. Scientific knowledge, however, based on evidence, method, procedure and reasoning comes to provide an increasing challenge to some of the fundamental assumptions in the Catholic understanding of the cosmos. One of the biggest challenges is the shift from a geocentric to a heliocentric conception of the solar system. Whereas in Aristotle's philosophy the world is the starting point and all other things are understood in relationship to this reference point, in the heliocentric model the Sun sits at the centre and around it all things revolve. This shift in worldview is known as the Copernican Revolution and it lies at the heart of a corresponding revolution in philosophical thought.

In the second of his three monumental *Critiques*, Kant wrote "Two things fill the mind with ever-increasing wonder and awe, the more often and the more intensely the mind of thought is drawn to them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me" (Kant, 1999b, p.269). The philosophical problem that Kant is setting out to resolve, and he refers to his solution as a 'Copernican revolution' in philosophy, is reconciling knowledge and belief (understanding according to our reason) to sensible experience; and then additionally reconciling these understandings with the idea of our free will and necessity to act according to our conscience rather than someone else's idea of what is right, that is 'received wisdom'. Before Kant, metaphysics is concerned with essence and knowledge of things-in-themselves but the Western Enlightenment undermines Aristotelian/Catholic metaphysics. This undermining occurs in three forms: Hume's skepticism, Locke's empiricism and what Kant terms 'indifferentism' (towards the necessity of metaphysics). Kant is therefore concerned to create a form of metaphysics that acknowledges both scientific inquiry and knowledge, and subjective moral law.

In Kant's philosophy, judgement is the creation of a unified understanding of the world that blends our intuitive appraisal of the world with the underly-

ing conceptual structure of consciousness understanding. Most famously this is expressed in the first critique thus “Thoughts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.” (Kant, 1999a, :75). For Kant, the world outside of us is fundamentally unknowable *in itself*, we can never know the noumenal realm, instead we come to understand the phenomenal world, the world *as it appears* to us. Our representations of the world then are bound up in our conceptual understanding and this *propositional representation* can be ascertained as more or less true. We can and must put our truths to the test and the demand of the enlightenment is no one should ever take anything at face value, hence the slogan *sapere aude* - ‘Dare to know’.

When teachers are assessing a child’s understanding, they are engaged in making judgements of truth; when league tables of school assessment performance are compiled, they are presented as representations of the world that are a truthful picture; when agents of accountability, such as in the UK OFSTED, make pronouncements ostensibly against criteria, then judgements of truth are being made. Philosophers of education make the argument that this form of rationality is so pervasive in western public that it is hard to perceive that it is only one form of judgement amongst many and does not deserve its preeminence. However, like a fish asked ‘How’s the water?’ and who replies ‘What is water?’, we may not perceive the tides of rationality which we as individuals and teachers are swimming. This form of judgment might then be said to be so strongly normative that we do not notice its prevalence in our classrooms and our everyday interactions with one another in schools and classrooms.

[little bit more needed on instrumental and scientific rationality]

## Judgement as inquiry

The third type of judgement I would like to consider is based on the philosophy of the American, John Dewey (18xx-1953). Both Aristotle and Kant share a basic philosophical assumption about the world. This assumption is dualist: that there is fundamental distinction between the self and the world. We have subjective selves and we have objective worlds. Philosophy, amongst other traditions of thought, concerns itself with the relationships between these two binary aspects. Dewey was concerned to develop a non-dualistic philosophy where a self and its environment were seen to be an integrated whole, not two separate parts that are inter-related. In this non-dualistic philosophy the self and its environment are seen to be continuous with one another. The habits or customs of thought are seen as adaptations and responses to the person’s experience of their environment. On the one hand this can be useful as it allows us to take cognitive shortcuts by using concepts and habits that have proved to be effective before in similar situations. However, a person can get also get into habitual or fixed interactions or responses with their world

that become stereotypes and a poor response to the actual exigencies of the situation.

At the heart of Dewey's philosophy is his 1938 work 'Logic: The Theory of Inquiry' (LW12). Dewey's theory of judgement is highly technical and so I present here a sketch of the salient core concepts. As with any sketch this can only give an impression of this work, which is deserving of greater attention than can be provided here. The first aspect to consider is how judgment resolves and indeterminate situation into a determinate one. When something becomes problematic for an organism in its environment then this is a state of indeterminacy. This can be met by one of two responses - habitual, stereotypical and rule-bound action - if the mindset of this response were voiced it might be something like: "This is what I do here", or "This is what this situation/person/place is *like*", or "This is what ought/must/should be done here.". The other response is to engage in inquiry, which is much more of an active investigation of what is the situation or case, here and now, and that inquiry eventually resolves into a new judgement or determinate conclusion. This judgement settles the matter for now so that the inquiry is no longer ongoing although it might become reawakened at some later time.

