

# Moral education in the community of inquiry

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## Abstract<sup>1</sup>

Moral inquiry—inquiry with children and young people into the justification for subscribing to moral standards—is central to moral education and philosophical in character. The community of inquiry (CoI) method is an established and attractive approach to teaching philosophy in schools. There is, however, a problem with using the CoI method to engage pupils in moral inquiry: some moral standards should be taught directly, with the aim of bringing it about that pupils understand and accept the justification for subscribing to them; but directive moral teaching is widely thought to be impermissible in the CoI. In this article I identify, and push back against, three sources of resistance to directive teaching in the CoI literature: (i) the idea that imparting moral beliefs is indoctrinatory; (ii) the idea that questions discussed in the CoI must be open; and (iii) the idea that teachers in the CoI must be philosophically self-effacing. I argue for a more expansive understanding of the CoI method—one in which there is, after all, room for directive moral teaching.

## Key words

Community of Inquiry, directive teaching, epistemic equality, indoctrination, moral inquiry, open questions, substantive neutrality

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## Introduction

Central to an adequate conception of moral education is an activity we might call *moral inquiry*, by which I mean inquiry with children and young people into the justification for subscribing to moral standards. Moral inquiry is a matter of investigating the nature of moral standards, asking how subscription to such standards might be justified, and examining the strength of suggested justifications. This is by no means the whole of moral education: at least as important as moral inquiry is *moral formation*, by which I mean the cultivation in children and young people of the intentions, feelings and habits that constitute moral subscription. But cultivating moral intentions, feelings and habits is only educationally defensible if accompanied by disciplined inquiry into their justification. And because disciplined inquiry is the stock-in-trade of formal education, moral inquiry may be the part of moral education to which schools have most to contribute. (For a fuller account of the distinction between moral inquiry and moral formation, and the place of each in moral education, see Hand 2018a).

I take it that both the methods by which moral inquiry proceeds, and the substantive claims it investigates, have their disciplinary home in philosophy. It is philosophers who have advanced the most plausible accounts of what moral standards are and what reasons there might be to subscribe to them, and who have developed the analytical tools needed to assess those accounts. So to teach moral inquiry is necessarily to teach philosophy. In a previous article in this journal (Hand 2018b), I have argued that the importance of equipping people to deal effectively with the problem of justifying subscription to moral standards is the strongest argument we have for making philosophy a compulsory school subject. Be that as it may, schools that take seriously their obligation to engage pupils in moral inquiry, regardless of the curriculum heading under which it happens, are thereby initiating them into the practice of philosophy.

Now, one established and attractive approach to teaching philosophy in schools is the community of inquiry (CoI) method. The CoI method is non-didactic, collaborative and dialogical: the role of the teacher is not to convey information or supply answers, but to facilitate a form of collective inquiry that is constructive, critical and self-correcting. A classroom becomes a CoI, says Matthew Lipman, when 'students listen to one another with respect, build on one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another's assumptions'

(Lipman 2003, p. 20). While this is by no means the only method of teaching philosophy available, it has considerable appeal as a way of equipping pupils to think well about their own and others' reasons for subscribing to moral standards.

There is, however, a problem with using the CoI method to engage pupils in moral inquiry, and it is a serious one. My aims in this article are, first, to draw attention to this problem and, second, to explain how I think it can be solved.

### **The problem**

We can sort the class of moral standards into three groups, according to their justificatory status:

- *Justified* moral standards are those to which there is decisively good reason to subscribe.
- *Controversial* moral standards are those to which the arguments for and against subscription are inconclusive.
- *Unjustified* moral standards are those to which there is decisively good reason not to subscribe.

In the context of classroom moral inquiry, teachers will have different aims in teaching the moral standards that belong to each group. When teaching justified moral standards (e.g. do not cheat; keep your promises), they will aim to bring it about that pupils understand and accept the justification for subscribing. When teaching controversial moral standards (e.g. do not eat meat; vote in democratic elections), they will aim to bring it about that pupils understand the arguments for and against subscription and can form considered views on them. When teaching unjustified moral standards (e.g. do not masturbate; do not engage in homosexual acts), they will aim to bring it about that pupils see the flaws in, and so reject, purported justifications for subscribing. (Again, I refer readers to Hand 2018a for a more detailed account of these justificatory categories and the pedagogical aims appropriate to the standards in each).

