

# The Socratic Classroom

**Reflective Thinking Through  
Collaborative Inquiry**

Sarah Davey Chesters



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**Sarah Davey Chesters**

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SENSE PUBLISHERS  
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-94-6091-853-7 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-94-6091-854-4 (hardback)

ISBN: 978-94-6091-855-1 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,  
P.O. Box 21858,  
3001 AW Rotterdam,  
The Netherlands  
<https://www.sensepublishers.com/>

*Printed on acid-free paper*

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## PREFACE

This book was written to serve two functions. First it is an exploration of what I have called Socratic pedagogy, a collaborative inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning suitable not only to formal educational settings such as the school classroom but to all educational settings. The term is intended to capture a variety of philosophical approaches to classroom practice that could broadly be described Socratic in form. The term ‘philosophy in schools’ is ambiguous and could refer to teaching university style philosophy to high school students or to the teaching of philosophy and logic or critical reasoning in senior years of high school. It is also used to describe the teaching of philosophy in schools generally. In the early and middle phases of schooling the term philosophy for children is often used. But this too is ambiguous as the name was adopted from Matthew Lipman’s Philosophy for Children curriculum that he and his colleagues at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children developed. In Britain the term ‘philosophy with children’ is sometimes employed to mark two methods of teaching that have Socratic roots but have distinct differences, namely Philosophy for Children and Socratic Dialogue developed by Leonard Nelson. The use of the term Socratic pedagogy and its companion term Socratic classroom (to refer to the kind of classroom that employs Socratic teaching) avoids the problem of distinguishing between various approaches to philosophical inquiry in the Socratic tradition but also separates it from the ‘study of philosophy’, such as university style philosophy or other approaches which place little or no emphasis on collaborative inquiry-based teaching and learning.

The second function builds from the first. It is to develop an effective framework for understanding the relationship between what I call the generative, evaluative and connective aspects of communal dialogue, which I think are necessary to the Socratic notion of inquiry. In doing so it is hoped that this book offers some way to show how philosophy as inquiry can contribute to educational theory and practice, while also demonstrating how it can be an effective way to approach teaching and learning. This has meant striking a balance between speaking to philosophers and to teachers and educators together, with the view that both see the virtues of such a project.

In the strictest sense this book is not philosophy *of* education, insofar as its chief focus is not on the analysis of concepts or formulation of definitions specific to education with the aim of formulating directives that guide educational practice. It relinquishes the role of philosopher as ‘spectator’, to one of philosopher ‘immersed in matter’ – in this case philosophical issues in education, specifically those related to philosophical inquiry, pedagogy and classroom practice. Put another way, it is a book about philosophical education.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I must firstly acknowledge Dr Gilbert Burgh, without whom this book would not have evolved. The ideas developed herein are a result of years of dialogue that reflect a true process of inquiry. My experience of a philosophical approach to teaching and learning as a student provided the impetus for my further inquiry into education as a discipline and philosophy's possible contribution. This book, which is an attempt to capture the pedagogical process introduced to me by Dr Burgh is attributed to him.

I would like to formally acknowledge the support given to me both financially and academically from the University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland and Queensland University of Technology with whom I was affiliated during the writing of this book. Particular thanks must go to Alan Rix, Fred D'Agostino, Nita Temmerman, Lindsay Parry, Wendy Patton and Annette Patterson.

Thanks must also go to Megan Laverty, Philip Cam, Trevor Curnow, and Mia O'Brien whose feedback helped to shape this manuscript and to Clare O'Farrell who encouraged me to see value in my writing.

To the practitioners of philosophical inquiry, in particular Lynne Hinton, Liz Fynes-Clinton, and Rosie Scholl, thank you for continually opening my eyes and demonstrating new ways of seeing philosophy in the classroom.

Thank you to the teachers and students I have had the privilege of working with, past and present who have embraced philosophy in their own classrooms, whose continued enthusiasm and commitment means that philosophy will have a place in education in the future.

Lastly, to my family and friends who have supported me throughout this process - thank you to my parents and my husband who have always, and continue to encourage, my sense of wonder and who teach me so much about life.

Some ideas in this book can be found in condensed form in the following publications and conference proceedings: Davey Chesters, S. (2010). Engagement through dialogue : an exploration of collaborative inquiry and dimensions of thinking. In Brune, Jens Peter, Gronke, Horst, & Krohn, Dieter (Eds.) *The Challenge of Dialogue : Socratic Dialogue and Other Forms of Dialogue in Different Political Systems and Cultures* (pp. 73–96). LIT-Verlag, Munster; Davey Chesters (2009, 3–6 December) *Technologies of Silence*. Paper presented at the Dialogue and Difference Conference, Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia, Hawaii; Davey, S. (2004). Consensus, Caring and Community: An Inquiry into Dialogue. *Analytic Teaching*, 25(1), 18–51; Davey, S. (2005, 14–16 July). *Creative, Critical and Caring Engagements: Philosophy through Inquiry*. Paper presented at the Creative Engagements Conference; Thinking with Children Conference, Oxford University. Thank you to the editors for their permission to include this work.



## INTRODUCTION

# **SOCRATIC EDUCATION: A SCHOOL OF FREEDOM**

This book, simply put, explores the potential of Socratic pedagogy as an effective educational strategy that develops the social and intellectual capacities for active citizenship in a democratic society. The assumption that underpins this claim is that certain kinds of educational arrangement lend more support to democracy than others (Lipman, 2003; Cam, 2006; Burgh, 2003). I am mindful that such a claim is contestable, so let me begin by situating this book in the wider context of philosophy in education. This book began as an exploration of various philosophical approaches to classroom practice that could be described as typically Socratic in form, as well as an attempt to open up discussion about what these approaches have in common—thinking through dialogue. It became apparent that there are also distinct differences between them, and that these differences have important practical implications, to which the pages of this book also attest. These differences notwithstanding, all teaching methods inspired by Socrates have in common questioning and inquiry, in which all answers are subject to further questioning. There is a proliferation of literature on the virtues of philosophical inquiry as a classroom strategy, either as an exemplar of democratic practice or as having the capacity to cultivate democratic dispositions and skills necessary for active citizenship. This has been affirmed in the 2008 UNESCO report, *Philosophy: A School of Freedom*.

This report, based on the results of a worldwide study on the teaching of philosophy, not only made clearer the purpose of the book, but also offered practical grounds for the arguments presented within. The overwhelming need for pedagogy that promotes thinking resonates from the study. It is the ability to think about problems and issues of all kinds that sows the seeds for liberating the powers of the individual and developing the social and intellectual capacities and dispositions needed for active citizenship. While education theorists aim to cultivate thinking for freedom, thinking for harmony or thinking for societal change, what lies at the heart of these aspirations is really about enhancing, quite simply, ‘good thinking’. This book, in retrospect, is a response to this study; it makes suggestions for how we might go about cultivating thinking well (that is the key to leading the ‘good life’) through the development of Socratic classrooms.

My chief concern is to look at philosophy in the tradition of reflective education, of which Socrates was a forerunner; that is, the tradition of promoting learning to think as a foundation for educational aims and practices. The Socratic Method, a form of philosophical inquiry, or more precisely, a dialectic method of inquiry used by Socrates mainly for the purpose of examining key moral concepts and first

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illustrated in Plato's early dialogues, is a distinctive pedagogy to encourage people to develop independent thinking by questioning claims about knowledge, to argue about ideas, and to engage in dialogue about important issues of life. While the Socratic Method described in Plato's dialogues would require little scrutiny to come to the conclusion that the practices and views on knowledge purportedly held by Socrates are questionable in terms of their relevance to inquiry about what constitutes a good life, there is much to applaud in relation to the development of higher-order thinking and the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and attitudes considered necessary to function in an increasingly changing and diverse world.<sup>1</sup> It is for this reason that the notion of the Socratic Method as philosophical inquiry and as pedagogy is central to the argument that I present in this book, in particular to teaching students to think well in the context of their lives.

### PHILOSOPHY: A SCHOOL OF FREEDOM

The primary purpose of the UNESCO study is to investigate the ways in which philosophy can contribute to teaching and learning. It states:

If we support the teaching of philosophy to children in principle, we still need to answer a pedagogical question. How? What teaching methods or approaches should be used? How can teachers learn to teach philosophy in a way that children can learn to philosophize? Again there has been much debate over these questions. (p. 9)

It is noteworthy that the UNESCO study claims to not presume any method or philosophical orientation. Yet at the outset of Chapter 1, entitled 'Teaching philosophy and learning to philosophize at pre-school and primary school levels', the reader could be forgiven for thinking that the study points to a particular orientation, namely Philosophy for Children or P4C, which has its roots in the educational theories of John Dewey and has been subsequently developed by Matthew Lipman. It is undeniable, as the report states, that (1) Lipman's groundbreaking work on engaging in the practice of philosophy for children represents a certain change in the objectives of teaching, and (2) that it sparked curiosity and interest in his Philosophy for Children curriculum, particularly the emphasis on narratives for children and the notion of converting classrooms into communities of inquiry. However, the entire chapter makes no mention of other classroom practices and strategies for engaging children in philosophy suitable for pre-school and primary school levels. This is somewhat misleading as there are other methods of teaching philosophy in the Socratic tradition that could be said to have similar objectives to those of Lipman. While Lipman drew on Dewey's modern conception of education, he also found parallels in the more ancient teaching methods of Socrates.

In response, I propose a framework for Socratic pedagogy that uses a multi-dimensional approach to thinking. In this book, we will explore three contemporary approaches to collaborative, inquiry-based teaching and learning through philosophy which could be described as Socratic in form, namely Matthew

Lipman's 'Community of Inquiry', Leonard Nelson's 'Socratic Dialogue', and David Bohm's 'Dialogue'. All three can be successfully used in Socratic pedagogy. The framework that I propose is multi-dimensional; comprised of generative, evaluative and connective thinking. By describing each of the dimensions of multi-dimensional thinking in terms of the function they perform, we are able to escape the confusion created by the vagueness of the terms critical, creative and caring thinking. When we look at creative thinking as generative thinking, critical thinking as evaluative thinking, and caring thinking as connective thinking, we move away from the prejudices and disagreements that surround the previously adopted terms. This allows for a greater understanding of the kind of contribution they make to Socratic pedagogy, which in turn informs classroom practice. It also offers a renewed understanding of Socratic pedagogy and a new starting point for discussion on theory and practice.

It is noteworthy that there has previously been little intellectual exchange between the proponents of the three approaches to dialogue featured in this book, despite there being much written on the benefits of each of them. Notwithstanding the recent publication *The Challenge of Dialogue; Socratic Dialogue and Other Forms of Dialogue in Different Political Systems and Cultures* (Brune et al, 2010), the inclusion of an article by Nelson and another by Bohm, which both appear in *Thinking Children and Education*, a collection of works edited by Lipman (1993), a paper by Trevor Curnow and another by Karen Murriss and Joanna Haynes, which appear in a collection of papers on philosophy in practice compiled in *Thinking through Dialogue: Essays on Philosophy and Practice*, edited by Curnow (2001), and less than a handful of articles scattered in various journals, intellectual discussion, particularly any extensive comparative analysis, of these different approaches to thinking through dialogue in education, remains largely underdeveloped.

There are many different directions in which these three approaches to thinking through dialogue have developed. For example, Lou Marinoff's emphasis on Socratic Dialogue within the context of philosophical counselling and practice, the development of philosophy for children in schools internationally as evidenced by changes in terminology in Britain to 'philosophy with children', and in Australia to 'philosophy in schools', or more generally 'philosophical inquiry in the classroom', and the use of Bohmian Dialogue in corporate leadership programs and in prisons across Britain and Europe. While my concern is foremost with philosophical inquiry as an educative practice, by bringing these approaches together in order to examine their commonalities and differences, it is hoped that the result of this examination will contribute to a much needed discussion, not only because each approach has much to offer classroom practice, but also because it would broaden the scope for discussion on thinking through dialogue.

It should be noted that the use of the term 'classroom' as it is used in this book does not strictly apply only to the school classroom, or even to tertiary educational settings, but it also has application generally to settings outside of what traditionally is considered to be an educational setting. For example, the classroom can be the staffroom or the boardroom. This view echoes the view of Socrates,

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widely considered to be an ‘educator’, whose purpose was to ‘rouse, persuade and rebuke’ (Plato in Kolak, 2000). His interlocutors weren’t students in a classroom, but Athenian citizens with whom he met by chance, usually in the agora, which was both the market-place and the centre of public life; a place to gather. Education is anywhere that learning can occur, and hence the classroom has many manifestations—it is not simply the right of the child that should be considered but all who come to education at any stage of life. My emphasis on lifelong learning notwithstanding, it is undeniable that the approach to pedagogy that I outline here is directly applicable for school-aged students.

### THE FREEDOM INHERENT IN PHILOSOPHY

In a statement by Pierre Sané, Assistant Director-General of Human Sciences (UNESCO), the initiative for the UNESCO study is a response to promoting philosophy and encouraging its teaching as outlined in UNESCO’s Intersectoral Strategy on Philosophy, which “is built on three key pillars of action: i) Philosophy facing world problems: dialogue, analysis and questioning of contemporary society; ii) teaching philosophy in the world: fostering critical reflection and independent thinking; and iii) promotion of philosophical thought and research” (p. xi). The notion of ‘thinking as freedom’, and the corresponding principle that the enhancement of thinking is a basic right of the child,<sup>2</sup> attempt to provide ethical and political justification for the claim that philosophy in education is imperative to the ‘three key pillars of action’ for promoting philosophy and encouraging its teaching. The report explicitly highlights the need for independent thinking, which is a necessary requirement for freedom of thought. The capacity for freedom of thought is becoming increasingly urgent in a contemporary society that sees students being connected to information via state-of-the art multi-media information and communications technologies. With information becoming more accessible, what is required is the disposition and capacity to think reflectively in order to process the increasing amount of information available.

All too often individuals, families, organizations, communities and sections of society live with the consequences of poorly thought-out decisions, faulty reasoning, biased judgements, unreasonable conduct, narrow perspectives, unexamined values and unfulfilled lives. If only people were better at asking appropriate questions, articulating problems and issues, imagining life’s possibilities, seeing where things lead, evaluating the alternatives open to them, engaging in discussion with one another, and thinking collaboratively, then we would all be so much better off. (Cam, 2006, p.2)

Basically, what Cam is referring to is philosophy as liberty, the freedom to think independently and to think for oneself collaboratively. What is inherent in the freedom of thought is the ability to ask questions about ‘what is a good life?’ which was the question that underpinned Socrates’ motivation for engaging people in dialogue.

## PHILOSOPHY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE THINKING CURRICULUM

As stated earlier, there is mounting pressure on teachers to engage students in higher-order thinking. This means more than paying attention to literacy and numeracy; it requires placing *inquiry* at the heart of education, lest we allow for the continuation of sections of society that are basically 'insocratic'.<sup>3</sup> If we are to promote thinking that is based on inquiry, then we must ourselves engage in inquiry into various models for good practice. What I propose is an approach to *pedagogy* that is Socratic, i.e., an approach to teaching and learning to develop and enhance Socratic classroom strategies and practices. This is not restricted to but may include methodology.

It is a Socratic pedagogy and not just a philosophical pedagogy as it is necessarily dialogical. Philosophy in general may not pertain to inquiry that is dialogical. It is thinking both philosophically *and* dialogically that is important for Socratic pedagogy. So why is it pedagogy and why is pedagogy important rather than just methodology or curriculum? It is pedagogy and not just a methodology or a method because it is an *underpinning* philosophy of teaching and learning. Throughout this book I will be offering a framework for Socratic pedagogy that should be read as a theoretical way of approaching teaching and learning and should not be mistaken as just a methodology. It is important because in theory and in practice we need to teach to take advantage of when situations arise that may allow for dialogue into matters of importance. We need to educate with an openness to inquiry through embracing wonder. Marshall Gregory (2001) gives us a further understanding as to why we need to focus on pedagogy:

The fundamental reason *why* pedagogy deserves careful thought is that pedagogy is the primary force, the engine, that accomplishes the "leading out" (from Latin *educare*) that lies as the etymological source of *educate* and that also describes education's most basic aim. Since at birth all human skills and forms of development are mere potentialities, it follows that we have to go someplace else in the world from where we are at any given time—we have to be led out, or educated—in order to turn those potentialities into realities. As Bartlett Giamatti (1976: 194) has said, "Teaching is an instinctual art, mindful of potential, craving of realization." The content of any curriculum, whether a single course or a whole program of study, seldom exerts a sufficient pull on a person's imagination to draw him or her out of the inertia of being a standing body and into the activity that takes mind and heart to new places and new levels of development. (p.73)

This passage further explains why philosophy must be adopted as *pedagogy*; as an underpinning for how we teach and not simply a discipline that we teach. It is not a curriculum, but it contributes to curriculum. It is pedagogy because it needs to underpin how and why we teach. We must develop a learning environment that embraces wonder. The development of such learning environments may be formed by the influences of three approaches analysed in this book that provide various approaches to education in the Socratic tradition. However, I stress that this is

simply a starting point for an exploration into how to approach thinking through dialogue.

There is a large body of literature devoted to philosophy and education. Historically this has consisted of formulating philosophical foundations that would guide educational practice. While painstaking attention to analysis of concepts, presuppositions, and the grounds of knowledge are necessary for philosophical exploration it is also important to keep in mind that education is also concerned with the analysis and justification of practical questions. On the other hand, to abandon philosophical points entirely would be a gross misunderstanding of the contribution philosophical inquiry can make to educational theory. What education and philosophy have in common is that they are both concerned with human affairs. This book attempts to maintain a balance between the issues of interest to philosophers of education, and to teachers and educators together, in the hope that both will see the virtues of such a project.

Chapter 1 examines the relationship between dialogue and the improvement of thinking. To begin, I compare and contrast dialogue with other forms of communication such as conversation and debate. Next, I examine the relationship between monologue, internal dialogue and engaging in dialogue with others. I also point to the importance of identifying silence in dialogue. I refer to what are termed ‘Technologies of Silence’ to illustrate the many ways in which people may be silenced. Silence is also a part of dialogue and can be used to replace words, to make a point. Similarly, silence can be a time for critical reflection during dialogue and may not necessarily be an inhibitor to dialogue. The Socratic Method also forms the basis of Chapter 1. There are various interpretations of the Socratic Method as a dialectic method of inquiry, ranging from a form of ‘cold calling’ in universities to a pedagogical method that underpins collaborative classroom inquiry. I refer to the metaphors used to describe Socrates as a facilitator of dialogue—as gadfly, as midwife and as stinging ray—to convey the different types of thinking that may be promoted by using this method in the classroom.

It is not always easy to imagine what the Socratic Method would look like in a contemporary educational setting. Chapter 2, therefore, explores three models of dialogue that share fundamental characteristics of the Socratic Method: the Community of Inquiry, Socratic Dialogue, and Bohmian Dialogue. Firstly, I introduce the Community of Inquiry, a philosophical pedagogy developed by Matthew Lipman, who in the late 1960s commenced development on a series of curriculum materials for children, consisting of novels and accompanying teachers’ manuals, aimed at improving children’s thinking skills, which he argued would improve the relationship between deliberative judgments and democratic decision-making. I give an overview of Lipman’s views on the importance of learning to think; a central theme in his educational theory and practice. To draw out the ties between Lipman’s view on thinking, education, and democracy, I examine the ideas of educationalist and philosopher John Dewey and his predecessor, pragmatist philosopher Charles Peirce, as well as Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, all of whom supply a theoretical basis for Lipman’s theory and practice. Such an understanding sheds light on Lipman’s claim that learning to think together is

necessary to develop social and intellectual dispositions and capacities for active citizenship.

Next, I focus on Leonard Nelson, Gustav Heckmann and Jos Kessels, who all contributed to the development of what is known as Socratic Dialogue. Nelson's aim was to educate children to want to seek truth, and to encourage self-esteem. To achieve this, he extended the Socratic Method to large groups. Whereas Nelson gave few guidelines on how to employ the method, his pupil Heckman developed guidelines for how discussion should be conducted. In order to compare Socratic Dialogue with the other two models of philosophical inquiry, I outline the rules for Socratic Dialogue, the role of the facilitator, and the importance of reflecting on experiences common to all participants.

Lastly, I examine a type of dialogue formulated by David Bohm, who emphasised the central place of 'meta-dialogue', but moreover that the actual process of dialogue and thinking is as important, if not more important, than the content. I argue that Bohmian Dialogue can assist in our understanding of the communal dimension of inquiry, and the role of care in the development of genuine engagement through dialogue. In particular, I analyse Bohm's views on listening and social function, especially on listening as key to understanding, and on relationships in the dialogue and the connection between these relationships and thought.

Chapter 3 highlights the metaphors used by proponents of each of the different approaches to dialogue to illustrate their aims and purposes, highlight important distinctions, and to initiate discussion so as to not be uncritical about different ways of understanding dialogue and the way in which dialogue may be implemented in the classroom. I discuss two aspects of the Socratic Method—*elenchus*, a technique of examination to critically investigate the nature or definition of concepts, and *aporia*, a state of doubt or perplexity. Next, I examine Lipman's view of the Community of Inquiry as a process of thinking similar to chamber music, whereby each player embellishes on the ideas and notes of others to follow the music where it leads, or in the case of philosophical inquiry, to follow the argument or logic where it leads. I also explain how Nelson compares the process of Socratic Dialogue to that of an hourglass where ideas are narrowed down and then reapplied in a larger context. This metaphor highlights the emphasis on conceptual analysis that characterises Socratic Dialogue. Finally, I turn to Bohm, who uses the metaphor of a dance to illustrate the type of relationship that occurs in his approach to dialogue.