There is an important implication of this conceptualisation of judgement, namely that judgement is *constructed* and that it is *active*. Dewey regards previous work on philosophy as suffering from 'the spectator theory of knowledge'. For example, in the previous section on Kant we saw how in his philosophy knowledge is a representation or *picture* of the world and a good judgement is the same as a true understanding of the world. This *propositional* understanding is fundamentally flawed as far as Dewey is concerned because there is nothing in the picture that we hold of the world that compels us to act on that understanding. We may believe that poverty is evil and should be eradicated yet a spectator view means we that observe this truth without feeling motivated to act upon it. For Dewey this observation or hypothesis or picture about the world is not yet a full judgement. A full judgment is actually evaluative as well as cognitive or epistemological. It is a position towards the world that reflects some scale of values and implies that in some way the world must or will change according to the judgement that we have arrived at.

This distinction is at the heart of pragmatist philosophy. A truth's veracity is established by the quality of the process by which it is arrived at, i.e. how well justified it is. The meaning of the truth is how well it plays out in action. If I claim that the world is fair, as a pragmatist I am not making a claim that is like a photograph of the world "Here is a picture. Let us judge against criteria. Is it fair or not (judgement of kind)? To what extent is it fair (judgement of degree)?" The pragmatist's truth is more like an unfolding video. If I believe the world is fair, what happens as a result of me acting as if that were true? How well justified is that judgement about truth I have arrived at? Hence, for Dewey, our lives are fundamentally deliberative. Some concepts such as truth, beauty and justice may be at the heart of a lifelong inquiry. For example, I

write this chapter in a cafe in an Italian town, and I am appraising what for me as a person "What constitutes the practically good life in a time of change?". The philosophical dictum "Know thyself" is part of this attitude or orientation that characterises pragmatism. It is an openness to inquiry and judgement *as a way of life*.

Dewey can be claimed to be one of the most influential philosophers on educational thought and practice and as such his legacy is bitterly contested. He is often and erroneously associated with 'educational progressivism', long a term of abuse amongst certain critics. Over recent years Richard Pring in the UK has done much to carefully excavate the authentic Dewey from the caricature portrayed by his critiques. Working carefully to expose the binary or dualistic thinking that Dewey was at pains to combat, Pring offers insights into how Dewey can help us consider the tension between different functions or purposes of schooling [Monastery or marketplace; recent Dewey books (Fesmire, Library on Dewey)]. In America Jim Garrison's work is of similar stature [refs].

## Plurality of judgement in P4C

### Metajudgement: Judgements about judgement

Given the variety of ways of judging, how do we judge what type of judgement might be good to use? Might this be a process of infinite regress - in order how to judge how to judge, do we then need to know how to judge how to judge how to judge? It is, to use a technical philosophical phrase, turtles all the way down. We encounter similar problems with other educational verbs such as 'to learn' - when we ask at what point we might have learned how to learn how to learn to... Winch (xxxx) addresses this well when he points out that 'to learn' is a one of a class of verbs that need to relate to an object. We 'learn to...' in the same way that we 'judge that...'. How as a teacher, or educational leader do I judge that my judgement is a good one here?

It is at this point that an appeal is often made to some metaprinciple or process in educational literature such as 'reflective judgement' (Schon, Pollard). On examination we find that principles such as these can be identified with a particular philosophical tradition. Schon's categories of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action very much presuppose a Kantian consciousness. Models of action inquiry (Kemmis, McNiff) can trace their philosophical roots to Deweyan modes of inquiry. It is at this point I challenge a premise hitherto not made explicit, that we must have firm ground upon which to stand when we make judgements. I will argue in the rest of the chapter that teaching is the type of professional activity where we can never be absolutely certain of ourselves and that a fundamental aspect of being a teacher is living with uncertainty and contingency - the latter term meaning that whatever we choose to do, we could also have chosen otherwise.



P4C then might be seen as a useful tool for helping understand how judgements are arrived at, what underpins judgements such as evidence and facts, explanations of how the facts justify the claim, how alternative explanations ought be rejected, and how our claims are scoped i.e. do not always apply across all times and spaces but apply to particular contexts. These last criteria are drawn from a particular model of argumentation from Stephen Toulmin, from the Deweyan tradition, about how arguments can be understood as a function of their justification. In Lipman's original materials the focus is much more on Aristotle's logic as the basis for sound argumentation even though the *process* for forming sound arguments is then based on a Deweyan mode of inquiry. Different traditions of P4C inquiry can be critically understood against these philosophical traditions. For example, McCall (200x, ch6) analyses the different Kantian and Deweyan influences that distinguish between her specific Community of Philosophical Inquiry approach from the English and Welsh more Deweyan tradition<sup>3</sup>.

### Judgement as dialogue, relating and cartography

The traditions of thought of three classic philosophers can give rise to different modes of judgement but it might be more helpful to consider a body of work rather than a specific philosopher that dwell on P4C as a process for arriving at sound judgments. What weaves these thinkers together is a motif of judgement as a dialogue, and/or a radically open-ended negotiation. The first three modes of judgement are recognisable as types of judgements that teachers may do in the classroom or whilst engaged in their practice. Here I want to consider judgement as social processes involving pluralities and multiplicities of people, sites, contexts and relationships.

