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Abstract:

Supporters of the philosophy for children movement often claim that philosophy is the ideal subject to teach children if we seek to improve their critical thinking. Claiming that only philosophy teaches meta-cognition, and that it uniquely encompasses the whole of the critical thinking enterprise, these proponents argue for its inclusion in both elementary and secondary school curricula. Yet, if we accept a mainstream description of critical thinking as an activity demanding both aptitude and disposition, the discipline of philosophy, independent of any particular pedagogy, does not offer the unique ability to improve either aspect of the critical thinker. Indeed, matched with the "wrong" pedagogy, the teaching of philosophy does nothing to encourage the disposition to think critically. The pedagogy of Community of Inquiry, even independent of use in teaching philosophy, does encourage such a disposition. As a public model of the process of critical thinking, this pedagogy acts as the "training wheels" of the critical thinker, allowing the individual to both observe and participate in the process. The expectation of the educator is that exposure to the model will, in time, result in its internalization. While philosophy itself may not improve either the critical aptitude or disposition, the nature of the discipline does uniquely enable efficient, productive, and extended practice of community of inquiry in an educational context. And it is this indirect link between philosophy and critical thinking, a link mediated by the pedagogy of community of inquiry, that should be cited by proponents of philosophy for children.

Keywords: Philosophy for Children; Critical Thinking; Community of Inquiry; Philosophy

## Pensamiento como dos - Filosofía, pensamiento crítico y comunidad de investigación

### Resumen:

Los partidarios del movimiento de filosofía para niños afirman a menudo que la filosofía es la materia para enseñar a los niños si deseamos mejorar su pensamiento crítico. Afirmando que solamente la filosofía abarca el conjunto del emprendimiento del pensamiento crítico, y que solamente ella enseña la metacognición, estos autores están a favor de su inclusión en los planes de estudios de la escuela fundamental y secundaria. Con todo, si aceptamos una descripción bastante aceptada del pensamiento crítico como una actividad que requiere tanto aptitud como disposición, la disciplina filosofía, independientemente de cualquier pedagogía particular, ella no ofrece por sí sola la capacidad de mejorar todos los aspectos del pensador crítico. De hecho, si estuviera acompañada de una pedagogía "incorrecta", la enseñanza de la filosofía no hace nada para estimular la disposición de pensar críticamente. La pedagogía de la comunidad de investigación, sin embargo, sí estimula tal disposición, incluso independientemente de su uso en la enseñanza de la filosofía. Como modelo público del proceso de pensamiento crítico, esta pedagogía actúa como "vehículo de entrenamiento" del pensador crítico, permitiendo al individuo que observe y participe del proceso. La expectativa del educador es que la exposición al modelo, en su debido tiempo, da lugar a su internalización. Mientras que la filosofía en sí misma puede no mejorar la aptitud o la disposición críticas, la naturaleza de la disciplina permite de manera única la práctica eficiente, productiva, y extendida de la comunidad de investigación en un contexto educativo. Y es este vínculo indirecto entre la filosofía y el pensamiento crítico, un vínculo mediado por la pedagogía de la comunidad de investigación, que debería ser citada por quienes proponen la filosofía para niños.

Palavras-claves: filosofía para niños; pensamiento crítico; comunidad de investigación; filosofía

Pensamento a dois – filosofia, pensamento crítico e comunidade de investigação

Resumo:

Os partidários do movimento de filosofia para crianças afirmam freqüentemente que a filosofia é a matéria para ensinar às crianças se desejamos melhorar seu pensamento crítico. Afirmando que somente a filosofia abarca o conjunto do empreendimento do pensamento crítico, e que somente ela ensina a metacognição, esses autores estão a favor de sua inclusão nos planos de estudos do ensino fundamental e médio. Contudo, se considerarmos uma descrição bastante aceita do pensamento crítico como uma atividade que requer tanto aptidão como disposição, a disciplina de filosofia, independentemente de qualquer pedagogia particular, ela não oferece por si só a capacidade de melhorar todos os aspectos do pensador crítico. De fato, se estivesse acompanhada de uma pedagogia “incorreta”, o ensino de filosofia não faria nada para estimular a disposição do pensar criticamente. A pedagogia da comunidade de investigação, sem dúvida, estimula tal disposição, inclusive independentemente de seu uso no ensino da filosofia. Como modelo público de processo de pensamento crítico, esta pedagogia atua como “veículo de entretenimento” do pensar crítico, permitindo ao indivíduo que observe e participe do processo. A expectativa do educador é que a exposição ao modelo, em seu devido tempo, ceda lugar à sua internalização. Enquanto a filosofia em si mesma pode não melhorar a aptidão ou a disposição crítica, a natureza da disciplina permite de maneira única a prática eficiente, produtiva, e estendida da comunidade de investigação em um contexto educativo. E é este o vínculo indireto entre a filosofia e o pensamento crítico, um vínculo mediado pela pedagogia da comunidade de investigação, que deveria ser citado por aqueles que propõem a filosofia para crianças.