In other words, moral inquiry involves a mixture of *directive* and *nondirective* teaching. The teaching of justified and unjustified moral standards is directive, because the teacher tries to persuade pupils that they should or should not subscribe. The teaching

of controversial moral standards is nondirective, because the teacher refrains from persuasion and tries only to acquaint pupils with the arguments on each side. Facilitators of classroom moral inquiry must therefore shift back and forth between directive and nondirective aims, depending on the moral standards whose justificatory status is under scrutiny.

And herein lies the problem with using the CoI method for moral inquiry. While the nondirective aims appropriate to teaching controversial moral standards harmonise perfectly with the CoI method, the directive aims appropriate to teaching justified and unjustified moral standards seem jarringly discordant with it. In their canonical book *Philosophy in the Classroom*, Matthew Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp and Frederick Oscanyan make it abundantly clear that they see no room for directive moral teaching in the philosophical CoI:

No course in philosophical thinking, whether for children or adults, can succeed if used as a means for implanting the teacher's values in the vulnerable minds of the children in the classroom. No matter that the teacher is confident his values are the 'correct' ones; if this is what he is doing, it is the destruction of philosophy. (Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan 1980, p. 85)

And again:

Students engaged in philosophical discussion should feel free to advocate any value position they choose, without the teacher's having to agree or disagree with each and every point. Teachers who persistently interpose their own views run the risk, if not of indoctrination, at least of creating inhibitions that will sooner or later close off discussion itself. (p. 86)

On the face of it, then, there is a basic incompatibility between the aims of moral inquiry and the CoI method. How might we respond to this problem? One option is simply to find another teaching method for moral inquiry. Perhaps, in the end, that is the path we shall have to take. But the powerful appeal and proven efficacy of the CoI method for teaching philosophy are such that it would be a shame for moral educators to give up on it too quickly.

A second option is to accede to the CoI ban on directive moral teaching and forgo the attempt to persuade pupils that some moral standards are justified and others

unjustified. This would be, in effect, to teach all moral standards as if they were controversial. One reason to decline this option is that it involves a kind of misrepresentation of the facts: presenting either robustly justified or demonstrably unjustified moral standards as if their justificatory status were matters of reasonable disagreement is tantamount to deception. And if the only grounds for the deception is rigid adherence to a favoured teaching method, it is hard to see how it might be defended. Another reason to decline the option is that, in a coherent programme of moral education, moral inquiry complements and supports moral formation. Moral formation involves cultivating in children and young people the intentions, feelings and habits that constitute subscription to basic moral standards: prohibitions on killing and causing harm, stealing and extorting, lying and cheating, and requirements to treat others fairly, keep one's promises and help those in need. One of the fundamental reasons for engaging pupils in moral inquiry is to reinforce their moral formation by helping them grasp the justification for subscribing to these standards. An approach to moral inquiry that treated all moral standards as if they were controversial would fall badly short in this respect.

A third option, and the one I want to take up here, is to argue for a more expansive understanding of the CoI method—one in which there is, after all, room for directive moral teaching. To make that argument, I shall identify what I take to be the principal sources of resistance to directive teaching in the CoI literature, and push back against each. The sources of resistance I shall consider are: (i) the idea that imparting moral beliefs is indoctrinatory; (ii) the idea that questions discussed in the CoI must be open; and (iii) the idea that teachers in the CoI must be 'philosophically self-effacing' (Sharp 2017, p. 30). I hope to show that none of these ideas gives us a good enough reason to rule out directive moral teaching in the CoI.

