Exploring the connections between Philosophy for Children and character education: Some implications for moral education?

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Abstract

In this paper we are interested in the connections between Philosophy for Children and character education. In sketching these connections we suggest some areas where the relationship is potentially fruitful, particularly in light of research which suggests that in practice schools and teachers often adopt and mix different approaches to values education. We outline some implications of drawing connections between the two fields for moral education. The arguments made in this article are done so in the hope of encouraging further critical reflection on the potential relationship between Philosophy for Children and character education.

Key words

Philosophy for Children, character education, intellectual virtues, critical thinking

Introduction

Superficially understood Philosophy for Children and character education may seem essentially different in nature and approach. Whilst the former may be associated with developing critical, free and autonomous thinkers, the latter has sometimes been seen (at least by its critics) as a mechanism for conformity. According to one leading critique, character education constitutes a 'morality of compliance' (Nash 1997, p. 30). The view that character education is overly paternalistic is echoed by Tainlong Yu in his critique of the field. Yu (2004, p. 2) argues that 'the construction of virtues is always tied to privilege, power, and control'. In these criticisms both Nash and Yu imply that character education might be somewhat undemocratic, requiring students to conform and comply rather than to think and act autonomously. Yet a more detailed and sophisticated consideration of both fields recognises that both

fields seek some sort of balance and relationship between critical, autonomous thinking and the development of virtues as a participating member of one's communities. While there have been some analyses which have sought to explore the connections between philosophy for children and character education (see, for example, Sprod 2001), there is a need for further explorations given recent research in both fields pointing to their respective positive outcomes for students (Arthur, Kristjánsson, Walker, Sanderse, Jones, Thoma, Curran & Roberts 2015; Fair, Haas, Gardosik, Johnson, Price & Leipnik 2015; Gorard, Siddiqui & Huat See 2015) and recent work in character education focusing on intellectual or epistemic virtues (Baehr 2013a, 2013b; Kotzee 2013; Pritchard 2013). Moreover, we are interested in findings from empirical research which suggest that, in the practical approaches adopted within schools, distinctions between the two approaches often become complex and blurred. That is, when adopting pedagogical choices, teachers are likely (whether consciously or not) to fluidly move between different approaches to moral education, as illustrated for example in the *Values Education in Australian Schools* project undertaken in Australia in the 2000s (Department for Education, Science and Training 2003; Education Services Australia 2010). Whilst this does not mean that the differences between particular fields of moral education are unimportant, it does suggest value in exploring areas of potential synergy. Our aim here, then, is to set out some pertinent connections between the two fields, which we believe are fruitful areas for further investigation and reflection, and to draw some tentative implications of these for moral education. Of course, there is not scope in the confines of one paper for us to enter into the sort of depth regarding each of these that we would want, and so we make the arguments here in the hope that they will provoke critical debate from others and with the intention of expanding on key elements in more detail in the future.

Before we commence the analysis it is important to set out—briefly—our working definitions of both character education and Philosophy for Children. We take our definition of character education from that employed by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Values at the University of Birmingham (2015) which defines character as 'a set of personal traits or dispositions that produce specific moral emotions, inform motivation and guide conduct' and character education as 'an umbrella term for all explicit and implicit educational activities that help young people develop positive personal strengths called virtues' (p. 2). We would dismiss standpoints which view character education as *necessarily* concerned with compliance and conformity, and concur with Kristján Kristánsson's recent suggestion that such readings are merely a 'myth'. According to Kristánsson:

> Aristotle's stringent condition about the eventual moral worth of virtuous activity—echoed by most contemporary character educationalists—serves to defuse the myth that character education is essentially anti-intellectual and anti-democratic. For if it is, it is not really character *education* on the Aristotelian understanding at all, but rather character *conditioning*. If the complaint is, rather, that some particular programmes of character education—for instance, as practised in the USA in the 1990s—were delivered in an anti-intellectual and anti-democratic way, then this may well be the case. But so much the worse for those programmes and the students who were at the receiving end of them, rather than for character education as such. (Kristjánsson 2013, p. 278)

