Philosophy for Children and the Cultivation of Good Judgment

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Several years ago a single question became increasingly perplexing to me. What, I wondered, is the value of Philosophy for Children (P4C)? Why is it important? When asked this question, I could, to be sure, provide some sort of answer. But I always felt that my answers lacked the needed authority and conviction.

Searching for an answer to my question, I turned to the literature of P4C.[1] Within this literature I found many good reasons for why schools ought to embrace P4C. Indeed, I found *too many* reasons. P4C, I discovered, can be connected with many educational aims. There are so many different arguments which can be (and, in fact, have been) made for the value of P4C.

Overwhelmed by this abundance of arguments, I felt as if, to make use of an old expression, I could not see the forest through the trees. Where I was looking for a single comprehensive and coherent argument, I found a plethora of different arguments which were, at least to my mind, too disconnected.

Naive to what I was getting myself into, I decided to take up the task of constructing an argument for the worth of P4C. This task, I came to understand, involved addressing two far-reaching educational questions. The first is a normative one: *What should be the primary aims of education?* The second is a pedagogical one: *How might these aims be realized?* In order to show why P4C is valuable, I concluded, I would first have to make some statement about what the proper business of education should be. Then I would need to connect P4C with these identified aims.

It was only after working full-time at a public elementary school for some years that an answer to the normative question which I posed began to emerge. Seeing first-hand what was and was not being done in my school, I came to realize that what schools (at least within my culture and epoch) need to concern themselves with vigorously (but not exclusively) is the task of *cultivating good judgment.*

This insight, as is often the case, gave rise to an additional question. This question was a conceptual one: what is "good judgment" anyway? Answering this latter question, I realized, was essential to my project; one cannot, after all, effectively argue that schools ought to educate for good judgment if one is not even clear on what "good judgment" is. And, at least within educational circles, there is a lack of clarity about what, precisely, "good judgment" means.

In the pages which follow I will take up the conceptual, normative, and pedagogical questions which I have posed. I will, first of all, endeavor to shed light on the elusive concept of "good judgment." Then I shall argue that schools ought to concern themselves with cultivating good judgment. Finally, I will contend that P4C is an effective pedagogical means through which to cultivate good judgment.[2]

What is Good Judgment?

There are within the world some people who regularly make poor judgments and others who frequently make good judgments. This qualitative consistency which characterizes the judging of both the foolish and the wise suggests that the worth of our judgments depends not merely on chance but on competency. The wise, we reason, do not characteristically make good judgments because they are lucky; they do so because they have some talent. Similarly, we conclude that the foolish make poor judgments because they lack some competency or power.

From the reasonable assumption that there is some competency which empowers one to make good judgments, however, it does not follow that there exists some "mysterious faculty" of judgment. One need not attribute the power to make good judgments to some "inscrutable quality."[3]

Indeed, to make this move of attributing the power to make good judgments to a faculty is to fall into a linguistic trap. The act of replacing "Socrates has some sort of talent which empowers him to consistently exercise good judgment" with "Socrates has good judgment" is, to be sure, a useful bit of linguistic short-hand. The problem with this

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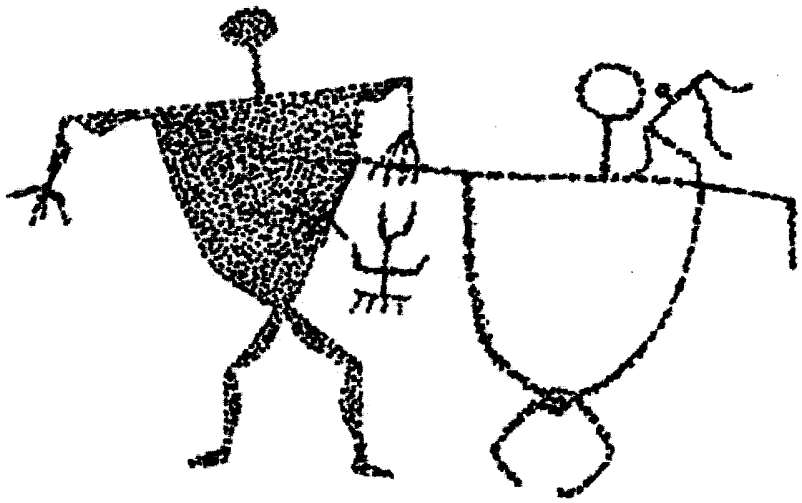
short-hand, however, is that it tempts us to conclude unduly that "good judgment" is, like a shirt or a book, a thing which one can possess.[4]

There is no reason to conclude that this power to make good judgments is the product of a single discrete faculty because there is a simpler, more easily confirmed possibility:

> I see no harm in rehabilitating the concept of faculty as a convenient label to designate a bundle of mental processes that at the level of common usage present a unitary face to the outside observer. In this sense intelligence, in the IQ sense, whatever its complex components, can usefully be referred to as a faculty. In the same sense I suggest it is useful to think of judgment as a faculty.[5]

The power to make good judgments, F. H. Low-Beer contends, comes not from a single faculty but rather from a complex bundle of abilities. To *have* good judgment is not to *possess* some faculty of good judgment; it is to be *able* to perform well the moves through which good judgments are made.



