Lipman, Dewey, and the Community of Philosophical Inquiry

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Abstract

The revolution that Matthew Lipman inaugurated in educational theory and practice in his Philosophy for Children program has two dimensions. The first—introducing philosophy as a subject matter in the elementary school—is based on the assumption that childhood is an appropriate stage of life to read, think, and talk about philosophical issues like justice, friendship, what we mean by self, and so on. As such, it represents a change in the way some adults understand children as thinkers, meaning makers, communicators, and moral agents. The second dimension is pedagogical. It is the idea that a guided, open-structured, dialogical speech community which he called “community of philosophical inquiry” (CPI)—is the most appropriate way to practice the philosophical curriculum that he had developed with students. This paper explores CPI as a concrete application of John Dewey’s educational theory, which posits a drive towards the reconstruction of habits—including, and perhaps primarily, the reconstruction of habits of belief—as an ongoing result of the dialectical relationship between our current habits and what he calls “impulse,” and works to overcome through dialogue the gaps Dewey identified between child and curriculum, the “psychological and the logical,” and ultimately, between child and adult.

Normal child and normal adult alike, in other words, are engaged in growing. The difference between them is not the difference between growth and no growth, but between the modes of growth appropriate to different conditions. With respect to the development of powers devoted to coping with specific scientific and economic problems we may say the child should be growing in manhood [*sic*]. With respect to sympathetic curiosity, unbiased responsiveness, and openness of mind, we may say that the adult should be growing in childlikeness. One statement is as true as the other.

—Dewey, *Democracy and Education*

The quiet revolution that Matthew Lipman inaugurated in educational theory and practice in his Philosophy for Children program has two inseparable dimensions. The first—introducing philosophy as a subject matter in the elementary school through a series of philosophical novels written for children¹—is curricular. Of course this is more than just curricular, because it is based on the idea—contested by “real philosophers” since Plato—that childhood is an appropriate stage of life to read, think, and talk about philosophical issues like justice, friendship, what we mean by self, the nature of thinking, the body-mind relation, what it means to be “good,” and so on. As such, it is an idea that follows from a change in the way some adults understand children as thinkers, meaning makers, communicators, and moral agents; it is a philosophical idea itself. What is more, it also opens naturally into the realization that all school curriculum—each of the disciplines—has a philosophical dimension, and that this dimension is the very one that makes it most meaningful, and, therefore, most necessary for education to be meaningful for children.

The second dimension is pedagogical. It is the idea that a guided, structured, dialogical speech community—a theory and a practice that Lipman, taking a cue from his friend and mentor Justus Buchler, developed and called “community of philosophical inquiry”—is the most appropriate way to practice with students the philosophical curriculum that he had developed. This idea is also a philosophical one, and it has far reaching implications, both practical and theoretical—for learning theory, for a theory of teaching, for argumentation theory, for a theory of knowledge, for group psychology, for moral education, and perhaps ultimately of the greatest importance, for grounded political theory and practice. Moreover, this is true not only in classrooms and schools, but also in a society peopled by the human subjects that emerge from those classrooms and schools. Lipman’s community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) is not just a pedagogical device, but rather the projection of an ideal speech community dedicated to a normative form of democratic practice—one that mediates the relationship between democracy as a form of social inquiry and dialogical philosophical inquiry as a form of communicative practice.

My goal in this article is to explore the relationship between these two inaugural educational ideas—the second one in particular—and the transformational

educational geography that John Dewey mapped in broad strokes around the turn of the last century. Of course, Dewey was by no means alone on his own counter-cultural map. Even a cursory look at the history of libertarian, anarchist, and socialist educational praxis in the first three decades of the twentieth century reveals just how already present and vivid were the ideas and practices that he explored, and how deeply his nascent progressive educational theory and practice both influenced and was influenced by libertarian and anarchist theory and practice (Avrich, 2006; Manicas, 2008; Cremin, 1961; Veysey, 1973; Dewey, 1938). Neither Dewey nor the libertarian anarchists, however, even alluded to the possibility of community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) among children, either in pedagogical or curricular terms; in fact it is likely that most of those true educational pioneers would have criticized the practice of CPI as excessively “abstract,” and in violation of the principles of “integrated education,” a term coined by Marx and adumbrated by Kropotkin, who described it as “teaching which, by the practice of hand on wood, stone, metal, will speak to the brain and develop it” (quoted in Avrich, 2006, p. 16). Although there is at least one recorded example of a children’s speech community in Bronson Alcott’s Temple School in Boston in the 1830s that was claimed as a precursor by anarchist and progressive educators (Alcott, 1991; Avrich, 2006, p. 57), both anarchist libertarians and more mainstream progressives tended to emphasize interest-driven, hands-on experience associated with home industries and arts and crafts. Integrated education sought to counterbalance the abstract work that was identified as a major source of the dramatic irrelevance of the traditional school to children, and understood as promoting a deformed subjectivity in adults. Dewey’s claim that “[t]he child has not much instinct for abstract inquiry . . . [or] making technical generalizations or even arriving at abstract truths” (Dworkin, 1959, p. 60) represents an opinion that was probably generally accepted among innovators of the time, and has historical antecedents in Rousseau and even Plato, who warned that introducing philosophical discourse to children would make for contentious, relativistic sophists.