We understand Philosophy for Children as an approach to learning built around children's developing philosophical questioning, thinking and reasoning capacities through engaging in structured communities of inquiry. Students' emotional and moral development is also a central element of Philosophy for Children. Indeed, many of the leading contemporary writers in the field of Philosophy for Children have viewed the development of capacities such as care and empathy as central to its practice (Gregory 2000; Lipman 1995; Pritchard 1993; Schertz 2007). Schertz' (2007, p. 192) position is illustrative. In relation to developing students' empathy, for example, he argues that the community of inquiry approach within Philosophy for Children 'provides a peer-mediated educational encounter that fosters the development of empathy through polyphonic discourse, inquiry-based inductions and the sharing of affective states'. That Philosophy for Children is interested in cognitive development as well as emotional and moral development is also demonstrated in many of the programme initiatives which support the development of philosophy in schools. For example, *Philosophy for Children New Zealand* define the field as 'more than a thinking skills programme … It encourages intellectual courage and rigor and helps to develop the *qualities that make for good judgment* in everyday life' (Philosophy for Children New Zealand n.d.-b, emphasis added). In addition, the internationally significant *Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education* (known commonly and hereafter as SAPERE) identifies, as one of the two key principles of Philosophy for Children, that reflection is a 'key practice that results in significant changes of *thought and action*' (www.sapere.org.uk).

It could be argued, of course, that the sorts of capacities to which we have given emphasis here—namely, good judgement or the relationship between thought and action—should be properly conceived as purely cognitive in nature. A leading example of this understanding of morality is provided by the Kantian tradition and

its clear separation between morality (which is based on and derives from duty and reason) and emotions (which according to Kant have no place in morality) (for a clear overview of the Kantian position in relation to moral education see, for example, Moran 2009; Sprod 2001; Surprenant 2010). While maintaining the central role of cognition within students' moral learning, we argue here that moral development requires more than the development of reason, and should also be concerned with the affective and active domains. Indeed, it is the recognition of the importance of developing cognition, affection and action that lies at the heart of possible areas of confluence between Philosophy for Children and character education that we explore throughout the present analysis.

Following this introduction we commence our analysis with a general overview of the two fields. Next, we seek to explore connections between Philosophy for Children and character education in two ways: (i) through highlighting the integral role that cultivating the intellect plays within character education, drawing links to the centrality of thinking skills within Philosophy of Education; and, (ii) through highlighting the place of moral judgement and action within Philosophy for Children, drawing links to the centrality of these within character education. In the final section we draw some starting points for further considerations regarding the implications for practice in moral education.

Philosophy for Children and character education: Some initial framing

Philosophy for Children

Growing out of the work of Matthew Lipman in the US during the 1970s, Philosophy for Children has developed into a large and diverse field. Central to Matthew Lipman's work was the centrality of two inter-related elements, namely *critical thinking* and *communities of inquiry* (Vansieleghem & Kennedy 2011; here we use the term 'communities of inquiry', while others prefer 'community of philosophical inquiry' (Kennedy 1999)). The coming together of critical thinking and communities of inquiry reminds us of the centrality of individual reasoning within a collective environment; indeed, this can be considered as the *leitmotif* of the Philosophy for Children movement (for an excellent overview of the place and nature of thinking within Philosophy for Children, see Lipman 1993). It is from the foundation of these elements—notably how they are constituted, at what they aim, and of what they are constitutive—that any differences within the field typically commence. This is evidenced in Lipman's work in which critical thinking is represented as an active process acting against ill- and under-considered assumptions (Daniel & Auriac 2011,

p. 420). Further, Lipman understood that critical thinking is developed through a process of discursive interaction with others. By locating critical thinking as being generated through and by participation in discursive *communities of inquiry*, Lipman references a property which is individual (critical thinking as the ability to govern oneself) and a property which is communal (critical thinking as the ability to participate within a community). According to Pardales and Girod (2006, p. 306) a community of inquiry can be understood as involving dialogue about 'topics of interest, in the service of constructing knowledge and common understanding, and internalising the discourse of the inquiring community' (though it is not altogether clear whether the community is internal to the inquiry or, additionally, includes the wider communities within which inquiry is undertaken). This focus on community reminds us that Philosophy for Children is not solely concerned with critical thinking and reasoning, but is also concerned with the ways in which one (in this case the student) engages as a critical, creative and caring member of their communities. Lipman (1995, 2002) included caring thinking as a key element of his approach to Philosophy for Children while, in her commentary on Lipman's work on Philosophy for Children, Vanseileghem makes clear the connection to significant inter-personal, as well as intra-personal, dispositions and capacities:

> In brief, it can be said that Lipman's programme is orientated towards objectives that are functional for intellectual development, logical thinking and empathy for others, as well as objectives that consist in the formation of participative, autonomous, responsible and respectful citizens. (2005, p. 22)

Similarly, Sharp (1999) suggests that:

> The community of inquiry reflects democracy and initiates the children into the principles and values of this paradigm, it engages young generations in a process of individual and political growth … By exercising in school freedom of thought and action, democracy will become their way of living and being when they become active adults within their society. (p. 12)

There is much in analyses such as this that is likely to be, at the very least, of interest to character educators, notably the focus on and connections between intellectual development, empathy for others, participative citizenship, and living and being. For us, this serves to highlight that Philosophy for Children is concerned not only with students becoming certain types of thinkers, but also certain types of human beings, a line of thought we return to in the next section.