The possession of certain *abilities* is an essential ingredient of good judgment. One would not say of a person that she has good judgment if she did not have the ability to make good judgments. To have the ability or potential to make good judgments, however, is not, in and of itself, a sufficient condition for the predication of good judgment. It is, as Andrew Norman notes, "perfectly possible to have a capacity for sound judgment, yet fail to employ it." If someone never or only on occasion made good judgments, one would not say that she has good judgment. Essential to good judgment is the *exercise* of good judgment. This exercise need not be unfailing (for, "even the wise make mistakes") but it does need to be *consistent*. The phrase "has sound judgment is properly predicated only if the subject of predication exercises consistently sound judgment."[6]

The ability to make good judgments, then, is not enough. Ability, as Dewey notes, must be coupled with disposition.[7] One must not only be able to make good judgments; one must also be *ready* to make good judgments. One must be in the *habit* of making good judgments.

Here I take "habit" not as an unthinking routine but rather as a tendency to act in a certain way. One who is in the habit of judging well is one who tends to perform consistently (but not necessarily invariably) those moves through which such judging is done. She has learned and embraced these moves and, hence, regularly (but not unthinkingly) performs them. She has, through her consistent action, made these moves a part of her *character*.

One who is in the habit of making good judgments, then, is one who has the "character trait" of good judgment.[8] This person has, *in addition to* the ability to make some moves, the desire or will to actually perform these moves consistently. She is one who, on account of her particular bent and distinctive aptitudes, consistently exercises good judgment.

One who consistently exercises good judgment is one who characteristically *judges well*. Judging well, like all judging, is a process of *thinking*. It is, like all judging, a part of, to use William James' term, the ongoing "stream of thinking."[9] It is not, however, the whole of this stream. Rather, it is, like a portion of a stream which has been diverted to turn the wheels of a mill, just that thinking which has been applied to the work of deciding between legitimate alternatives. It is, then, not merely a cognitive *process*; it is a cognitive *means*. Judging well, like all judging, is a process of *thoughtful choosing*.

Such are the ways in which judging well is akin to judging. But what is the differentia which distinguishes judging well from other sorts of judging? Just this: judging well is judging which proceeds through "more effective" thinking which, as Dewey puts it, "[does] better the work that thinking can do..."[10] It proceeds through ways of thinking which (thus far) have proven to be especially well-suited to the cognitive work of judging. It proceeds through ways of thinking which characteristically help us to make *good judgments*.[11]

Thinking which is good for judging—which, for the sake of convenience, I shall simply call "good thinking"—is the distinctive mark of judging well. Like all judging, judging well is a process of choosing which is performed

through thinking. Unlike all judging, however, judging well is choosing through *good thinking*.

But what is this sort of "good thinking"? It has, I argue, at least two characteristics: (1) it is performed through the skillful exercise of a variety of appropriate cognitive moves, and (2) it "leans back on" one's understanding.

(1) Part of good thinking is the effective employment of a variety of *cognitive moves*. Just as a skilled craftsman is able and disposed to capably employ a variety of tools in the doing of his work, an individual who is skilled at thinking has the ability and inclination to adeptly make use of a number of cognitive moves in doing the work of judging.

Cognitive moves are the temporally and functionally distinct movements of which the ongoing stream of thinking is comprised. These movements are like the individual flaps of a hummingbird's wings. In normal time, at normal speed, they oftentimes go unnoticed. But if one slows things down, if one carefully examines the process of thinking, one finds that behind the smooth blur of movement lies an irregularly pitching series of distinct moves.

Each cognitive move is, like the flap of a hummingbird's wing, a burst of energy through which thinking proceeds onwards. But cognitive moves are not merely random discharges of mental energy. A cognitive move is a bundle of cognitive activity which, unlike a haphazard selection of such activity, *does something*. A cognitive move is a tool which serves some function. It is a means through which one attempts to get along within one's world.