In the next three chapters, I address creative, critical and caring thinking and how each dimension of thinking contributes to inquiry. In Chapter 4, I address creative thinking as a form of divergent thinking. Inherent in divergent thinking is risk. I also make the distinction between creative thinking and creativity. Creative thinking, according to Lipman, is concerned with thinking for oneself. He argues that developing, exploring and extending ideas is at the very heart of creative thinking. Because dialogue is based on the ideas of the participants and following the argument where it leads, generating ideas requires inventiveness. Engagement of a creative kind occurs when we let the argument lead because the ideas must be developed by the participants themselves and cannot be predetermined. I look at Lipman's

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metaphor of chamber music and the idea that this kind of thinking is concerned with building on ideas. I then draw on the characteristics of creative thinking that are integral to the development of Socratic pedagogy. This is generative thinking. I assert here that the Community of Inquiry has much to contribute to a model of generative thinking in classroom collaborative inquiry.

In Chapter 5, I explore critical thinking as conceptual exploration, reasoning and logic. The main concern of this chapter is with the application of critical thinking to philosophical inquiry in the classroom and what I think is central to Socratic pedagogy, that is, evaluative thinking. Socratic Dialogue places a great emphasis on conceptual analysis and the use of consensus. Nelson's metaphor of the hourglass describes the process of evaluative thinking, and clearly illustrates the kind of thinking intended through Socratic Dialogue. Participants move from a general definition of a concept to a narrow definition agreed upon by the group through reaching consensus.

Chapter 6 examines care as the other dimension of multidimensional thinking. While there are different ways of understanding care, my concern is with the conception of care first described by Carol Gilligan in her studies on moral development and reasoning. Her work has since gained wide attention, in particular from Nel Noddings, whose work has become a major reference point for an analysis of caring and its place in ethics and education. This chapter aims to initiate discussion on the place of care in communal dialogue. I examine three aspects of care in collaborative classroom inquiry: (1) care for the inquiry, (2) care with others, and (3) care for problems deemed worthy. I also redefine caring thinking as connective thinking which is central to Socratic pedagogy. I argue that connective thinking is necessary to the achievement of collaborative, inquiry-based teaching and learning, and that it works in concert with the generative and evaluative dimensions of thinking.

In the concluding chapter, I propose a framework for Socratic pedagogy and examine the contributions of the three models of dialogue to this framework. The Community of Inquiry has much to offer approaches to generative thinking, whereas Socratic Dialogue can inform evaluative thinking. Bohmian Dialogue highlights what is central to connective thinking. Bohm's exploration of the connections between thinking and dialogue has much to contribute to Socratic pedagogy. I do not attempt to recommend one model of dialogue over another but show how their emphasis on generative, evaluative and connective thinking may contribute to the development of Socratic pedagogy.

By beginning a dialogue between proponents of philosophy, educators and philosophers can continue to think innovatively, reflectively and, most importantly, collaboratively about philosophy as pedagogy and to continue to reconstruct the Socratic classroom. What is consistent, however, is the overarching need for Socratic pedagogy in order to create thoughtful, reflective citizens in any educational context. With this in mind, let us begin the exploration.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The character of Socrates is a reconstruction from the evidence of others, mainly from Plato's dialogues written after Socrates' death and to some extent the writing of Xenophon. He also appears

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as a caricature in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. My concern is not with Socrates, actual or reconstruction, but with what has been described as the Socratic Method—the dialectic processes of seeking truth.

- <sup>2</sup> See the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) that stipulates the right to 'express views freely' (Article 12); 'the right to freedom of expression [...] to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds (Article 13) and to 'freedom of thought' (Article 14).
- <sup>3</sup> Cam (2006) coined the term 'insocratic' (to be put alongside the terms illiterate and innumerate) to describe anyone who cannot adequately think for themselves in order to think effectively about life.



## **SOCRATIC PEDAGOGY: PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY THROUGH DIALOGUE**

To most of us, conversation comes naturally. It is something we do every day; from fleeting exchanges at the supermarket, to inconsequential remarks aimed at filling up the routine morning greetings when we arrive at work, to convivial exchanges among guests at a dinner party. These conversations might touch on a topic, or, in the case of longer exchanges, move from one topic to another. On the other hand, we sometimes find ourselves engaged in more structured conversation. Unlike ordinary forms of conversation which are an everyday part of living, in structured conversations participants inquire into something, they seek an outcome, and make progress towards it. These are the sorts of conversations that we sometimes have with friends or family members that we are apt to call ‘deep and meaningful’, or when people come together in agreement, or when politicians seek genuine solutions, or professionals gather to deliberate over new ideas or hypotheses.

While a distinction can be made between these two very different kinds of conversation, it is not at all clear what distinguishes one from the other. Terms like ‘conversation’, ‘discussion’, ‘inquiry’ and ‘dialogue’ (and their many cognates) are often used interchangeably. For example, one way in which the term ‘dialogue’ is used is to describe a conversational interaction between at least two speakers regardless of the purpose. But sometimes we want to make a distinction between ‘discussion’ and ‘dialogue’. In doing so, we are distinguishing between people talking to each other in everyday conversation and those engaged in an exchange of ideas or opinions. At other times, we need to make a further distinction between dialogue as the exchange of ideas and opinions, and dialogue as inquiry or as philosophical reflection.

Our task in this chapter is to consider some fundamental questions about dialogue to see what they reveal about dialogue itself. This is a necessary task for a comparison of the different models of dialogue that will unfold in subsequent chapters. Our concern in particular is with dialogue in relation to Socratic pedagogy, a form of reflective thinking or inquiry that requires a certain kind of communion between listener and speaker; an inquiry with the purpose of pursuing ‘truth’ or progressing toward understanding or meaningfulness. Note however, that this chapter should be read as an illustration of what takes place in dialogue, *not* as an attempt to formulate a precise definition that provides a directive for guiding educational theory and practice. Thus, we begin with an overview of dialogue, leading to a comparison of dialogue with other forms of communication. Dialogue is not just a mere conversation, nor is it a debate or series of monologues. It is a

method of joint understanding rather than producing adversaries or winners. In the second part of this chapter we will explore the importance of identifying silence in dialogue. Silence plays a part in assisting dialogue but can also act to inhibit genuine dialogue. The term ‘technologies of silence’ illustrates the many ways in which people may be silenced. We will also look at silence as a time for critical reflection and lastly, review the importance of Socratic pedagogy as reflective education, specifically philosophy as a collaborative activity.

### WHAT IS DIALOGUE?

Just as there is a time and place for everyday conversation, or for more focused discussion, there is also time for dialogue. But what is dialogue? A common misunderstanding is that dialogue simply means a discussion between two or more people, in which case it is often contrasted with monologue. The term *dia* is not derived from the Greek meaning ‘two’ but from the Greek meaning ‘through’. The use of *logue* is derived from *logos*, which has multiple meanings from language to reason.

In the fundamental sense, then, dialogue is a process of thinking or thinking through something. On the grounds of pure etymology, there is no requirement that there should be more than one person involved. Furthermore (and just as importantly), if the involvement of more than one person is not a necessary condition for dialogue, it is not a sufficient one either. Just because two people are talking to each other, that does not of itself mean that there is a dialogue, in the strict sense, going on. Dialogue and discussion are not the same thing. Unfortunately, everyday use tends to undermine this distinction. (Curnow, 2001, p.234)

This quote by Trevor Curnow raises a number of important questions about dialogue. Is dialogue the same as two people having a conversation? If not, then what distinguishes one from the other? If the involvement of another person is not a necessary or a sufficient condition for dialogue, then how does dialogue differ from monologue? To avoid the problem of vagueness over the term ‘dialogue’, let us now make some distinctions, in particular on different types of discussion that might be considered dialogue but are not.

#### *Dialogue is Not Mere Conversation*

We have all no doubt been party to a conversation or witnessed conversations between others. To illustrate my point, let us imagine three friends meeting at their favourite café, deeply immersed in each others’ stories, which move from their relationships with family and friends in common, to their joys and sorrows, future employment prospects, and opinions on current affairs. There is, among other things, laughter, friendly banter, and occasional expressions of agreement and disagreement. As the purpose of their meeting is to share conversation over a

cappuccino or Earl Grey tea, the mood is more likely to be one of offering support, encouragement, or a shoulder to cry on. This café conversation scenario, of course, does not discount the possibility of the friends engaging in more structured conversation, but it is unlikely to lead to an extended dialogue whereby assumptions are examined and disagreement is valued as a catalyst for further inquiry. These kinds of conversations usually seek equilibrium rather than engagement in dialogue. Nevertheless, it is possible to imagine that a conversation over what wedding flowers would suit a sage coloured wedding palette could shift to questions over independence and identity in marriage. The friends may still be inclined to journey along the conversation, offering helpful advice rather than, say, questioning assumptions on the meaning of marriage. But we can also imagine the friends engaged in dialogue together and relishing the opportunity to explore their disagreements to come to a greater understanding of each other and strengthen their friendship. In doing so, the friends have moved from having a mere conversation to engaging in dialogue.

Dialogue, as Susan Gardner (1995) puts it, is “no mere conversation.” As the example of the three friends in the café illustrates, when kept to mere conversation the exchanges aim for equilibrium. However, as the conversation begins to explore disagreement and eventually becomes a dialogue, the aim is for disequilibrium, creating opportunities for a renewed understanding that comes from difference. Lipman (1991) identifies motivation for the talk itself as that which separates dialogue from mere conversation. A conversation, he argues, focuses on creating equilibrium between those engaged in it. A dialogue, however, aims at disequilibrium in order to bring new understanding to the topic under discussion, and perhaps at the conclusion of the dialogue equilibrium may again be restored (p.232). In an inquiry it is our disagreements as well as our agreements that shape the dialogue. What we are aiming for is a renewed understanding that comes from exploring ideas in disequilibrium. In this process, we reconstruct our previous knowledge. As the example illustrates, a conversation about marriage aimed at retaining equilibrium may revolve around the style of dress the bride will be wearing and the flowers in the church, but a dialogue about marriage will focus on issues such as the bride’s identity in relation to changing her name or on the nature of marriage. Another way in which Lipman distinguishes between conversation and dialogue is that the former is an exchange being driven by a personal process of sharing information, and the latter follows a logical thread, whereby the participants are interested in the comments of others to further the inquiry, and to reaffirm or disprove their own argument (p.232).

An inquiry where participants are not engaging with the ideas of each other can be a series of monologues. When there is no internalisation of the process of dialogue, what we are left with is a series of interconnected monologues by individuals rather than a group moving towards a new understanding of the matter under discussion. I will have more to say on this later in this chapter, but for the moment it is suffice to say that the opposite situation can sometimes occur, whereby a dialogue may emerge out of other forms of discourse. For example, conversations that may not necessarily start with engagement may turn into a

dialogue if there is genuine inquiry, as illustrated in the example of the friendly café conversation that may turn from talking about wedding dresses and flowers to more critical subjects such as identity and marriage.

According to Gardner (1995), it is the progress toward truth that “is vital to the practice of inquiry ... at least if such progress is possible” (p.38). For a dialogue to be productive the participants must in fact produce something of substance, which, in turn, would make that dialogue substantive. This product, according to Gardner, is truth. Without the necessity of trying to reach it, a dialogue would have no direction and there would be no motivation for its participants. Gardner is not advocating a Platonic conception of truth—one that is absolute and founded on certainty. In fact, she contends that truth may not, in fact, result at the conclusion of the dialogue. However, she stresses that having truth as a goal gives the inquiry purpose. Justus Buchler also identifies that the conclusion of the dialogue is not as important as the process itself. Although we may not come to a conclusion (or find ‘truth’ in the Platonic sense of the word) he argues that “a product is inevitably established in any given hour of discussion,” and that participants “may have no right to demand final answers, but they certainly have the right to expect some sense of intellectual motion or some feeling of discernment” (in Lipman 1991, p.231). According to Clinton Golding (2005), the purpose of dialogue is not truth but to seek understanding or meaningfulness (p.1). This, of course, brings into question what truth is, especially with regard to the processes and procedures of inquiry. There is a longstanding controversy in philosophy, and to a lesser degree in education, over what ought to count as truth. As this wider exploration may distract us from our task, for the moment it is suffice to say that it is a regulative ideal (Gardner, 1995; Lipman, 1988).

Gardner’s distinction between mere conversation and dialogue concurs with the view of Lydia Amir (2001) with regard to the dual meaning of dialogue as conversational interaction and as colloquy.

In the formal sense, ‘dialogue’, ‘talk’ and ‘conversation’ denote spoken language or linguistic practice. This is a strictly observational definition of dialogue, adopted by, amongst others, ethno methodologists. Their preferred term—conversational interaction—refers to any sequence of oral utterances in which more than one speaker are engaged successively, regardless of purpose ... In the content-oriented sense, dialogue means ‘colloquy’ and won very early a status of its own: it was counted as a joint communicative activity with the goal of discovering truth. (p.239)

This conception of dialogue as colloquy has retained its currency among scholars who see dialogue as fundamentally important from a philosophical and educative perspective, and it looms large in the different models of dialogue explored in later chapters of this book.

Laurance Splitter and Ann Sharp (1995, pp.34–40) also point out the difference between ordinary conversation, in which there is either not much thinking or thinking which is not well-formed, and structured conversation or dialogue, in which participants engage in a kind of reflective inquiry. They

recognise four conditions that define dialogue as different to conversation. First, the talk must focus on a topic that is either problematic or contestable insofar as the community must think reflectively about their viewpoints or perspectives. The tension present in this case is likened to the tension of a stringed instrument—it is only this tension that produces new music or in the case of dialogue, new perspectives. Splitter and Sharp note that some dialogues may concentrate on expression or creative discussion which is an important aspect of dialogue. Second, a dialogue is self-regulating and self-correcting. Students must have the ability to rethink their initial arguments but also be aware of why they have changed their minds. It is not enough to simply change the direction of thought for no good reason or through faulty reasoning. Third, the talk is of an egalitarian nature where individuals are valued as equal members of the community. Fourth, chosen topics are mutually interesting to each individual in the community. Splitter and Sharp warn that this may not be possible in the initial stages of dialogue. However, interest may evolve for those individuals for which interest is not sparked from the outset.

Dialogue is not mere conversation; however dialogue may come out of conversation in the illustration of the café conversation mentioned previously. In a conversation it is equilibrium that the friends strive for, however, in a genuine dialogue it is the balance between equilibrium and disequilibrium that gives the process its richness. By exploring both agreement and disagreement, a greater understanding may come about. There must be a genuine commitment and engagement between the individuals if it is to be considered dialogue, otherwise it may just reflect a series of monologues. Dialogue is also characterized by its progress towards truth, or what Amir (2001) terms ‘colloquy’. Importantly it is also considered a form of reflective inquiry.

### *Dialogue and Debate*

It is not at all unusual for the terms dialogue and debate to be used interchangeably to denote an exchange of words with an emphasis on talking through a problem. General usage aside, the two terms clearly can be distinguished from each other. Whereas dialogue is collaborative, debate is oppositional. Debate is something that occurs between antagonists and adversaries, and its goal is to win an argument (Lindop, 2002, p.36). An appeal to rhetoric, with emphasis usually on pathos or ethos, and little or no attention to the logic of argument, is not uncommon as a mechanism for persuasion in debates. Indeed, this is what Plato accused the Sophists of doing.<sup>1</sup> Dialogue, on the other hand, focuses on collaborative deliberation, with emphasis on reasoning and the logic of argument in order to gain an understanding of the matters under discussion.

Let us elaborate further in our comparison of dialogue and debate. As stated, dialogue is collaborative. The parties involved in dialogue work together as co-inquirers with the goal of finding both common and new ideas and improving on them. They listen to one another to understand and build agreement. It is a self-correcting process where ideas are considered and evaluated, which possibly could

lead to a change of mind or a re-evaluation of points of view. Dialogue, therefore, has the capacity to promote open-mindedness to ideas and to being wrong. It invites keeping an issue open for further exploration even after the discussion has formally ended or reached closure. Debate, on the other hand, emphasises opposition. In a formal debate two sides oppose each other to prove each other wrong. The goal is clearly for one side to win with their ideas and for their point of view to emerge as victor. During this procedure each side contributes their ideas and defends them against any challenges by listening to the opposing side to find flaws and present only the opposing view. This gives no room for considering ideas or changing your mind, lest you lose. Debate encourages criticism of others, closed-mindedness to the ideas of others, and determination to be right. It creates a winner and a loser and is likely to discourage further discussion.<sup>2</sup>

Edward de Bono (1994), particularly, has misgivings over what he calls the adversarial model of thinking, which he argues was established over two thousand years ago with the ‘Greek Gang of Three’, his preferred term for Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. According to de Bono, with adversarial thinking each side takes an opposing position and attempts to attack the other side to prove them wrong with the aim of winning the argument. His view is shared by others such as Janice Moulton (1983), who describes it as aggressive but “often takes on positive associations” (p.149). However, unlike de Bono, Moulton argues that philosophical reasoning does not neatly fit into the adversary paradigm and that a misinterpretation of the history of philosophy and choice of philosophers has made it difficult to recast philosophy as anything but adversarial (pp.155–7). The Socratic Method, contrary to de Bono’s attack, is often considered to be a prime example of philosophy which is dialogical in terms of its literal form and dialectic in structure, and thus does not lack a constructive or a creative element simply because its intended purpose is to discover ‘truth’. Indeed, elements of de Bono’s ‘parallel thinking’ which he contrasts to philosophical thinking can be found in the Socratic Method, particularly cooperative and coordinated thinking (Burgh et al, 2006, pp.36–41). Nevertheless, de Bono’s criticisms apply wholeheartedly to debate.

Cam (2006) notes “that the dynamics of an inquiry differs from that of a debate” (p.44). By the term inquiry I take Cam to mean dialogical inquiry. According to Cam (pp.44–5) in a debate each speaker must be committed to sustain their given position. Unlike dialogue where the aim is to consider all arguments, the aim of debate is to win an argument—speakers are not responsible for considering other positions as that is the responsibility of the opposing side. Whereas a debate consists only of two sides (there is only agreement and disagreement on the issue), in an inquiry there may be various levels and shades of disagreement and agreement. Unlike debate, in an inquiry agreement may be contingent on certain points to be clarified. Students may both agree and disagree with a statement, agreeing with some points but not others. Cam argues against debate as being a type of dialogue insofar as the participants in a debate are not allowed to express their own opinions but must agree with their team’s argument and disagree with the opponent’s argument. He says that “debating points often do not depend on the

soundness of the argument but on rhetorical devices designed to cut the ground from under the opposition and to sway the audience to one's side" (pp.44). This is not true of a dialogue, which allows for one's own opinions to be expressed as long as they are productive.

It is noteworthy that Cam raises the topic of playing devil's advocate whereby someone puts forth a proposition in order to explore an idea further by testing it against an opposing one (p.45). Playing the devil's advocate is a useful tool in an inquiry insofar as it may test propositions and thus deepen inquiry. Ross Phillips (1994), too, argues for the importance of the devil's advocate in inquiry in order to examine all aspects of the issue under discussion. He sees little trouble in voicing an alternative view in order to further examine the issue at hand. However, Cam warns that playing devil's advocate has its dangers with regard to creating an adversarial atmosphere; that students in an inquiry may use this technique to deliberately disagree and this may interfere with the progress of the dialogue. As Cam (2006) says:

Students who delight in contradiction or who constantly play the sceptic, may bring a sense of fun to the proceedings, but their input needs to be tempered by recognition that inquiry is an attempt to make headway with the matters under discussion. (p.45)

The role of playing devil's advocate should be identified and discussed at the beginning of any inquiry to avoid producing disagreeable students (i.e., students who disagree for the sake of disagreement). Otherwise, dialogue could be in danger of becoming debate.

Unlike dialogical inquiry, in a debate there is no room for genuinely being devil's advocate, as each of the opposing teams presents arguments either for or against a proposition. It is easy to see why debate as a tactic is often used in legal argumentation and by politicians. But in both of these cases, it is the task of a third party (e.g., members of the jury or electors) to listen to the arguments of both sides in order to make judgments to overcome adversary (either by verdict or by casting a vote). There is, of course, no guarantee that the propositions both for and against will be given equal consideration. For this to happen it relies on the open-mindedness and deliberative capacities of the third party, including the ability to be the devil's advocate. But the role of devil's advocate has no place in the actual debate itself insofar as the terms of the debate are set out, i.e., agreement is expressed only to the assigned proposition and disagreement to that of the opposition (regardless of any doubt about one's own opinion). A genuine inquiry, on the other hand, can benefit from participants playing devil's advocate as its aim is not primarily adversarial.

We can sum up by saying that dialogue differs from debate because a debate is aimed at winning an argument whereas a dialogue aims at a greater understanding through collaboration. Dialogue emphasises collaboration while debate emphasises opposition. De Bono cautions against introducing debates into education for its promotion of adversary, a criticism that he also retains for doing philosophy in education. Cam, however, makes further distinctions between dialogue and debate

for this reason when he notes that dialogue allows for multiple possibilities, in a sense promoting open-mindedness. The role of the devil's advocate in dialogue has been questioned for its reflection of debate, but it is nevertheless simply a way to explore all sides of an argument, and not just two arguments contained in a debate.