Character education

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a 'revival' in character education (Arthur 2003; Nash 1997). A range of commentators in the US (Bennett 1993; Lickona 1991; Wynne 1982, 1986)—and subsequently in Britain (Arthur 2003; Carr 1995, 1996; Wringe 1998)—have contended that education should be concerned with the development of the character of students and, for this reason, that virtues should form the basis of school-based moral education. A central tenet of character education is that forms of moral education which focus solely on cognitive development provide an insufficient basis for *real* moral development, which requires the development of affection and action alongside cognition. There is insufficient scope to provide a detailed overview of the philosophical roots underpinning work on character within moral education, and this corpus is handled well elsewhere (see, for example, Arthur 2003; Crittenden 1992). While we do not to diminish the importance of other moral and theological scholars—such as Cicero, Erasmus, Augustine, Aquinas, Montaigne and Rousseau—who have similarly sort to place character as central to moral development and/or education, following others (Arthur 2003; Carr 2008; Kristjánsson 2013) we draw predominantly on its Aristotelian roots. Indeed, Aristotle's work has taken a central place in the renaissance of interest in virtues in moral philosophy through the work of scholars such as Elizabeth Anscombe (1958), Philippa Foot (1981), Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), and Rosalind Hursthouse (1999).

To a large extent, the character education movement can be understood as a reaction to the dominance of liberal-minded, cognitive development approaches to moral education that emphasised 'process over content and critical autonomy over social interdependence' (Arthur 2003, p. 27). Inter-related with theoretical conceptualisations of a virtue-based approach to moral education have been a number of practice-led character education programmes. Predominantly based in the US, such initiatives include the *Character Institute* (http://charactereducationinstitute.com/), the *Character Education Partnership* (http://www.character.org/) and *Character Counts* (http://charactercounts.org/). The latter bases its educational policies and practices around its *Six Pillars of Character*: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. More recently a large-scale research centre focused on character, virtues and values has been established at the University of Birmingham, England. *The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues* works to promote 'a moral concept of character in order to explore the importance of virtue for public and professional life' and defines character as:

encompass[ing] the morally evaluable, reason-responsive, and educable part of human personality, and we understand virtues as states of character concerned with morally praiseworthy feelings and conduct in specific spheres of human life. (www.jubileecentre.ac.uk)

As was suggested in the introduction, whilst we accept that the nature of character education is open to a number of interpretations we are interested in forms of the movement that recognise that character conjoins affective *and* cognitive domains, and in doing so relates thinking, feeling and action. Clearly, there are some important differences between the fields of Philosophy for Children and character education which, whilst not our primary focus here, should not be ignored completely. Whilst Philosophy for Children is interested primarily in the *processes* which make moral reasoning possible, character education's interest is fundamentally on outcomes in terms of the development of individuals' character. Further, the two fields, for example, draw on different theoretical roots. Whilst the latter takes its essence primarily from Aristotelian roots (and from contemporary interpretations thereof), philosophy for children draws on a range of influences. Daniel and Auriac (2011, p. 418) point to the influence of a range of twentieth century American philosophers such as 'Robert Ennis, Matthew Lipman, Richard Paul, John McPeck and Harvey Siegel', whilst Golding (2011, p. 413), with particular regard to communities of inquiry, cites the influence of John Dewey, CS Peirce, Lev Vygotsky, GH Mead, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Jürgen Habermas (see also Lipman 1993 for a range of accounts of the philosophical basis of Philosophy for Children).

Such differences, however, are not complete binaries, but rather are complex and blurred. Furthermore, any serious approach to moral education must take account of how cognition, feeling and action interact—something which is of interest to educators in both fields. To be able to reason and use one's 'moral imagination' (Johnson 1993, p. 198) is a necessary condition of moral learning (indeed, it would seem hard to countenance any approach to moral learning that viewed reasoning as unimportant), but is not in and of itself sufficient. Without emotional commitment, reason remains somewhat abstract and partial, lacking a commitment to moral action. As Sprod suggests:

> When we are committed to our thinking, it is because of the emotions that underpin it. Without any emotion, there would be no commitment. And without any commitment, there would be no reason for thinking rather than not thinking, or for thinking this way rather than that. (2001, p. 23)

The point that moral learning should involve a combination of thinking, feeling and action is not simply a philosophical one, with evidence suggesting that schools are often involved in developing students' values through a variety (rather than one singular) method. Indeed, *the Values in Australian Education* project found that whilst 'it may not have been overt in the reports they prepared, many of the schools and clusters involved in the study … often seek some sort of synthesis' between cognitive-developmental and character based approaches, and that 'such a synthesis is arguably supported by the strong empirical indications that the adoption of different teaching and learning approaches is much more effective than the adoption of a single approach in isolation' (Department for Education, Science and Training 2003, p. 35).