### **Indoctrination**

Anyone with a serious interest in the teaching of philosophy must be attentive to the danger of indoctrination. Many of the moral, political, religious and metaphysical beliefs with which philosophers wrestle are precisely the beliefs with which children are most at risk of being indoctrinated by the adults who raise them. Advocates of the CoI method are therefore right to identify indoctrination as a significant threat and to insist on vigilance against it. Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan (1980) list 'an absence of indoctrination' as a prerequisite of their method that is 'intrinsic to philosophy itself' (p. 45). They continue:

What the teacher must certainly abstain from is any effort to abort the children's thinking before they have had a chance to see where their own ideas might lead. Manipulation of the discussion so as to bring the children to adopt the teacher's personal convictions is likewise reprehensible. (p. 45)

These points are well taken. But what Lipman and his colleagues appear to infer from the prohibition on indoctrination is that teachers may not endorse or encourage any moral belief in the CoI. And that is a non sequitur.

To see why, we need to be clear about what indoctrination is. To indoctrinate others is to bring it about that they hold beliefs on some other basis than relevant evidence and argument. It is to impart beliefs to them in a way that bypasses their reason, to bully, seduce or cajole them into believing. While any belief *can* be imparted in this way, there are some beliefs that can *only* be imparted like this. Beliefs that are contentious, in the sense that the evidence and argument bearing on them is inconclusive, cannot be reliably imparted to others by appealing to their reason alone: some degree of manipulation or emotional pressure is required. So any educator committed to 'an absence of indoctrination' must also eschew any attempt to impart contentious beliefs. That, I take it, is the reason for Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan's judgment that efforts to secure children's acceptance of 'the teacher's personal convictions' are 'reprehensible'.

The slippage occurs in the move from 'the teacher's personal convictions' to 'the teacher's values'. What makes it wrong for teachers to impart their personal convictions is that personal convictions are contentious. To be sure, many of the values teachers hold are contentious too; but not all of them. If a teacher believes a basic moral standard to be justified, on the strength of the decisively good reason there is to subscribe to it, her belief is epistemically warranted. And if she persuades her pupils that the standard is justified, by drawing their attention to the decisively good reason for subscribing to it, she is imparting an epistemically warranted belief by rational means. That is the exact opposite of indoctrination.

It is possible, of course, that Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan take the view that no moral standard is justified. If they think that all moral standards are controversial, it follows that any attempt to persuade pupils that a moral standard is justified will involve some bypassing of their reason. But that view about moral standards is very implausible.

If they do not take this view, more care is needed in formulating the worry about ‘implanting the teacher’s values in the vulnerable minds of the children’. Insofar as teachers try to impart their *contentious* moral beliefs to pupils, they are certainly doing something educationally objectionable—perhaps even something tantamount to ‘the destruction of philosophy’. But insofar as they try to impart *warranted* moral beliefs, and use rational means of persuasion to do so, they are breaching no norm of either education or philosophy. The suggestion that directive moral teaching is by nature indoctrinatory must therefore be rejected.

### Open questions

Directive moral teaching is educationally permissible, then, when the beliefs imparted are epistemically warranted. But this immediately gives rise to a second source of resistance to directive moral teaching in the CoI: questions with established answers are not the sort of questions that can sustain a classroom philosophical inquiry. Perhaps, as I have suggested, it is possible to divide the class of moral standards into those whose justificatory status is known and those whose justificatory status is unknown; but, if so, it is only the latter that invite exploration by the CoI method. Directive teaching is off the table because questions discussed in the CoI must be open.

In his well-known Question Quadrant, Philip Cam (2006) classifies questions along an open-closed axis and a textual-intellectual axis. He explains the open-closed distinction as follows:

An open question does not have a settled answer, whereas a closed question does. If there are facts to hand that settle the answer to a question beyond all reasonable doubt, say, or if the answer is a matter of general knowledge, then the question is normally regarded as closed.  
(p. 33)

Cam’s proposal is that ‘inquiry questions’ are those to be found in the open, intellectual corner of the quadrant. These are questions of which ‘a proper examination will require us to critically examine what we say, to discuss our disagreements, and to test out alternative points of view’ (p. 34).