### *Monologue and Inner Dialogue*

Earlier I mentioned that the common usage of the term dialogue as simply a discussion between two or more people can lead to it being contrasted with monologue. In this section I would like to explore this comparison further. So, let us for a moment imagine the unusually long speeches recited by Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*, or the string of jokes flowing from the mouth of a stand-up comedian on a late-night talk show, or the endless minutes of talk by someone at an intimate dinner party who shows little or no concern for conversation with others who have fallen silent. These are typical examples of monologue—an extended, uninterrupted speech by a single person.<sup>3</sup>

Now imagine the sober but solitary figure of *The Thinker*, the bronze and marble statue by Auguste Rodin. The statue is often used to represent philosophy—a man in meditation battling with a powerful internal struggle. Whether or not this is an apt representation of philosophy is disputable.<sup>4</sup> Of immediate concern to our discussion is whether or not inner discourse, as represented by *The Thinker*, is a kind of monologue or dialogue. As mentioned previously, Amir (2001) defines dialogue as “a joint communicative activity with the goal of discovering truth” (p.239). She argues that a monologue is a kind of dialogue in that it uses the same processes, with the difference being that the discussion is with oneself rather than with others (p.240). Even when we engage with others in dialogue we do not discontinue the monologue, as we continue to formulate the ideas that contribute to the dialogue. Whereas Amir wishes to claim that monologue with oneself is a kind of dialogue, I make a distinction between a non-critical inner discourse or internal monologue and a critical inner discourse or internal dialogue.

An internal monologue can be similar to the monologues of Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, with tendencies toward uncritical and unreflective monotonous speech, but differing only insofar as it is done in silence with oneself. One talks *to* oneself rather than *with* oneself. There is no exchange of ideas or opinions, no self-correction or no discursive interaction between listener and speaker. Only one voice is taking part and being heard. On the other hand, an internal dialogue, like its external counterpart, is a communicative activity with the goal of discovering truth, but rather than being a joint activity with others it is a kind of joint activity with oneself. Amir's description of monologue as a kind of dialogue is what I am calling internal dialogue. Unlike internal monologue, internal dialogue is critical and reflective. It is also a vital part of dialogue with others, as it would not be a dialogue proper if the inner discourse ceased—without an ‘inner listener’ there can be no dialogue in the content-oriented sense of dialogue as colloquy.

When the thinking and dialogue that occurs externally translates internally as inner speech, this process is described by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky as

internalisation. In a dialogue we may become increasingly conversant at continuing the inner dialogue and the external dialogue at the same time, in effect multi-tasking our thoughts as we express them while concentrating on other perspectives in the dialogue. According to Vygotsky's (1987) process of internalisation the subject is engaged in internal dialogue, what he calls 'solo thinking'. His theory of solo thinking helps to clarify the distinction between internal dialogue (i.e., monologue as a form of dialogue) and monologue. Internal dialogue may be thought of as the very process of thinking; the voice in our head when we are thinking through a problem. In sum, dialogue cannot exist without internal dialogue, and no amount of monologue can act as a substitute.

### *Dialogue, Rhetoric and Dialectic*

We now turn to dialogue as philosophical reflection and analysis. On the one hand, the term dialogue is often used to refer to the literary form of Plato's works and those other works that appeal to this literary form. On the other hand, and more importantly, dialogue can be described as dialectic insofar as it refers to its philosophical form or structure. To gain a better understanding of dialogue it is useful to make a comparison between dialectic and rhetoric. According to Curnow (2001), dialectic is concerned with the form or structure of dialogue. It is a specific type of dialogue insofar as it is a continual process that focuses on questioning and the answering of questions (p.234). The process is one of thesis, antithesis and synthesis and is distinctive by the resolution of tensions and contradictions over time (p.234). Curnow suggests that this process, as reflected in Plato's dialogues, is in general a positive one. Given the discussion in this chapter already, it is easy to see the links between dialectic and dialogue.

Rhetoric, on the other hand, is often cast off as inferior to dialectic. Historically, Plato's treatment of the Sophists in his dialogues is largely responsible for the modern view of rhetoric as confusing or illogical argument used for deceiving someone. The Sophists were depicted as selling rhetoric that mirrored dialectic, employing rhetorical sleight-of-hand and ambiguities and vagueness of language in order to support fallacious reasoning to achieve their purposes, which was to persuade or convince others. But to say that rhetoric is simply the 'art of persuasion' is misleading, as dialectic is also used to persuade. According to Aristotle, rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic.<sup>5</sup> While both are proof-centred, and are used in persuasion, they have different purposes. Dialectic relies exclusively on argumentation and is used primarily within a discipline, which consists of experts who test for the truth of their claims and consistency of argument. Rhetoric is aimed at a general audience or target group whose members do not necessarily have expert knowledge, and therefore persuasion is *not only* a matter of arguments and proofs, but also of credibility and emotional attitudes. We can see from our earlier discussion on debate the links between rhetoric and debate, i.e., the intention of persuading the audience to adopt one point of view.

From our discussion in this first part of the chapter we can see that dialogue is not just mere conversation, nor is it debate or monologue. Dialogue can also be

said to be necessarily dialectic, with the aim of resolving disagreement through rational discussion or to search for truth. Let us now turn to the role silence plays in dialogue, as both companion and inhibitor.

#### OUT OF THE SILENCE

Silence, simply put, is the absence of noise. In a world filled with all kinds of noises, it is very rare or not at all that we experience this kind of silence. We are, of course, not concerned with ‘dead silence’, but the ways in which silence functions in social interactions. As such, silence is the absence of speech. It plays a variety of roles in our everyday interactions and in the ways we communicate. For example, in designated ‘quiet zones’ such as those in libraries and cinemas, and increasingly public spaces where mobile phones are barred. Interpersonal relationships too are filled with moments of not speaking, not necessarily to seek quiet but also as necessary to our interactions with others in order to communicate, whether that is in conversation, purposeful discussion, or in dialogue. Silence, or not speaking, is sometimes a matter of choice and other times it is imposed upon us. This distinction highlights two notions of silence: ‘being silent’ and ‘being silenced’. The connection between the two is not as straightforward as it may first appear when observed in the context of the kinds of communication where speech and silence are interwoven, specifically dialogue which is the matter of our direct concern. However, conceptually we can separate them by linking silence brought about by choice to the notion of *being silent* and linking imposed silence to the notion of *being silenced*.

Let us now look in more detail at the connections between being silent and being silenced. When we enter a public library we are usually expected to be silent so as to not disturb others. While it is an expectation, we *do* have a choice to do otherwise, albeit that by choosing to speak we may forfeit the privilege to use the library. A similar illustration can be found in Remembrance Day, a day on which it is not uncommon for people to commemorate fallen comrades with a moment of silence. Some people may even use this ‘commemorative silence’ to engage in reflection on the act of war—‘lest we forget’. It is a voluntary action that gives the individual the opportunity to be with their own thoughts. There is nothing imposing about such a silence unless the person is not partaking in the silence willingly. On such occasions, the expectation of silence itself can be imposing for some people as not everybody necessarily wants to commemorate war heroes at that time and so are effectively being silenced during that time. Nevertheless, it can be argued in cases like this and the library, that we knowingly engage in activities where silence is required. Both cases can therefore be said to be illustrations of being silent.

Now let’s look at another example which is much more problematic. In the broader context, we have, what many people in Western countries see as natural freedoms—freedom of speech and the right to remain silent. Free speech inextricably includes the right to remain silent, i.e., logically anyone who is genuinely free to speak must also be free to not speak. The logical relationship

between speech and silence in this instance links the right to free speech to the freedom from self-incrimination. To act on silence in this context is to not allow control by an authority; to allow no one person to completely control discourse. However, this example also acts to highlight that choosing to be silent can also be an act of silencing, i.e., silence is imposed on another person without choice. That is to say, by exercising the right to remain silent others are silenced, not in the sense that they are unable to speak, but they are no longer able to interact with the other party.

Generally speaking, silencing is a way of wielding power over others; that is, those being silenced have little or no choice in the matter. Another example of this can be found in parent-child relationships. Parents of teenagers may occasionally be subject to the 'silent treatment' which serves as a form of control to manipulate or punish. Friends who resort to the 'cold shoulder' are doing similarly. Both of these acts silence individuals because of the enforced block to any further communication by the person imposing such a barrier to others. Moreover, the silence may be accompanied by visual signs such as body movement and gestures, which indicates that silence, while absent of speech, is not always absent of language. Splitter and Sharp (1995, p.47) also draw attention to a relationship between silence and language. However, their discussion is within the context of silence opening the way for meaningful dialogue and questioning. We will look at this in further detail later in the section on silence as reflection.

In the literature devoted to looking at theories of silencing, theorists such as Michel Foucault and Luce Irigaray offer theories of how silence occurs in different contexts. Foucault devoted his theories of power and silencing of the individual, ranging from coercive forms of silence, for example through surveillance, to the institutional silencing that occurs in the outdated modes of mental institutionalisation of individuals (Foucault, 1975). In the case of the latter, the technologies of silence are present both psychologically and physically. Individuals may be 'given a voice' but only insofar as being spoken for. But, silencing can also be a gender issue. For example, while men are able to discuss topics such as abortion, women's health, child-birth and menopause, their lived experiences in terms of gender/sex identity are not the same. In the case of abortion men may have informed opinions about women's choice or the right to life, but the impact of abortion laws are not experienced directly by men as these laws are to do with control over women's bodies. Irigaray looks at such issues through an exploration of dominant discourses, particularly male-centric language, which she says serve to marginalise or silence women (Irigaray, 1985). She adopts the term phallogentrism which refers to the advancement of the masculine as the source of power and meaning through cultural, ideological and social systems that effectively strips women of agency, i.e., female subjectivity is constituted as Other, or as marginal, displaced by discourses of phallogentrism. Women may be given opportunities to speak but the language that women speak through, and are understood by, is not the same language spoken by the opposite sex. Terms such as 'equality', 'freedom', 'rights' and so forth, have historically acquired their meaning through masculine discourse.<sup>6</sup>

These perspectives of silencing have made valuable contributions to the understanding of power, domination and the construction of knowledge in the context of language and communication. However, we are not directly concerned with theories of silence in the wider context that Foucault, Irigaray and others address, although in some respects this line of thought speaks to the issues of power and the construction of knowledge. Our concern here is more specific: to explore the extent to which speech and silence are interwoven in relation to the construction of knowledge through dialogue, especially in the context of education. Firstly, we will look at silence as inhibitor of dialogue. Our focus will be on technologies of silence as a way of exploring the notion of imposed silence or silencing. Later, we will explore silence as companion to dialogue, particularly the reciprocal relationship between speech and silence as they function in dialogue.

### *Technologies of Silencing*

Broadly speaking, silencing happens due to coercive measures. This could be that someone is actually doing the silencing, or due to structural arrangements, such as the placing of classroom furniture as found in many traditional classroom settings, or the use of pedagogies that make little or no opportunities for inquiry. It should be noted that silencing can occur when participants in a dialogue bring with them certain patterns of power resulting from learned behaviour of which they themselves might not be consciously aware. The issue of power will be examined in more detail in Chapter 6, but for the moment it is suffice to say that participants who are prone to silence or who dominate discussion might not be receptive to changing their patterns of behaviour (Yorshansky, 2007; Burgh & Yorshansky, 2008). In this section, of main concern will be technologies of silence as a way of understanding the role of coercive measures or structural arrangements in obstructing progress in a dialogue.

Naomi Sunderland (2002) identifies seven different kinds of technologies that leave people silenced: (1) stereotypes, social roles, identity and reputation, (2) employment contracts and working conditions, (3) personal shared [in]security and attacks on self-esteem, (4) hierarchy and the phenomenon of the institutional voice, (5) discourse and public education/consultation, (6) resigned, passive waiting hope as opposed to healing, active, or revolutionary hope and (7) focus on the future. I will be directly concerned only with those technologies relevant to our exploration of how silence interacts with dialogue, specifically the first, fourth and fifth technologies of silence listed. The others are specifically related to dialogues on biotechnology, and so are not directly related to our discussion on dialogue and silence in general. However, the second technology she mentions, 'issues of personal security and self esteem', is significant to the discussion on power in Chapter 6.

The first technology of silence has to do with 'stereotypes, social roles, identity and reputation' (p. 6). For our current purposes, the term 'stereotypes' shall refer to simplified conceptions of groups based on prior assumptions that

there are attributes which all members of a group have in common. Stereotypes can be either positive or negative, both of which could lead to biased opinions or prejudices. Of particular concern is that stereotyping could lead to unwillingness to rethink our attitudes and behaviour towards stereotyped groups, particularly in the case of negative stereotypes. Negative stereotypes coupled with prejudices can prevent some people of stereotyped groups from succeeding in life, e.g., in the development of their identity, social roles, and reputation.

Sunderland argues that when we are labelled as a particular type of person, there are certain values and opinions that may be linked to that stereotype, and in some cases these stereotypes lead to a degree of silencing. For instance, the assumption that children are sponges informs how they should be educated; as empty vessels awaiting a transferral of facts. Paulo Freire (1970) warns against such a view, what he calls the ‘banking model’ whereby the teacher-student relationship is one of depositing and collecting; where students are receptacles for receiving, filing and storing knowledge given to them by the teacher. Similarly, the assumption that children have nothing of worth to say or that they do not have the capacity for sophisticated thought could result in missed opportunities to develop their capacity to reason. For example, the activity of philosophy is considered by some to be inappropriate for children, or to be treated cautiously when being introduced into the classroom, particularly for those in the younger age-bracket. Plato tended to restrict philosophy to mature students on the ground that it made younger people excessively contentious. This view, though not popular amongst philosophers today is also reflected in the words of Tony Coady, who cautioned that “philosophy can easily create ‘smart-arses’ out of bright kids if introduced to children too early” (in Slattery, 1995, p.21). This common misconception has repercussions for the development of children and their way of thinking. Contrary to Coady, the literature in the field of doing philosophy with children suggests otherwise, that children can engage in philosophical inquiry provided it is offered in a way that is suitable for their interests (Cummings, 1981; Niklasson, Ohlsson & Ringborg, 1996; Imbrosciano, 1997). If teachers, parents, or communities assume that the level of capability in children is limited to only certain kinds of thinking, then children will not be encouraged to learn beyond their individual means. This stereotype leaves children unable to voice their ideas, effectively silencing them.

On the other hand, stereotyping children as *always* having ideas to contribute can be just as concerning, even though this concept of the child could be considered by some to be a positive one. This concept of the child should not be mistaken with the view of the child as typically having a natural sense of wonder or curiosity. A propensity to wonder is not the same as always having something to contribute. To stereotype children in this way could lead to expectations about every child’s ability to contribute to dialogue, regardless of whether or not they actually feel like contributing or feel that they have something to contribute. Julie Dawid offers a caution based on her

observations of six primary schools using stories to engage students in philosophical inquiry.

Feedback from the children indicates that a reluctance to speak may not be caused by a lack of confidence in expressing thought; it may be due to a lack of cogent thoughts to express ... This is not commonly recognised by teachers, as expressed in the School Two Teachers' attempt to encourage a quiet member of the class: 'Everybody has thoughts—come on, tell us what your thoughts are.' This teacher had failed to recognize that the problem may be other than a lack of confidence and that everyone's ability to 'have thoughts' differs vastly. (Dawid, 2005, p. 63)

This highlights not what Coady cautions against, but that this kind of stereotyping silences the child insofar as their ability is being judged on the attributes associated with all children. This may have a negative impact on the child in terms of their identity, reputation, and interactions with their peers. Stereotyping in this way could even be self-fulfilling insofar as the child could identify with the judgments of their teacher or peers. This may have even further repercussions with regard to the classroom no longer being a safe environment for children to take risks or reflect in silence. While philosophy offers a forum for the expression of thought, questioning and problem-solving, it also requires paying attention to context and observing the interactions of the participants in relation to speech and silence. This does not deny the importance of other forms of expression, for example, philosophical expression through art.

To do what Dawid warns against is to fall into a form of cold-calling where people are forced to contribute when put on the spot. Reich (1998) points out that cold-calling is a common misconception of the Socratic Method put into practice. It has, he says, been interpreted at some American universities as a way to catch students out by asking questions that demand instant answers. Cold-calling, as Reich describes it, could disrupt the progress of inquiry, as participants also require silence to formulate and think through their ideas. It is similar with 'round-robin' exercises. While giving each student a turn to speak consecutively ensures everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the discussion, the flow of communication will be stifled making it difficult for meaningful dialogue and questioning to take place. Using classroom approaches such as these do not actually give students access to dialogue. To the contrary, they serve to silence rather than to liberate.

Stereotyping as an obstacle to inquiry extends to ethnicity and race, social class, religion, and gender, sex and sexual orientation. This kind of stereotyping has relevance to the current educational climate which places emphasis on pluralism in terms of knowledge and values. As teachers we must take seriously the possibility that some cultures do not place a premium on certain approaches to dialogue and may indeed be compromised by such a requirement, but we also must acknowledge that engaging students in philosophical inquiry can also assist them to function better in non-traditional settings (Laird, 1993; Field, 1995).<sup>7</sup>

Sensitivity to the contexts into which we are introducing philosophy is therefore paramount.

Philosophical inquiry must find a balance between students having to be aware that they are acquiring knowledge from within a particular dominant discourse (i.e., a dominant way of thinking about or viewing the world) and letting them generate their own agenda. Otherwise it could be complicit in, or perhaps even unknowingly proliferating the values and concepts it wishes students to challenge. (Burgh, Field & Freakley, 2006, p.19)

What is required is a dialogue that is concerned with creating spaces to embrace such diversity rather than dismissing it through assuming that one model of dialogue is appropriate in every context. Miller (2005) cautions that if we are to introduce inquiry into any classroom then educators must aim to create an intellectually safe environment. Acknowledging the context in which dialogue takes place will help teachers to avoid the technologies of silence that come about through stereotyping.

What our discussion so far reveals is that generalized perceptions or preconceptions of children and their abilities, or of groups of people, can lead to unchallenged stereotypes which teachers bring into their classrooms. What I have said can apply also to issues of multiculturalism, gender, sex, and sexual orientation. Stereotyping can impede inquiry through representations that are hard to shake off, which if gone unchecked will contribute to the presence of dominant discourses that serve only to silence rather than liberate individuals and groups. This applies also to the ways in which Western philosophy has been stereotyped as being inherently masculine and therefore adversarial and with an overemphasis on the critical and rational aspects of inquiry to the detriment of creative and affective thinking. Briefly, Western philosophy has its roots in Ancient Greece, a historical turning point that owes much to Socrates. Through the influences of Plato and Aristotle, in terms of methodology derived largely from the Socratic Method and topics of interest, it developed into the predominant philosophical thinking of Europe, and later spread throughout what is now referred to as the Western world, to places such as America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Along the way Western philosophy has had influence on and was influenced by Western religion, science and politics. While the history of Western thought in itself should not be seen as a problem for education, this very history raises issues about the exclusion of other ways of approaching philosophy, and subsequently its influence on educational theory, aims and practice. The traditions of the East and the West are sometimes used to demarcate different ways of thinking or approaching life; religion, science, family, community, politics and so forth. There have also been moves to bring the traditions closer together by describing what they have in common. Similarly, but with different histories, the traditions of African, Hispanic and Indigenous peoples could be brought closer or further apart. Feminist philosophy has also contributed to these discussions in terms of its emphasis on caring approaches to society and the environment.

Philosophical education in the form discussed in this book has a line of history that can be described as traditional Western thinking, but what needs to be avoided is any generalised perception of philosophy as either a universal way of thinking applicable to all traditions or as adversarial thinking in the way de Bono describes. To define philosophy narrowly in these ways is to ignore the richness of both its history as a discipline and its methodology. Janice Moulton (1983) observes that the justification for philosophy is that “it shakes people up about their cherished convictions so that they can begin philosophical inquiries with a more open mind” (p.156). I will have more to say on this in later chapters, but for the moment it is enough to state that philosophy is characterised either as a universal way of thinking or as an adversarial method which fails to recognise the integral relationship between critical, creative and caring aspects of engaging in dialogue together.

Sunderland’s second technology is ‘hierarchy and the phenomenon of the institutional voice’. Her concern is mainly about the relationship between professionals and the organisations that employ them. She argues that there is pressure to conform to the ‘institutional voice’ which may compromise not only the professional’s personal values, but also their professional values to conform to the common view or the prescribed view of the organisation. This may happen due to a number of reasons, such as fear of reprimand or needing to come to some kind of consensus over an issue. This technology of silence is a form of coercion and has application to education. I refer back to the conception of the child as a receptacle awaiting knowledge to be ‘poured into their heads’. In the case of values education based on assumptions that universally shared values can be found, or that values can be prescriptively taught, or that students will accept certain guides to behaviour, both teacher and student are silenced in terms of developing an understanding about the relationship between values, ethical deliberation and decision-making. This is true of models that are underpinned by character education, prescriptive approaches, and values clarification. Thus, curriculum and pedagogical constraints act as technologies of silence, effectively acting as an obstacle to genuine dialogue.

Conformity through subtle forms of coercion is not limited to institutions such as education or other professions. Peer pressure in friendships in order to fit into a group is a common but subtle form of coercion. In friendships, individuals may be aware of pressure to conform to the views of others, and consequently find it difficult to speak honestly over disagreements. Fearnley-Sandler (1998) highlights the split loyalties that students experience within classroom inquiries between following an idea that contributes to an argument and going to the aid of a friend. While she notes that this adds an extra dimension to inquiry in terms of helping others, it can act to also inhibit the exploration of ideas (p.28). In the classroom, this is especially problematic as disagreement and agreement are at the heart of philosophical inquiry. Moreover, while friendships may be a motivation for individuals to conform to the ideas of others, coercion can be more covert in an inquiry. Mor Yorshansky (2007) argues that certain power relations in an inquiry can block or influence the direction of inquiry. She says “[w]hile ideas are explored among the members, some may try to influence

the inquiry and its result in favor of their particular interests by monopolizing discussion time and by insisting to voice their ideas and understandings over other timid and less influential voices” (p.19). Such actions serve to silence other individuals in an inquiry and block the progression of ideas of the whole group. It is worthwhile to quote Yorshansky in full here.