Palavras-chave: filosofia para crianças; pensamento crítico; comunidade de investigação; filosofia

THINKING AS TWO  
PHILOSOPHY, CRITICAL THINKING, AND COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY

Daniel Fisherman

Much has been said about the didactic capacity of philosophy to improve the critical thinking of children. Claiming that "critical thinking is the essence of philosophy" (Winstanley, 2009, p. 91), Carrie Winstanley proposes that philosophy, more than other academic subjects, is ideally suited to teach children to think critically. Harvey Siegel (2009) offers five substantial reasons for the more radical proposal that epistemology be taught in schools. And Matthew Lipman concurs, stating that "only philosophy can provide the logical and epistemological criteria that are now lacking in the curriculum" (Lipman, 2003, p.228). Indeed, these writers view philosophy as a discipline fundamentally different than other arts and sciences. As Winstanley argues, philosophy is the only discipline whose practice does not presuppose a substantial knowledge base (Winstanley, 2009, p.92). Lipman, for his part, strongly implies that philosophy is the only discipline whose practice encompasses the entirety of the critical thinking (Lipman, 2003, p.229). Given these unique characteristics, philosophy is taken to be the ideal, if not only discipline suited to systematically improve the critical thinking of children. In this way, we might say the authors believe that philosophy maintains a "privileged didactic relation" to critical thinking.

While arguing their positions, both Lipman and Winstanley associate a particular pedagogy with didactic philosophical practice. To them, the study of philosophy does not involve reading the classics, writing essays, or listening to lectures – core elements of both post-secondary philosophy, as well as the standard academic disciplines at all levels of education. Instead, it entails more the "doing" of philosophy by utilizing a practice known as community of inquiry, a method of learning "that emphasizes dialogue, deliberation, and the strengthening of judgment and community" (Lipman, 2003, p.230). And so the question naturally arises as to the role of pedagogy in supporting, or even establishing, the privileged relation that philosophy maintains to

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critical thinking. Specifically, does philosophy, as a discipline, maintain the privileged relation, or is the pedagogy required? Perhaps it is the pedagogy itself that characterizes the relation, relegating philosophy to the same status as the standard academic disciplines.

In what follows, I will argue that philosophy does, indeed, maintain a privileged relation that warrants its inclusion as an academic subject devoted, in large part, to improving critical thinking. However, that relation is not to critical thinking, but rather to community of inquiry. In fact, I propose that it is community of inquiry that maintains the privileged relation to critical thinking, that philosophy's connection to the latter exists only indirectly, through its unique ability to enable the efficient, productive, and extended practice of community of inquiry in an educational context. In the end, it is the unique bond that philosophy maintains with an essential pedagogy that renders philosophy, itself, essential to education.

Others in the philosophy for children (P4C) community have elaborated upon this triadic relation. Kennedy (1999) points to the dialogue essential to community of philosophical inquiry as embodying the skills needed to achieve the "consistent thinking" valued by Kant. Splitter (2000) advocates for the implementation of discipline-specific communities of inquiry, arguing that classroom philosophy is an effective means of teaching good thinking precisely because it is a "paradigm of a 'community of inquiry' in action" (p.12). And Reimann and Johnson (1986) document the aspects of critical thought evidenced in an actual P4C community of inquiry of sixth graders. While the primacy of the pedagogy is at least hinted at in both Kennedy's and Splitter's pieces, neither attend to the issue of whether philosophy itself, as a discipline independent of classroom community of inquiry, fosters the development of critical thought in ways that other academic disciplines cannot. It is this issue in particular that I shall explore.