A great number of distinct cognitive moves have been identified by philosophers and psychologists.[12] Thomas Jackson's "Good Thinker's Tool Kit" is one attempt to distinguish key cognitive moves. Good thinkers, Jackson explains, tend to make the moves of seeking clarification (by asking "what do you mean by...?), providing reasons, identifying assumptions, noting inferences and implications, evaluating the truth of claims, giving examples, and providing counter-examples.[13]

Not all cognitive moves, it should be noted, are of help in the work of judging well. Some cognitive moves, in fact, have been shown to be an impediment to good judgment. Logical fallacies—such as when one jumps too quickly from an instance to a generalization—are, for instance, cognitive moves which tend to lead one's judging astray.

There are, however, some cognitive moves (like those which Jackson emphasizes) which have proven to be especially useful in the work of judging well. They have been "proven" to be useful not by some certain, ahistoricial god's-eye perspective but rather by the malleable collective experience of humankind. Human beings have found that certain cognitive moves have thus far characteristically conduced to judging well. It is through these moves that good thinking proceeds.

(2a) Having the ability and disposition to skillfully employ effective cognitive moves is a necessary ingredient of good judging. This alone, however, does not ensure good judging. One must also be ready and able *to lean back upon one's understanding*.

Thinking, Dewey explains, is too often no more than an "uncontrolled coursing of ideas through our heads." It is a "random" succession of "mental states" through one's "mind." This "irregular sequence" of "something or other," Dewey continues, "does not suffice." Indeed, this sort of thinking is hardly even worth the penny which one might offer for it because, while pleasant, it "rarely leaves much that is worth while behind."[14]

A "better way of thinking," Dewey continues, is "reflective thinking." Unlike undisciplined thinking, reflective thinking is neither aimless whim nor unintelligent cut and try. Instead, it is orderly. It always involves the deliberate and purposeful appeal to one's prior thought. It "leans back on" or "refers to" one's *thought*.

Here, following James' lead, we use "thought" as a "general term by which to designate all states of consciousness merely as such..."[15] "Thought" should be interpreted, for our purposes, as a broad and varied cognitive *fund* upon which reflective thinking draws. One's experiences, one's memories, one's ideas, one's knowledge, and the facts with which one is acquainted; these are all a part of this fund of thought which reflective thinking accesses and employs.

Leaning back on one's fund of thought is not a product of reflective thinking but rather is that through which reflective thinking proceeds. "Leaning back" is a complex cognitive move which is the definitive element of reflective thinking. To engage in reflective thinking *is* to make the move of leaning back.

Leaning back consists, I assert, of both a forward-looking element and a backward-looking element. The backward-looking element I call *reflection*. The forward-looking move I call *self-correction*.

Reflection is the move through which one *accesses* one's fund of thought. To reflect is to refer back to or, quite literally, to "re-call" or "re-collect" one's fund of thought.

Self-correction is the move through which one *employs* one's fund of thought. To self-correct is to advance from that to which one has referred back. It is to make use of one's reflected upon thought in order to direct the course of one's future thinking, judging, and acting.

To make use of an analogy, the complex cognitive move of leaning back on one's thought is like a hiker's act of using her compass to direct her journey. The hiker's initial act of pulling out and referring to her compass is like the backward-looking act of reflection. The hiker's consequent act of correcting her course of travel based upon the compass reading which she has taken is like the forward-looking act of self-correction. Like the hiker, the reflective thinker refers back and then, with the results of this act of reference in mind, proceeds onwards.

(2b) Good thinking is a sub-class of reflective thinking. Like all reflective thinking, good thinking essentially involves the skillful performance of the cognitive move of leaning back on one's thought. Unlike all reflective thinking, however, good thinking leans back especially upon a

particular *quality* of thought.

The fund of thought upon which reflective thinking leans back is neither simple nor of uniform quality. Within this fund one finds both great ideas and half-baked opinions. One finds profound insights, trivial bits of data, sound knowledge, and even misunderstandings. While the ratio of useful content to useless clutter will vary from one individual's fund to another's, it is safe to say that each person's fund of thought contains both that which is worthwhile and that which is worthless (or, even worse, dangerously harmful).

Good thinking may reflect back upon both the worthless and the worthwhile but it tends to take its lead only from the latter. That is to say, good thinking tends not to be guided by shabby 'knowledge' or intellectual garbage. Quite to the contrary, good thinking is in large part "good" precisely because it proceeds forwards from high-quality knowledge. Good thinking is characteristically guided by *understanding*.