Such attempt can be conceptualized as the use of coercion and domination by individual members who are able to use their influence, gain more power and influence the inquiry in an unbalanced manner. Thus, coercion and domination are practices which jeopardize the development of a deliberative democracy in the classroom, and the community’s attempts to identify solutions for amelioration based on a collective perception of the good. (pp.19–20)

However, she says that by emphasising equal participation, which is necessary for engagement in dialogue, that we may hamper the genuine emotions or opinions that are naturally expressed in an inquiry. Measures taken to share the power in inquiry equally to all members can, at the same time, silence individuals. For example, ‘round-robin’ exercises designed to distribute power evenly can silence ideas by stopping the flow of argument and the process of ‘to-ing and fro-ing’. I mentioned earlier the concerns related to such exercises as they make the assumption that each student has something to contribute despite some students requiring further time for reflection.

The very structures underpinning certain kinds of inquiry can also be coercive or result in a kind of conformity. As we have seen, technologies of silence can aid conformity in both institutional practices and friendships. But conformity can also come about through the seeking of agreement by consensus. To some extent the models of dialogue that are the topic of this book appeal to some kind of consensus, or at least they do so in practice. Two that spring to mind are reaching a common definition through a rigorous process of inquiry, and setting the agenda for discussion. I will be addressing the issue of consensus later in this book, but for the moment I will concentrate on what all conceptions of consensus have in common—the convergence of ideas. If a dialogue has the aim of consensus, either through unanimity, general agreement, or group decision-making processes that seek agreement from most participants and the mitigation of minority objections, the ideal is that of a process of collaboration not compromise. Participants are brought together until a convergent decision has been developed. However, in practice, placing high value on consensus in order to make judgments or come to decisions may cause some students to feel the need to conform to the views of others, rather than reaching agreement through reasoned argument. Consensus acts as a procedural principle for coming to collective agreement, which in practice results from either the development of relationships among participants to reaching ‘willing consent’ or the sacrificing of opinions. As such, consensus almost always requires some kind of compromise of ideas or opinions. In pluralist communities particularly, where there is a high degree of variation, compromise becomes a matter of finding agreement through the mutual acceptance of terms often

involving varying the original purpose or goal. But a compromise of this kind should not be seen as compromising the procedural aims of a genuine dialogue as this might be what ‘following the argument where it leads’ entails in a pluralist inquiry. The important point is that teachers need to be aware of the context in which consensus is required, e.g., reaching a common definition through analysis or making practical judgments for decision-making, and to be aware of any coercive practices that silence individuals or minority groups.

The way in which agendas are set in philosophical inquiry can also have the same effect. For example, the selection of questions by voting, which has become typical to how teachers approach agenda setting in the community of inquiry, allows students to reach agreement on what question to address first, but places an emphasis on the decision of the majority rather than on collective agreement.<sup>8</sup> By restricting the items on an agenda or restricting input regarding the formulation of questions the exploration of ideas is limited, therefore effectively silencing opinions that may have had the potential to facilitate discussion in another direction. If voting is seen as indicative of democratic decision-making then it is not surprising that this is perpetuated by political parties who are elected through democratic processes which require a vote rather than deliberation. While the majority of votes reveals the winner of an election, this may not indicate the better preference, especially in democratic countries where voting is not compulsory. The amount of votes may indicate only the preferences of those compelled to vote and therefore not necessarily representative of the whole community. Referendums have also been criticised, despite the view that they offer some degree of direct participation in policy-making. As an aside note, if education is to support democratic ways of life, then resorting to voting rather than collective agreement serves to justify current democratic practices. Needless to say, we will be discussing the notion of consensus further, regarding its contributions to dialogue and the nature of agenda setting and formulating questions.

The third form of silencing is ‘discourse and public education/consultation’. Sunderland argues that by not providing forums for citizens to discuss topics of importance, free speech is impeded and individual voices silenced. She is correct to say that deliberative forums provide opportunities for citizens to develop solutions to problems collaboratively, but this applies not only to public decision-making in a democracy but also to the kinds of educational settings that support democracy. Classroom dialogue is integral to democratic education and has the potential to engage students in life-appropriate ways of learning and to reconstruct children’s view of public discussion. By promoting classroom dialogue, children are actively involved in deliberative process aimed at developing the social and intellectual dispositions and capacities needed for active citizenship. To ignore this is to inhibit opportunities to develop the capacity for freedom of thought and to think for oneself, and therefore increase the risk of silencing children as future citizens.

In sum, we must be aware that in promoting classroom dialogue it is approached in ways that are conducive to reflective thinking. I have already acknowledged the concerns that arise from forcing students to contribute to inquiry through

stereotypes and coercive classroom activities. If philosophy is a form of *freedom* then students should be exposed to philosophy in a way that liberates them from technologies of silence, i.e., centred on collaborative, inquiry-based practices that facilitates free speech, deliberation, and informed decision-making. The UNESCO study backs such a move, in order to expose students to democratic ways of life and to prepare them for active citizenship.

*Dialogue, Philosophical Inquiry, Silence, and Reflection*

According to Splitter and Sharp (1995), speech and silence in dialogue are interwoven; “the distinction between speaker and listener tends to disappear and the moments of silence become integral to the inquiry” (p.47). Put another way, silence and speech play a reciprocal role in balancing power in a dialogue. Silence, therefore, also has a positive role to play in inquiry—a chance for participants to listen, to consider the ideas of others, to be probing questioners, and to formulate their own opinions in order to contribute to the progress of the discussion. That is to say, participants are required to hear what others are saying to formulate opinions and to listen to their own thoughts to reflect on the meaning of their own words. Silence is, as Splitter and Sharp (1995) put it: “essential wait time that should accompany questioning and problem-solving activities” (p.47). Powell and Connor-Green (2004) concur, adding that silence is an essential part of a dialogue as it takes the emphasis off simply talking in order to listen and think before contributing. What is noticeable in a dialogue that progresses is that as thinking becomes more complex there may be more silences during an inquiry. Paulo Freire has argued along similar lines. Silence, according to Freire, opens up a space for participants in a dialogue to genuinely listen to what others have to say. It affords them the opportunity to appreciate questions and doubts and to “enter into the internal rhythm of the speaker’s thought and experience that rhythm as language” (Freire, 1998, p.104). Participants must be sensitive to their own contributions in regard to silence and speech so as to not subvert the dialogical process, but to share time with others so that they may also make contributions.

Martha Nussbaum (1993) claims that “the real value of philosophizing [lies] in the responsive interaction of teacher and pupil, as the teacher guides the pupil by questioning ... to become more aware of his own beliefs and their relationship to one another” (p.298). Nussbaum’s comment could sum up well the view that the strength of philosophising is in its uniqueness to elicit immediate and responsive interaction among participants and between participants and the teacher. Perhaps a good case study to illustrate this is ‘Joan’s story’ as told by Lipman (1991, pp.209–10). Joan has two separate educational experiences; one in which she attends a lecture on philosophical theory and another in which she attends an inquiry-based philosophy tutorial. In the lecture Joan ponders her own thoughts in response to the professor’s words. But in the tutorial, the professor acts only as facilitator to a classroom inquiry and Joan discovers that there are other, multiple perspectives that she could not have considered on her own. Initially she is reluctant to contribute but finds that she is compelled to test her ideas against

others. The responsive interaction among participants, and between participants and the teacher, requires awareness of their own thoughts and those of others, which is a listening process, one that demands silence. On the other hand, expressing ideas requires language. What Lipman and Nussbaum are alluding to is that engaging in philosophical dialogue demands an interplay of speech and silence.

Both Nussbaum and Lipman could be read as referring to philosophical inquiry as primarily a face-to-face interaction. A commonality in much of the literature on Socratic influenced teaching methods is an assumption that face-to-face dialogue retains its 'liveliness' as it happens in a 'here-and-now' atmosphere of responsive interactions between participants. Even though face-to-face dialogue is fleeting and will inevitably contain irregularities, there is emphasis on a reciprocal relationship in face-to-face dialogue that purportedly is not found in other forums where dialogical interactions occur over time or are delayed. Although not directly relevant to our discussion on silence and speech in dialogue, I would like to point out that there are also benefits not present in face-to-face interactions, benefits that may have implications for reciprocal roles of silence and speech in dialogue. For example, web-based dialogue provides a forum for people who may have previously been denied access to central forums, for example, people in remote communities, international communities, and where time-constraints pose an obstacle to regular communications. The literature supports the view that delayed dialogue (a term used to describe web-based dialogue) offers education an effective tool for reflective thinking as it allows students time to think about their contributions and the ability to edit statements before posting. For example, Kirk and Orr (2003) note that delayed dialogue overcomes problems with access to dialogue for the following reasons: (1) users can engage in dialogue at different times and in different locations, (2) access to dialogue is available for twenty-four hours [per day], (3) small group discussion online overcomes the schedule coordination problems of face-to-face groups, and (4) time can be taken for reflection, data accumulation, and the gathering of references in order to substantiate their positions. Similarly Davis (2002, p.31) asserts that not only does delayed dialogue allow time for more reflection, but there is also more time for participants to develop their arguments, effectively making their recorded contributions more thoughtful. While the immediacy of face-to-face is lost in delayed interactions, also having access to web-based technologies enhances the opportunities for reflective thinking. This is also the view of Carol MacKnight (2000) who argues that online dialogue cannot replace face-to-face but acts as an additional dialogical tool. She cautions against introducing online dialogue without face-to-face dialogue. Students must already have "comprehension and knowledge of the elements of an argument and thus how to interact with ideas and each other in a meaningful way" (p.39). What we can extrapolate from this is that, while delayed dialogue gives greater opportunity for essential reflection, it is unlikely that students will succeed in substantive, reflective exchanges if they have not learnt to carry on similar conversations through face-to-face collaborative dialogue.

Some authors<sup>9</sup> argue that reading a written text is a form of dialogue; an engagement between the reader and the writer through the medium of the text. Turning to Nussbaum (1993) again, she argues that books are inflexible because the written word addresses “very different people, always in the same way” (p.298). Books don’t interact with the people in the same way as other people do. If the author is not present to engage in direct dialogue, then there is no real engagement in philosophical thinking because the author cannot follow the reader’s argument to where it leads but rather, delivers the same argument to each reader regardless of the person doing the reading.<sup>10</sup> In terms of reading philosophy texts to enhance the inquiry process, Nussbaum does say that philosophy books may be a useful substitute for those experienced in philosophical dialogue, but warns against the complacency that comes from reading *about* philosophy rather than the action of engaging in philosophical dialogue.

Real philosophy by contrast, as Socrates saw it, is each person’s committed search for wisdom, where what matters is not just the acceptance of certain conclusions, but also the following out of a certain path of them; not just correct content, but content achieved as the result of real understanding and self-understanding. Books are not this search and do not impart this self-understanding. (p.300)

She does admit to Plato’s recorded dialogues being an exception. Karel van der Leeuw (2004) also highlights the importance of written dialogues as a form of written philosophy, adding that they can act as a guide to the Socratic Method.<sup>11</sup>

To avoid any contention regarding the reading of texts *as* dialogue per se, it is safer to say that reading texts is a form of listening to others whose ideas and arguments can be taken back to the dialogue, and therefore becomes integral to the process of dialogue as in intellectual pursuit. Maughn Gregory (2002) discusses the importance of bringing outside texts to the inquiry. He argues that if we are to have reflective inquiries, then we need to consult written texts for further information and to conduct our inquiries in the wider context of the community. Engaging with texts allows for greater reflection of ideas that may be explored further in the context of classroom inquiry. The teacher not only acts as the facilitator of classroom inquiry but also acts as a mediator between classroom dialogue and the written texts which are the result of professional dialogues conducted in intellectual communities of inquiry (as formulated by Peirce). The to-ing and fro-ing between actively listening not only to the other participants but also to the writer, while at the same time reflecting on your own thoughts and expressing your ideas to the group, can be seen as engaging in a greater dialogue of ideas. This process, which could also include web-based interactions and research, incorporates both face-to-face and delayed dialogue that demands interplay between silence and speech in a discourse that belongs to the participants.

A note of caution: it is not always easy to detect what is going on in the interplay between silence and speech, which essentially can be observed only as

a group dynamic. But with the dynamics of groups silence also operates at the level of the individual, which may or may not have a positive effect on the progress of a dialogue. It may sometimes be obvious that silence on the part of one or more students is for reasons other than for reflection and active listening. Such silence can be “difficult to deal with precisely because of its essential ambiguity” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p.47). It may be the case that some students have a propensity to remain silent for most of the time. Aside from the obvious disadvantage suffered by those students who are not regularly engaging in dialogue, their behaviour may also have repercussion to the dynamic of the group. Wendy Turgeon (1998) refers to such students as ‘reluctant philosophers’. She concedes that there are multiple reasons why students are reluctant to actively participate in inquiry: personal reasons related to social dynamics such as inter-personal conflict, or deep seated reasons, such as problems or crises at home (p.11). Recall that Dawid (2005) cautioned against assuming that every student is *able* to contribute to the inquiry. What this indicates is that there are causal reasons why these students are being silent, possibly as an indirect result of encountering technologies of silence or an inability for expression through speech; preconditions that have the potential to disrupt dialogue. Simply put, being silent may indeed be silence as wait time during a dialogue, but equally it could also be a form of silencing, effectively causing the whole group to be silenced.

While this book is concerned with approaches to philosophical inquiry through dialogue, there is often a mistaken view that when we argue for a model of philosophy as pedagogy, that it is necessarily appropriate for every educational experience. As Gregory (2002) suggests, there must also be time for reflection and engagement with outside texts to inform inquiry. There are indeed many situations in the educational context that require students to simply read a book to collect information. There may be times when students require quiet reflection—silence as the absence of speech but not of language. There are times when it will be necessary for students to engage with a text to access further research but also to engage in delayed dialogue when face-to-face interactions are not readily available. The UNESCO report suggests that students need to have access to philosophy and philosophical inquiry, but this must not imply that dialogue be the only teaching methodology used. Good classroom planning and practice “takes note of the students’ needs for variety in classroom organization” (Sprod, 2001, p.155). Many practical skills need to be learned, such as research and library skills, computer skills, as well as skills in dialogue. Moreover, having these skills will be invaluable to the process of inquiry itself in a modern world driven by information and communications technology—an incomprehensible world to Socrates and the Ancient Greeks. Socratic pedagogy needs to be an adaptation of the Socratic Method for modern times. It is Socratic because it is characterised by a particular kind of dialogue; a dialogue with regard for cognitive growth and respect of persons. These two dimensions of dialogue, as we have seen, demand a similar respect for the interplay between silence and speech. It is with this in mind that we now turn to Socratic pedagogy.

## DIALOGUE AS SOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

I mentioned earlier Rodin's statue *The Thinker*, a solitary figure deep in his own thoughts of introspective reflection. Its popularity as symbolic of philosophy is undeniable. In contrast Raphael's *The School of Athens* portrays philosophy as a gathering of people who share ideas. At the centre of the image Plato and Aristotle declare their different views of knowledge. Plato gestures upward to where knowledge of the forms lies, while Aristotle's gesture stresses observation as the source of understanding. To the left of both of them Socrates addresses a group of bystanders. This image more closely represents the view of philosophy I present here; as a collaborative activity to stimulate rational thinking and illuminate ideas in the pursuit of knowledge or greater understanding of the world.

*The Socratic Method*

This idea of philosophy as an open-minded inquiry and collaborative activity can be traced back to Socrates and what has become known as the Socratic Method. Socrates spent most of his life attempting to engage his fellow Athenians in the activity of philosophy: a method of critical inquiry that had no obvious methodology like geometry or physics. He encouraged the idea that philosophy should be a process of argument and analysis, but with emphasis on dialogue. By engaging people in dialogue, Socrates could show that the answers to life's questions were not so easily attainable. Anyone who engaged in discussion with Socrates nearly always found that their answers to philosophical questions were either inadequate or unacceptable. In the excerpt below, from Plato's *Republic*, Socrates and Cephalus are engaged in a dialogue over what it means to be just.

- Socrates: But let us consider this further point: Is not he who can best strike a blow in a boxing match or in any kind of fighting best able to ward off a blow?
- Cephalus: Certainly.
- Socrates: And he who is most skilful in preventing or escaping from a disease is best able to create one?
- Cephalus: True.
- Socrates: And he is the best guard of a camp who is best able to steal a march upon the enemy?
- Cephalus: Certainly.
- Socrates: Then he who is a good keeper of anything is also a good thief?
- Cephalus: That, I suppose, is to be inferred.
- Socrates: Then if the just man is good at keeping money, he is good at stealing it.

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- Cephalus: That is implied in the argument.
- Socrates: Then after all, the just man has turned out to be a thief. And this is a lesson which I suspect you must have learnt out of Homer; for he, speaking of Autolycus, the maternal grandfather of Odysseus, who is a favourite of his, affirms that.
- Cephalus: “He was excellent above all men in theft and perjury.”
- Socrates: And so, you and Homer and Simonides are agreed that justice is an art of theft; to be practiced, however, “for the good of friends and for the harm of enemies”—that was what you were saying?
- Cephalus: No, certainly not that, though I do not now know what I did say; but I still stand by the latter words.

This short excerpt gives us an illustration of certain techniques that Socrates employed. Socrates was explicit in his demand for rigor when he used argument to uncover assumptions and fallacious reasoning; he showed arguments to be invalid by his questioning. In his dialogue with Cephalus, Socrates shows the flaws in Cephalus’ reasoning by showing how his definition of justice would in fact lead to a contradiction if applied to a different situation. In a series of arguments being met with counter-arguments, the logic of the reasoning is shown to be deficient. This required Socrates’ interlocutors to be sure of their reasoning before they entered into dialogue. However, in most cases, Socrates would still help his interlocutors to uncover their own faulty reasoning. In classroom dialogues, students must be aware of their own reasoning and that of others.

The type of questions posed by Socrates usually always led to the realisation that answers to such questions are much more difficult than initially thought. Below is a summary of the techniques that are central to the Socratic Method.

1. Socrates claims to have no knowledge to impart, and admitted ignorance at the end of discussions as strongly as he did at the outset.
2. In each step of the dialogue, Socrates poses a question to which his co-inquirers would supply answers, which in turn are met by further questions from Socrates. His clarifying questions lead to their answers nearly always being inadequate or unsuccessful.
3. Despite Socrates’ admission of his own ignorance, he facilitates discussion in a subtle direction.

Nevertheless, there is contention over what it means to be Socratic. In Plato’s dialogues Socrates is described variously as midwife, gadfly and stingray. Although he claims he is not himself a teacher, Socrates as a philosophical interlocutor leads his respondents to a clearer conception of wisdom. Claiming himself to be analogous to a midwife Socrates says he is himself barren of theories, but knows how to bring the theories of others to birth and determine whether they are worthy. He is also referred to as the gadfly of the state because he was “a

persistent irritant whose questioning and reproaches aim at preventing the citizens of Athens from sleeping till the end of their days, from living and acting without genuine moral reflection” (Arendt, 1999, p.206). Just as the gadfly stings the horse into action, Socrates stung Athens. He has also been described as “a stinging fish who paralyzes and numbs all who it comes into contact with” (p.206). In effect, this metaphor alludes to Socrates’ ability to draw his interlocutors into dialogue and then, through his questioning he “infects his listeners with his own perplexities, interrupting their everyday activities and paralyzing them with thought” (p.206). Once his interlocutors have interacted with Socrates they can no longer be content to go about their daily business without thinking through examination. This view of Socrates is important for our discussions on pedagogy as it pertains not only to education generally, and classroom practice specifically, but also to a way of life whereby students are encouraged to be reflective in their everyday activities and not just those activities in the classroom.

### *Socratic Pedagogy*

While Socrates is an important figure in the history of Western philosophy and is responsible for the development of what we now refer to as the Socratic Method, I make no recommendations that schools should adopt the Socratic Method in the classroom, nor that students be expected to engage in Socratic practices in the way that Socrates did, especially in light of the ambiguities as to the precise nature of the Socratic Method. For example, Socrates is known for his relentless questioning of basic concepts, but in Plato’s dialogues it becomes clear that he had certain cherished beliefs that underlie his questioning that sometimes led him to direct the conversation in subtle ways. He also had a specific kind of knowledge that he viewed necessary to discovering a good life. However, there is no denying that his principle of ‘everything must be open to question’ is fundamental to getting people to re-examine what they think they already know for certain. Recall that Socrates was considered a stinging fish for this reason, encouraging a way of life that is underpinned by constant questioning and re-questioning. What I am advocating is the development of Socratic classrooms through Socratic pedagogy, an approach influenced by Socratic methods but with further refinement. We need to identify those aspects of Socratic traditions that are applicable to classroom practice as this provides a focus for defining an approach to teaching and learning through collaborative, inquiry-based dialogue.

Socratic pedagogy calls for a specific relationship between teacher and learner, one in which the teacher understands the need for students to think for themselves in order to provide a practical means for students to improve their ability to think about problems and issues they are likely to encounter in their lives. Cam (2006) concurs that the Socratic Method itself may not always be ideal for the classroom, but that there is merit to being Socratic.