### **Critical Thinking and Thinking as Two**

As summarized by Bailin and Siegel, most critical thinking theorists identify two essential characteristics of the critical thinker - "the ability to reason well and the

disposition to do so" (Bailin & Siegel, 2003, p.182). Whereas the ability to reason well can be viewed as "the ability to determine the goodness, or probative force, of candidate reasons for belief, judgment, or action" (Bailin & Siegel, 2003, p.183), the disposition to do so entails an inclination to apply those abilities to appropriate situations, to "seek reasons, to assess them, and to govern beliefs and actions on the basis of such assessment" (Bailin & Siegel, 2003, p.183). Thus, while aptitude is required for critical thought, the absence of the disposition or, what Bailin and Siegel term the "critical spirit" (2003, p.185), guarantees the absence of critical thought.

Two specific accounts of critical thinking illustrate this two-fold nature. First, Lipman offers an account that specifies three essential characteristics - a reliance on criteria (or, more simply, reasons), a self-correcting nature, and sensitivity to context (Lipman, 2003, p.212). These qualities don't map individually onto the ability/disposition distinction, and Lipman does not specifically discuss the distinction; yet each can be seen to embody both sides of it. While ability is required to choose appropriate criteria to support judgment, a disposition to use criteria as support is essential. Similarly, a self-correcting thinker must not only be open to changing judgment, but must be capable of assessing both the conditions under which such change is necessary, as well as the most reasonable alternative position to adopt. And finally, context-sensitivity requires not only the ability to analyze similarities and differences among various contexts, but the desire to utilize such differences as part of the reasoning process.

In a second formulation, Robert Ennis elaborates on his succinct definition of critical thinking as "reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do" (Ennis, 2004) by enumerating eleven characteristics of the critical thinker. Whereas each of Lipman's characteristics exhibit both the competence and disposition required of the critical thinker, Ennis' characteristics, partly because of their greater specificity, tend to target one or the other of the two aspects. Some characteristics, like the ability to develop and defend a reasonable position refer to required ability, while others, like open-mindedness and the desire to be well-informed, clearly reflect the

need for the "critical spirit." Regardless of the apparent differences between Lipman's and Ennis' formulations, both exemplify the distinction between aptitude and disposition that forms the basis for mainstream accounts of critical thinking.

If we are to accept this dual-component conception, we better ensure that we understand the meaning and ramifications of the two requirements. While I personally find the notion of "reasoning well" unproblematic, I find its partner, disposition, in need of further elaboration. That Bailin and Siegel substitute "critical disposition" with the metaphorical phrase "critical spirit" indicates precisely the problem at hand: what do we mean by a critical spirit? Their expanded elaboration as the "complex of dispositions, attitudes, habits of mind, and character traits, characteristic of the critical thinker" (2003, p.185) is vague enough to raise the question "What attitudes, habits of mind, etc. are we talking about?" While some of Ennis' eleven qualities provide an answer to this question, they don't, as a group, provide us with a coherent, unambiguous conception. Unless we accept a reductionist view whereby a concept is defined by the totality of its instances, we are left wanting more.

In an effort to further clarify the concept, let me suggest that the tendency to "cooperatively think as two" fundamentally characterizes, the critical spirit. When an individual cooperatively thinks as two, she establishes a dialogue between two internal entities, or voices, that are committed to a common goal – the acceptance or rejection of one or more propositions. In such a dialogue, these entities interchangeably assume one of two roles – that of the asserter/creator, and that of the questioner/doubter. One entity seeks to assert one or more propositions, while the other seeks to question or doubt the assertion(s). As the dialogue proceeds, the entities will likely switch roles, but always such that when one asserts, the other questions.