Given this history of negativism towards the idea of practicing philosophy with children in any systematic way, I want to identify some fundamental elements of Dewey’s theory of inquiry and his philosophy of childhood that make it possible to understand communal philosophical inquiry as it is practiced in CPI as one way of realizing, not just the psychosocial ideals and practices of what at one point Dewey characterized as “radical democracy” (1989), but also as a living ground for those ideals and practices. I will argue that CPI exemplifies and models a form of reason that, grounded as it is in the concrete lived experience of oral dialogue and rigorous mutual and self-interrogation, is an affective and social process of collaborative concept construction that satisfies Dewey’s notion of educative experience, and that CPI can be as sensuous a form of group experience as is the experience of “hand on wood, stone, metal” for the individual. The kind of collaborative thinking that goes on in CPI at its best, I will suggest, addresses children’s urge to experience

a sentient or “felt” reason, which in turn is connected with Dewey’s insistence that no real discipline is possible in educational matters apart from real interest—that unless the child’s “own vital logical movement” (1986, p. 179) is triggered, any curriculum remains inert (1972).

The concept of what I am calling “felt reason” is identifiable as a major theme of the Romantic movement and its projection of the “new humanity” or revolutionary subject of late eighteenth and turn-of-the-century Europe. Beyond its prophetic enunciation in Rousseau’s *Emile*, perhaps its most classical statement is in Schiller’s *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, published in 1795, in which the “form impulse” and the “sense impulse” interact dialectically and are subsumed in the form of the “play impulse,” which represents the human goal to “bring form into the material and reality into the form” (1965, p. 75). It can be argued that this dialectical ideal was an implicit horzonal objective for the educational initiatives emerging in the early nineteenth century—most famously in the work of Pestalozzi and Froebel, but also in the educational thinking of the nascent socialist and anarchist movements that were steadily articulated over the course of that revolutionary century, and which were reformulated for the raw, sprawling emergent democracy of the US by Dewey and his colleagues on the left. Indeed, what there is of radicalism in Dewey could be said to flow from the radical aesthetic of what he calls “immediate empiricism” (after William James’s “radical empiricism”).² Communal, collaborative, philosophical dialogue as developed by Lipman is, I would suggest, an educational form that satisfies the Romantic Schillerian normative ideal of “the possibility of a nature that is both sensuous and rational” and that “reconciles the laws of reason with the interest of the senses” (1965, pp. 60, 75)—that is, as a realm of abstraction that is immediate and concrete in its affect and implication. And I will develop this claim in the face of the implicit Deweyan critique, shared, not just by Plato and Rousseau, but by other biologically and evolutionarily influenced thinkers of the first half of the twentieth century, that talking about philosophical ideas with children, even in their own terms and with their own vocabulary, is miseducative to the extent that it removes them from their own experience, their own vital interests, and their own questions, which are the only authentic basis for the sort of inquiry that leads to the reconstruction of cognitive structure and belief, and as such to ethical reconstruction as well.

The most direct route to the justification of the practice of CPI as concrete and relevant to and in line with children’s interests is, as I have already suggested, through understanding CPI as an ethical and a political practice, and there is very little here that conflicts with a Deweyan perspective. Although Lipman did not initiate his adoption and development of CPI on this basis, the practice has as many broad-reaching implications for moral education and for school culture and governance as for curriculum design and pedagogy. The existence and perdurance of an international network of small, private “democratic schools”³ have, in the central and widely adopted practice of a weekly “school meeting,” in which each person, adult or child, has one vote on issues generated by the members themselves, connects

the normative requirements of the ideal speech community with actual democratic practice in a vivid and practical way. The school meeting, however, has functioned satisfactorily for its users for years with a protocol something like Roberts Rules of Order, and does not appear to require teacher-facilitated group philosophical argumentation as a necessary dimension of governance. It is the problematization and reconstruction of habits of belief that is primary in CPI, and secondarily (if necessarily) psychosocial group practice, one major dimension of which is political. Here democratic practice is not something to which philosophical inquiry is added; rather, it takes its discursive shape from its philosophical dimension, which is expressed in such a way that it opens naturally onto the ethical—onto the question “What then must we do?” As such it offers a prime example of Dewey’s oft-quoted, implicit exhortation: “Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men” (1917, p. 42). And because the practice is, in his words, “saturated” with the “social values and qualities” (1986, p. 167) that inform the child’s intellectual and ethical experience, it is a discursive zone that arouses the child’s “vital logical movement” in a way analogous to its arousal by wood, stone, and metal.