Given this, and the interest which the fields of Philosophy for Children and character education have received over the last four decades, it is somewhat surprising that there has been so little discussion regarding the potential for commensurability between Philosophy for Children and character education (see Sprod 2001 for a notable exception). Our aim in the sections which follow is to begin to address this gap.

Cultivating intellectual virtues

It was suggested in the introduction that whilst some critiques of character education view the field as *necessarily* anti-intellectual and conformist, this conception is mistaken. A typical example of this misrepresentation is the stance adopted by Robert Nash, who has argued that

> character educators go too far in separating moral reasoning from moral conduct. The result is to foster an ethos of compliance in schools wherein indoctrination and rote-learning replace critical reflection and autonomous decision-making. (1997, p. 30)

Nash's argument strikes an important chord with regard to seeking greater clarity about the function and nature of critical reason within character education. Indeed, as Nash points out:

> Aristotle teaches that we need to appeal to *reason* to locate an individual's particular *telos* as well as the universal *logos* (an ultimate rational power). Mimesis is not always enough. While the character educators talk often of 'habituation' and of fostering a 'disposition' towards virtuous conduct, they

speak far less frequently of the function of *critical reason* in living a virtuous life. (1997, p. 40, emphasis in original)

However, and as Sprod reminds us, learning through habituation requires some degree of critical reasoning if it is to be learning at all (rather than, say, repetition without progress), while 'unthinking habituation' makes no moral distinction between context and situations, and therefore moves students '*away* from ethical behaviour' (2001, p. 103, emphasis in original). Once the confluence highlighted here *between* reason and habituation is accepted, there are clear grounds for claiming that no *prima facie* reasons exist as to why programmes of character education are *necessarily* and *ex vi termini* anti-intellectual. Properly constituted character education programmes are anything but anti-intellectual—interested in intellectual development rather than intellectual conditioning (Kristjánsson 2013). As Arthur (2003, p. 40) suggests, the 'cultivation of virtue does not mean the abandonment of rationality – it simply provides a moral setting for the exercise of reasoning'. The questions remain, however, (i) how such intellectual development is best understood within character education, and (ii) whether the sort of intellectual development central to character education can be reasonably understood to be broadly commensurable with the sorts of critical thinking central to Philosophy for Children. Let us consider each of these in turn.

Those character educationalists who have been explicit about the role of intellectual growth typically posit it as occurring within particular communities and as operating interactively with the development of moral feelings and action. Indeed, the location of moral development in relation to the community (whether that of the classroom, the school or the wider neighbourhood) is a recurring and central theme within character education (Cochran 1982; Popenoe 1995; Strike 2008). Jonathan (1999) suggests the importance of relating individual moral learning with communities in the following way:

> to develop in the young the capacity for critical reflection on values cannot in and of itself provide an adequate framework either for the development of individual commitments or for the shared social understandings that both shape and reflect commitments. Indeed, the rationale for such reflection in individuals presupposes the exercise of a surrounding framework of value that both supports and sustains, and against which personal values are elaborated and modified. (p. 64)

In other words, students' character development does not occur within a vacuum but rather takes place with reference to, and through participation within, the

various communities in which they are located and embedded (Strike 2008). For this reason, education of, and for, character is dynamic and multi-dimensional. Arthur (2003) further illustrates the importance of community in relation specifically to cognitive aspects of character development, providing the example of students' individual intellectual development as working interdependently with, and within, the wider school community. By considering their own values and virtues within such a context, students' moral attachments, dispositions and understandings are given context and meaning:

> if a school identifies and promotes habituation in virtue as providing sustenance for the school community, its students will find it easier to reflect upon and modify their thinking and behaviour, rather than merely emphasising (even self-chosen) rules to which individual actions must conform. (p. 32)

But what, specifically, are the intellectual properties which are being developed? While most character educators place their primary focus on the development—through habituation—of moral action and its connection to the intellectual virtue of *phronesis*, there has more recently been a turn within the field toward 'intellectual' virtues. Intellectual virtues represent