"Understanding," of course, can be interpreted in a variety of ways. By "understanding" I mean a knowledge which is both meaning-laden and true. To say that understanding is meaning-laden is to emphasize its *depth*. Whereas *information* is a superficial acquaintance, *understanding* is a deeper, richer knowledge about "what makes [matters] what they are."[16] One who understands something grasps the meaning of it and "see[s] it in its relations to other things"[17] To say that understanding is true is to emphasize its *usefulness*. Understanding, unlike misunderstanding, *works*; it does not take things amiss and, hence, provides one with reliable guidance.[18]

(2c) Implicit within my assertion that one who judges well leans back on understanding is the assumption that there is, in fact, an understanding to which this person can appeal. For one cannot appeal to one's understanding and employ it as a judgment-guiding criterion if one does not even have understanding. The good thinker, then, not only thinks well; she also *possesses understanding*.

While the comprehensiveness and subject-matter of one person's understanding will be different from that of another, all good thinkers must possess "a fund of relevant knowledge" upon which they can draw in confronting the perplexities of their lives.[19] Though the specific contour of this fund of relevant knowledge depends upon the situation within which one finds oneself, there are, I contend, certain broad areas of understanding upon which all good thinkers characteristically lean back. All good thinkers must have some understanding of their world, themselves, and others. They must, to be more specific, have an understanding of the possibilities and limitations of their environment, a self-awareness of who they are and who they wish to become, and an ethical appreciation of others as human subjects.

(2d) One who judges well must possess some understanding. But where does this understanding come from? Some suggest that understanding is something which is *given* to one. One gains knowledge by, as E. D. Hirsch says, "piling up [the] specific, communally shared information" which is provided to one.[20]

Hirsch is correct, I think, when he says that information can be given. Information is a "bare impression" which can be transmitted from one person to another.[21]

Hirsch also gets it right when he says that there is a connection between the piling up of information and understanding. Information, either in the form of the facts which one is told or the impressions which one experiences, is the raw material of understanding. "There must," as Dewey says, "be data at command to supply the considerations required in dealing with the specific difficulty which has presented itself."[22]

From the fact that information is an essential ingredient for understanding, however, it does not follow that information *is* understanding. Indeed, as Dewey contends, "information" is not "understanding."[23] Information is a relatively superficial acquaintance with something. It is an "undigested burden." Understanding, on the other hand, is an integrated, meaning-laden, useful knowledge about something.

Following from this mistaken identification of information with understanding is the false supposition that understanding, like information, can be *given*. Quite to the contrary, argue Lipman and his colleagues, understanding is not the sort of thing which can be given:

> Meanings cannot be dispensed. They cannot be given or handed out to children. Meanings must be acquired; they are *capta*, not data...[24]

One must, to be sure, have hold of some information. But this information, this raw material, this "working capital," only becomes understanding when it has, through one's thoughtful reflection, been refined.[25]

From this it follows that the good thinker cannot merely *possess* understanding. Since understanding cannot be given to her, she must have something more. She must have at her disposal means which enable her to create understanding. *She must have the power to understand.*[26]

(2e) This power to understand is comprised of both an *ability* to understand and a *disposition* to understand. One who can judge well is both ready and able to pursue understanding.

To be *disposed to understand* is to be inclined to wonder. One who is continually working to revise and extend her understanding is one who has been infected with (or, perhaps more accurately, *remains* infected with) wonder. She is one who possesses a sort of "intellectual curiosity"; she possesses a motivating inclination "to penetrate to deeper levels of meaning—to go below the surface and find out the connections of any event or object, and to keep at it."[27] She is in the habit of living the examined life.

To have the *ability to understand* is, in large part, to be armed with the appropriate cognitive moves. "Thinking," Lipman writes, "is the skill *par excellence* that enables us to acquire meanings."[28] It is through the skillful use of cogni-

tive moves that one orders and refines one's experience and information. Grasping the relations which bind a particular thing, event, or situation to the broader context of which it is a part, one moves through thinking from a bare acquaintance to a useful, meaning-laden understanding. The skillful use of cognitive moves, then, is not only the means through which good judgments are made; it is also the means through which understanding is gained.

The ability and disposition to skillfully employ cognitive moves, the ability and disposition to appeal to one's understanding, the ability and disposition to gain a deep understanding of one's situation; these are essential ingredients of good judgment. To possess the power to judge well and, so, to consistently make good judgments—or, to employ a figure of speech, to *have* good judgment—is to have made these abilities and dispositions one's own.

Having gotten clear on what good judgment is, it becomes evident that good judgment can be taught. For abilities and dispositions are the sorts of things which can be purposefully cultivated. One can, as the rise of the critical thinking movement attests to, empower children to more skillfully do such things as give reasons, spot assumptions, and provide examples. Dispositions can also be cultivated. This is a point which current proponents of "values education" make.[29] One can cultivate the inclination to wonder, to be respectful, to be reflective, and, so too, to perform certain cognitive moves.