As Peter Worley has cautioned, open questions in this substantive sense are not to be confused with open questions in the grammatical sense. A question like ‘Is the mind the same as the brain?’ is grammatically closed, in the sense that it admits of a yes or

no answer, but substantively open, in the sense that the answer to it is unknown. It is substantive, not grammatical, openness that matters in the CoI. Worley's (2015) recommendation is that inquiry questions are drawn from a subset of substantively open questions that he calls 'conceptually open questions':

A conceptually open question is one that contains or invites tensions, conflicts or controversies in the concepts contained within the question itself ... or one that has no determinate answer and where the possible answers may lead to conflict. (p. 20)

What are we to make of the requirement that questions discussed in the CoI should be open? It is clear enough where the idea comes from. It looks at first glance as if sustained, dialogical inquiry into settled questions is rather a waste of time: one might as well just look up the answer and move on. The example questions Cam puts in the closed, intellectual corner of his quadrant reinforce the impression that settled questions are not worth discussing: 'Who wrote the stories about Pooh and Piglet?' and 'What are the names of the other characters in those stories?' (Cam 2006, p. 34). Pupils as yet ignorant of the answers to these questions could be invited to guess at them, and to vote on each other's suggestions, but what would be the point? There is no room here for reflection, criticism and self-correction. Meaningful discussion cannot get off the ground.

But a great many settled questions are not at all like Cam's examples. Think of mathematical proofs, confirmed scientific hypotheses and established historical facts. These matters are straightforwardly settled, but for those not yet familiar with the argument and evidence that settles them, there is ample scope for collaborative and critical inquiry. In some cases, 'looking up the answer' is not really an option; but even where it is, there is self-evident educational value in pupils discovering the answer for themselves, through the constructing and testing of hypotheses, the collecting and analysing of data, the making of inferences and the drawing of conclusions. Inquiry does not depend on questions being open: it depends on the answers being difficult to come by and not yet known to the inquirers.

This is as true in philosophy as it is in maths, science and history. Most children learn at an early age not to kill, steal, cheat or lie, to treat others fairly and to help those in need. But they often do not learn the justification for subscribing to these standards. It would be quite wrong to classify the question of justification as open: there is decisively good reason to subscribe to basic moral standards. But the justification for basic morality takes time and effort to understand, is not easy to look up in a book,



and is something children are unlikely to discover prior to doing some philosophy. Again, the benefits of enabling pupils to work out the justification for themselves, through a dialogical process of proposing, testing, critiquing and refining arguments, are obvious.

Happily, one leading advocate of the CoI method has recently challenged the idea that questions discussed in the CoI must be substantively open. Laurance Splitter, in the pages of this journal, explicitly denies that inquiry depends on questions that 'do not have answers, or do not have "settled" answers, or have multiple answers or, taking an epistemological perspective, are questions to which those involved – questioner and respondents – do not know the answer' (Splitter 2016, p. 19). What matters, he argues, is not that questions *are* open, but that they *feel* open to the pupils engaged in the inquiry:

The feeling or sense that matters are unsettled, in so far as it determines the dispositional states of those inquiring, is the crucial ingredient needed for sparking an inquiry, irrespective of the state of settlement among relevant experts in the field. (p. 23)

Splitter also confesses to a change of heart about the curious idea that philosophical questions are necessarily unsettled. He writes:

In so far as teachers want to encourage their students to focus more on philosophical questions, I do not think that characterising the latter as questions with no settled answers is particularly helpful ... As someone who had hitherto characterised philosophical questions as those whose answers are 'eternally contestable', I concede this point with some reluctance. Still, if we think of philosophical puzzles such as those concerning the concept of identity, it does seem that once we become clear about the meanings of the key concepts involved, the puzzles can be resolved. In my terms, conceptual clarification and analysis can, at least sometimes, relieve the sense of unsettlement, both psychologically and epistemologically. In this respect such philosophical problems are akin to those in science and other disciplines, yet warrant being described as 'philosophical' because of the manner in which we seek to solve them. (p. 32)

Splitter is right on both points. Questions discussed in the CoI need not *be* open as long as they *seem* open to the pupils engaged in the inquiry. And it is simply a mistake

to suppose that philosophical questions are open by definition. As long as teachers can create for their pupils what Splitter calls 'the illusion of unsettlement', thereby 'simulating in the classroom the same kind of environment as might be found among scientists or other experts (including philosophers) working at the epistemological boundaries of their disciplines' (p. 33), there is no impediment to the exploration of closed philosophical questions in the CoI.