Perplexity, Problematization, Dialogue, Childhood, and Democracy: Historical Vistas

CPI, as developed by Lipman and his associate Ann Margaret Sharp, has many precursors, but its present historical location in a global world struggling to realize authentic democracy makes it such that it cannot be reduced to any of them. Philosophy has always had an interlocutive dimension, and professional philosophers have always been in dialogue with other philosophers through texts and other forums. Traditionally, when philosophers actually meet we are more likely to expect a debate or an exegetical event. Socrates, although he was a great communicative genius and taught us many things about structured conversation, never really practiced communal philosophical dialogue as Lipman envisaged it: one has only to single out the utterances of his interlocutors to see that he is engaged in a conversation with himself, however brilliant and colorful his methodology.

Socratic dialectic represents only one set of speech acts among the larger set that CPI encompasses, which is broadly oriented to clarifying, coordinating, instantiating, and evaluating the ideas that emerge from each participant in the group. It is an ongoing self-corrective process that involves offering and evaluating of examples, uncovering assumptions, identifying contradictions, posing further questions, and reviewing chains of argument. Socrates’ conversations—at least in the early dialogues—do however give the impression of being speech events through and through: not dialogue from a distance, but oral and aural mutual encounter, speaking and listening. As such, they return us to the rhetorical space of orality—the preliterate culture the characteristics of which children, as polymorphs, still carry the traces (Ong, 1982)—

which imbues the experience of CPI. The skills and habits that CPI builds upon are language based and to that extent genetic—given with membership in the human speech community, and not, in their origins anyway, artificially learned techniques. As such, CPI is at once a genetic human form—people sitting in a small circle and deliberating together—an evolutionary ideal and a pedagogical project, which implies that it is developmental: one learns how to do it through practicing it over time, and that learning involves guidance through modeling and coaching. Therefore, it can be practiced in a way that is miseducative, and this calls for the formation of a set of guiding principles of practice, of which there is an ever-growing literature.⁴

The operational logic of CPI—the logic that Lipman displays children using in his novels and the logic in which he framed the discursive structure of communal dialogue in CPI—is traditional Aristotelian, a logic of classes based on the three classical laws of thought—identity, contradiction, and the excluded middle. It is set out clearly in his first novel, *Harry Stottlemaier's Discovery*, and its accompanying manual, *Philosophical Inquiry* (Lipman, 1984). Because its main categorical statements—the “all,” the “some,” and the “no” statement (as well as, implicitly, the identity statement)—are clearly embedded in the structure of everyday speech, this logic is immediately available to children at least from kindergarten on. And because it is interhuman, interlocutive discourse, it is dialectical in a Hegelian as well as a Socratic sense; that is, it proceeds through a spontaneous, emergent process of negation and the identification and mediation of contradictions. Ask virtually any kindergartner to respond to the statement “all dogs are brown” and she will, with the speed of thought, identify a counterexample, and thus instantly downgrade the proposition to “some” statement status—and the group must go from there. The engine of CPI, whether among children or adults, is a deconstructive one—it begins by taking concepts apart through a process of generalization and instantiation. But its dialectical character, which seeks an ultimate goal of consensus, orients it to a process of ongoing reconstruction of those same concepts.

On a more fundamental motivational level the logic of CPI is Deweyan and Pragmatic, for it is based on problematization in the interest of the improvement of a lived situation. Dewey's logic is grounded in the biological world, and it operates through a continual process of reconstruction of the relationship between organism and environment, its goal being the adaptive enhancement of both.⁵ Inquiry begins when the relationship between a concept and the lived experience and narratives to which that concept relates shows enough dissonance and strain to trigger inquiry in order to correct it. We can return to the historical significance of CPI here in characterizing it as a form of discourse that emerges when there is a problem—when one is, as Dewey says, faced with a “dubious and perplexing situation” (Dewey, 1986, p. 190), when the automatic steering and control mechanisms of the vehicle of communicative culture no longer assure a stable meaning to the “social values and qualities” that “saturate” our experience.

Historically speaking, such problems have only increased. CPI as an educational discourse has emerged—crystalizing out of a myriad of analogues and precur-

sors—at a moment in which values are no longer fixed or certain, become contestable, and enter public discourse. As such, what Dewey calls the “primary situation” that functions to trigger philosophical inquiry, and which opens the possibility of the creation of new values and a “world that is experienced as different” (1986, pp. 194–195), is a historical one that is common to us all: the cosmological bedrock of a previous age has shifted and cracked, and the reconstruction of meanings and values has become a matter of primary adaptive importance.