In general terms, I am proposing that the disposition to think critically is characterized by the tendency to assume a particular mental process or habit, one whose output, when combined with critical aptitude, is critical thought. I can think of three reasons to support this offering. First, the process of cooperatively thinking as two approximates our individual experience. When we consciously attempt to think

critically, we are aware of an internal dialogue that resembles the one described above. This does not mean that the process requires some element of consciousness – only that when we are conscious of the process, it appears as a cooperative dialogue. Conversely, uncritical thinking lacks this dialogue, and in this way, requires the participation of only one. Second, our concept of critique in general, not simply with regard to critical thinking, entails the existence of some kind of communication between two entities. Even our notion of art or music criticism, which generally cannot be characterized as a cooperative endeavor, involves such a structure. The artist asserts through some object of creation, and the critic attempts to question that assertion. Finally, as a description of the process of "reflective thinking", as a characterization of the mental activity resulting from the "critical spirit," cooperatively thinking as two provides a didactic roadmap to improved critical thinking – that is, to learn to think critically, individuals must learn to think as two. Clearly, that is not all that is required, as aptitude is the other required aspect. But for educators seeking pedagogical techniques that attend to both the aptitude and dispositional aspects of critical thinking, saying that they need to get children to think as two provides more direction than simply stating that they need to help them assume the critical spirit.

Note that cooperatively thinking as two is paradoxically agonistic, as each entity persistently acts against the immediate goals of the other. There is intent on the part of each to promote its own position at the expense of the other. And yet, the fact that both sides enter into dialogue with a common goal ensures that this agonistic quality is subservient to an overriding attitude of cooperation. Indeed, such conflict is not utilized for self-serving purposes. It is employed solely in the name of potential consensus. In this way, we might say that each entity is ego-less, and that conflict becomes the essential tool of cooperation.

### **Critical Thinking and Community of Inquiry**

The claim that the dispositional aspect of critical thinking requires that we cooperatively think as two is functionally equivalent to the claim that the critical thinker systematically adopts the roles of both the asserter/creator and the questioner/doubter.

From a didactic perspective, i.e. the perspective of improving the critical thinking of individuals, the task of the educator is clear – she must help children to systematically adopt those roles when thinking. The question is how to do this, how to get children to learn a disposition.

Regardless of the pedagogy employed, it seems clear that there is no way to force an individual to adopt a disposition. Perhaps one can argue that educators can't force individuals to learn anything, even simple propositions such as "World War II ended in 1945." However, this appears particularly true with regard to dispositions. Adoption of a disposition occurs truly at the discretion of the individual. Yet, educators have tools to encourage its adoption. Specifically, they can provide a public model of the disposition at work that both characterizes its essential aspects and demonstrates its benefits. They can also invite students to participate in the model, to become comfortable with the use of the disposition, practice its essential components, and receive feedback on its practice. With regard to the specific disposition to think as two, the model would have to demonstrate the mechanics and behavior of the roles of asserter/creator and questioner/doubter, illustrate how these roles are utilized to produce reasoned judgments that can be used to govern our actions and beliefs, and allow students to assume the roles as part of its practice. The expectation of the educator is that observation of, and participation in, the model will result in a systematic internalization of the process<sup>1</sup> - that is, adoption of the disposition. Barbara Rogoff refers to this phenomenon as participatory appropriation - "the process by which individuals transform their understanding of and responsibility for activities through their own participation" (as cited in Lipman, 2003, p.104).

As a pedagogy, community of inquiry offers precisely this model. It functions as a public model of critical thinking, whereby participants engage in public dialogue, taking turns assuming the roles of asserter/creator and questioner/doubter in order to cooperatively formulate judgments concerning a specified topic of inquiry. It is the public actualization of the internal dialogue, the public display of cooperatively

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<sup>1</sup> As described by Vygotsky, 1978, pp.52-57.

thinking as two. Indeed, because the model involves more than one individual, it is, by necessity, not actually thinking *as* two, but rather thinking *by* two (or more<sup>2</sup>). And it is the quality of thinking *by* two that infuses community of inquiry with unique didactic character. Any individual can, at any time, either observe the model at work or actively participate by assuming one of the roles. In the same way that the beginning cyclist requires assistance before being able to ride on two wheels, we might say that community of inquiry functions as the training wheels for the critical thinker, removing from the individual the burden to adopt the roles of both asserter and questioner in order to engage in, and thus learn how to conduct, the activity. It is for these reasons that I suggest that community of inquiry maintains a privileged didactic relation to critical thinking.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> David Kennedy has noted that dialogue in community of inquiry often does not follow the dyadic model described by "thinking as two." Instead, he prefers to characterize such discourse as poly-vocal and multi-logical, where participants do not necessarily subject ideas to binary truth analysis, and hence don't assume the rigid roles of asserter/creator and questioner/doubter. Much like Buber and Gadamer, Kennedy sees propositional truth taking a back seat to understanding and communication in true dialogue.