### **The self-effacing teacher**

A third and final source of resistance to directive moral inquiry in the CoI is the idea that teachers must be 'philosophically self-effacing'. Here's Ann Margaret Sharp:

... teachers have a responsibility to be pedagogically strong and philosophically self-effacing. What I mean by that is that their role is to model the inquiry procedure sufficiently till the children have internalized the procedure and can proceed by themselves. By philosophically self-effacing, I mean it is not the role of the facilitator to be giving answers to the philosophical questions that are raised by the group. (Sharp 2017, p. 30)

The requirement to be pedagogically strong but philosophically self-effacing is sometimes couched as a requirement to be procedurally committed but substantively neutral:

We have elsewhere noted the particular usefulness of the distinction between substantive and procedural considerations with respect to classroom instruction. The teacher, we have pointed out, should normally be neutral when moderating discussions among students about specific substantive issues in which value questions predominate. But the teacher in such discussions should definitely be partial to and insistent upon the rules of procedure by which the discussion is carried on. (Lipman et al. 1980, p. 186)

In other words, even if it is accepted that directive moral teaching need not be indoctrinatory, and that inquiry does not depend on questions being open, there is still a problem about teachers in the CoI guiding pupils towards the answers to moral questions. Any such guidance is incompatible with the demand that the CoI facilitator is philosophically self-effacing or substantively neutral. And the reason for this

demand is that the CoI method is non-didactic and dialogical: the task of the teacher is not to foreclose inquiry by supplying answers, but to facilitate inquiry by enabling pupils to find answers for themselves.

Now, just as the idea that questions discussed in the CoI must be open rests on an unhelpful caricature of closed questions, so the idea that teaching in the CoI must be substantively neutral rests on an unhelpful caricature of substantively committed teaching. An opposition is set up between teachers who *give answers* to philosophical questions and teachers who treat them with strict impartiality. But this opposition does not survive a moment's scrutiny. Consider the maths teacher who sets a question for her pupils and gently guides them through the steps needed to answer it. At no point does she give her pupils the answer: what she wants is for them to solve the problem for themselves. But nor is she impartial about the question: she knows what the answer is and she deliberately steers her pupils towards it. Plainly, substantively committed teaching need not, and often does not, involve foreclosing inquiry by supplying answers.

It is important, in this connection, to distinguish *directive* teaching from *didactic* teaching. Recall that to teach *directively* is to teach with a certain aim: the aim of persuading pupils that a matter is settled, a claim true or a standard justified. It is properly contrasted with *nondirective* teaching, which has no such persuasive aim. To teach *didactically*, on the other hand, is to teach by means of telling, to facilitate learning by instructing, informing, expounding or explaining. It is properly contrasted with *non-didactic* teaching, which is teaching by means other than telling, such as inquiry, experiment, discussion and play. While it is clearly a defining feature of the CoI method that teaching should be non-didactic, that constitutes no reason at all for insisting that teaching should also be *nondirective*. It is perfectly possible for the facilitator of an inquiry, an experiment or a discussion to have the aim of persuading pupils that some answer is correct or some conclusion warranted.

Once it is recognised that substantively committed teaching need not be didactic and need not involve the giving of answers, the idea that teaching in the CoI must be substantively neutral becomes much harder to defend. Insofar as basic moral standards are robustly justified, and there is pedagogical value in engaging pupils in philosophical inquiry about those standards, it is appropriate for the teacher to intend, and take steps to ensure, that the robust justification comes to light and her pupils appreciate its force. She will not instruct, expound or sermonise: that would defeat the point of the inquiry. But she will see to it that the sound arguments for basic morality,

and the sound objections to arguments against it, are thoroughly aired and understood, either by giving the floor to pupils able to articulate them or by feeding them into the discussion herself. Her aim will be to guide the course of the discussion in such a way as to give due prominence to the strongest arguments. To prescind from this aim, in the name of philosophical self-effacement, would be at best a missed educational opportunity and at worst a dereliction of educational duty.