Yet there can be no doubt that the ability to think about the issues and problems that we face in our lives, to explore life’s possibilities, to appreciate

alternative points of view, to critically evaluate what we read and hear, to make appropriate distinctions and needful connections, and generally to make reasonable judgements are among the attributes of anyone who has learnt to think effectively in life. (p.1)

Socratic pedagogy is reflective education, in which thinking is understood as a process of inquiry. In an inquiry it is our disagreements as well as our agreements that shape the dialogue. Cam argues that this backward and forward motion of agreement and disagreement is what gives an inquiry its rigor, as it moves from convergent to divergent thinking through the course of the dialogue (p.44). It is important to note, however, that the aim of Socratic pedagogy is not to discover truth, at least not in the sense of discovering certainty. Rather Socratic pedagogy is an educational process, a regulative ideal which has as its foundations that all knowledge is fallible and stands open to future revision.

The idea of fallibility is central to our understanding of dialogue as expressed here. Its origins can be traced back to the philosophical works of Charles Peirce. Peirce rejected the idea of Cartesianism; that the mind is the key to unlocking knowledge, and therefore that truth and certainty are to be found in the individual consciousness (Pardales & Girod, 2006, p.300). He recognized the value of exploring disagreement and agreement with others, emphasizing collaborative thinking and knowledge derived from what he called communities of inquiry.

In sciences in which men come to agreement, when a theory has been broached it is considered to be on probation until this agreement is reached. After it is reached, the question of certainty becomes an idle one, because there is no one left who doubts it. We individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue, we can only seek it; for the *community* of philosophers. Hence, if disciplined and candid minds carefully examine a theory and refuse to accept it, this ought to create doubts in the mind of the author of the theory himself. (Peirce, 1955, p.229)

Peirce asserts that dialogue and thinking collaboratively is not only a positive way of thinking, but absolutely necessary to the acquisition of knowledge and understanding and hence essential if we are to arrive at ‘truth’ at all.

Fallibilism, Peirce thought, is central to the journey towards truth or reality. Ideas are under constant scrutiny by a community of inquirers, for it is constant examination and re-examination that can bring the group closer to knowing. Pardales and Girod (2006) refer to this process as people coming together to serve as a “jury to ideas and hypotheses” (p.301). Peirce’s view of truth could be described as coming to know the world through rigorous analysis and re-analysis by the community. Once all ideas are tested against counter-arguments, the group may be confident that they have arrived at truth and reality: “The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed upon by all who investigate, is what we mean by the

truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real” (Peirce, 1955, p.38). However, it is only as a community of inquirers that truth may be uncovered.

Like Peirce, Lev Vygotsky also saw the necessity for collaborative thinking. A proponent of social constructivism, Vygotsky’s theories align with that of Peirce. His *zone of proximal development* is a space in which children’s natural capabilities can be furthered through their interaction with others. Vygotsky’s notion of *scaffolding* means that, through both interaction with members of the wider community and with classroom peers, children’s individual achievements can be enhanced (Berk, 2000, pp.259–69). Sprod (2001) argues that this “conceptual and reasoning space [is a space in which] children can operate with help from a group, but are not capable of operating in on their own” (p.148). This is not at odds with Peirce’s view on collaborative inquiry. Vygotsky coined the term ‘Community of Learners’ which describes how different members of the wider community can contribute to student-learning (Berk, 2000, pp.259–69). If the contributions are from a diverse range of people, then learning can be broadened in much the same way as communities of inquiry use different ideas and views to shape the dialogue, in order to achieve better outcomes than inquiring alone would produce.

Vygotsky’s theory of social-constructivist learning is strengthened by his theories on thought and language. Vygotsky (1962) was concerned with the relationship between thought and language, which he argued have distinct genetic roots. In Chapter 4 of *Thought and Language*, ‘The genetic roots of thought and speech’, he studied this connection at various stages of human development. While thought and language operate separately in early infancy, referred to as the pre-linguistic stage, they develop as the child uses the spoken word to reflect her intellect. Until this point, speech is present as a survival function only, for example, to express hunger. As the child develops, speech becomes more meaningful and has direct interaction with thought as the child realises the functionality of the spoken word. From approximately the age of two until preschool age, the child understands that everything has a corresponding word. From this stage forward thought and speech remain interlinked:

The relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought. In that process the relation of thought to word undergoes changes which themselves may not be regarded as developmental in the functional sense. *Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them.* Every thought tends to connect something with something else, to establish a relationship between things. (p.125, *italics my own*)

Vygotsky called the process of the interplay between thought and word a ‘word meaning’ (Medoca, 1997, p.30). He also argued that the process could never be complete as thought is continually enhanced by engaging in social speech. Vygotsky saw the value in thinking as a social process, and believed that thinking was enriched by social speech as opposed to thinking through solitary endeavours such as reading or writing or thinking alone. These skills come out of being guided

beyond one's own individual capabilities. What happens, according to Vygotsky, is that the individuals involved in the collaboration have an *intersubjective* connection whereby the knowledge is a shared sense of understanding that comes from the contributions of different individuals (Berk, 2000, pp. 261). This cannot occur when inquiring alone. This is illustrated in Joan's two experiences of philosophy education mentioned earlier. In the first instance she was essentially inquiring alone, with the lecture as a text on which to reflect. However, in her second experience, the ideas that she had in the lecture were extended by the ideas of others that diverged from those introduced in the lecture. Intersubjectivity is, hence, the connection that occurs between individuals engaging in collaborative inquiry. We can suppose then that Vygotsky saw learning as dialogical and, like Peirce, that he rejected the Cartesian view of acquiring knowledge.

In sum, Socratic pedagogy is a process of reflective education through dialogue as a way to construct knowledge and create meaningfulness. The process is not an individual one, but a communal one in which the ability to think for oneself can be said to be one of its educational aims and practices. Moreover, Socratic pedagogy has the potential to contribute to the thinking curriculum, and clearly addresses the concerns outlined the UNESCO study in relation to 'thinking as freedom'.

### *Socratic Pedagogy and Democratic Education*

Another reason for accepting truth as a regulative rather than as an attainable ideal, and thus to recognise the necessity of Socratic pedagogy in education, is pluralism. In a multicultural society there are many visions of the good, but "the diversity of society precludes us from identifying any one as the pinnacle of what it means to be human" (Reich, 1998, n.p). Socratic pedagogy, therefore, has a place in civics and citizenship education. It has the capacity to assist students in learning the skills and habits necessary for participation in democratic ways of life, especially for an understanding of pluralist democracy. This sentiment is reflected in the words of Nussbaum when she says "in order to foster a democracy that is reflective and deliberative, rather than simply a marketplace of competing interest groups, a democracy that genuinely takes thought for the common good, we must produce citizens who have the Socratic capacity to reason about their beliefs" (in Reich, 1998, n.p). To produce such citizens, we must start in the classroom. Socratic pedagogy has the capacity to help students to examine the world around them and to acknowledge that doing philosophy can improve their ability to think more effectively about problems and issues, and hence to reflect on democratic ways of life.

Cam (2000) claims that having access to dialogue is a basic freedom and an integral component of democracy and living a democratic life. The role of education is to develop a democratic citizenry, i.e., citizens with democratic dispositions and the capacity to reason and make judgments. What lies at the heart of a democratic society is the deliberative citizen. It is through dialogue that students can gain an understanding of the processes and procedures underlying deliberative inquiry, and learn to practice democracy and citizenship. Education and democratic citizenship become intertwined; a social and educative process of

growth, not merely a preparation for life. Philosophy as freedom, simply put, means having the capacity to engage in dialogue with others, liberated from technologies of silence to pursue the question of: ‘What constitutes a good life?’ Practicing thinking in education that goes some way to solving society’s issues, which is the first pillar of action for UNESCO, may just result in change at some level. Dewey (in Lipman, 1991) sees this as the basis of education.

An educational system that does not encourage children to reflect—to think thoroughly and systematically about matters of importance to them—fails to prepare them to satisfy one criterion that must be satisfied if one is to be not merely a citizen of society, but a good citizen of democracy. (p.113)

A distinction can be made between ‘educating for democracy’ and ‘democratic education’. Whereas education for democracy focuses on the acquisition of knowledge and skills as a means to improve the capacity of future citizens to exercise competent autonomy, democratic education recognises the social role of schooling as that of reconstruction and that children and young people have an integral role to play in shaping democracy (Burgh, 2003; Burgh, Field & Freakley, 2006). A commitment to Socratic pedagogy as a social and educative process of growth, not merely a preparation for life, is a form of democratic education not only because it is designed to bring about deliberative democracy, but it is in itself a form of deliberative democracy, where communicative and deliberative capabilities and attitudes are developed in order to nurture thoughtfulness and reflection to support democratic ways of life.

#### SUMMARY

Dialogue is a specific form of engagement whereby individuals can test ideas against others to create a better outcome than thinking alone can achieve. Dialogue is specifically for the purpose of travelling together to achieve a better understanding of the matter under discussion. It is a process of inquiry where individuals can explore agreements and disagreements to come to decisions based on the mutual search for truth. A genuine dialogue should aim to be as free as is practicable from technologies of silence that have the potential to impede inquiry. However, a genuine dialogue also welcomes silence because it “can function as a ‘probing questioner’ which grounds the speech of all participants” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p.47). As such, silence and speech work hand-in-glove in the interaction between thinking and dialogue. In the next chapter we will look at three models of dialogue that can contribute significantly to our understanding of philosophical education and the development of Socratic classrooms.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sophists were rhetoricians who were skilled in rational argument. They taught people their craft for pay and this earned them the scorn of Socrates and Plato. See Rohmann (2000).

## CHAPTER 1

- <sup>2</sup> For more information on debating rules and formats, refer to Phillips (1994).
- <sup>3</sup> Strictly speaking, the term ‘monologue’ applies to a speech made by one person in the company of others, whereas the term ‘soliloquy’ is used for a speech spoken by one person who is alone. However, the distinction usually applies to dramatic or literary forms of discourse. In such cases the term ‘dramatic monologue’ is used to distinguish it from monologue generally. I shall use the term monologue to refer to both kinds of ‘single speech’ as well as any long speech delivered by one person who forgets or neglects the others who are there.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Thinker* has been used at times to represent *philosophy, especially modern philosophy since Descartes*. A cursory internet search reveals that this depiction is also a popular symbol for tertiary philosophy courses.
- <sup>5</sup> See Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, in Kolak (2000).
- <sup>6</sup> Moira Gatens has the best approach to silencing of ‘different voices’ in her idea of the ‘body politic’ where she says that marginalized voices can only be heard as hysterical, not as ‘legitimate voices’.
- <sup>7</sup> Robert Laird (1993) has used philosophical inquiry with children in the Buranga Community in the Northern Territory, Australia. He found a noticeable improvement in their oral skills and in their confidence. On the one hand, this can be seen as a positive indicator because the children function better in non-traditional community. On the other hand, it draws attention to the complexities of language use and its relationship to cultural identity.
- <sup>8</sup> A variety of ways have been suggested to assemble questions or make connections between different kinds of questions (see Cam, 2006; Burgh, Field & Freakley, 2006). However, I mention voting for questions simply because it is still common practice among teachers. Arguably, this practice has limited value as way of structuring an agenda.
- <sup>9</sup> See La Caze (2008).
- <sup>10</sup> Nussbaum likens philosophy books to a manual whereas engaging in dialogue is action. Philosophy books that describe philosophical ideas are like tennis manuals; they can only take you so far in terms of instructing someone how to play tennis.
- <sup>11</sup> Karel van der Leeuw (2004) also highlights the importance of written dialogues as a form of written philosophy. She notes the benefit of written dialogues as our only record of what Socrates did and points to the fact that any guide to the Socratic Method comes from Plato’s dialogues. While Socrates rejected the written word, it is because of it that his legacy remains. Hence, the ‘Socratic dialogues’, as recorded by Plato, have value insofar as they allow us to access that which Socrates does.

## **SOCRATIC PEDAGOGY AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

As a result of current innovations and reforms in education, teachers are increasingly required to adopt new approaches to teaching and learning, with emphasis on curriculum integration and new pedagogies to facilitate student-learning. In connection with these reforms a growing number of theorists of education are advocating inquiry-based education with emphasis on integrating curriculum, pedagogy and assessment to improve teaching and learning. This is in stark contrast to traditional or direct teaching methods. Of particular importance is the increasing acceptance of the need for the teaching of philosophy and philosophical inquiry to children. This development is recognised in the UNESCO study as a response to cultural and political needs. This is one of the reasons why the teaching of philosophy and philosophical inquiry to children was given a privileged treatment in that study.

The impact of philosophy on children may not be immediately appreciated, but its impact on the adults of tomorrow could be so considerable that it would certainly make us wonder why philosophy has until now been marginalized or refused to children. (UNESCO, 2007, p.4)

If more children are learning philosophy it is because more teachers are introducing it into their classrooms or more people are creating conditions that support the teaching of philosophy. Although still in its infancy, philosophical education represents a change in educational objectives and approaches to teaching. What is not clear is the ways in which different kinds of pedagogical approaches to philosophical education could develop that would be applicable to any curriculum.

This chapter explores three approaches to dialogue that have their roots in the Socratic Method or inform classroom pedagogy that is typically Socratic in form. They are Socratic insofar as they provide models that draw attention to different aspects of the Socratic Method. That is to say, they are methods of inquiry that have application to classroom practice but also have in common the cultivation of good thinking and its improvement. In particular, they have application to educational settings committed to thinking as a process of inquiry, especially for the development of intellectual dispositions and capacities needed for active citizenship. Simply put, these three approaches to inquiry can inform what a Socratic classroom might look like.

The three models of dialogue that share fundamental characteristics of the Socratic Method are: the Community of Inquiry, Socratic Dialogue, and Bohmian Dialogue. First, I introduce Matthew Lipman's Community of Inquiry, the teaching

method that informs his Philosophy for Children program. His program includes a series of curriculum materials for children, consisting of novels and accompanying teachers' manuals, aimed at improving children's thinking skills, which he argued would improve the relationship between deliberative judgments and democratic decision-making. We shall explore Lipman's views on the importance of learning to think; a central theme in his educational theory and practice. To draw out the ties between Lipman's view on thinking, education, and democracy we examine the ideas of educationalist and philosopher John Dewey and his predecessor, pragmatist philosopher Charles Peirce, as well as Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, all of whom supply a theoretical basis for Lipman's theory and practice.

Next, we focus on Socratic Dialogue, a distinctly different approach to Socratic pedagogy but with similarities. Founder Leonard Nelson's aim was to educate children to want to seek truth, and to encourage self-esteem. Whereas Nelson gave few guidelines on how to employ his method of dialogue, his pupil Gustav Heckman developed guidelines for how discussion should be conducted. We explore the rules for Socratic Dialogue, the role of the facilitator, and the importance of reflecting on experiences common to all participants.

Finally, we examine dialogue as formulated by David Bohm. Bohmian Dialogue can assist in our understanding of the communal dimension of inquiry, and the role of care in the development of genuine engagement through dialogue. In particular we analyse Bohm's views on: listening as key to understanding, relationships in the dialogue, and the connection between these relationships and thought.

## PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN

Imagine a classroom full of children all focused on one joint activity. The children sit in a circle, facing one another, with legs crossed and furrowed brows, with visible signs of thinking processes shown on their faces as a teacher reads a story about two friends. The class pool ideas from the narrative just read and come up with a question that they are wondering about. The question 'What is a friend?' has been narrowed down by the class through careful facilitation by the teacher. One child draws a connection to the narrative and suggests that one of the characters was being a friend when he shared his sweets. Another child asks a clarification question and probes for further thinking; 'but is it only friends who share—can't you share with someone who is not your friend?' The teacher suggests that the class find an example of sharing that does not occur between friends. The class continues to dialogue together and to and fro between examples and counterexamples, asking for clarification and extending on the ideas of others. The teacher documents the exchanges until the paper clipped to the board is filled with the thinking processes of the class and the names of the children responsible for them. At the conclusion of the inquiry, the class has come to a collective understanding. They engage in a process of reflection, assessing their thinking together as a group.

This description is typical of classroom dialogue with students in what is referred to as a Community of Inquiry. Students put forward their views, describe,

question and argue their points of view. As part of this process, they reason, justify and make sense of their experience. The Community of Inquiry is one approach to Socratic pedagogy. However, while this method could be said to have Socratic roots, its development in a social and educational context is more recent and can be traced back to Charles Peirce who originally sought to bring scientific inquiry to philosophy. He argued for the idea of science as an activity in which a community of scientific inquirers (or other scientifically based disciplinary communities) is engaged. John Dewey later broadened its application to the educational context generally. This was later extensively developed by Matthew Lipman as the pedagogical dimension for his Philosophy for Children program.

### *Background and History*

Lipman initially began his journey of developing Philosophy for Children in the late 1960's as a lecturer at Columbia University, New York. While reflecting on the educational system in the United States, he found himself frustrated with the level of critical thinking that students had upon their arrival at university (Lipman, 2004, p.5). Eventually, with Ann Sharp and other colleagues, Lipman set about developing Philosophy for Children, an inquiry-based education program designed to integrate curriculum, teaching and learning through the practice of philosophy as the methodology of education. It consisted of a series of purpose-written philosophical novels and accompanying teacher manuals for early, middle, and senior phases of schooling. The novels, written in narrative form and containing characters that children could relate to, explored philosophical questions and issues, and provided a foundation for the development of philosophical thinking tools. The novels are intended to be read by students and teachers in teacher-facilitated communities of inquiry. Lipman's view is that the fostering of thinking rather than the transmission of knowledge is central to school education.

Since then Philosophy for Children has developed in various ways throughout the world, through training and publications. A variety of terms are used to discuss the teaching of philosophy to children from 'P4C' which has become an informal trademark for Lipman's program, to 'philosophy *with* children', which is not only the preferred British term, but distinguishes Lipman inspired programs that use specific written materials for British students. Another term used is 'philosophy in schools', which has been adopted in Australia to describe the direction of teaching philosophy as inquiry-based education. A large body of literature and classroom resources has also been developed in Australia, some of which have moved away from Lipman's original purpose-written material. Nonetheless, all of these attempts to develop or enhance ways of teaching though philosophy retain Lipman's original ideas that are characteristic of reflective inquiry-based education.

### *The Community of Inquiry*

In the literature on Philosophy for Children, the phrase 'converting the classroom into a community of inquiry' is usually understood as the application of Lipman's

educational philosophy to guide classroom discussion. In its broader application it means to convert the entire classroom or educational practices into a community of inquiry (Lipman 1991; Splitter & Sharp, 1995). The former is best described as the ‘narrow-sense’ Community of Inquiry and the latter the ‘wide-sense’ community of inquiry (Sprod, 2001, pp.152–56).<sup>1</sup> The literature on Philosophy for Children is vague as to what converting the classroom into a community of inquiry exactly means.

Peter Seixas (1993) makes a distinction between a classroom Community of Inquiry and an intellectual or professional, discipline-based community of inquiry. An intellectual community of inquiry retains its original meaning as formulated by Peirce and is grounded in the notion of communities of discipline-based inquiry engaged in the construction of knowledge. Seixas points out that these communities of inquiry (e.g., scientific inquirers, psychological inquirers) are the producers of knowledge, and that this knowledge informs specific subject areas within the curriculum. A classroom Community of Inquiry, on the other hand, is subject to the curriculum rather than being in a position to transform it. Any attempt to conflate the two, he argues, is not advisable for knowledge between communities is not unidirectional. Classroom communities of inquiry serve the purpose of developing an understanding of the skills, knowledge and methodologies of the disciplinary-based communities.

As students are not in school voluntarily, and as they are usually subjected to a curriculum that is not of their making, forcing students to be part of a learning community at the beginning of a schooling experience is unreasonable. They do not, at the outset, represent the shared values of scholarship and participation that members of a professional, discipline-based, Community of Inquiry do. (Pardales & Girod, 2006, p.308)

Maughn Gregory (2002), on the other hand, maintains that a Community of Inquiry in the classroom should not be removed from the professional, discipline-based community of inquiry. He argues that an intellectual community of inquiry, or what he refers to as a community of experts, should be mediated by the classroom teacher as facilitator. It is the responsibility of the teacher to connect the students to the practices similar to those of expert communities of inquiry. This implies more than a classroom of students engaged in dialogue but also includes other teaching and learning strategies and activities are incorporated as part of a greater inquiry, for example, research, engaging with texts, experiments, field studies, and service learning. It was also Dewey’s view that the classroom should be situated in the wider community and that the walls of the classroom should extend beyond the school to include the greater community.

Let’s return to the Community of Inquiry as formulated by Lipman. Lipman’s Philosophy for Children is an “attempt to reconstruct (not water down) the discipline of philosophy: to make it accessible and attractive to children who will then be able to appropriate it and thereby acquire the tools, skills and dispositions they need in order to think for themselves” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 99). Philosophy for Children is not simply a skills program but an approach to teaching and learning to enhance philosophical thinking. There are two basic principles to Philosophy for

Children: (1) an introduction to philosophical concepts and procedures through the process of reading and interpreting narratives, and (2) a methodology based on the Community of Inquiry through which philosophical dialogue can take place.

### *Classroom Practice*

The Community of Inquiry follows a basic pattern of inquiry (Lipman, 1980; Sprod, 2001; Burgh, Field & Freakley, 2006; Cam, 2006). It has two distinct phases; a creative phase and a critical phase. The creative phase is marked by an initiating stage, consisting of the introduction of a problematic situation, asking questions, and agenda setting, as well as a suggesting stage which is the formulation of ideas, conjectures and hypothesis. The critical phase involves reasoning and conceptual exploration, evaluating evidence and criteria, and concluding.