> the personal qualities or *character traits* of a good thinker or a good learner … They are a matter of will and of related psychological states like attitudes, beliefs, desires, and feelings. (Baehr 2013b)

This explicit focus on *intellectual* character draws on recent work within the field of 'virtue epistemology', a field of epistemology which Pritchard (2013, p. 236) describes as 'arguably the dominant viewpoint in contemporary epistemology'. Intellectual virtues can be viewed as 'traits that flow from and are anchored in a desire for or commitment to epistemic goods' (Baehr 2013b). For Kotzee (2013):

> [R]ather than focusing on what the knower knows, virtue epistemology turns its attention to the knower him/herself. The question, for virtue epistemology, is not so much what knowledge is as what it is to be a good knower. (p. 159)

This recent work in the field of virtue epistemology has sought to restate the centrality of intellectual dispositions, typically citing their normative properties. This work, of course, has its roots in the classical work of Aristotle whom, in his original formulation, presented five intellectual virtues required for critical thinking: wisdom (*sophia*), scientific knowledge (*episteme*), reason (*nous*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and craft or skill knowledge (*techne*). For Aristotle, intellectual virtues are entities in

their own right and represent important elements of character necessary for sound reasoning and judgement. However, in the central virtue of *phronesis* – practical wisdom – the intellectual becomes intertwined with the moral; that is, the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* plays an essential role in mediating, informing and enacting moral virtue (Kristjánsson 2014). This view is central to Aristotelian understandings of character education, and are based on the premise that the 'key to the development of the full virtue for which moral habituation could only provide the foundation l[ies] in the cultivation of the particular form of reason or deliberation' characterised by *phronesis* (Carr 2008, p. 115). In other words, it is within and through *phronesis* that correct thinking, feeling and conduct are applied. Indeed, it is the capacity to arrive cognitively at right decisions about how to act and feel that enables one to live the good life so conceived (Kristjánsson 2014).

The identification (or strictly speaking the re-identification, given its roots in Aristotle) of intellectual virtues as operating alongside and as—in *phronesis*— importantly related to moral virtues has an educational significance concerning the nature of moral learning and its cognitive elements. This significance is illustrated by Alasdair MacIntyre (1967) when he argues that:

> We … exhibit rationality in two kinds of activity: in thinking, where reasoning is what constitutes the activity itself; and in such activities other than thinking where we may succeed or fail in obeying the precepts of reason. The excellences of the former Aristotle calls the intellectual virtues; of the latter, the moral virtues … intellectual virtue is the consequence usually of explicit instruction, moral of habit. (p. 64)

It is in and through this combination of intellectual and moral development that an education in the virtues moves beyond the mere conditioning and indoctrination attributed by its critics, and in doing so opens the possibilities for the expression and development of an individual's personal and unique character (Kaplan, 1995; Arthur, 2003). The sorts of intellectual virtues which their contemporary proponents have in mind are represented in the following list from Baehr (2013b), which also includes the sorts of intellectual vices which are to be avoided:

> … curiosity, wonder, attentiveness, intellectual carefulness, intellectual thoroughness, open-mindedness, fair-mindedness, intellectual autonomy, intellectual courage, and intellectual humility. Intellectual *vices* … [include] dogmatism, bias, intellectual hastiness, closed-mindedness, intellectual carelessness, intellectual superficiality, and intellectual arrogance. (emphasis in original)

There is a clear sense in which intellectual virtues relate to the sorts of actions familiar to educational practice, finding expression in 'thinking, reasoning, interpreting, analysing, reflecting, questioning, and so on' (Baehr 2013a, p. 255). Indeed, the sorts of intellectual virtues described by Baehr are very similar to the critical thinking skills identified as being central to Philosophy for Children. Daniel and Auriac (2011), for example, highlight the centrality of the following within Philosophy for Children:

> … complex cognitive skills (to elucidate, examine, review, discriminate, distinguish, evaluate, criticize, etc.) and predispositions (curiosity, open-mindedness towards others, thoroughness, acceptance of criticism, etc.) that are related to critical thinking. (p. 415)

Whether framed in terms of reason or critical thinking, these intellectual capacities are fundamental to many of the educational initiatives within the Philosophy for Children community. SAPERE claim that Philosophy for Children results in 'notable increases in respect, open-mindedness, *reasoning* and reasonableness—in and out of the classroom' (www.sapere.co.uk). The Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations suggests that the movement