Should Schools Work to Cultivate Good Judgment?

Not only *can* good judgment be cultivated but, indeed, it *ought* to be cultivated. Good judgment, unlike the current fashion or the latest trend, is something that human beings cannot do without. Good judgment empowers us to act effectively within our world while paying due deference to this world. Good judgment enables us to dwell together harmoniously and to govern ourselves judiciously. Good judgment helps us to be true to ourselves and, so, to lead lives which are rich, worthy, and fulfilling.

While good judgment is something which people have always needed, current circumstances now make the need for good judgment especially acute. In the past century the technological prowess of human beings has advanced at an extraordinary pace. With this gain in power there has come, to be sure, opportunity for unprecedented progress and prosperity. But just as surely it seems at times as if, as James puts it, we will "drown in [our technological] wealth like a child in a bath-tub, who has turned on the water and who can not turn it off."[30] Whether our power will be a boon or a curse depends, in very large part, upon our judgment. In order to harness our great power wisely we need to exercise good judgment. We must, if we are to survive (let alone flourish), base our decisions upon a good understanding and choose through sound thinking.

Good judgment is what humankind undeniably needs. Unfortunately, however, good judgment is precisely what is oftentimes lacking in today's world. This is made evident in the news headlines of terrorist attacks and corporate collapses. But such dramatic instances are only the tip of the iceberg. The extent of the problem only becomes clear when one goes beyond the headlines and finds, in the back pages and small print, a staggering overabundance of examples of decidedly poor judgment. In a single day's paper, for instance, one reads of the massacre of thirty-four people, tobacco companies which put profit before public health, ocean species that have been driven to the brink of extinction, an archbishop who is on trial for loan-sharking and misappropriating church funds, and individuals who deliberately endeavor to contract the HIV virus in order to gain kinship, respect, and notoriety.[31]

There is, accounts like this scream out, currently a dearth of good judgment. Too many of people's decisions are rash or confused. Too many of their actions are ineffective, unethical, or inauthentic. Too often that which human beings say, do, and create is marked not by good judgment, but rather by ignorance and imprudence. The conclusion is practically unavoidable: In the world today there is a precipitous lack of good judgment.

How should we respond to this shortage of good judgment? We cannot flee from our power for, like a modern day Pandora's Box, the knowledge of how to split the atom, clone a cell, or create a computer chip cannot be simply closed-up and forgotten. Nor would such a course of action even be desirable since technology can be a boon as well as a bane.

Given the untenability of escapism, the only other response is, as Albert Einstein suggests, to change our "modes of thinking."[32] We must, if we are to survive and flourish, address the current dearth of good judgment by purposefully endeavoring to improve people's thinking, understanding, and choosing. We must take up in earnest the work of cultivating good judgment.

There are, of course, a variety of social mediums within which one can work in cultivating good judgment. The family, the job site, religious institutions, political organizations, and clubs; these are just some of the places where one can (and should) foster good judgment.

Among the spheres within which one can work in cultivating judgment of particular importance are a society's schools of formal education. Unlike other social environments, schools are "framed with express reference to influencing the mental and moral disposition of their members."[33] The very function of schools is to do the work of shaping children into the sorts of citizens whom society values. Given this mission, schools can potentially be ideal venues for fostering good judgment. They, more than any other social environment, can be deliberately structured and purposefully equipped for the work of cultivating good judgment.

While schools have the potential to be ideal venues within which to cultivate good judgment, they have, by and large, failed to live up to this potential. This, of course, is

not to say that every school—let alone every teacher—fails to do enough to foster good judgment. My contention, rather, is that, because the attention and energies of administrators and educators are occupied by other matters, schools do not do as much as they should to foster good judgment. More must be done to educate for good judgment.

What Can Schools Do To Cultivate Good Judgment?

In order to cultivate good judgment, our conceptual analysis has revealed, one must both empower and inspire children to skillfully employ cognitive moves, to wonder, and to reflect back on and make use of their understanding. One must also help them to gain understanding of themselves, their world, and others.

The community of inquiry approach of Philosophy for Children (P4C), I contend, is an excellent means through which to do these things. When one transforms the classroom into an intellectually safe community where students engage, not in unkind "parliamentary sparing" or in meandering "small-talk," but rather in "disciplined conversation" which proceeds from their own interests, one does much to cultivate the skills, dispositions, and understanding which are essential to good judgment.[34]

P4C's community of inquiry approach cultivates good judgment, first of all, by encouraging the *modeling* of essential skills by the children's peers. "In a community of inquiry," writes Lipman, "children will use other children's behavior as models for their own."[35] If, for example, some children within the community consistently give reasons, the other children may well, with sufficient exposure, begin to do likewise. Children learn to think well by following the lead of their peers.