While I am sympathetic to this conception of dialogue, and view community of inquiry as a tool to realize these goals, two points should be noted. First, by suggesting that community of inquiry is a public model of "thinking as two," I am limiting myself to a didactic context. No doubt, there are many uses for community of inquiry; in this paper, however, I focus on its pedagogical value. As such, even if we acknowledge the power of community of inquiry to enable poly-vocal and multi-logical discourse, its ability to enable dialogue based simply on a dyadic model is enough to warrant its value as an education tool. While critical thinking may at times entail internalized multi-logical discourse, improving a child's boolean logical competence is still a worthy goal.

Second, and perhaps more important when considering the general nature of dialogue in community of inquiry, I can see arguing that the complex, multi-vocal nature of dialogue in community of inquiry is ultimately reducible to "dyadic moments," where every move made by participants is a response to an assertion. Clearly, this is not the place to develop and defend this idea. So let me say briefly that while truth analysis may not be relevant to some discourse, a multi-vocal dialogue involves some kind of evaluation of each assertion – if only to evaluate its relevance to the conversation. And that evaluation is not made by the group as a whole. It is made by one or more individuals. So a model of dialogue based on atomic assertion and evaluation does, at least *prima facie*, seem to have merit, even if, when we look at the conversation as a whole, it is essentially characterizable as multi-vocal.

<sup>3</sup> We might ask the question how a public model of critical thinking can be conducted in an educational setting if each of the participants is learning to think critically. That is, if everyone is learning how to engage in the activity, who is left to model it well? The answer is that children bring with them differing levels of critical thinking ability to any discussion. Some children will be relatively adept, while others will require more exposure and practice. The point isn't necessarily that we need to teach all children to think critically, but rather that we seek to *improve* each child's capacity to do so. To the degree that all participants of a community of inquiry are learning how to think critically, the value of literature that

### Critical Thinking and Philosophy

As I mentioned at the outset of this paper, Lipman, Winstanley, and Siegel all argue that *philosophy* maintains a privileged didactic relation to critical thinking. As the discipline that encompasses the whole of the critical thinking enterprise, these authors view philosophy as uniquely positioned to improve the critical thinking of individuals. Yet, in proposing that community of inquiry maintains this relation, I am clearly disagreeing with their position. It is not that I do not believe that philosophy utilizes and requires the entire domain of critical thinking, or that it provides "the logical and epistemological criteria that are now lacking in the curriculum" (Lipman, 2003, p.288). Rather, it is that those qualities, divorced from the pedagogy of community of inquiry, are not sufficient to establish a privileged *didactic* relation. Lipman, himself, acknowledges as much when he states:

My own opinion is that there is no better way of involving students in an independent course in critical thinking than by making it a course in philosophy. Not the traditional, academic philosophy of the university tradition, but the narrative philosophy that emphasizes dialogue, deliberation, and the strengthening of judgment and community (Lipman, 2003, p.230).

The point is relatively simple: the practice of a discipline must be distinguished from the teaching of the discipline. Just because the discipline of philosophy utilizes critical thinking to a degree unlike other academic disciplines does not mean that teaching philosophy develops the disposition to think critically. There are several ways to teach philosophy, from reading the great texts to listening to lectures to engaging community of inquiry dialogue, and not all those methods foster the development of cooperatively thinking as two. In fact, of the three methods mentioned, I think it is clear

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provides an observable model of critical thinking needs to be appreciated. This point is articulated well by Splitter and Sharpe when they state:

"...there is a further justification for the centrality of the narrative text...We cannot assume that children walk into the classroom able to do philosophy well. They need to know how to proceed, and one effective way to help them acquire this procedural knowledge is to involve them, intellectually as well as emotionally, in the lives of characters who enact and model the processes of inquiry" (Splitter & Sharpe, 1995, p.99).

that only dialogue in a community of inquiry supports such development.<sup>4</sup> If that is the case, we simply cannot claim that philosophy, as a discipline independent of a particular pedagogy, maintains a privileged didactic relation to critical thinking.