> encourages the development of a collaborative and inquiring classroom community. It cultivates useful intellectual and social habits, such as careful listening, imaginative and critical thinking, clear communication and empathy. (FAPSA 2011)

Furthermore, and as the statements from leading organisations suggest, it is important to recognise that Philosophy for Children goes beyond the development of critical thinking and reason, and extends to the development of wider attributes and dispositions. This is encapsulated in the following:

> Whilst it is true that philosophy for children does improve students' critical and creative thinking skills, calling it a 'thinking skills' programme does not do it justice. It does much more as well … Philosophy for children builds on the students' own wonder and curiosity about ideas that are vitally important to them. The subject matter of Philosophy for Children is those common, central and contestable concepts that underpin both our experience of human life and all academic disciplines. Examples of such concepts are: Truth, reality, knowledge, evidence, freedom, justice, goodness, rights, mind, identity, love, friendship, rules, responsibility, action, logic, language, fairness, reason, existence, possibility, beauty, meaning, self, time, God, infinity, human nature, thought. (Philosophy for Children New Zealand n.d.-a)

It is worth reflecting, however, as to whether the two fields might be understood as embracing a different level of intellectual commitment and desire. The essence of this question lies in the extent to which what is being developed are intellectual *virtues*—permanent, deep-rooted behaviours and dispositions—as opposed to particular skills which the student can demonstrate (or not) without a concomitant desire to do so; that is, the development not only of a skill but of rational capacity and a desire in one's will to make use of it appropriately. The argument we are seeking to make here about the educational importance of differentiating between intellectual skills on the one hand and intellectual virtues on the other borrows from a critique of contemporary morality offered by Alasdair MacIntyre (1999) when he suggests that:

> what the morality of the virtues articulated in and defended by the moral rhetoric of our political culture provides is, it turns out, not an education in the virtues but, rather, an education in how to seem virtuous, without actually being so. (p. 131)

The key here is the extent to which (to paraphrase from MacIntyre) an education in intellect is one that focuses on how to act intellectually without actually being so. That is, whether it is possible for a student to demonstrate intellectual *skills* without actually possessing any intellectual *virtues*. We contend that this can be helpfully illustrated in the following example regarding reflection/evaluation.

Many experiential educational programmes include student reflection/evaluation as a key component. Typically, these require students to consider an event, action or task in which they have been involved and to analyse what happened, why it happened, its benefits, its costs, and, crucially, how such reflection might usefully inform further experience/practice. Let's assume that two students—Student A and Student B—have provided a written response in an examination, and that this is being assessed by someone who knows nothing else about the students involved other than the information contained in their responses (owing to the anonymity of the marking process). Student A is an engaged, focused student whose level of academic attainment is low, but who has actively sought to improve their inter- and intra-personal skills, has reflected well throughout the process, and has tried, not wholly successfully, to convey this in their response. Student B is not engaged in the subject or the activity, but has a strong aptitude for written responses, and is knowledgeable about the key terminology and sorts of language employed within reflective writing. As such, Student B is able to write a long and extensive answer about the ways in which they were reflective throughout the task and how they

learned from this process. In fact, Student B feels that they have not learned from the process, but is aware that writing this will seriously limit the mark they receive for this question. Clearly, there is a difference here in the extent to which Student A and Student B can respectively be said to possess the intellectual virtue of reflection. Whilst one may ask wider questions regarding the validity of the examination system and task involved (one would want to ask these, but the example described was a common one across a number of subjects until recently in the GCSE qualifications in England), crucial for our analysis here is whether the student in question is a reflective person expressing the virtue of being reflective, or merely demonstrating the sorts of language required by the reflective genre; that is, has each student really been reflective and will this have an applicability and value which transcends their participation in other activities? For Student B, certainly not.

The essence of our suggestion here is that, in the cases of both Student A and Student B, it would seem evident that *both* students have developed and displayed some form of cognitive skills or capacity and that, on certain measures of assessment, both students have displayed this skill or capacity through their work. The difference lies, therefore, in the extent to which one of the students (in our illustration, Student A) can be said to have integrated the trait in question—being reflective—within their character and, in doing so, has moved beyond displaying cognitive skills to possessing an intellectual virtue. As such, our contention is that while cognition forms a key part of intellectual virtues, cognition is not in and of itself a necessary and sufficient condition, with virtue requiring a concomitant desire to enact the virtue within one's actions. It would seem to us that there is potential for some useful further investigation to take place across the fields regarding the internalisation and enactment of intellectual capacities/virtues.