Another source of modeling is the teacher herself. The teacher can deliberately, and quite explicitly, model desirable moves. The modeling of the teacher is, as Splitter and Sharp note, particularly important in the early stages of the development of a community of inquiry when the children have not yet begun to consistently exercise moves themselves.[36]

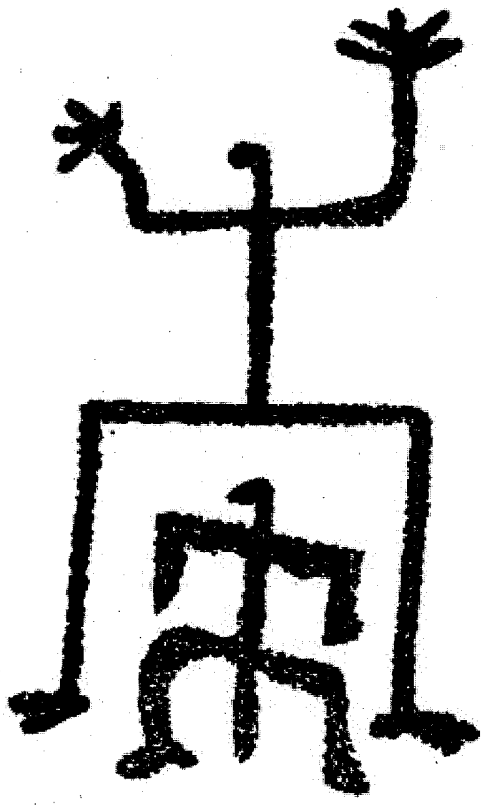
A third source of modeling can be the characters in the texts which the community reads together. If the characters in these texts model certain moves, then there may be, with sufficient exposure, a "gradual internalization of the thinking behaviors of the fictional characters." "The live students in the classroom [will] take the behavior of these fictional characters as models of how to behave."[37]

Allowing for the modeling of essential moves is an important way in which the P4C approach cultivates good judgment. Of equal importance, however, is the fact that members of the community of inquiry are given the chance, not just to observe, but to *practice* these moves themselves. Within the community of inquiry children are, during the natural flow of dialogue, both allowed and encouraged to practice doing such things as giving reasons, evaluating inferences, and reflecting back upon their experience.

That children are placed within an environment where they can observe and practice moves such as these is of great pedagogical significance. For, it is largely through continuing observation and practice that children develop both the ability and the disposition to make these moves. There is an "intrapsychical reproduction of the interpsychical."[38] The "interpersonal process" of dialogue is, with due time, "transformed into an intrapersonal" process of thinking.[39] Children learn to think well by *internalizing* the good thinking which is expressed through classroom dialogue. Not only the ability but the very "tendancy" to think well "becomes effectively ingrained in [them] in proportion to the uninterrupted frequency with which" they are immersed within the community's dialogue.[40]

This process of internalization is aided by the opportunity for *reflection* which the community of inquiry provides.[41] Within the community of inquiry children are encouraged to turn their thinking upon itself. They are invited to inquire together into the efficacy and very nature of the moves which they are employing. This inquiry can take the form of a consideration, either impromptu or planned, of these moves or, as Jackson suggests, a post-session evaluation of the community's discussion.[42]

It is pedagogically efficacious to provide children with this opportunity for reflection because it provides them with an opportunity to discover of their own accord the worth of



the moves which are essential to judgment. If children are not helped to understand for themselves the value of these moves, they may resist our efforts to cultivate these moves.[43] Enlisting the children's aid in examining these moves, one helps them to become more *disposed* to employ them.

This opportunity for reflection is also pedagogically efficacious because it prepares children to make better use of these moves. As is the case with any tool, if one does not fully understand what a particular move is or how it works, then one is not fully prepared to use it effectively. Reflection upon moves which are essential to judging well not only encourages the *doing* of these moves; it also helps children to know *what they are doing.*

It is, then, largely through the modeling, practice, and reflection which it invites that the community of inquiry approach of P4C cultivates the abilities and dispositions which are essential to good judgment. The community of inquiry approach also educates for good judgment by helping children to craft the sort of quality understanding from which good judgments arise.

The community of inquiry approach helps children to understand, first and foremost, by empowering them with the *means* by which to craft understanding. Some of these means are *cognitive.* Arming children with the cognitive moves through which the raw material of their experience is processed into understanding, one gives them the power not only to understand but, more importantly, to continue to understand.