We may say that this loss of value-certainty is in fact a necessary characteristic of a postmodern—or post-“ism”—culture: that is, in a value context where the traditional ways of “fixation of belief” that Pierce (1877) identifies—tenacity, authority and the *a priori*—are found wanting, and we are generally, as a collective, seized by “a real and living doubt,” without which, he claims, genuine inquiry is not possible. In this social context, Dewey’s conditions for genuine inquiry are existentially present in the culture, and CPI becomes a crucial form of communicative action. We may also, from a transhistorical perspective, identify this loss of value-certainty as a characteristic of democracy as a social phenomenon and a set of communicative practices, and as such about the problematization and reconstruction of personal and social power in and through various forms of association. Dewey’s identification of democracy as not just a political but also a social, communicative ideal sets the stage for CPI as a sort of *ur*-discourse, a model of an ideal speech community at the heart of any school community engaged in genuine democratic practice, and the only basis for a form of moral education worthy of the name. Philosophical dialogue is in the middle of it because, as Dewey himself said, “the chief role of philosophy is to bring to consciousness, in an intellectualized form, or in the form of problems, the most important shocks and inherent troubles of complex and changing societies since these have to do with conflicts of value” (1986, p. 30).

In a “radical” or “deep” democracy, or democracy understood as a moral ideal involving a “clear consciousness of communal life, in all its implications” (Dewey, 1916, p. 149), the ideal speech situation demands what Foucault, reintroducing an ancient distinction, invokes as *parrhesia* (Gk) or truth telling—“frank” speech as opposed to rhetoric (e.g., debate or persuasion) and flattery (imitation) (Foucault, 1981; and see Vansieleghem, 2011). In addition, in democratic discourse the inquiry is about solving real ethical problems—of justice and fairness, of empowerment, of agency, of basic governmentality, and of duty and necessary restraint⁶—all of which are problems that emerge from a divergence of meanings and values that is based on a divergence of beliefs, which are often held unconsciously, or based on unexamined assumptions.

To introduce philosophy as an invitation to truth telling in the form of collaborative epistemological, ontological, aesthetic, ethical, and moral inquiry, or social problem solving, in public schools is really quite a dramatic innovation in the group speech situation of traditional childhood education, which is typically modeled on the catechical, and on public acts of pious affirmation—of the gods, the ancestors, the elders, the homeland, the nation, the mores, the ideology. CPI

is, on the contrary, not public rhetoric or flattery, but rather negativity, interruption, problematization, interrogation, reinvention, self-correction, and epistemological and moral suspense. To introduce this form of speech to children is to initiate a change in conventional adult-child school discourse, which is perhaps why so many adults (and prematurely socialized children) find it hard to do. It implicitly tests adult authority—not just epistemological, but existential—in that it affirms the necessity of distribution—not just distributed thinking but distributed participation, and thus power—as fundamental to its developmental process. CPI makes children and adults co-inquirers, and as such invokes, not just Erich Fromm’s distinction between irrational and rational authority—the latter based “on competence, and . . . help[ing] the person who leans on it to grow,” the former “on power, and serv[ing] to exploit the person subjected to it” (2007, p. 31)—but also Dewey’s regular and often near-vituperative indictment of the adult practice of betraying children’s “original plasticity” or “original modifiability” by “an impatient, premature mechanization of impulsive activity after the fixed pattern of adult habits of thought and affection” (1922, pp. 96-97). He argues this from the Romantic conviction that “there is in the unformed activities of childhood and youth the possibilities of a better life for the community as well as for individuals,” and that childhood “remains a standing proof of a life wherein growth is normal not an anomaly, activity a delight not a task, and where habit-forming is an expansion of power and not its shrinkage” (1922, p. 99).

CPI takes up Dewey’s challenge to adult blindness regarding the evolutionary possibilities of childhood in a concrete form. By creating a site in which the “fixed patterns of adult thought and affection” enter the space of interrogation and dialogue, it also implicitly challenges the ideological mechanisms of biologicistic stage theory, which acts to deny children the capacity to reason. As a practice, CPI turns both Piaget’s stages of cognitive development and Kohlberg’s stages of moral development on their sides, rendering them simply domains of reasoning which are no longer sequentially invariant: the seven-year-old is as capable, under conditions that allow and encourage, support, model and guide it, of reasoning, however weakly or sporadically, from a formal operational as from a pre-operational point of view; and from a postconventional, universal ethics orientation as from a social conformity orientation. And because it is by definition a space of dialogue and interrogation, CPI introduces both an element of interruption and even of implicit social danger into the adult-child collective we call school, which traditionally assumes the absolute epistemological authority of the adult. But it also introduces a concrete, workable discourse model for negotiating that danger in the form of ongoing philosophical and social reconstruction, which includes the reconstruction of the adult-child relation.

Impulse, Habit, Thought and Reason

In making adults and children co-inquirers, CPI positions them in a chiasmic relationship, whereby growth—the aim of education according to Dewey—becomes

as relevant to the adult/teacher as to the child/student, albeit in different directions. This introduces us to a first concrete application of Deweyan educational theory to Lipman's innovation. It begins at the heart of Dewey's transactionalism, which posits a drive towards the reconstruction of habits—including, and perhaps primarily, the reconstruction of habits of belief—as an ongoing result of the dialectical relationship between our current habits and what he calls “impulse,” or often “instinct.”⁷ Two other of the many binaries Dewey employs in his educational thinking—“child and curriculum” or, differently put, the “psychological and logical” and “child and adult”—represent analogous contrastive pairs.