Moral action

Drawing on the work of Aristotle, exponents of character education have typically focused on the centrality of moral action; that is, the development of students' acting in accordance with the virtues. It is this aretaic commitment that underpins and explains the educational importance which character educators place, in turn, on habituation. Indeed, habituation can be seen as representing the core educational practice in the development of character. Citing the recent work of Gregory (2000), Vanseileghem (2005) and Schertz (2007), we suggested above that by pointing to emotional capacities such as care and empathy, as well as the exercising of responsible and participative citizenship, writers within the field of Philosophy of

Children have also been interested in the affective and experiential. In this section we take this focus one step further, and consider the extent to which Philosophy for Children takes seriously the connection between the cognitive, the affective, and the experiential in relation to moral action.

In his exposition of philosophical inquiry in classrooms, Fisher (1998, p. 10) notes that '[A] fully participative democratic society requires an autonomous citizenry that can think, *judge* and *act* for themselves' (emphasis added). Of particular interest and importance here is the work of Ann-Margaret Sharp, one of the founders of the Philosophy for Children movement. In her article *Philosophy for Children and the development of ethical values* Sharp (1995, p. 49) lists examples of the ethical tools or procedures which children need to be taught with regard to their ethical inquiry. These include 'citing reasons for opinions or actions', 'utilizing criteria or standards', 'defining terms', and 'investigating underlying ethical assumptions'. Sharp continues 'These tools are not self-sufficient. They require being supplemented with virtuous dispositions on the part of the students'. Sharp talks in terms of Philosophy for Children encouraging:

> the formation of community feelings, which develop the pro-social virtuous dispositions (such as sincerity, courage, care, honesty, considerateness, compassion, sensitivity, integrity etc.) and character structures of the children in the class. (1995, p. 49)

It might be useful here to draw out two potential ways in which Philosophy for Children might prepare students for action, both of which have connections to the focus on habituation and service central to character education programmes. The first way is to conceive of Communities of Inquiry as participative forums in their own right; that is, mechanisms for students to actively cultivate and express moral character *as well as* exhibiting their cognitive development. It is this sense of community which Sharp (1995, p. 49) has in mind when she suggests that 'the community of inquiry provides a social dimension in which the bonds that connect students can be strengthened and their understanding of moral philosophy can be clarified'.

The second way is to conceive of Communities of Inquiry as forums for reflection about and on actions which occur within other environments (the school, the family, the community etc.). In this sense, the Community of Inquiry becomes an essential element of a process of active and experiential learning. This is hinted at within the aims of Philosophy for Children identified by Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan (1980), according to whom its purpose 'is to help them become more thoughtful, more

reflective, more considerate, and more reasonable individuals' and that, as a result, students will 'not only have a better sense of *when to act* but also of *when not to act*' (p. 15, emphasis added).

In both of these conceptions the relationship between individual and societal formations comes into focus. For some proponents of cognitive development the strong commitment to individual reasoning means that its relation to wider communities and societies may be neglected. Daniel and Auriac (2011), for example, cite the importance of Richard Paul's principle of 'strong sense critical thinking' which involves not only reflection and critical thinking, but also posits as crucial that individuals' 'beliefs are their *own constructions* rather than the result of absorption of society's beliefs and prejudices' (p. 419, emphasis added). Paul's principle wrongly presupposes that an individual's construction can ever fully be their own, produced in a vacuum. Rather, an individual's construction represents an interplay between society's norms and values and how these are incorporated into the particular and specific character of the individual. Daniel and Auriac recognise this when they suggest that the sort of critical thinking involved within philosophy for children is not concerned with 'simply initiating students to the standards, rules, laws and traditions of their culture, but that it consists of encouraging students to embrace them in a critical manner' (2011, pp. 421-422). For this reason, a community of inquiry does not only represent a 'micro-society' as Daniel and Auraic (2011, p. 422) suggest, but also (ideally) a microcosm of the communities within which students live and participate. Moreover, this recognition does not in and of itself mean that a student's individuality—their individual character—becomes indistinguishable from those of others or the collective whole. As Arthur (2003, p. 29) reminds us, 'Virtues are chosen and acquired because they have the capacity to help us become the person we ought to become, but we remain unique individuals and characters even if we acquire exactly the same virtues as others'.