Bearing in mind that the framework for the Community of Inquiry can be adapted to different classroom situations and needs, traditionally it is an inquiry that begins with the reading of a philosophically significant story. Students are asked to think of philosophical questions that arise out of the story. The group then decides on one question, perhaps the one most fundamental to the inquiry, to begin discussion. The inquiry then proceeds until either the group finds a natural end point or the lesson comes to an end. The final stage of inquiry is self and peer reflection, where the group must reflect on their own thinking in the inquiry and of the group as a community. This is only a brief overview of what a Community of Inquiry might look like, but let us now elaborate on the model further.

The Community of Inquiry can be adapted to a variety of classroom and educational settings; as a lesson in itself, and across subject areas in order to integrate curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as a way of improving or enhancing teaching and learning. The starting point for inquiry is the introduction of stimulus material. The type of stimulus used depends largely on the age of students in the class, the subject matter taught, the purpose of the activity, and other factors that teachers will usually be concerned with when developing lessons. Teachers may wish to introduce a purpose-written story wherein the philosophy is embedded within the story, or they may use existing children's literature, or any other stimulus materials, e.g., newspaper headlines, magazine articles, or movies which lend them to philosophical questioning, to initiate dialogue from the group.<sup>2</sup> For example, Susan Wilks (1995) shows how fairytales can be used to elicit dialogue about concepts, such as what it means to be good. Once the students have engaged with the stimulus, it is normal practice to give them time to digest the material. The teacher then asks students if they have any questions they would like to raise. This is a very important part of the process, as the interest must come from the students themselves. The questions that the students volunteer will determine the type of inquiry that will ensue.

Looking at Wilks' example of some questions that may result from exploring fairy tales, we have: (1) 'What makes a character good?' (2) 'What actions do characters perform that are good?' and (3) 'What actions do characters perform that

are bad?’ (p.83). From the list of questions raised by the group, students then decide on a question, or group of related or interconnected questions to focus on during classroom discussion. For example, the question selected may be, ‘What makes a character good?’ The students’ questions set the agenda, and are vital for stimulating further discussion. Discussion may or may not stay on the original question, e.g., ‘What makes a character good?’ and can flow onto an array of issues. This is not necessarily a problem, provided that the inquiry focuses on an idea or issue, and the discussion builds around it. Lipman insists that the logic of the argument itself should lead the inquiry (2004). So after the agenda is set, the dialogue may go in many different directions depending on the requirements of the inquiry. It is worthwhile to quote him in full here as the idea of ‘letting the argument lead’ is central to our understandings of the Community of Inquiry.

When the classroom has been converted into a community of inquiry, the moves that are made to follow the argument where it leads are logical moves, and it is for this reason that Dewey correctly identifies logic with the direction of inquiry. As a community of inquiry proceeds with its deliberations, every move engenders some new requiredness. The discovery of a piece of evidence throws light on the nature of the further evidence that is now needed. The disclosure of a claim makes it necessary to discover the reasons for that claim. The making of an inference compels the participants to explore what was being assumed or taken for granted that led to the selection of that particular inference. A contention that several things are different demands that the question be raised of how they are to be distinguished. Each move sets up a train of countering or supporting moves.

Under the guidance of the teacher, students will discover that discussion is more than simply expressing opinions, or eliciting a range of responses but is disciplined in its logic. They may be asked to give reasons for their views, and since reasons “may pull in different directions, and some are likely to be stronger than others, the [students] will find themselves in need of criteria by which to judge the outcome” (Cam 1995, p.42). The teacher’s role is vital to successful inquiry. Whilst it is important that the students’ questions set the agenda, the teacher must help students develop the habit of exploring disagreement, and to be mindful of the progress of the discussion. Divergent opinions must be explored, e.g., through considering alternatives, appealing to criteria, making appropriate distinctions, seeing implications, and giving reasons (pp.41–54).

The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and co-inquirer. This is paramount, as the teacher must model the procedures of inquiry in order for students to engage collaboratively and to “follow the inquiry where it leads” (Sharp 1993, p.59). Lipman represents the teacher as facilitator through metaphors like the captain of a ship or a conductor of an orchestra. It would be detrimental to inquiry if the teacher were seen as an expert or imparter of knowledge, as he or she is responsible for the form of discussion and not the content (Freakley & Burgh 2000, p.7). The teacher’s role is to bring out the skills of others through coordinating “highly complex and varied activities” rather than holding knowledge as “contents to be doled out to

students” (Lipman, 1991, p.212). The teacher is also a role-model for students in the inquiry. While the teacher should be wary of becoming heavily involved in the substantive content of the inquiry, they should model the procedural aspects. In the illustration of a Community of Inquiry at the beginning of this chapter, I illustrated how the teacher asked the class if they could think of any examples to further the ideas of one of the children. By asking procedural questions that facilitate discussion the teacher models the behaviour that is required in the inquiry (Howells & McArdle, 2007). The teacher also has the task of monitoring the discussion and to ensure that the rules of inquiry are followed. The most notable of these is that every participant must be self-reflective (Splitter & Sharp 1995, p.16). Being self-reflective means that participants should be willing to modify and adapt their arguments if they cannot adequately respond to an opposing argument or alternative perspective. This should not be seen as a competition. However, if a participant in a group has firmly held beliefs on a particular issue, then he or she should be allowed time to process and articulate a counterargument before agreeing with another argument (Thomas 1997, pp.42–8). The dialogue should be prevented from straying from philosophical inquiry into unfocused discussion or anecdotes.

The procedural aspect of inquiry, otherwise known as the process of inquiry, guides both the way in which the community interacts collaboratively, and the progress of the discussion. For example, the characteristics of an inquiring community include listening attentively to others, responding to ideas and not the person, openness to consider alternatives, being prepared to challenge ideas and have ideas challenged, as well as asking questions, exploring disagreements and making links between ideas. These characteristics refer to how the participants in an inquiry engage with each other as a community. This is different, but not separate to the substantive elements of the inquiry. The substantive dimension is the “subject matter, the content, things worth inquiring about” (Burgh et al, 2006, p.138).

The critical elements of inquiry include being able to reason critically and think conceptually. For example, participants can engage in self correction, identify weakness in premises, fallacious reasoning, and unwarranted generalisation, as well as develop the skills of categorisation, concept exploration, finding definitions, and classification. Critical thinking is integral to philosophical inquiry, as participants must learn the rules and skills that are at the heart of reflection and judgment. These rules and skills aid in making the discussion a dialogue, and not a mere conversation. For dialogue to be productive, it must produce something, which is what makes a dialogue substantive. Creative thinking makes an important contribution. Through engaging with ideas, such as exploring alternatives or building on the ideas of others, and developing a hypothesis, students gain a deeper understanding of what is being inquired into.

At the conclusion of the inquiry participants must value the process and not only the outcome of inquiry. Lipman (1991) argues that the inquiry is an end in itself. He says “[s]eldom have I seen children dissatisfied with the product they took from a philosophical discussion, even if it is only some modest philosophical distinction, for they recognize how before that acquisition they had even less” (p.231). Golding

(2002) adds that there must be progress made if the inquiry is to be worthwhile. Perhaps he puts it best when he says “When you do philosophy you end up more confused, but you are confused at a higher level” (p. 10). This raises the issue of how to assess the quality of the inquiry in relation to its educational aims and practice. However, because the Community of Inquiry emphasises both community and inquiry, assessment of both the cognitive and social behaviour of the class as a whole is required in order to give a practical indication of its progress for both teacher and students alike. It is, therefore, useful at the conclusion of the inquiry to allow time for students to engage in self- and peer-reflection to make qualitative judgments about the cognitive and interpersonal outcomes that occur during the dialogue. Usually this takes the form of reflection on procedural questions, which are aimed generally at social behaviour or interactive patterns of the community. This will assist in an understanding of how students engaged with one another (e.g., ‘How well did we listen?’ ‘Did we search for alternatives?’). Reflection on substantive questions considers the quality of the inquiry, how philosophically rich the discussion was (e.g., ‘Have we made good progress towards answering the question?’ ‘Did we sufficiently examine the concepts used and reasons given?’). Arguably, this is the most important part of the inquiry as it allows for: (1) consolidation of thinking through self-realisation, and (2) room for growth as students come to realise where they need to work on some areas or continue with aspects that went well in the inquiry.

Questions for reflection are not intended as a checklist for students to simply tick one at a time. Rather, they are meant to elicit discussion on opinions about students’ experiences of the inquiry process in similar ways that the inquiry itself is conducted. It is a kind of meta-dialogue which is both an individual reflection and a group reflection for which the teacher is a part. While careful observation of the inquiry itself will give an indication of such behaviours as listening and turn-taking, as well as more substantive aspects such as building on ideas and asking for clarification, self and peer assessment at the conclusion of a session is designed to assist students to reflect on their inquiry and encourage them to self-correct. The process of reflection and self-correction is vital for the progress of inquiry—as participants become more reflective about their behaviour during inquiry they are likely to learn to take more responsibility for the improvement of their thinking. This kind of reflection can gradually become more sophisticated, for example, questions for reflection could become more in-depth and complex and reflective journals can be used.

### *The Community of Inquiry as Ethical Inquiry*

Engaging students in dialogue offers them the opportunity to explore ethical issues collaboratively. Dialogue is important in nurturing imagination in students, helping them gain a sense of community, as well as an understanding that trust and respect are integral to being a part of such a community. Understood in this way, Lipman’s approach to integrating curriculum, teaching and learning offers more than a thinking skills program. Other proponents have noted that the Community of Inquiry is important for the development of dispositions ranging from democratic dispositions to multiple intelligences including emotional intelligence.<sup>3</sup>

Lipman (1991b, p.7) insists that philosophy is a way of cultivating reflective thinking rather than creating a classroom full of philosophers. The aim of the Community of Inquiry is “not to turn children into philosophers or decision-makers, but to help them become more thoughtful, more reflective, more considerate, more reasonable individuals” (1977, p.69–70). By developing these dispositions, Lipman thought that students would be better equipped to think ethically and consequently to become reflective and engaged citizens in a democracy. By being self-reflective, we are able to think about how to approach a situation, and to consider how we should act at any given moment to make informed decisions regarding our interactions with others, and with the environment. Cam (1994) interprets Lipman as saying that being reflective is in fact what being moral is all about; that “the alternative to moral instruction lies in developing children’s reflective moral judgement” (p.23). Splitter and Sharp (1995) claim that “[w]hen it comes to ethical development—that is, the development of traits which make it possible to form good judgements about how to act and how to live—the reciprocal relations which link our self-directed thoughts, feelings and actions with those thoughts, feelings and actions directed towards others, are fundamental” (p. 165). They argue that this requires reflection in order to come to the realisation that others may have different desires, thoughts and opinions. Students will then make ethical decisions based not only on their self-interest, but on the interests of others also.

Lipman (1988) argues that philosophical inquiry and ethics go hand in hand, and should not be devoid of one another. Cam (1994) concurs with Lipman that philosophy has an ethical component, insofar as philosophical inquiry reflects an ethical process (pp.19–21). They contend that the very process of engaging in Community of Inquiry is exemplar of the behaviour required outside of inquiry that requires such dispositions as respect, tolerance and fair-mindedness. However, ethical inquiry is also a sub-discipline or branch of inquiry and has its own application. A philosophical inquiry should also be devoted to questions of ethical importance regarding what is the good life. Children must be concerned with moral issues throughout their inquiry.

What participants make in the discussion is an intersubjective connection, insofar as the process of inquiring and reflecting together can help participants gain a greater understanding of the topic at hand. By asserting and justifying one’s own opinions, as well as taking on board or rejecting other opinions, a participant may arrive at a perspective that has been shaped by having the group as a sounding board (Thomas 1997, p.44). It is through this type of inquiry that participants are likely to achieve more than an individual working alone could possibly achieve. Intersubjectivity is the process by which participants develop understanding and create meaning through the exploration of ideas in collaboration with others. Splitter and Sharp (1995) use the following analogy to explain the connection between individual perspectives and the construction of knowledge.

Just as in physics we learn that the things we observe are affected by our observations, so the person who thinks for herself understands that the

subject matter of her inquiry can never be completely severed from herself as an inquirer. This is not an argument in favour of subjectivism or relativism, but an *acknowledgement of the power of individual perspectives*. It is precisely for this reason that the person who thinks for herself is committed to the inquiry process, a process which involves self-correction and a coming together of different perspectives. (p.16, *emphasis mine*)

In terms of ethical education, I posit that Splitter and Sharp’s notion of committing oneself personally to the inquiry is central to developing a greater understanding of the relationship between individual values and collective decision-making. If the inquiry is applicable to all individuals engaged in dialogue together, and they are each committed to the process of inquiry, it is more than likely that they will develop their own perspectives of world-views. As Lipman (1977) puts it, “every child should be encouraged to develop and articulate his or her own way of looking at things” (p.62). This goes to the heart of the Community of Inquiry, which Lipman (1988) says is an exemplar of democracy in action.

The idea of democracy is central to the Community of Inquiry and to ethical education (Vicuna Navarro 1998, pp.23–26). Lipman (1988), inspired by Dewey’s notions of education in preparation for democracy, based his program around these values.<sup>4</sup> Democracy, in the case of the Community of Inquiry, allows all participants the opportunity to voice their opinion. The dialogue that is based on these principles is in itself democratic, and thus creates the potential to promote or foster democratic dispositions and behaviour. According to Lipman, the Community of Inquiry is an effective method not only for civics and citizenship education, but generally, for ethics education, and is more reflective of Socrates’ attitude. The notion of following the argument to where it leads “has been a perplexing one ever since Socrates announced it as the guiding maxim of his own philosophical practice” (p.230), and hence is central to the question of “what is a good life?”

### *Philosophical Education and Constructivism*

Lipman was certainly influenced by theorists who valued children as active constructors of knowledge. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that social constructivism underpins his theories on learning and teaching. Using Peirce’s original conception of a community of inquirers, Dewey’s manifestation of inquiry-based learning in the classroom, and Vygotsky’s social constructivism, Lipman could build his idea of a Community of Inquiry.

Although we have already looked at Peirce briefly in Chapter 1, we will revisit him here. Peirce’s ideas are integral to Dewey’s theory, for his emphasis on fallibility is at the heart of inquiry. Lipman (2004), too, saw this as his guiding maxim.

Inquiry began with the failure of our key beliefs and ceased when that belief had been repaired or replaced. We were alerted to the realization that one of our beliefs wasn’t working by the onset of doubt. It was doubt that caused us to reflect, to inquire. It was doubt that compelled our attitude to switch from

an uncritical one to a critical one. It was doubt that forced us to begin thinking imaginatively, creatively, productively, so as to come up with a hypothesis of what could be done to make our doubt subside. (p.3)

Lipman says that fallibility is the basis of his Community of Inquiry which was borrowed directly from Peirce's idea of fallibility in scientific communities of inquiry. Therefore Peirce becomes important to Lipman's concept of inquiry as a community process. Recall that we explored Peirce's idea that knowledge can only be obtained if it is tested against other ideas. Peirce's pragmatist approach should not be confused with scepticism which is the train of thought that one should question everything.

Lipman was baffled by Dewey's dismissal of philosophy as purely a theoretical discipline and his failure to put it to practical use. While Lipman brought out the philosophy in Dewey, it was not recognised by Dewey that philosophy would have its place in the classroom despite his interest in philosophy as a discipline (Lipman, 2004, p.2).<sup>5</sup> Dewey was originally concerned with the notion of scientific inquiry. Scientific education, according to Lipman, seemed the easy connection for Dewey between inquiry and education. Lipman saw that the same connection could be made between philosophical inquiry and education and so he sought to make a practical philosophical model for education purposes. Dewey's most notable influence was his approach to democratic thinking as practiced in the classroom and reflected in the construction of his *Laboratory School* which turned the school into a miniature society. Lipman (1991) notes that Dewey's theories of reflective thinking which involves an awareness of one's own thinking and how this may impact on others is a framework for both democratic thinking and ethical thinking. Lipman says "To know the consequences of ideas is to know their meaning, for as Dewey, pragmatist and follower of Peirce, was convinced, their meaning lies in their practical bearings, the effects they have upon our practice and upon the world" (p.106).

Vygotsky's theories on social-constructivism can also be seen as an influence on Lipman. Lipman notes that Vygotsky's emphasis on thinking and cognitive skills and metacognition were becoming an important part of a new wave of education in the 1970s. Vygotsky can be traced in Lipman's theories of internalisation. It is Lipman's view that the process of inquiry, if it is successful in the classroom, will translate to behaviours adopted both inside and outside of a Community of Inquiry. The dispositions to think ethically, for example, if practiced in an inquiry will give students the disposition to use the same decision-making skills required in the inquiry to apply to situations outside (Lipman, 1991, p.242)

We now have an understanding of the Community of Inquiry as Lipman intended it to be implemented. We have explored the theoretical underpinnings in terms of Lipman's overall goal to engage students in active citizenship by thinking together. While the process of inquiry is important to Lipman in terms of letting the argument lead, this process of thinking collaboratively was a catalyst for the creation of democratic dispositions. Taking his lead from Dewey and Vygotsky, it was Lipman's view that engaging students in dialogue would

naturally relate to dispositions outside of the classroom. Lipman's idea of thinking through inquiry is inherently creative while also retaining a balance of critical and caring thinking (the latter will be explored later). In contrast, Nelson's Socratic Dialogue focuses on critical philosophy. It is to Nelson and Socratic Dialogue that we shall now turn.

### NELSON'S SOCRATIC DIALOGUE

Imagine a group of students philosophising in a classroom using personal experience as the primary building block for understanding issues. The process, due to its specific structure, can be likened to an hourglass. Facilitated by an experienced teacher, the students begin with a universal question. One by one the students offer examples, each of which undergoes analysis until one of them is chosen as the focus for rigorous discussion. Their only purpose at this stage of the inquiry is to determine where, in the example, the universal can be found. From the widest part of the hourglass they move toward its narrow waist. The group does this by trying to decide on a definition through consensual articulation, in an attempt to try to particularise the universal. From here the dialogue begins to broaden again. The working definition is again applied but this time to all of the other examples raised earlier by the students. They do this in an attempt to decide if the definition is truly universal—a continual process of modifying where necessary. At the final stage, now toward the bottom of the hourglass, they try to falsify the definition with counterexamples until the group has succeeded in its quest to find a conclusive definition. If such a definition cannot be found, they continue to undergo this process and modify the definition until they do so. Let us now look at the history and background of how such a process developed in educational settings.

#### *Background and History*

In the 1920s, German philosopher Leonard Nelson adapted and promoted the Socratic Method as a way of renewing education and politics. Nelson was not simply interested in philosophical education, he was also interested in mathematics and politics. These interests influenced his approach to education through an emphasis on logic and reason, and his inherent desire to create reflective and critical citizens. Following the thinking of Immanuel Kant and Jakob Fries, he believed that by working collaboratively in groups, participants could critically investigate their own beliefs by understanding how they came to their judgments and the assumptions that go unnoticed in their efforts to give meaning to their experiences. Identifying the Socratic Method as both critical dialogue and a means to awareness of the limits of human cognition, Nelson emphasised the Socratic search for the foundations of knowledge more prevalent in the later dialogues of Plato, and played down the Socratic claim of 'not knowing' or coming from a position of ignorance. This is significantly different to Lipman, who, through his

pragmatist links, held onto the notion of fallibilism as a regulative ideal of the community of inquiry.

While acknowledged for having contributed significantly to political theory, Nelson's development of these theories was cut short by his early death at the age of forty-five. Similarly, his work on Socratic Dialogue was also incomplete. His adaptation of the Socratic Method may not have seen the light of day had it not been for one of his students, Gustav Heckmann, and later among others, Jos Kessels. Heckmann is particularly renowned for being responsible for its distribution in Europe. Because Nelson wrote primarily in German, his many contributions have not been translated into English and are, therefore, not widely accessible in the English-speaking world. Much of what we know about the success of his method of dialogue is the result of those practitioners who introduced it into educational and other settings.

Like Dewey, Nelson had an experimental school. The purpose of *Landeserziehungsheim Walkemuehle* was to "train its pupils in enlightened and liberal citizenship" (Blanshard in Nelson, 1965). Writing on the aims and purposes of the school, in the publication of Nelson's collected papers, *Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy*, Blanshard wrote the following in his foreword.

Nelson developed in his own classrooms a method of teaching philosophy that seems to have been extraordinarily effective. He believed it to be derived from the nature of the subject itself. What is philosophy essentially? ... It is a special kind of mental activity directed toward a special end. If we can agree about this end, we can perhaps also agree about the activity, and about the best means by which one mind may induce it in others. (p.vi)

Proponents of this method agree that engagement in philosophical dialogue through striving for consensus leads to a close examination of arguments and hence a propensity for reason through a process of self-examination and self-criticism. The common view held by the proponents of Socratic Dialogue is that the model has an emphasis on collective agreement in which the group journeys together through dialogue to reach a consensus at the conclusion of the inquiry, and a group understanding of the topic under discussion. The group reaches this conclusion through a series of steps. Nelson proposed that the group proceed through seven steps that follow sequentially (the process we will address in more detail later). These steps, according to Nelson, must be followed rigorously in order to conclude the dialogue. Not everyone agreed with Nelson. For example, if there is not enough time to complete all of the steps then no conclusion can be reached. This led to a number of interpretations of Nelson's original formulation of Socratic Dialogue.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, Nelson was adamant that there may be a need for the modernisation of Socratic Dialogue, and hence it could be argued that Nelson may have agreed with the adaptation of his own method. Some proponents who have adapted Socratic Dialogue argue that, had Nelson been present today, his model may have followed a slightly different direction with regards to his interpretation of reaching consensus. Like Lipman who offered training in the

Community of Inquiry, training workshops are available for the purpose of educating facilitators in the process of dialogue. The ‘Kopfwerk Berlin’ is mainly responsible for training in Europe and has also engaged in training in the United Kingdom.