“Habit,” for Dewey, denotes dispositional structures, motivational sets, cognitive schemata, regular response structures with their variety of thresholds—an overall initiative-and-response system or assemblage that is a cumulative product of the past—even the very last second before the present moment—and with which I meet the present moment. It represents my current state of adaptation to an ontologically uncertain future, to an existence that, as Dewey describes it, is both “precarious and stable” (1981). “Impulse” represents the desire, psychosomatic energy, anxiety, irritation, eagerness, curiosity, affective momentum—attention, intentionality, attentiveness—that challenges, animates and invests habit, but which habit also selects, interprets, shapes, channels, censors, canalizes, regulates, and guides in the transaction between them that is the present moment.

If I am “growing”—if I am undergoing, in Dewey's terms, “educative” (as opposed to “miseducative”) experience—impulse keeps habit flexible, adaptive and vigorous by continuously re-informing it, energizing it, often through an initial process of breaking it up, problematizing it, deconstructing it. In one sense impulse is time itself—the temporal as an ongoing irruption. In subjective terms, it is analogous to G. H. Mead's “I,” which always escapes the internalized, socialized structure of the “me” (Mead, 1934). In this sense it is the ineffable. To widen the metaphor, we may say that the philosophy group of CPI represents subjectivity writ large, and its habits—its “me”—are the “fixated” beliefs, including both the uncoordinated beliefs of each individual and the more general beliefs of the culture. These more general beliefs make it possible for there to be enough agreement about the meaning, for example, of the word “justice” to be able to problematize and interrogate it as a concept. The group's impulse is for reconstruction of the concept to better reflect contextualized experience, and to better reorient and channel the desire for personal and social transformation which that impulse carries at its core—a desire of which childhood, for Dewey, is “a standing proof.” The drive for self-correction that motivates the group is one manifestation of the utopian drive, the upsurge of the normative, the ineluctable “ought.” It invokes the “Front” or “Not-Yet-Conscious” or “Novum” of Ernst Bloch—the sense of personal and social possibility that we all carry, of “a future which has not yet appeared in its own time” (Bloch, (1986, p. 127).

The process of inquiry itself, from what I can make of Dewey's somewhat elliptical account in *Human Nature and Conduct*, is triggered when a “present diffi-

culty" (1986, p. 217) confounds a habitual response within a given situation. That is, the habit—in the case of CPI, a habit of belief (which necessarily informs patterns of behavior) regarding the status of a concept such as friendship, justice, life or "alive," mind, language, "animal," knowledge, happiness and so on, and the practices that both inform and are informed by the concept—no longer fits the situation. At this point the impulse—the desire, the energy, the implicit goal—that "animates" the habit is "impeded," and in that moment is transformed into "thought." "There is no thought without the impeding of impulse" (1922, p. 257), Dewey claims, and "Thought is born as the twin of impulse in every moment of impeded habit" (1922, p. 171). This may be thought of in psychoanalytic terms as a form of sublimation. Behaviorally, Dewey identifies it with being moved to "stop and think." When there is group or distributed thinking going on, we may associate it with the opening of a collective noetic space that Dewey calls "reason," which has emerged through these alchemical reactions as a sort of Apollonian zone that is at least temporarily immune from the impetuosity of impulse because it has transformed it into thought. The open space of reason is by definition metacognitive, and it is experienced as a "period of delay, of suspended and postponed overt action, the period in which activities that are refused direct outlet project imaginative counterparts. It signifies, in technical phrase, the mediation of impulse" (1922, p. 197).

The result of the opening of a space of reason through the mediation of impulse is the reconstruction of habits—in the case of CPI, habits of philosophical belief. Given that we have entered the realm of reason, the implicit aim is the cultivation of habits of reasonableness, a theme that is present throughout both Dewey's and Lipman's work. "Rationality," Dewey writes, "is not a force to evoke against impulse and habit. It is the attainment of a working harmony among diverse desires. 'Reason' as a noun signifies the happy cooperation of a multitude of dispositions, such as sympathy, curiosity, exploration, experimentation, frankness, pursuit—to follow things through—circumspection, to look about at the context, etc. etc." (1922, p. 196). We may associate this happy portrait with what Dewey also called "cultivated naïveté," fundamental to his theory of "the method of intelligence," which by definition may be understood as a learned—through the alchemy of impulse, world, habit and thought—set of dispositions of reasonableness that represents in fact a developmental sublation of childhood. "We cannot," he writes, "achieve recovery of primitive naïveté. But there is attainable a cultivated naïveté of eye, ear and thought, one that can be acquired only through the discipline of severe thought" (1981, p. 40). David Granger has characterized the notion of cultivated naïveté as an "interpretive dialectic between self and world that resists closure," and as such emblematic of Dewey's "cultural hermeneutics" (2000, p. 55)—a dialectic only made possible, I would suggest, by an interpretive dialectic between impulse and habit within the self. From the point of view of Lipman's project of fostering the habits of reasonableness in children, it involves what Dewey describes as "the transformation of natural powers into expert, tested powers: the transformation of more or

less casual curiosity and sporadic suggestion into attitudes of alert, cautious, and thorough inquiry” (1986, p. 181). This, in fact, is its educational payoff.