Other of these means are *social.* P4C arms children with certain social habits—such as listening well, being patient, clearly expressing oneself, and being respectful of others. These social habits are essential preconditions to the sort of disciplined conversation practiced within the community of inquiry. This sort of disciplined conversation (which need not only be practiced in the classroom) is, in turn, a form of social inquiry through which understanding is effectively pursued. Thus, to empower children with the social habits which are essential to disciplined conversation is also to empower them with means through which to pursue understanding.

The community of inquiry approach also helps children to gain understanding by providing them with the *materials* from which understanding is created. Taking part in the community of inquiry, children learn things. The information about the world, themselves, and others which they gain during P4C discussions serves as raw material from which their understandings will be crafted.

Here I reject the contention that, simply because the community of inquiry's primary aim is to empower children to think well, it fails to provide children with important information. It is not the case that the process of thinking can somehow be cleaved from the content of thought and that children do not learn content even as they learn how to think well. For, as Dewey argues, the "*how*" of "experienc*ing*" is always accompanied by the "*what*" which is "experienc*ed*."[44] Just as one cannot "eat without eating something," one cannot think without thinking about something. Learning how to think well necessitates thinking about some content. Students *must*, if they are to practice the good thinking which will empower them to understand, be simultaneously informed about their world.

Finally, the community of inquiry approach helps children to gain understanding by providing the *opportunity* for information to be refined. In the community of inquiry information is not merely transmitted. Rather, it is thought about, mulled over, reflected upon, and, hence, made sense of and refined into understanding. Having the opportunity to engage in the reflective process of meaning-making, children commonly take away from an inquiry session not just information but understanding.

I have, in this section, argued that the pedagogy of P4C is well-suited to cultivating the sophistication of thinking and understanding which is essential to good judgment. But is P4C, in actuality, an effective means through which to cultivate this sort of thinking and understanding? I certainly believe that it is and there is, to be sure, research which supports this hypothesis.[45] To be honest, however, more work must be done. Does P4C empower children to be more reflective and self-corrective? Does P4C inspire children to wonder? Does P4C arm children with the social behaviors which are prerequisites to disciplined conversation? Does P4C help children to become more empathetic, respectful, and caring? If one is to make the case that P4C is an effective means through which to cultivate good judgment, these are some of the research questions which need to be addressed.

Conclusion

A newspaper article tells the story about how a nineteen year old beat his best friend to death. Why did the young man kill his friend? It was not because he harbored ill feelings against his friend but rather because he was zealously following his gang's code of conduct. "I was listening to what they were saying," he said, "trying to impress everybody, trying to look hard."[46]

As I read this story my mind travels back to a conversation which I had with former fifth grade teacher Jean Matsumoto. Matsumoto, by any measure a truly outstanding teacher, was retiring after some forty years in the classroom. As she packed the last of her classroom items into her car she reflected upon her many years of teaching. Traditional academic subjects, she said, were never the most important thing to her. What she always aimed to do, above all else, was to help her students to become *good people.*

Matsumoto, like Dewey, has gotten it right. It is not enough in today's world to teach children how to read, write, and calculate. It is not enough to fill their minds with facts, to arm them with dazzling computer skills, or to prepare them for tests. Though these things may be important, we must do more.

If we want our children and, with them, our society to flourish, we need to empower them to judge well, to think well, and to understand deeply. Just as importantly we must help them to know themselves and, so too, to care for others. We must arm them with the interpersonal talents which will enable them to successfully interact within their society and, finally, enrich them with a spirit of wonder.

Philosophy for Children is most commonly presented as a "thinking skills" program. Indeed, it is. But it is also much more. The community of inquiry is a place of laughter and joy. It is a safe place where children come together in fellowship and proceed forwards with wonder and care. It is a place where children and, so too, their teachers are granted permission to slow down, to reflect deeply, and to think for themselves about the things which matter most. It is, put most simply, a place where good judgment is cultivated. It is a place where children are empowered and disposed to live not just smartly and successfully but, more importantly, wisely and well.

Endnotes

1. See especially: Lipman, Matthew. (1991) *Thinking in Education.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Lipman, Matthew, Sharp, Ann Margaret, and Oscanyan, Frederick S. (1980) *Philosophy in the Classroom.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980. Splitter, Laurance J. and Sharp, Ann M. (1995) *Teaching For Better Thinking: The Classroom Community of Inquiry.* Melbourne, Australia: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd., 1995.