Nelson is startlingly similar to Lipman in his outcomes for education despite the years and continents that separated them. Both argue that philosophical dialogue in the classroom is for the cultivation of judgment. Like Lipman, Nelson argued that the Socratic Method is “the art of teaching not philosophy but philosophizing” (Nelson, 1965, p.1). However, unlike Lipman, who argued that the aim of philosophical education “is not to turn children into philosophers or decision-makers, but to help them become more thoughtful, more reflective, more considerate, more reliable individuals” (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1980, p.15), Nelson placed more emphasis on “making philosophers of the students” (Nelson 1965, p.1). Whereas, Lipman does not intend to make philosophers of students but rather to cultivate the skills used in philosophising, Nelson’s overriding aim was “for the education of responsible political leaders” which he argued could be achieved by thinking philosophically and ethically (Kraft in Nelson 1965, p. ix). We can make the distinction that while both theorists had a similar outcome in mind, for Lipman the focus was on the ethical individual whereas Nelson saw the ethical individual as the political individual.

### *Socratic Dialogue*

Dieter Krohn (2004) points to four features that must be present if a dialogue is to be called a Socratic Dialogue. These are: (1) starting with the concrete and remaining in contact with concrete experience, (2) full understanding between participants, (3) adherence to a subsidiary question until it is answered, and (4) striving for consensus. These defining features of Socratic Dialogue are best explained in terms of their application to practice, which will be the topic of the next section. But I offer here a brief account of each to highlight their importance as defining features for practice.

In Socratic Dialogue, experience and concrete examples play a crucial role in testing universal claims. To Nelson, knowledge must remain connected to human experience. So, rather than considering hypothetical situations that draw on experiences ‘out there’ concrete examples allow the contentious concept being questioned to come out of lived experiences. This is where Krohn’s second feature comes into play. Because the dialogue is concerned with finding a definition, in order to gain full understanding between participants, there must be continual reflection on the application of the concept to these concrete experiences. This process requires participants to adhere to the subsidiary question until it is answered. The subsidiary question in this case may have come out of initial questions that required narrowing down to what is central in the problematic situation. It is this question that holds the focus for the rest of the dialogue. These three features are driven by the most defining feature of Socratic Dialogue—striving for consensus. To come to conclusive definitions there must be a collective

understanding in order to claim, at least provisionally, that there are no further counter arguments.

Socratic Dialogue, according to Boele (1998), is like sport.<sup>7</sup> Every sport has rules of play, which act as guidelines for the players, and helps spectators to understand how the game is played. Socratic Dialogue also has rules, which can be extrapolated from Krohn's four features. However, Boele notes that in order to follow these rules participants must have certain attitudes toward dialogue. These are more like dispositions than rules or guidelines, which he describes as Socratic virtues (p.52). If we take a closer look at Boele's analogy, we can also infer that while rules act as guidelines for both players and spectators, they also define a game as a particular kind of game, which ultimately sets one sport aside from another. The so-called rules of dialogue that Boele talks about also separate Socratic Dialogue from other forms of dialogue or inquiry. The six pedagogical measures described below, and the framework for inquiry discussed in the next section, illustrate this point further.

In Socratic dialogue, the role of the teacher as facilitator is more directive than participatory. While teachers may be "well acquainted with the finer points of the subject under discussion, they remain completely outside the argument itself" (Brune et al, 2004, p.161). The facilitator's task is not that of co-inquirer, rather, he or she has the responsibility of ensuring that the discussion remains focused and that the steps are followed until consensus is reached. Because the method of inquiry is rule-bound, the facilitation is integral to successful discussion. Rene Saran and Barbara Neisser (2004) note that the rules of facilitation will apply differently to school teachers than to adult educators. They assume that the school teacher would have more responsibility for behaviour management than would the adult educator. Whilst it is recognised that teachers are not imparters of knowledge, they must still be seen as figures of authority in order to remain in control of the dialogue, but at the same time being a gentle guide for the dialogue (Brune et al, 2004, p.165). This balance will be different depending on factors such as the age of the students or whether the education is compulsory or voluntary.

Heckmann (2004) gives us six 'pedagogical measures' that a facilitator should follow when conducting a Socratic Dialogue. These measures also give us a good insight into the very principles of Socratic Dialogue as they should be upheld by the facilitator. They are: (1) content impartiality, (2) working from the concrete, (3) mutual understanding, (4) focusing on the current question, (5) striving for consensus, and (6) facilitator interventions. The first measure, content impartiality, refers to the responsibility of the facilitator to remain impartial about the question being discussed (p.109). Because Socratic Dialogue is student-directed, to make substantive contributions would undermine the very purpose of the dialogue.

[I]t is an indispensable requirement to prevent teacher judgements from exercising any influence. Where such influence is not excluded, all further effort is to no avail. The teacher will have done his best to steal a march over the student's own judgement by offering his own prejudice. (Heckmann, 2004, p. 109)

Heckmann's second measure is 'working from the concrete'. Nelson saw practical experience as one of the defining features of his model, and by drawing back to a concrete example the question could be put into the context of a real-life experience. The facilitator has a responsibility to guide the group back to this experience throughout the process of dialogue. 'Mutual understanding', the third measure, has to do with the role of the facilitator as being imperative to productive thinking. It is the facilitator's responsibility to make sure that all students understand each other, which therefore demands that the facilitator be a step ahead of the students at all times. This can occur by modelling procedural questions, for example, by asking questions such as 'I'm not sure if I understand; what was the meaning of your statement' if a student has been unclear in getting their meaning across. The fourth measure is 'keeping focus on the current question'. The facilitator must keep the group focused on one question. However, Heckmann (2004, p.110) acknowledges that if the group notes that another question is needed for clarification before the original question can be addressed, they may make a digression. The fifth measure is 'striving for consensus', which, as I have stated, is the model's most defining feature. This is addressed in more detail later on in this chapter, suffice it to say that it is the role of the facilitator to demand consensus from the group. The final measure is 'facilitator interventions'. The facilitator is free to interrupt the dialogue in order to keep the group on track, but should be free from personal contributions in order to prevent influence on the substantive elements of the dialogue. These six measures give guidelines for how a Socratic Dialogue should be conducted by a facilitator and also give us an insight into the important aspects of dialogue.

Nelson's original view was that participation in Socratic Dialogue would generally be two or more days. It is this factor that makes it difficult to implement, so subsequently the model has been adapted in a variety of ways and for different settings. A standard variation of the original model now exists called a short Socratic Dialogue. In other modified forms it has made its way into education, consultancy, and educational workshop. The techniques have also found a place in philosophical counselling; the most visible proponent is Lou Marinoff in the USA.<sup>8</sup> Murriss and Haynes (2001) point out that both Nelson's and Heckmann's ideas are not suitable for educational settings "because of the rigor involved in this kind of dialogue this is possible only when children are engaged on a *voluntary* basis, and therefore it is not suitable for mainstream education" (p.162). Due to its structure it is not only unsuitable in terms of fitting into the school curriculum, but it also cannot therefore be enforced.<sup>9</sup> While these concerns are understandable, Socratic Dialogue should not be dismissed so readily as not having any contribution to make in contemporary primary and secondary classrooms. It is a matter of finding ways to modify it to suit the particular educational setting. With this thought in mind we can move onto our next topic—classroom practice.

### *Classroom Practice*

It is generally agreed that Socratic Dialogue can be described as a framework of inquiry consisting of seven steps. They are: (1) choose an appropriate question,

(2) choose a personal experience to apply to the question, (3) find a core statement, (4) identify the experience in the core statement, (5) formulate a definition, (6) test the validity of the core statement, and (7) find counterexamples. These steps must be rigorously followed in order to reach a conclusion at the end of the dialogue. So let us view them in more detail.

The question that the participants in the group are to pursue for the coming days is the first step in Socratic dialogue. For our purposes let us assume that this question is an ethical one. After putting forth suggestions, one question is chosen, whether this be an amalgamation of more than one question or a contribution from one member only. All other questions must be put aside to focus on the one at hand. These questions can be filed away for another session at a later date. This is the first instance in the process where consensus features. Again, I will use as examples the questions from Wilks' book used earlier. The original question, 'What makes a character good?' can be reformulated to, 'What do we mean by good?' so that the concept of 'good' can be defined. Arriving at a definition by consensual articulation is fundamental to reaching agreement on the question of good character. It should be noted that it is not always the case that the participants choose the question. It is also common practice for the facilitator to select a question, in which case they must follow the criteria for selecting a question to make it appropriate for inquiry. The question has to be a 'real' question, not a theoretical one. It should always be connected with one's own experiences, and it must not lead to moral condemnation of anyone in the group (Kessels in Murriss & Haynes 2001, p.162). The process of arriving at an appropriate question is much more structured than the process outlined in the previous section on the Community of Inquiry, but it nonetheless needs to be an open-ended question. There are three different levels of questioning that lead to a philosophical question appropriate for a Socratic Dialogue. Students should move from a concrete question to a more abstract question. Brune et al (2004, p.155) pose these as first, second, and third order questions:

- First order question: What is the character doing that is good?
- Second order question: What is good behavior?
- Third order question: What is good?

Personal experience plays a major role in Socratic Dialogue, and is at the core of the second step in the proceedings. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the 'lived experience' volunteered by one of the participants in the group can be unpacked and used to illustrate inadequacy of the definition of the concept being explored. Secondly, it helps not only the bearer of the experience but also all of the participants to relate to the experience in order to better articulate their perspectives or feelings in regard to the topic at hand. The experience must meet certain criteria: (1) it must be the bearer's own experience, (2) it must be an event which has concluded prior to the commencement of the dialogue, and (3) it must be one in which the member volunteering the information is willing to extend and share all facets of the story for investigation (Prawda, 2000, para.6).

The third step builds around deciding on a core statement. Once the experience has been chosen, based on its relevance to the topic and its relatedness to many of the lives of the participants, it “is then retold in much more detail and the group poses any clarifying questions they have” (Marinoff, 1999, p.263). Once the experience has been broken into details, a core statement can be formed that integrates both the experience and the topic on which the group has decided to focus (Boele 1998, p.50). If we turn again to our example, then the experience would be applied to the question ‘What do we mean by good?’

In the fourth step, the group must identify precisely at what point the topic under discussion (i.e., in our example, the concept ‘good’) occurs in the experience. As Marinoff (1999, p.263) states, “once everyone agrees on where ‘X’ occurs, you can begin to decide what ‘X’ is.” In the excerpt from Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates demonstrates this when he inadvertently says, ‘if you can give me an example of justice, then you must tacitly know what justice is’. This illustrates why personal experience is so important. Participants can relate to the experience, but they must also use the example to help formulate a concise definition of the concept being discussed. Boele (1998, p.56) argues that the experience is the touchstone. Because participants can relate to this experience, it becomes central to reaching consensus. In our example, the participants formulate a precise definition of the term ‘good’. Boele says “without something comparable, there will be no mutual understanding and no consensus” (p.60).

The fifth step in the process of Socratic Dialogue is arguably the most difficult because of the extensive emphasis on consensus, more than in any of the other steps. The group must come to agreement on a definition, using the experience as an example. This requires a rigorous process of conceptual analysis and logical reasoning referred to as ‘regressive abstraction’. This technical strategy develops a syllogistic structure of thought as its method of rigorous inquiry. It is an abstraction because the “conclusion is derived from the inquiry by a process of abstracting from the concreteness of the example so as to uncover the assumptions about [the concept] which are contained in it. It is called regressive because the group works back, as it were, from the concrete example to the general answer to its opening question” (Van Hooft, 1999). In this case, if the group were inquiring about what it means to be good, the definition would be informed by a concrete example of where ‘good’ may have occurred. By identifying what good is in this case may inform the definition and the process continues.

Reaching consensus over definitions is at the root of Socratic dialogue. Socrates also strived for consensus over definitions, but not as an end in itself. Rather, it was a way of achieving greater understanding of certain terms used in the discussion (Lindop, 2002, p.37). Because a word may carry with it different meanings, conceptual analysis for Socrates played an important role in defining or clarifying terms. For example, in Plato’s *Protagoras*, Socrates shows the inter changeability of meaning when referring to the term ‘beauty’. After engaging in dialogue with a fellow Athenian, Socrates determines that beauty may not necessarily refer to physical attributes, but also to mental attributes (pp.36–7). The purpose of this example is to illustrate that words can be ambiguous or vague, and hence, that it is

imperative to be clear about what we mean when using terms. By finding examples and using personal experiences we can define our terms. This process, if done rigorously, will bring about a conclusive definition, which is what Socratic Dialogue sets out to achieve.

Although the experiences of the other participants may have been put aside, in the sixth step of the dialogue these may be recovered and examined. The definition which forms the core statement that has been agreed upon by the participants in step three must then be applied to each of the other experiences to test the validity of the core statement (Prawda, 2000). If the core statement, for example ‘good is anything that is altruistic’ is manifested in all of the experiences, then the group can move onto the next and final stage of the dialogue. However, if an experience either refutes or places doubt on the accuracy of the definition, then the participants must regroup and review their definition until it can no longer be contested. After this is done, the group is ready for the final stage.

All prior experiences that have been volunteered in the process of dialogue have been restricted to all of the members’ own experiences. In the seventh step, however, the participants must think of other situations, hypothetical or real, which can act as counterexamples outside of those already presented in order to refute the definition that has been established (Marinoff 1999, p.264). For example, the group should find situations that illustrate what ‘good’ is that doesn’t appear altruistic. If the definition is again proven incapable of accommodating these counterexamples, then the participants must go back to one of the previous steps. It is the task of the facilitator to ensure that this happens, and that the group is brought back to the appropriate steps. Once the group can find no more counterexamples, and a conclusive definition is established, only then can the dialogue be concluded.

In a Socratic Dialogue participants can also engage in meta-dialogue, which is a dialogue on the process and strategies of the dialogue itself. A meta-dialogue can take place at any time. When students find that they reach a point that needs resolving due to conflict or inquiry being blocked, they can ask to break into meta-dialogue free from the substantive dialogue (Saran & Neisser, 2004, p.33). For example, if the group is stuck on a definition because one member is closed to further suggestions, the whole group can address the situation of blocking directly before continuing on with the dialogue. Meta-dialogue can also occur before the dialogue to clear up any problems before the group begins, or in cases when there are “any disciplinary problems or difficult group dynamic tensions during the lesson, one can immediately interrupt the main dialogue to clear up these difficulties in a meta-dialogue” (p.33). This aspect of dialogue is an important learning process as it allows for the participants to concentrate on the topic in a disciplined way in the inquiry itself. It should be noted that this was added to Nelson’s original model by Heckmann but is now widely accepted as an integral part of Socratic Dialogue.

### *Socratic Dialogue and Ethical Inquiry*

Nelson was interested in cultivating ethical thinking in students. A large part of his theory was devoted to ethics within philosophy. Many proponents of Socratic

Dialogue have used the method for ethical inquiry, and in many of the papers translated into English, Socratic Dialogue is viewed as being most useful for the exploration of ethical concepts as well as being a model that cultivates ethical thinking through its very process.<sup>10</sup> In other words, as well as a concern for the cultivation of judgment, the process of Socratic Dialogue is in itself an ethical process (Saran & Neisser, 2004, p.39). Dieter Birnbacher (2005) argues that the aim of Socratic Dialogue is to create independent minds in a collaborative setting through developing reasoned judgment in students. It is this ability to reason in a group based on personal experiences that makes Socratic Dialogue an ethical dialogue. Students need to develop judgment ability without the necessity of theoretical knowledge of philosophy, religious education, ethics or values education. He argues that Socratic Dialogue is particularly appropriate for developing such dispositions in children. Philosophy itself is concrete, related to life, and hence the reason why we start with a concrete example in Socratic Dialogue. It is integral to the cultivation of ethical thinking and the purpose of Socratic Dialogue that students should be able to think for themselves, or cultivate what Birnbacher terms independent minds. Nelson (1965) asks:

How is education at all possible? If the end of education is rational self determination, i.e., a condition in which the individual does not allow his behaviour to be determined by outside influences but judges and acts according to his own insight, the question arises: How can we affect a person by outside influences so that he will not permit himself to be affected by outside influence? We must resolve this paradox or abandon the task of education. (p.19)

This paradox, he argues is resolved by engaging in philosophy. Nelson is adamant that the thinking must occur naturally for the students, free from any teacher influence. Socratic Dialogue is also valued because it is integral to the cultivation of democratic thinking through its emphasis on consensus. Consensus is viewed as a tool to ensure that not only students are clear in their meanings but by requiring consensus, students must have a deep understanding of what the other is saying. Only when we truly understand what another is saying can we either agree or disagree (Kletschko & Siebert, 2004, p.119). This, the proponents of Socratic Dialogue argue, is at the heart of democratic thinking.

### *Truth, Knowledge and Striving for Consensus*

Nelson was influenced by the tradition of critical philosophy, and is renowned as a philosopher for his rediscovery and expansion of Kant-Friesian philosophy (Wiegner, 2005). According to this tradition the primary task of philosophy is criticism rather than the justification of knowledge (Ross, 2006). Following Kant, the term criticism means making judgments about the possibilities of knowledge prior to advancing to knowledge itself. The task of philosophy is to subject all theories of knowledge, including those about philosophy itself, to critical review as a measure of their validity. In other words, philosophical inquiry is not about the

establishment and demonstration of theories about reality, but rather about the character and foundations of experience. Philosophy must concern itself with how human reason works, and within what limits, in order to correctly apply it to sense experience, and to judge if it can be applied also to metaphysical objects.

From these basic considerations and his theory of Socratic Method, Nelson developed the epistemological foundations of his method of dialogue. Socratic Dialogue is guided by the idea of regressive abstraction, described as the process of “inquiring into people’s concrete and abstract conceptions by exposing the basis of the more general truths upon which these conceptions are founded” (Schuster, 1999, p.60). It is the establishment of knowledge as true through a process of objective verification gained from concrete judgment and personal experience. Understood in this way, Nelson has come under criticism on the basis that his view of rational philosophical truth as too closely aligned with Plato’s theory of knowledge. This confusion has followed Nelson even after his death, even though “it is now clearer, after the work of Karl Popper, that Socrates was using the logic of falsification rather than verification” (Brown, 1965).

Heckmann (2004) has attempted to clarify the confusion by drawing attention to Nelson’s most central feature of Socratic Dialogue—striving for consensus. Central to Socratic Dialogue, he says, “is the search for meaning beyond the purely subjective, to strive for valid inter-subjective statements, for truth, *as we used to say*” (p.111, *italics mine*). He seems to be saying that valid truth claims can be arrived at only within inquiring communities whose purpose is truth-seeking. He then acknowledges that confidence in valid inter-subjective statements has been undermined and that “[s]triving after truth and claims to have recognised truth in respect of a particular question are often considered presumptuous” (p.111). Note that it is not only claims that recognise truth that are under question, but striving after truth is treated with equal suspicion. He overcomes these objections in the following passage.

Whenever we reach consensus about a statement in a Socratic Dialogue it has a provisional character. For the moment there are no further doubts about the outcome of our effort. Yet a point of view not previously noted can come into our awareness and arouse new doubts. In such a case the proposition has to be tested anew. No statement that ever emerges can ever avoid the need for further revision. (p.111)

Heckmann’s position seems to be that the purpose of Socratic Dialogue is striving for truth, but any claim to have recognised truth is only provisional. If we accept this about Socratic Dialogue, then its educative value is not in producing answers, but rather as a means of evaluating beliefs.

What Nelson treasured most about the method used by Socrates, was its effectiveness in getting people to think for themselves, and to realise their own ignorance of the knowledge that they had once thought they possessed. Put another way, he was interested in the process of unlearning and getting students to discover the presuppositions and principles underlying their own beliefs. This is the historical Socrates of the early Platonic dialogues who never gets an answer that holds up to scrutiny. The idea that the method used by Socrates can produce

answers was held by Plato, which is demonstrated in some of the transitional dialogues and certainly the later dialogues where Socrates resorts to leading questions; the dialogue with the slave to demonstrate knowledge as recollection, as featured in *Meno*, being exemplary. But it is these sorts of leading questions that Nelson was opposed to, and said should not be used.