For those reluctant to let go of substantive neutrality in the CoI, there is one more line of defence available. It is sometimes suggested that, when an inquiry is being steered or guided, however subtly, by a substantively committed teacher, it is not a genuine inquiry at all. For an inquiry to be genuine, all participants, including the teacher, must meet on terms of *epistemic equality*. That is to say, there must be no epistemic hierarchy, no distinction between teacher and pupil or expert and novice, no hidden pedagogical agenda. If one participant is motivated not by curiosity about the question under discussion, but by paternalistic concern for the learning of other participants, she is not engaging as an epistemic equal and her interventions, however well-intentioned, will tend to subvert the process of inquiry.

David Kennedy, for example, emphasises the egalitarian character of the CoI. It is a pedagogy in which power is not concentrated in the hands of the teacher but shared equally among the inquirers. The crucial difference between the CoI method and 'Socratic practice' is that the responsibility 'Socrates takes solely upon himself is distributed among all members and has its source in their interactions' (Kennedy 2004, p. 746). Kennedy invokes the Habermasian notion of the 'ideal speech situation' to bring out the contrast between the CoI and the conventional classroom:

As a pedagogical form, CPI [community of philosophical inquiry] is dialogical and multilogical rather than monological, constructivist rather than transmissional, and its curriculum is at least partially co-constructed and emergent. As a form of communal discourse, it aspires to an ideal speech situation in the sense that power is present in the discursive system, not as reified in role hierarchy or arguments from authority but in the transformative, systemic dynamics of dialogue. (2004, pp. 744-745)

And Karin Murrin is explicit in calling for epistemic equality in the CoI:

When thinking *with* children, adults need to 'give' their mind to what there is to think about, which is only possible when adults are 'open-

minded', have 'epistemic modesty', 'epistemic trust' and are committed to 'epistemic equality'. (Murriss 2013, p. 258)

There are, however, good reasons to resist the idea that a classroom CoI can or should exemplify epistemic equality. The conception of a community of epistemic equals, working together on a question to which none of them knows the answer and motivated only by a shared commitment to the truth, may be a helpful ideal when thinking about the work of professional philosophers, scientists or historians; but it is not at all helpful when thinking about the work of teachers in schools. While classroom inquiries sometimes find their way to what Splitter calls the 'epistemological boundaries' of a discipline, where answers to questions are as yet unknown, such inquiries are the exception rather than the rule. And even in those cases, the teacher's primary concern is not with the satisfaction of her curiosity but with the learning of her pupils. The first duty of the teacher is to educate, and that means she will never meet her pupils on terms of epistemic equality. She will always have a pedagogical agenda that prevents her from 'giving' her mind wholly to 'what there is to think about': the larger part of her attention will be on enabling her pupils to give *their* minds to what there is to think about, and on helping them to think about it well.

Again, encouragingly, there is some appreciation of these points in the CoI literature. Peter Seixas gives a lucid account of the differences between the classroom CoI and the scholarly CoI:

Within the scholarly community there is ... an understanding that the most junior member is in a position to challenge the most senior, and that critical comment on each other's work is expected of all: it is a community where 'individuals confront each other as equals and participants' ... The community of inquiry in the classroom offers a major contrast in this regard. First, a teacher is responsible for structuring the learning experiences of the classroom members ... Ultimately, the teacher is responsible for negotiating the form and content of cultural authority imposed from beyond the classroom, and for defining and modeling the interpretive latitude permissible within the classroom. (Seixas 1993, p. 312)

The demand that inquirers should 'confront each other as equals' is appropriate for the scholarly CoI, whose members 'have been through a long process of selection that is highly competitive at every level', but not for the classroom CoI, which 'is inclusive

rather than exclusive, and has no such selection process' (pp. 312-313). A discursive ideal designed for teams of qualified and well-informed scholars working at the frontiers of their field cannot simply be transposed to settings in which a qualified and well-informed adult is charged with facilitating the learning of unqualified and poorly informed children. Seixas continues:

Thus, the criteria of authority, exclusiveness, education, and training all distinguish the scholarly community of inquiry from the classroom community of inquiry. They indeed are, as our common sense tells us, two very different systems. Attempts to conflate them would be woefully mistaken and dangerous. (p. 313)