CPI and the Fourfold Interests

Dewey employs a slightly different use of the concept “impulse” in a very early educational work, *School and Society* (Dworkin, 1959), where he identifies four “instincts” or “impulses” which, he says, characterize the deep structural impulse life of the child, and by implication, the human. They are: the “social” or “language” instinct, as shown in “conversation, personal intercourse, and communication,” which he considers “a great, perhaps the greatest of all educational resources”; the “instinct of making—the constructive impulse,” the “impulse to do” which “finds expression first in play, in movement, gesture, and make-believe, [then] becomes more definite, and seeks outlet in shaping materials into tangible forms and permanent embodiment”; the “instinct of investigation,” which “seems to grow out of the combination of the constructive impulse with the conversational”; and the “expressive” or “art” instinct, which also “grows out of the communicating and constructive instincts. It is their refinement and full manifestation” (Dworkin, 1959, pp. 57-61). I would suggest that the process of CPI—both psychodynamic and cognitive—provides a social framework for the interplay of what Dewey calls “these fourfold interests.” It is their creative and adaptive systemic interaction that, in the context of CPI, problematizes, interrogates, and works to reconstruct the habits of belief that the group carries, as both an individual and a group task. The critical, dialogical process of CPI prods and forces their ongoing, never-completed reconstruction.

The investigative instinct, articulated in communicative speech acts, interrogates concepts and the assumptions that inform them, and finds itself in a process of (re)construction, in shaping a narrative, a “tangible form” of an adjusted structure of concepts in their interrelationships and web of entailments—that is, in the emergent “argument.” The shared voice of the group itself, as the “refinement and full manifestation of this construction,” makes of CPI a sort of dramaturgy—the collective play, the expressive construction of a narrative that is as aesthetic as it is cognitive—that, as suggested above, amounts to a form of sensuous reason, a structure of concepts not abstract and removed from experience, but fully contextualized, personalized, and made meaningful by their expression through the fourfold interests. In CPI, each individual, thinking for herself and with others, becomes a practicing philosopher, and the group as a whole shifts, self-corrects and develops as a philosophical and an ethical culture through the reconstruction and coordination of each individual’s philosophical beliefs.⁸

Problem posing and problem finding

The fact that CPI is a group process through and through offers a perspective on Dewey’s often reiterated assertion—related to his insistence on the necessary relation between “interest” and “discipline”—of the primary educational importance of how

and from where the “problem” or “disturbed and perplexed situation” or “present difficulty” (1986, pp. 200, 217) that triggers inquiry arises. A Deweyan perspective might question how a philosophical novel, however artfully arranged, or an equally artful list of philosophical questions exploring the concept of friendship,⁹ can trigger the child’s intellectual curiosity and arouse her innate logical dispositions—or, to use Dewey’s third contrastive pair, close the gap between the psychological and the logical, the child and the curriculum. The Deweyan conviction that there is a crucial educational difference between encountering problematic situations in the course of some (everyday) activity and having someone or something intentionally problematizing experience for you enters a gray area when applied to what he called “primary situations” that are social. This conviction is reinforced by his related belief that, as he puts it in another early work (1972),

there will be a distinction according as children are mainly in the stage of direct interest, when means and end lie close together, or have reached a capacity for indirect interest, for consciously relating acts and ideas to one another, and interpreting one in terms of the other. The first, the period of elementary education evidently requires that the child shall be taken up mainly with direct, outgoing, and positive activity, in which his impulses find fulfillment and are thereby brought to conscious value. In the second, the time of secondary education, there is basis for reflection, for conscious formulation and generalization, for the back-turned activity of the mind which goes over and consciously defines and relates the elements of its experience. (pp. 143-144)

Both of these views reflect a long tradition, based on the Lockean genetic epistemology (which, by the way, Dewey rejected) utilized by Rousseau to claim that “childhood is reason’s sleep”—or slightly less naïvely, that “man’s first reason is a reason of the senses” (Boyd, 1956, p. 54)—a belief codified and institutionalized in the ascendancy of Piagetian developmental stage theory in the twentieth century. This view of childhood has had, it is true, a salutary effect on educational theory and practice ever since Rousseau, but besides representing a limited view of the phenomenon of “reason,” it is based on a biologicistic view of childhood that traps it in chronological time, and it locks children in a sequential, organismic metaphor, ignoring what Merleau-Ponty (1964) referred to as their status as “polymorphs”—capable of assuming a variety of attitudes and functions in a variety of social situations—and what Vygotsky (1978) referred to as the “zone of proximal development,” which represents the profound difference that social and interactional context makes to the possible operations of intelligence. To go beyond the biologicistic view is to advance the philosophy of childhood in a direction towards which, in fact, Dewey’s epistemological and educational theory point, and Lipman’s pedagogical formulation may in fact be seen as one key exemplar of that advance.