The confluence of P4C and character education? Some implications for moral education

In this last section we explore some tentative implications for moral education of the sorts of connections between Philosophy for Children and character education which we have sought to draw here. We focus on three which are of particular significance. The first implication is the need to recognise the *integral relationship between individual and collective reasoning* in any form of moral education. This recognition is central to models of communities of inquiry (Sprod 2001). Within communities of inquiry the

role of the teacher is central for, as Millett and Tapper (2012, p. 547) suggest, 'guidance from the teacher helps the students to build a constructive dialogue in which concepts are clarified, meanings are explored and where through a process of dialectic a shared understanding is achieved'. As they are typically presented within the field of Philosophy for Children, communities of inquiry are interested in (i) the *processes* through which individual and collective moral cognition occurs; (ii) the *outcomes* of moral thinking and discussion; as well as, potentially and importantly, (iii) the *relationships* between intellectual and moral cognition, affection, and action. We have touched on each of these three facets of communities of inquiry in various degrees of depth throughout our analysis so far. This said, while we take the first assertion—that communities of inquiry are interested in the processes through which individual moral cognition occurs—to be unproblematic, it is worth briefly explaining the second and third assertions.

In suggesting that communities of inquiry are interested in the outcomes of moral thinking and discussion, we concur with Kennedy (1999, p. 346) that the forms of dialogue central to communities of inquiry are characterised by their fluidity, dynamism and emergent nature and in this sense 'the path of dialogue is both found and constructed'. Moreover, and in relation to the third assertion that communities of inquiry are also interested in the relationships between intellectual and moral cognition, affection and action (Gregory 2000; Schertz 2007; Sprod 2001), it is important that teachers provide opportunity for students to inquire, feel and act as part of a simultaneous learning process. As Gregory (2000, p. 458) suggests, this would mean that teachers and students consider, reflect on and experience moral conduct and moral strategies 'with a view to becoming proficient in them and to developing them into habits'.

The second implication we would like to draw is the need to recognise the contextual import of any issues, values and virtues subject to moral discussion. Moral discussion, and the issues, values and virtues which make them possible, take place within a given context. In other words, they do not occur in isolation from school, familial, neighbourhood, community, and society, but in fact are shaped and influenced by these contexts. So too, the actors (in this case students) engaged in moral discussions are themselves influenced by (and to some extent themselves influence) the contexts into which they operate. Independence in thinking and action should not be understood as that which is an individual property, but rather as the thinking and action of an individual which recognises and accounts for contextual influences in a critical manner.

The third implication stems from recognition that properly constituted moral education programmes include cognitive, affective and volitional elements and as such *bring together* the features of both Philosophy for Children and character education. This concern is illustrated in the following comment from the leading democratic theorist Amy Gutmann:

> People adept at logical reasoning who lack moral character are sophists of the worst sort … But people who possess sturdy moral character without a developed capacity for reasoning are ruled only by habit and authority … Education in character and in moral reasoning are therefore both necessary, neither sufficient, for creating democratic citizens. (1987, p. 51)

Similar concerns are reflected in two central pedagogical approaches for the teaching philosophy in schools identified by UNESCO (2007 and cited by Millett and Tapper 2011, p. 549) as central to collaborative philosophical inquiry:

- The *democratic and discussionary paradigm*—Here as well the aim is problem-solving. What is different is the attempt to link the goal of learning to think for onself to democratic objectives … The idea is that for democracy as a political system to mature, it needs to have a thinking citizenry, that is to say, citizens with critical minds who can avoid the excesses of which democracy is always capable: doxology, majority rule, sophistry, persuasion by any means, demagoguery, and similar'; and,

- The d*ecision-making (praxeological) and ethical paradigm*—'this concerns learning to act, and not to solely think, in order to live well and in accordance with values. Doing philosophy involves consciously adopting a certain ethical conduct'.

The democratic and discussionary paradigm and the decision-making and ethical paradigm relate in important ways to both Philosophy for Children and character education. It would seem to us that there is much to be gained from further and deeper reflection and research into how the two paradigms might provide fertile ground for strengthening the connections between the two fields.

Conclusion

Considering the connections between Philosophy for Children and character education is analytically important. Through the tentative analysis we have offered, we have suggested that there are areas of confluence between Philosophy for Children and character education that are philosophically and practically interesting.

Central to these connections is the inter-relationship between cognition, affection and action in moral learning, and the development of *both* intellectual and moral virtues. We have suggested that a necessary prerequisite for attaining such learning is to afford importance to the dynamic relationship between the education of the individual moral agent and the moral communities within which they live and act. Finally, here, we would also like to suggest also that more work needs to be done to consider the relationships between the community of inquiry approaches central to Philosophy in Schools and teaching approaches that seek to develop young peoples' character and virtues. Such work is necessary not only to provide a more developed awareness of the two fields, but also to provide a prism through which to view and understand the sorts of moral education which takes place in schools.

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