2. This article is a summary of (and contains many excerpts from) a longer work: Yos, Thomas Butler (2002), *Educating for Good Judgment.* Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services/ ProQuest Information and Learning Company, 2003. In this longer work I examine more thoroughly the points which I raise in this article.

3. See Low-Beer, F. H. (1995) *Questions of Judgment.* Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1995. (p. 26) See also Norman, Andrew P. (1996) "Teaching Wisdom." In *Knowledge, Teaching and Wisdom.* Edited by Keith Lehrer, B. Jeannie Lum, Beverly A. Slichta, Nicholas D. Smith. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996. (p. 260)

4. See Lawson, Douglas E. (1961) *Wisdom and Education.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961. (p. 8)

5. Low-Beer (1995), p. 167.

6. See Norman (1996), pp. 259-260. See also Lawson (1961), p. 8.

7. Dewey, John. (1933) *How We Think.* Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1933. (p. 30)

8. Norman (1996), p. 259.

9. James, William. (1890) *The Principles of Psychology: Volume I.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1923. (pp. 239-240)

10. Dewey (1933), p. 3.

11. A "good judgment," as I understand it, is the characteristic product of the process of judging well. It, like all judgments, is at one and the same time the settlement of some uncertainty, the affirmation of an alternative, the product of one's thought, the proclamation of one's resolve, and a promise of future action. Unlike all judgments, however, a good judgment is a judgment which *fits* with one's situation. For more on this see Yos (2002).

12. See, for instance, Splitter and Sharp (1995), pp. 9-10 and Lipman, Matthew and Gazzard, Ann. (1988a) *Getting Our Thoughts Together: Instructional Manual to Accompany Elfie.* Montclair, New Jersey: The Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, 1988. (p. iv)

13. Jackson, Thomas. (1998) *Philosophy in the Schools Project: A Guide for Teachers.* Unpublished Manuscript. (pp. 20-22).

14. Dewey (1933), pp. 3-4.

15. James (1890), pp. 185-186.

16. James (1890), p. 221.

17. Dewey (1933), p. 137.

18. See Dewey (1933), p. 159. See also James, William. (1907) *Pragmatism.* Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1981. (pp. 29-30 and 92-94)

19. Dewey (1933), p. 15.

20. Hirsch, E. D. (1987) *Cultural Literacy.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987. (pp. xv-xvi)

21. James (1890), p. 259.

22. Dewey, John. (1916) *Democracy and Education.* New York: The Free Press, 1966. (pp. 156-158)

23. Dewey (1933), p. 78.

24. Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan (1980), p. 13.

25. Dewey (1916), p. 158.

26. Here it is worth noting that even if we were to reject the assertion that understanding can never be given, it still does not obviate our contention that the good thinker needs to have the power to understand. The good thinker still needs this power because, while one might admit that *some* of the needed understanding can be given to one, it can never be the case that one can instill *a priori* within an individual *all* of the knowledge which will be required to contend wisely with the unpredictable twists and turns of life.

27. Dewey (1933), pp. 38-39. See also Dewey (1916), p. 326.

28. Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan (1980), p. 13.

29. See Lickona, Thomas. (1991) *Educating for Character.* New York: Bantam Books, 1991. (pp. 27-28)

30. James (1907), p. 85.

31. The Boston Globe; June 18, 2000. For more examples of poor judgment see, for instance, Lickona (1991), pp. 3-5.

32. Einstein, Albert. (1946) "Telegram to Prominent Americans." In *The New York Times.* May 25, 1946.

33. Dewey (1916), p. 19.

34. Tiles, J. E. (1995) "Education for Democracy." In *Studies in Philosophy and Education.* Vol. 13, 1994/1995, pp. 261-271. (p. 93.)

35. Lipman (1991), p. 219.

36. Splitter and Sharp (1995), pp. 140-142.

37. Lipman, Matthew. (1996a) *Natasha: Vygotskian Dialogues.* New York: Teachers College Press, 1996. (p. 18) Lipman (1991), p. 219.

38. Lipman (1996a), p. 12.

39. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) *Mind in Society.* Edited by M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, and E. Souberman. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978. (p. 57) See also Lipman (1996a), pp. 104-105.

40. James (1890), p. 125.

41. See Splitter and Sharp (1995), p. 140.

42. Jackson (1998), p. 14.

43. I take this line of argument [illegible] of moral education. See Lipman, Matthew and Gazzard, Ann. (1988b) *What to Do: Instructional Manual to Accompany Elfie.* Montclair, New Jersey: Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, 1996, page i.

44. Dewey (1916), pp. 166-167.

45. See, for instance, Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan (1980) and Yos (2002)

46. *Honolulu Advertiser* [illegible]