Yet one might argue that philosophy still has a unique didactic role when it comes to teaching the aptitude aspect of critical thinking. In other words, perhaps we can still claim that philosophy is uniquely positioned to teach children to reason well, even if we accept community of inquiry as the activity most suited to encourage the disposition to use and value reason. Someone espousing this position might argue that philosophy is the only discipline that requires the full complement of reasoning skills – deduction, induction, abduction, analogy, etc. Or they might argue, like Winstanley, Siegel, and Lipman, that only philosophy teaches metacognition, thinking about thinking. Such arguments demand attention, and the second, in particular, has some merit. However, I am not convinced by either that philosophy has the potential to develop reasoning aptitude to a substantially greater degree than any of the disciplines.

With regard to the first argument – that only philosophy requires the utilization of the full complement of reasoning skills – I think it is misguided to associate a rigid, uncompromising subset of reasoning skills to a particular discipline. Were we to look broadly enough and long enough at the practice of a discipline, I believe we would find in use a wide variety of reasoning skills not typically associated with the discipline. Mathematics provides an apt, if ordinary, example. As a subject dedicated to deductive reasoning, we might not expect to find a need for inductive or analogical reasoning. Yet, we can readily imagine a mathematician, or even a student of mathematics, solving a problem by recognizing a characteristic of the problem that existed in a series of previous problems each solved using the same mathematical technique. In this case, the individual uses both analogical and inductive techniques to successfully choose a particular deductive method based on previous experience. Even if we grant that different disciplines emphasize particular reasoning skills to the exclusion of others, the

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<sup>4</sup> The same applies to the other disciplines as well. The practice of biology, earth science, history, or even mathematics differs radically from the way it is taught.

fact that students will be exposed to multiple disciplines for the entirety of their educational lives virtually guarantees their exposure to the full complement of such skills. And finally, we should recognize that the set of reasoning skills required to learn a discipline is apt to be different, perhaps larger, than the set of skills needed to practice the discipline. So to claim that discipline X requires skills A, B, and C seems particularly shortsighted.

As for the second argument – the argument regarding metacognition – Lipman claims that "only philosophy can provide the logical and epistemological criteria that are now lacking in the curriculum" (Lipman, 2003, p.228). Winstanley offers a similar position, stating that philosophy is the only discipline where "the validity of inferences, the quality of arguments and the meanings of words are constantly under scrutiny" (Winstanley, 2009, p.91). While both formulations suggest the need for the serious study of logic, they also claim that the current disciplines are deficient in their attention to logical argument. Considered as such, I find the argument difficult to accept. While I applaud an effort to improve the foundations of logical thinking, I can easily think of academic subjects devoted to logical inference. Certainly the standard high school geometry course is devoted completely to elucidating the characteristics of a deductive system, and much of the precollege mathematics and science curriculum examines validity of inferences. Further, though logic is often found under the purview of philosophy, it would be difficult to argue that the study of logic is, on its own, the study of philosophy.

As for epistemology, let us grant that the subject is currently absent from the curriculum, that its study would improve reasoning ability, and that its subject matter is essentially philosophic. Still, I think it is a stretch to claim that the benefits of learning epistemology imbue philosophy with a privileged relation to reasoning aptitude. Understanding, or at least engaging oneself in, the fundamental issues concerning the nature of knowledge is no doubt beneficial, but ultimately, the question is whether such understanding makes the critical thinker. And that is, perhaps, my central concern with this "metacognitive argument" – that while formal study of the fundamentals of logic

and epistemology would, no doubt, add to the reasoning skill set, the benefits from such study are not of such magnitude to warrant the claim that philosophy is uniquely positioned to improve reasoning ability. Most of the cognitive and metacognitive reasoning skills needed to nurture reasonable individuals can be learned in the various academic disciplines, and those that might be exclusively in philosophy's domain are likely not critical to such development.

### **Philosophy and Community of Inquiry**

Up to this point, I have argued that if we accept the distinction between reasoning aptitude and reasoning disposition, adopting a pedagogy of community of inquiry is an ideal way to improve the critical thinking abilities of children. The same, I have proposed, cannot be said for philosophy. While philosophy, as a discipline, may utilize the full complement of reasoning skills associated with critical thinking, the traditional academic disciplines, when taught with the appropriate pedagogy, have sufficient potential to enable children to learn the tools of reason. If this is truly the case, we may legitimately ask if philosophy has any unique role in promoting the development of critical thinking. I would like to suggest that the answer to this question is yes, and that its value can be found not in its relation to critical thinking, but rather from its singular relation to community of inquiry.