David Kennedy's work *The Well of Being* marked an important turning point in the P4C literature. It was the first full-scale treatment of postmodern themes such as intersubjectivity in the context of philosophising with children. Postmodernism was and is an intellectual movement that by its very nature is hard to define since it fundamentally rejects the idea that meaning and definitions can be fixed or in other words that we can get to the *essence* of things. Opponents of postmodernism often accuse it of philosophical relativism, the idea that ideas are in some way a product of their time, place and location, whereas postmodernists do not find this accusation as troubling but instead a good place from which to start inquiry. Francois Lyotard famously said of postmodernism that it marked 'the end of grand narrative' - all encompassing systems of ideas that aim at explaining everything, such as Marxism, Kantian philosophy or any other -ism such as empiricism. For postmodernists it is the process of knowledge production, and the conditions that give rise to the possibility of socially recognised knowledge, that matter more perhaps than the substance of what is said. Kennedy's work is important therefore for recognising that the historical child-adult relationship, stretching in the

West back to the Aristotelian deficit model, and enshrined in Piagetian psychology, fundamentally limited the possibilities of children. Schooling further perpetuated such restrictive and limiting relationships. Kennedy returned to the work of Dewey and read into him postmodern themes that were latent in Dewey's work. Kennedy concluded that intersubjectivity, the idea that there was a unique space created between individuals that afforded rich, philosophical meaning-making and that this was at least, if not more important, than individual meaning-making.

The theme of relating is an important one in philosophy of education. One of the most trenchant criticisms of contemporary schooling is that it has borrowed from the practices and language of business management a wholly inappropriate vocabulary and set of beliefs about the relationship between children, teachers and the subject-matter of learning. The 'Taylorist' model of factory-production focuses on productivity, inputs and outputs and the whole *system* of production in order to focus on the most important business value of *efficiency*. Respected critics such as Biesta have argued strongly against the appropriateness of such business models for considering relationships of teaching and learning (Biesta, 2006, 2010, 2014). For example, he tackles what he calls 'learnification' culture where a child's 'learning' is commodified, treated as a discrete quantity, and which can somehow be poured or placed into children. Learning however cannot be separated from teaching, and when learning is referred to without mention of teaching this isolates the learner, and relegates to the margins the relationships that are at the heart of the *educational* process. These relationships are reduced to a technical management process, what we referred to earlier in the Aristotelian account as *techné* rather than full, wise judgement. These business models can have a tragic impact on a teacher's career as vocation and Higgins has recently written on the dangers of the professional who either burns in or burn out of their profession rather than maintaining their vocation as a living and vital inquiry over their working life-course.

As a final speculation I would like to consider how a variety of ideas can be brought to bear on the idea of educational judgement. Rosa Braidotti writes about radical feminism from a posthuman perspective using the idea of nomadic subjectivity. Hers is an enormously rich and complex philosophy and at first glance not entirely relevant to education and professional judgement. However, certain of her ideas might be translated into our concerns in this chapter. For example, she Braidotti claims she writes 'cartographies' (2011: 46) - intellectual landscape gardening that provides horizons or frames or references that allow her to navigate whilst never actually belonging anywhere but merely visiting. How would pedagogical judgement look that was based on nomadic cartography? Would a teacher be charged with *understanding* the terrain created and inhabited by children? Would their professional training address questions such as how to visit such terrains sustainably, without wrecking invasive and permanent damage, like oil-drillers in the Arctic? These

are philosophical questions about ethics and would require a completely different sensibility and orientation, and a radically different professional toolkit, than the ones currently being promoted in Initial teacher Education. In another example, Braidotti talks very differently about identity than we are used to in everyday language. For her identity is something we construct after the event, rather than being the thing that creates the event or causes the action; we look back afterwards and say 'there I was' rather than 'I am here' - it is a 'retrospective notion' (p.40). What might judgement be like for a teacher whose professional identity is radically uncertain and always under doubt and examination? I think we would need very different types of school if not society. And that is the gift of philosophy, to be concerned not with what *is* the case but with how things *ought or should be*.

### Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have introduced three traditions of philosophical thinking that understand judgement very differently from one another. I relate these forms to educational and P4C practice before going on to discuss the difficulty in making judgements when each position offers a stance to critique one's practice no matter how well justified one's judgement is. I argue that there is no place that one can stand that allows an objective judgement and that good practitioners come to live with this contingency and build this into their practice by being sensitive to negotiation, relationship and by being an educational 'visitor' to the pedagogical encounter. In a later chapter I relate these concerns more explicitly to models of teaching and teaching expertise.

## Chapter 6

# Notes

### Chapter 5 Pedagogic judgement

1. Metaphysics gains its name from being the book immediately after the 'Physics' in Aristotle's library. We use the term now to refer to concepts that are not immediately empirically establishable such as truth, causation, justice. Some philosophers have regarded metaphysics as unjustifiable nonsense (**Ayer**)
2. What my own children never knew was that when I did this I could not actually see beyond the end of my own nose
3. As an example of 'turtles all the way down' my approach here of staying within philosophy as a way of navigating between traditions can also be challenged. In my doctoral thesis ([link to repo](#)) I used the philosopher Richard Rorty to argue that there can be no reasons to philosophically prefer one tradition over another. Each tradition creates *lacunae* or gaps that have to be addressed by other traditions

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