Be that as it may, I suggest that CPI as a discursive phenomenon satisfies Deweyan motivational requirements on their own terms. Based on the requirements for authentic educational experience sketched above, Dewey might argue that CPI

represents a situation in which means and ends lie so far distant from each other that they are mutually indistinguishable, and that it is unlikely that philosophical questions have the power to transform impulse into thought, and to trigger the fourfold interests. It is important, however, to distinguish philosophical questions—which include ethical ones—from scientific questions, and it was in respect of the latter that Dewey developed his theory of inquiry, even though he made little epistemological distinction between the two, and if anything assimilated the former to the latter. But as I have already argued, philosophical questions are existentially present in the culture—they lie just under the surface of everyday life and conduct, and they are “saturated with social value.” They are potentially present every time I experience or witness an injustice large or small, or lose a friend or find that I have too many, or observe some unusual sign of intelligence in an animal, or attempt to communicate with an infant, or have an extraordinary dream, and so on. I have also suggested that we live in a historical era in which philosophical questions tend to become more and more visible as cultures and ideologies become increasingly intervisible, and absolutisms of all kinds less and less epistemologically viable. Nor is there any reason to assume that these doubts and questions are not communicated, directly or otherwise, to children from an early age and in a multitude of ways, whether via media, peers, or real experience of difference.

Second, philosophical questions are, as characterized by Splitter and Sharp (1995), “common, central, and contestable.” The last of these is often the first thing children notice about them, and this can represent a liberatory experience, for the traditional school culture is one of “right” or “wrong” answers, in which the conflict of interpretations is suppressed, not just socially and politically, but epistemologically. The fact that they are common to all of us, central in importance, and above all contestable make of them questions most likely to check impulse and give birth to thought; and in a communal setting, their implicit dissonance interrupts the mimetic tendency either to conform our thought to that of others, or conversely, to polarize and enter debate. The process of conscious, careful deliberation on these questions is living proof to the child (and the adult) that in fact they are in some way related to scientific questions—that although they are practicably unanswerable in one authoritative way, their answers are not just a matter of opinion, that in fact the work of going about answering them is their answer to the extent they are explored, clarified, and seen in their relation to each other in that realm of “happy cooperation of a multitude of dispositions” called “reason.” The group work of going about answering them results, both for the individual and the group, in what Dewey calls the “intellectualization of the experience,” which he understands as the mark of an educationally worthwhile experience, one that “leaves behind an increment of meaning, a better understanding of something, a clearer future plan and purpose of action: in short, an idea” (1986, pp. 239-240).

Finally, philosophical problems as they are encountered in CPI are implicitly problems of behavior and conduct. Raised as they are in a social context—by the

members of a working group sitting in a circle—and, influenced by the facilitator's modeling and coaching, concentrating on one another's ideas of as intently as on their own, striving to maintain an ideal of undistorted communication while interrogating both their own and their fellows' beliefs and the assumptions that inform them: this could not more fully embody Dewey's "social instinct"—especially when, as I have suggested throughout this article, this same circle is the one in which the group deliberates on and makes decisions about their own daily collective life—about violations of rules or social expectations, about class and school governance issues, about (potentially) what shall be studied and how—all of which entail taking up common, central and contestable concepts. In its ethical mode—as an emergent curriculum in moral education—CPI is in fact the ur-discourse of the "miniature society," "embryonic community," "child's habitat" (Dworkin, 1959, p. 41) of Dewey's early formulation of the ideal in *My Pedagogic Creed* and *The School and Society*. It is the "school meeting" of the democratic school movement in philosophical mode, and the ethical expression of the school as a form of community life.

Conclusion

The third dyad found in Dewey's educational thinking, that of adult and child, returns us to the epigraph, and to a broader theme of this article, which follows from the claim that Lipman's formulation represents a change in the way adults might understand children—that is, as a historical development in the Western philosophy of childhood.¹⁰ The change starts in Dewey to the extent that his understanding of childhood suggests the Romantic theme of childhood as, in Emerson's famous phrase, the "perpetual messiah." But Dewey's child messiah asks us not to return to paradise, but rather to live the relation between impulse and habit through experimental intelligence, and thus to advance on a paradise that remains a perpetual horizon. Here the child as representative of impulse—and in Dewey's other favorite terms, "plasticity" and "modifiability" of habit—challenges the adult as representative of over-mechanized and maladaptive habits, habits which thwart and foreclose on the ongoing reconstruction of habit that educational growth entails (Dewey, 1922). The embryonic community, the miniature society of the adult-child collective called "school," is the habitat of this perpetual messiah to the extent that it is organized to allow for the creative and adaptive dialectical activity of the child's impulse-life through the exercise of the fourfold interests.