Much the same distinction is drawn by Tim Sprod, who uses the terms 'paradigmatic' and 'distorted' to describe the scholarly CoI and the classroom CoI respectively:

I don't think that we can take the classroom Community of Inquiry as the paradigmatic Community of Inquiry. It is, I think, a distorted Community of Inquiry ... If there is a regulative ideal that defines the Community of Inquiry, I feel that Habermas is close to having it in his ISS [ideal speech situation] ... In the light of this, we can judge any putative Community of Inquiry as to the ways in which it is distorted from the ISS ... The classroom Community of Inquiry is being used educatively, to empower the participants. It might be referred to more accurately as a *developing* Community of Inquiry—one which aspires to becoming a Community of Inquiry, as the participants become more able. I think we fool ourselves if we deny that the teacher in a classroom Community of Inquiry is in a position of power, or that they should be. (Sprod 1997, pp. 14-15)

To accept that the classroom CoI is a distorted or developing version of the scholarly CoI is not to give up any of its central features: inquiry is still collaborative, constructive, critical and self-correcting; participants still listen to each other, build on each other's ideas, ask for reasons and identify assumptions. But it *is* to give up the feature of epistemic equality. The teacher in the classroom CoI does not, and should not, meet her pupils as an epistemic equal; she does not, and should not, lose sight of her pedagogical responsibility for her pupils' learning; and, where she knows the answer to the question under discussion, she does not, and should not, refrain from helping her pupils to find it.

## Conclusion

To recap: moral inquiry, which is an essential component of moral education, is philosophical in character, and an attractive approach to teaching philosophy in schools is the CoI method. There is, however, a problem: where moral standards are robustly justified or demonstrably unjustified, the facilitator of moral inquiry has a responsibility to bring these facts to light; but directive moral teaching seems to be disallowed by the CoI method. The principal sources of resistance to such teaching in the CoI literature are the ideas (i) that imparting moral beliefs is indoctrinatory, (ii) that questions discussed in the CoI must be open, and (iii) that teachers in the CoI must be philosophically self-effacing.

I have argued that none of these ideas gives us a good enough reason to rule out directive moral teaching in the CoI. The first idea is simply false: there is nothing indoctrinatory about using rational means of persuasion to impart warranted moral beliefs. The second idea confuses the requirement that questions *are* open with the requirement that they *feel* open to pupils: only the latter is necessary for a fruitful classroom inquiry. The third idea can be interpreted in two ways. If it means that teaching in the CoI should not be didactic and should not involve the giving of answers, it is perfectly consistent with teachers steering discussion in the right direction. If it means that there must be epistemic equality between teacher and pupils, it is an unreasonable demand to make of the classroom CoI.

I have also tried to show that some of the objections to these ideas are already to be found in the work of prominent CoI advocates. My aim in critiquing the ideas is certainly not to discredit the CoI method. It is rather to defend a more expansive understanding of the method, one that makes room for teachers to meet more of their pedagogical obligations in and through dialogical inquiry. The classroom CoI has the potential to transform teaching in many areas of the curriculum, not just philosophy; but its potential will be largely unrealised for as long as it is thought of as incompatible with directive pedagogical aims.

In the specific domain of moral inquiry, where pupils explore the nature and justification of their own and others' moral standards, the CoI method has a great deal to offer. Here more than anywhere we need an approach that puts a premium on respectful listening, openness to different points of view, attentiveness to reasons and readiness to question received wisdom. But the things that count in favour of using the CoI method to investigate moral standards whose justificatory status is unknown also count in favour of using it to investigate moral standards whose justificatory

status is known. Where pupils are surveying moral standards and asking which, if any, deserve their allegiance, it makes little pedagogical sense to initiate dialogical inquiry when they encounter a standard that is controversial, but to halt inquiry and revert to didactic instruction when they encounter a standard that is justified or unjustified. Rather, I suggest, we should broaden our conception of the classroom CoI to allow both directive and nondirective aims, so the method can be used to tackle any and all justificatory questions in the moral sphere.

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