I have proposed that the educational value of community of inquiry lies in the fact that the pedagogy provides a public didactic model of the process in which critical thinkers engage. This model provides both observational and participatory aspects that are crucial to "teaching" the disposition to reason well. As a pedagogy appropriated by an academic discipline, the value of community of inquiry is therefore intimately tied to the ability of students to engage the model by adopting the roles of both the asserter/creator and questioner/doubter. Ideally, such engagement is consistent and extended, allowing students to take turns switching between roles. And here is where the traditional academic disciplines fall short in their ability to do full justice to the pedagogy. As currently implemented, these disciplines require that students spend time learning discipline-specific content and methodology. And these aspects of

disciplinary study don't readily lend themselves to community of inquiry.<sup>5</sup> I do not mean to claim that both the spirit and methodology of community of inquiry should not be welcomed in the study of these disciplines, just that, from a practical perspective, certain aspects of disciplinary study are better suited to the pedagogy than others. Unless we're about to radically alter our views about the value of learning the methodology and content of a discipline, a significant portion of the time engaged in such learning will not be devoted to developing the critical spirit.

Philosophy, on the other hand, is uniquely suited to the process involved in community of inquiry. It has no required knowledge base, and its methodology is the methodology of critical thinking. Thus, the entirety of the activity, when used in conjunction with a community of inquiry pedagogy, can be used to engage students in the roles of asserter/creator and questioner/doubter.<sup>6</sup> Every act in the practice of a community of inquiry engaged in questions of a philosophic nature is an act requiring students to assume one of those roles. The open-ended nature of these types of questions, their ability to persist regardless of reference to fact, enable students to devote their energies to cooperatively thinking by two. And as I suggested previously, the expectation of educators is that thinking *by* two encourages and develops thinking *as* two.

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<sup>5</sup> Carrie Winstanley makes a similar point when she claims that philosophy uniquely enables conversations because it does not rely on a substantial knowledge base to defend assertions. As for the other disciplines, she states "the conversation founders and becomes about the verifiability of facts rather than about ideas" (Winstanley, 2009, p.92).

<sup>6</sup> Since the unique didactic value of philosophy with regard to critical thinking resides in its ability to foster extended participation in community of inquiry, any such activity not truly promoting the consistent adoption of the roles of asserter/creator and question/doubter is not taking advantage of what didactic philosophy does uniquely best. Thus, to the degree that Oscar Brenifier's description of community of inquiry as a process of aggregate opinion (Brenifier, 2004) is appropriate, his criticism has value. Children need to enter into cooperative conflict to engage in thinking as two, and the process of aggregate opinion, whereby children sequentially assert their opinion on a topic of inquiry, does little to promote the adoption of both roles. Indeed, we may say that such an activity is a public model of thinking, rather than critical thinking, as each individual acts merely as asserter. That said, criticism of Brenifier's technique, which has been described as overbearing and micro-managed, also has merit. While cooperative conflict is essential to the process, that conflict must originate from its participants. If children are being told which role to adopt, little is being done to encourage the disposition to adopt a role.

So in the last analysis, philosophy does have a unique role, though perhaps not for the reasons that we initially thought. It is easy to claim that philosophy has a privileged relation to critical thinking, for, as Winstanley boldly asserts, "critical thinking is the essence of philosophy" (p.91). However, when we examine this relation, particularly when we distinguish between philosophy as a discipline, and philosophy as a didactic medium, we find that not only do other disciplines have the potential to help children to reason well, but that philosophy, matched with the "wrong" pedagogy, does nothing to encourage the disposition to think reasonably. Yet, for those of us committed to reintroducing philosophy to public education, the situation is not at all dire. Philosophy does do something uniquely well – it enables the extended, efficient practice of a pedagogy that, itself, uniquely improves critical thinking. And it is this indirect link between philosophy and critical thinking, a link mediated by the pedagogy of community of inquiry, to which we should refer when arguing our cause.

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*Recebido em: 15/10/2010*  
*Aprovado em: 23/12/2010*