The cost of this new, post-Romantic positioning of childhood is an exposure of children to the measure of cultural and even personal alienation that philosophical perplexity and problematization entail. Many would argue that it amounts to early exposure of children to the dark and ambiguous realities of historical existence that early protection may help them to face more optimistically when they grow up. For others the "philosophic mind," as practiced in group dialogue, is a symptom of a sort of disease, or unhealthy addiction to doubt, against which children should be inoculated early. For yet others, to avoid philosophical problematization is itself a

kind of alienation, in the form of bad faith. For Dewey, it would appear to be the cost of the cultivated naïveté that he holds up as a subjective ideal. The latter follows from disillusion, deconstruction, critique—the perception of problems where there had been none before. We must, he argues, “divest ourselves” of the habits that we have unconsciously assimilated from our culture, and this involves interruption and negation. Only through undergoing the process of critical divestment of naïve cultural internalization is “intelligent furthering of the culture” a possibility (1981, p. 40). It may happen earlier or later in the life cycle, but there is no reason to postpone it; and if we understand human subjectivity as to a certain extent historically determined, there may be periods in which it is in the interest of personal and social reconstruction that it happen earlier.

Lipman and Sharp’s formulation assumes that children are—in the interactive context of the adult-child relation anyway, and especially in the zone of proximal development that group deliberation creates—intellectually up to this task. Their assumption is grounded in Dewey’s logic of inquiry itself, which understands doubt, conflict, interruption, negation, as necessary to growth. The process of the ongoing reconstruction of habit as an engine of growth takes a special form in CPI, one that is a paradigmatic example of the method of intelligence. “What intelligence has to do in the service of impulse,” Dewey says, “is to act not as its obedient servant but as its clarifier and liberator” (1922, p. 255). This clarification and liberation is, finally, as appropriate and necessary and, in our present historical circumstances, as culturally unfamiliar a process for the majority of adults as it is for children. When Dewey says “with respect to sympathetic curiosity, unbiased responsiveness, and openness of mind, we may say that the adult should be growing in childlikeness,” he is not engaging in sentimentality. Community of philosophical inquiry is as relevant and powerful—and culturally novel—a speech community for the adult as for the child, and, as such, it is a central and fundamental practice of, not just that ideal school that Dewey’s educational theory invokes, but of the reconstruction of philosophy as a communal and holistic practice—the practice of care of self, other, and community—which that ideal school implies.

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Notes

1. Lipman wrote six novels for different age groups, each of which is accompanied by a large compendium of thought exercises and discussion plans, which are organized according to each chapter's or episode's "leading idea."
2. The connections between James's and Dewey's pragmatism and Romantic ontology, epistemology, and aesthetics have been ably explored over the last two decades. See Goodman, 1990; Wheeler, 1993; Haskins, 1999; and Granger, 2003.
3. See <http://www.idenetwork.org/schools/democratic-schools.htm>.
4. See, for example, Lipman, 2003; Gregory, 2006, 2007; Kennedy, 2010; Splitter & Sharp, 1995. And of course Dewey's *How We Think* (1986) remains a guiding star of this literature.
5. This is not just a characteristic of American Pragmatism; it is common early twentieth-century developmental theory, influenced by biological and evolutionary studies.
6. Vivian Gussin Paley (1992) presents a clear and powerful example of teacher-initiated communal social inquiry in her description of the process of introducing a new and controversial rule ("you can't say you can't play") in her kindergarten class.
7. Dewey justifies his interchangeable use of these two terms in a lengthy footnote in *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922, p. 105).
8. The communal process of bringing philosophical beliefs to consciousness and interrogating them through the four impulses operates in an analogous way when we apply it to the school curriculum as a whole. Here the four impulses meet the regulative concepts, the accumulated knowledge, the narratives, the methods and materials of the disciplines—history, science, mathematics, music and art, literature—and enter into the same encounter that leads to reconstruction and aesthetic expression. What sets the philosophical curriculum of CPI apart is that the concepts encountered there are encountered in the disciplines as well—concepts like organism, alive, fact, observation, person, progress, measurement, and so forth. As such, CPI acts as a container, a metaphor, and a symbol of the whole process of inquiry as it is practiced in the school community. See Kennedy & Kennedy (2011).
9. For example, What is friendship? Can you be friends with an animal? With an object? With your parents? Can someone you don't like or who doesn't like you be your friend? Is there one or more things that all friends do? What's the relationship between friendship and love?
10. For a broad interpretation of this development, see Kennedy (2006).

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