We must bear in mind that instruction in philosophy is not concerned with heaping solution on solution, not indeed with establishing results, but solely with learning the method of reaching solutions. If we do this, we shall observe at once that the teacher's proper role cannot be that of a guide keeping his party from wrong paths and accidents. Nor yet is he a guide going in the lead while his party simply follows in the expectation that this will prepare them to find the same path later on by themselves. On the contrary, the essential thing is the skill with which the teacher puts the pupils on their own responsibility at the very beginning by teaching them to go by themselves—although they would not on that account go alone—and by so developing this independence that one day they may be able to venture forth alone, self-guidance having replaced the teacher's supervision. (Nelson, 1929, p.439)

This issue of consensus as a defining feature of Socratic Dialogue still remains. Heckmann and other contemporary theorists still retain the view that consensus is an important aspect of the dialogue insofar as it requires the group to have a full understanding of the other views and is important for understanding of the topic in general. Regardless of whether or not Heckmann has an accurate account of Nelson's position on truth and knowledge (although it seems it must be conceded that he is correct), consensus must still play a featured role in arriving at truth, otherwise the dialogue will have a different structure and will no longer be a Socratic Dialogue as Nelson intended. Recall Krohn's list of the non-negotiable features of Socratic Dialogue, one of which is 'striving for a consensus'. The provisional character of Socratic Dialogue does not discount the value of consensus. To the contrary, it demands of all participants in the group that they strive for rigor in terms of paying attention to the logic of the arguments presented, to the analysis of concepts, and to the necessity of finding counterexamples to falsify claims. The hourglass remains the metaphor for how to proceed through the seven steps of Socratic Dialogue. Consensus does not happen as a result of verification, but when all attempts at falsification by the group have been exhausted. The group can claim to have arrived at truth, but with the understanding that any claim to truth is provisional.

If Socratic Dialogue functions as a means of evaluating beliefs by examining contradictions among their implications, then the method is not one of verification of truth but it "shares the logic of falsification with Popper's philosophy of science" (Ross, 2006). It is noteworthy that there are similarities between Popper's theory of falsification and Peirce's theory of fallibilism. Both accepted that we can never be completely certain about knowledge. The more difficult question is whether or not we can be reasonable in increasing our confidence in the truth of a theory when it passes observational tests. Popper, who was concerned with the logic of science, said 'no'

because logically no number of positive outcomes that result from observations or experimental testing can confirm a hypothesis with any positive degree of probability, but a single counterexample is logically decisive. Peirce, recall, argued that significant insights or reliable knowledge could be achieved through a form of rational inquiry bound by the rules of an interpersonal scientific method. Nelson's concern was Popper's concern, which is evident in his demand for rigor in the procedures of logic.<sup>11</sup> In sum, truth in Socratic Dialogue can only be provisional, for universal claims derived from observation cannot be conclusively verified even by consensus.

### BOHMIAN DIALOGUE

Imagine a group of twenty-five people voluntarily sitting in a circle with no pre-set agenda engaged in dialogue together. All have agreed beforehand that no group-level decisions will be made in the dialogue. Their purpose for being there is to create an open and free space where no-one is obliged to reach any conclusions, nor to say anything or not say anything. Each person naturally brings assumptions to the group meeting. But these assumptions are not brought to bear by others nor suppressed in any way. Instead, assumptions are suspended, and as the session progresses these eventually unfold. No-one seems to be judging one another even though they are asked to be as honest and transparent as possible as they share their ideas, controversial or otherwise. The group meets regularly for an indefinite period of time. Gradually the members of the group become familiar with the process and with one another. They are not here to solve problems or to resolve conflict, but they are all concerned about exploring thought, which may eventually result in increased understanding of fellowship among the group. The group is surprised that they have indeed resolved problems along the way, and their new experiences have developed a new understanding of culture and how to contribute to its development.

This encounter with dialogue as free inquiry was David Bohm's vision. Individual and collective assumptions, ideas, beliefs, values, and emotions that subtly control human interactions are explored collectively as a group in the 'spirit of dialogue'.

The spirit of Dialogue is one of free play, a sort of collective dance of the mind that, nevertheless, has immense power and reveals coherent purpose.

Once begun it becomes continuing adventure that can open the way to significant and creative change. (Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991)

We will now explore the last of the three models of dialogue, namely Bohmian Dialogue (also called Bohm's Dialogue or simply Dialogue).

#### *Background and History*

Bohm was primarily a physicist, but made profound contributions to science and philosophy. He contributed significantly to theories on quantum physics, worked with J. Robert Oppenheimer at Berkeley in the early 1940s, enjoyed much scientific collaboration, was author and co-author of many scientific books in which his important ideas were presented in concise and simplified form, and at

the time of his death was Emeritus Professor at Birkbeck College in London. He became acquainted with Albert Einstein and entered into a series of intensive conversations with him. He also paid close attention to Einstein's epistemological challenges to Danish physicist Niels Bohr's interpretation of quantum theory. Bohm noted that the pursuit of scientific knowledge was hindered by personal ambition, adversarial defence of theory, and tradition. These observations led him to believe that it was not just scientists but that humans generally were caught up with similar motivations and actions which led to personal and social fragmentation, which cut across cultural and geographical boundaries. Humans, he remarked, learned to accept such a fragmented state of affairs.

Bohm also searched beyond physics and maintained a long dialogue with the Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti and the English psychiatrist Patrick de Mare. From these enduring dialogues, which probed deeply into various dimensions of human knowledge and experience, the limitations of human thought, and the nature of insight and intelligence beyond thought, Bohm's work in physics became unique for he built a spiritual foundation into his theories that gave them a philosophical significance while at the same time preserving their empirical and scientific basis. These dialogues also produced his views on dialogue itself as a path to greater understanding and learning, which culminated in a published book, entitled *On Dialogue*. To counter the fragmentation and breakdown in communication in our culture Bohm argued that people in dialogue can collaboratively create the possibility for new insights, which would not occur by merely thinking on their own.

During his lifetime Bohm's increasing interest in the connection between philosophy, science and cognition, with themes of wholeness and interconnectedness, meant that his conception of dialogue evolved. Interest in Bohm's techniques of dialogue continued after his death, and as a result the dialogue has evolved beyond what he intended. Several groups have been formed around the world to engage in Bohmian Dialogue, and The Massachusetts Institute of Technology initiated a Dialogue Project. His techniques have been widely used in the field of organisational development, and they have also been adapted in 'prison dialogues' for staff and inmates as a way of increasing communication between them and to come to collective understandings.

### *The Features of Dialogue According to Bohm*

To illustrate the connection between thought and individual and social fragmentation, Bohm appealed to an analogy of a watch. When smashed into random pieces, the separate parts are disconnected and unable to function, whereas intact they share an integral relationship with one another as a functional whole. Analogously, human thought processes have a tendency toward perceiving the world in a fragmentary way, to break things up into discrete logical and ontological categories, which human selves believe to be actual representations of the way the world is, i.e., we assume automatically that our representations are true pictures of reality. This is due to the structure of our consciousness, formed over the whole of evolution. Our beliefs and values are grounded in assumptions that have their

origins in many contributing factors; parenting, media, peers and so forth. But we fail to see them as guides for action, as unexamined beliefs and values, or unquestioned knowledge. Dialogue was Bohm's key to helping people understand one another and to understand the way they perceive the world.

Dialogue is really aimed at going into the whole thought process and changing the way the thought process occurs collectively. We haven't really paid much attention to thought as a process. We have engaged in thoughts, but we have only paid attention to the content, not to the process. Why does thought require attention? Everything requires attention, really. If we ran machines without paying attention to them, they would break down. Our thought, too, is a process, and it requires attention, otherwise it's going to go wrong. (Bohm, 1996, p.9)

Simply put, the beliefs and values that we hold are the product of all of the environmental factors, social, political, technological and so forth, working in conjunction with one another. We should not be so arrogant to think that our beliefs and values are the product of individual thought that springs from within us, otherwise we become like the machines that break down due to lack of attention. If thought derives from collaboration, then we can examine and perhaps change our way of thinking through collaboration—through dialogue.

According to Bohm, dialogue is essentially a conversation between equals. It does not share the same meaning as 'discussion' and 'debate' which involves breaking things up. Both these forms of conversation, he says, "contain an implicit tendency to point toward a goal, to hammer out an agreement, to try to solve a problem or have one's opinion prevail" (Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991). It is also not an 'exchange' which is characterised by conversation aimed at friendship, gossip and other information. On these points he would find agreement with Lipman and Nelson. They would also agree with Bohm about his understanding of dialogue as educative, and as a way of exploring presuppositions, ideas, beliefs and feelings and the 'quest for truth'. However, the purpose of Bohm's model of dialogue is notably different. He was concerned *primarily* with the process of dialogue and the correlation between thinking and speech, rather than the content of the inquiry. This is not to say that Lipman and Nelson dismissed the importance of reflecting on and analysing what and how one thinks, feels and learns. Lipman, in particular, was conscious of the need for dialogue as a meta-cognitive process. However, they placed more emphasis on problem-solving, upon which meta-cognition is the medium to achieving that goal. Bohm is important because of his emphasis not on what we inquire into but *how* we engage in dialogue and the thought processes behind our interactions with others—what he understood as a kind of meta-dialogue aimed at clarifying the process of dialogue itself.

Bohm's method of dialogue could be said to capture the spirit of what he thought of as a non-purposive, free and open space. Peter Garrett<sup>12</sup> lists what he thinks are the main features for the creation of such a space.

- Listening/attentiveness: Hearing from a point of view as an outside listener, standing aside from our assumptions.

- Speaking/authoring: Speaking not from one’s own perspective, but thinking about what needs to be said.
- Suspension/disassociation from ego/identity: Standing aside from your own beliefs as an observer. Thinking of thought as collective and the need to contribute to it. Also, suspending your feelings for the moment. Feelings of anger etc may still be felt, but think about why such feelings come about. Being aware.
- Respect for each other and the process: The group being a nucleus of thought. Forging a fellowship that goes together into inquiry.

Listening and being attentive have a major role to play in dialogue. To be engaged in dialogue together is more than simply coming together to talk—it may not be the case that they are actually actively listening and therefore not engaging in dialogue (Reeve, 2010, pp.97). The participants need to develop what Bohm calls an ‘impersonal fellowship’, which is a trust and openness, regardless of not sharing any history or experiences together (Bohm, 1996; Reeve, 2005). Participants should listen attentively and collaboratively create something new or innovative from the views shared by the group. Listening attentively is a prerequisite for mutual understanding and exploration of human thought. It affords the opportunity for participants to examine their preconceptions, prejudices and patterns of thought. To relate this back to our earlier discussion on silence, silence is used as wait-time and as a probing questioner (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, pp.47–48). According to Garrett listening attentively allows for each individual to stand away from their own viewpoints to ‘really listen’ to what is being said by others. In this listening situation, it is not listening from a personal viewpoint but in the role of an ‘outside listener’ where what is being received is not to be interpreted based on preconceptions, assumptions, unchallenged beliefs or values.

We have already noted the interconnectedness of silence and speech in a dialogue in the previous chapter. When silence is treated as an opportunity to listen, to consider the ideas of others, to be probing questioners, and to formulate opinions, participants are thinking about what needs to be said in terms of contributing to discussion; to *connect* with others in dialogue. To Bohm, speaking in dialogue is not to speak from one’s own assumptions but to keep track of those assumptions. As Garrett says, the overall direction of the dialogue must come from the needs of the dialogue and group rather than an individual perspective. Particular attention must be paid to the direction of the dialogue and to what others are saying. Attention in this case is twofold: to the dialogue itself and to the contributions of the other participants (both verbal and nonverbal). They must work together in dialogue toward a shared understanding. The difficulty is that the dialogue has to deal with the assumptions of the participants, but not just the assumptions themselves but the thinking processes behind the assumptions. This usually manifests in feelings of frustration, anger, and other feelings and emotions, due to the different value systems and cultures in a group with large numbers. Moreover, participants are likely to be tied up in their own interests, or inclined to place more weight on their own opinions and values, and in all likelihood to defend

their own positions. To work collectively as a group under such circumstances, the participants need to suspend their assumptions in order to consciously open themselves to listening and understanding each person's point of view.

The idea of listening attentively and keeping track of assumptions requires the suspension or disassociation from one's own beliefs and feelings. Bohm recommends that we don't suppress our assumptions, but to create a space between our judgments and our reactions so that we can listen to others in a new way. This can create opportunities for any ill feelings or frustration towards others or their ideas to be dealt with more reflectively. Dialogue, thus, becomes a way of freeing ourselves from assumptions rather than assumptions themselves becoming a technology of silence (e.g., assumptions based on stereotypes). Seen from this perspective, it is not a matter of suppressing assumptions, but rather they are merely suspended in terms of making judgments based on them. This has the potential to create reflective group practices which can act to counter adversarial interactions among participants. Garrett refers to this aspect of the dialogue as the principle of suspension or disassociation from ego or identity. By this he means that there must be a concentration on the progress of the dialogue in general and the attention to the group's direction rather than an individual argument. By disassociating from the self, there is chance for a greater collaboration that is free from adversary.

Lastly, but certainly not of any lesser importance, is the principle of respect for each other and the process. By this, Garrett means forming a relationship based on fellowship. There is a mutual respect for each individual that is connected through the dialogue and also a respect for the dialogue itself. Bohm uses the term impersonal fellowship to describe the experience of collaborative dialogue wherein the participants are engaged in the process not the content of thought in order to overcome their perceived blocks or limitations. They suspend their assumptions, judgments, and values, and enter into a dialogue and the flow of meaning so that the group can move away from an emphasis on the individual aspects of ego to a group process. To have respect for each other is to put aside our attachments to the content of thought and be involved in an exploration of common meaning from which a shared state of consciousness emerges—an internalisation of the inquiry process. Hester Reeve (2005) describes the relationship between participants in dialogue as analogous to spectators supporting the same team at a football match. While the football fans may not have any personal connection outside of the football match, they unite in their commitment to the game. Their connection in this space is their common interest in football. They have a sort of 'fellowship' rather than a friendship. This is similar to the relationship that individuals in a Bohmian Dialogue have with each other, however, Reeve notes that there is more trust involved in a dialogue because each person is required to contribute and essentially take on the role of the facilitator (p.9). In both of these instances, friendship may ensue from their connection over common interest and, as Bohm suggests, a friendship that results after dialogue is stronger because their initial relationship underwent an exploration of values and assumptions.

Let me briefly sum up what has been said so far. Bohm “insisted that sustained inquiry into the nature of consciousness and the ‘ground of being’ is essential if we are to have some prospect of bringing an end to fragmentation in the world” (Nichol, in Bohm, 1996, p.xvii). Bohm’s techniques are intended to bring about connectedness. Like Bohm’s metaphorical watch smashed into random pieces, which once had an integral relationship with one another as a functioning whole, thought gone unchecked can fragment things which are not meant to be separate. Bohm’s overarching intention for dialogue was to shed light on the activity of fragmentation “not only as a theoretical analysis, but also as a concrete experiential process” (p.viii). Otherwise fragmentation of selves leads to social, cultural and political fragmentation. I will take up the matter of connectedness, and Bohm’s ideas on this, briefly later in the chapter, and again in Chapter 6 on caring thinking. We will now take a brief look at what Bohm’s techniques look like in practice.

### *Dialogue in Practice*

In practice Bohmian Dialogue has no detailed organisational or procedural guidelines. Bohm found that a dialogue works best with a group of twenty to forty people gathered together facing one another in a circle. As a preliminary to the dialogue the group is introduced to the meaning of the activity. This might require the guidance of experienced facilitators so that everybody understands the difference between Bohm’s method of dialogue and other group processes, including information on the suspension of assumptions, group expectations, duration and regularity of sessions, and the processes of collective inquiry without facilitation and a pre-set agenda. Their task is not like that of the facilitators described for the Community of Inquiry or Socratic Dialogue but to ‘lead from behind’ as Bohm puts it. Usually two hours is optimum for each session and the more regularly the group meets the more the participants become familiar with the idea of dialogue. But even the clearest introduction is likely to result in confusion, frustration, and self-consciousness. When the group finally commences there is still anxiety and concern as to whether or not the participants are engaging in dialogue. But this sort of behaviour is seen as encouraging, for the purpose of the dialogue is to explore the social constructs and inhibitions that affect communications, not to avoid them.

Once dialogue commences it is up to the group to find their own direction. This requires listening attentively and formulating questions. There is often a period of silence that precedes the dialogue before someone finds the words to begin discussion. This initial period can turn to awkwardness, but sometimes it is accompanied by a level of trust that someone *will* make the first comment and that others will then follow through with the dialogue. Garrett likens it to playing ball: if you throw it, you must be able to trust that it will in turn be thrown back to you. The absence of a facilitator means that during prolonged silences it is up to each participant to get the ball rolling, so to speak. Bohm and his colleagues have observed that some participants tend to talk more than others. Usually the less talkative ones will speak as they become more familiar with the experience and the

more talkative ones will talk less and listen more. There is no limit on how long the group will continue its ongoing exploration. It would be contrary to Bohm's purpose of dialogue to become fixed or institutionalised. Dialogue must remain constantly open, which means constantly changing memberships and schedules to prevent rigidity. Alternatively, the group naturally dissolves on its own accord after a period of time.

Suspension of thoughts, impulses, judgments, and assumptions is crucial to the dialogue. Participants generally find this the most difficult element of the dialogue as mostly they are unfamiliar with this kind of activity. Suspension requires attentive listening and looking. It is necessary that participants speak for without it there would be no dialogue. But attentively listening to the group and to oneself is essential because this is where exposure to reactions, impulses, feelings and opinions can be given serious attention while they are actually being experienced. By sustaining attention on these experiences, the thought process can become more reflective, and the structures of thought that might otherwise go undetected could reveal their incoherence. This could have an impact on the overall process that flows from thought, to feeling and to acting within the group. This externalising and internalising of the process could lead to the reconstruction of thought both individually and collectively. The process has to be persistent for it to be successful.

The difficulties of initiating discussion notwithstanding, dialogue can begin with any topic that is of interest to the participants. The content should not be determined beforehand and no subject should be excluded. If some participants feel that certain exchanges or subjects are disturbing or inappropriate, it is vital that they express their thoughts or feelings during the dialogue. Otherwise participants might be inclined to complain or express their dissatisfactions or frustration afterwards. It is exactly these sorts of discussions that should be voiced inside the dialogue as it affords the opportunity for moving the dialogue into deeper realms of meaning and coherence beyond superficial conversation. Participants would be exploring the thoughts behind their assumptions, beliefs, and values as well as the feelings and emotions towards others.

At the end of a dialogue group session the participants may have developed a better understanding of some of their own presuppositions that underlie their convictions. Each participant has the further opportunity to individually reflect on what they learned before the commencement of the subsequent session. Indeed some of the participants may have already discovered that they have gained new insights through the process of collective creativity. However, Bohm hoped that these dialogue groups would continue to meet for the purposes of meeting collectively to explore the structure of fragmentation in order to create opportunities for fellowship and sharing.

### *Bohman Dialogue and Ethics as Connected Selves*

Dialogue as a free association conducted in groups to counter the fragmentation of selves emphasises its underpinning purpose of developing ethical persons. It is ethical not because it rests on any particular normative or meta-ethical claim.

Rather, the engagement in communal dialogue as a way of understanding the group as a whole reinforces certain behaviour through an awareness of the interpersonal relationship between the individual and the group. While Bohm's method of dialogue shares no ethical content necessarily, emphasis is on the creation of an ethical discourse. Engagement in dialogue is essential not for the sake of personal problems, but it is a matter of culture. The group is a microcosm of society, and the goal is to get the whole group to have a better understanding of it. Bohm's (1996) own words, I think, make this clear: "in a dialogue, each person does not attempt to *make common* certain ideas or items of information that are already known to him. Rather, it may be said that two people are making something *in common*, i.e., creating something new together" (p.2).

Due to the emphasis on collective thought, the relationships that are forged in the dialogue are intensified because of the reliance on each other. The forging of such relationships requires trust, especially because of the perpetual reliance on reciprocity in a dialogue that has no facilitator or no set agenda. There is also the reciprocal requirement that each of the individuals in the group will receive what is being said in an open manner. Not only are opinions, beliefs and values required to be considered by each of the participants in a respectful and considered way, but there must be genuine engagement, through a process of careful listening, reflection and contribution in order to create the opportunity to counter the fragmentation of selves and subsequent fragmentation of the social, cultural and political aspects of life. The challenge is to listen, and to create a new kind of association in which we listen deeply to all the views that people may express—a kind of wholeness. Given the emphasis that Bohm places on relationships, the ethic that underpins it could be described as an ethic of connectedness.

### *Connecting Science, Philosophy and Cognition*

To recap, Bohmian dialogue is "a kind of collective proprioception or immediate mirroring back of both the content of thought and the less apparent, dynamic structures that govern it" (Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991). It creates an opportunity for each of the participants to reflect back to each other and to the whole group, the preconceptions, prejudices and the underlying patterns behind their thoughts, opinions, beliefs and feelings, and to examine them and to share their insights. Any number of people can engage in dialogue, including with oneself, revealing Bohm's recognition that internal dialogue is more than a monologue. However, he suggests the ideal is twenty to forty people seated in a circle talking together. The significance of this can be found in the reports from an anthropologist who lived with a group of North American hunter-gatherers. The group was typical of similar hunter-gather groups who ranged in size from twenty-five to forty people. The tribe met regularly, sat in a circle, and talked with no apparent purpose. There was no leader, everybody could participate, and no decisions were made. The meetings lasted until the group dispersed. Yet afterward the group seemed to know what to do as a result of knowing each other so well. Later in smaller groups they would

make decisions and take action (Bohm, 1996, pp.16–17). From these observations he inferred the following conclusion.

[S]uch gatherings seemed to provide and reinforce a kind of cohesive bond or fellowship that allowed its participants to know what was required of them without the need for instruction or much further verbal interchange. In other words, what might be called a coherent culture of shared meaning emerged within the group. It is possible that this coherence existed in the past for human communities before technology began to mediate our experience of the living world. (Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991)

His friend the English psychiatrist, Patrick de Mare, a practitioner of Group Analysis, conducted research that reflected these practices but under modern conditions. Bohm adapted the theory of microculture and the idea of impersonal fellowship from de Mare. The theory of microculture proposes that groups containing a minimum of twenty and maximum of forty members (like those of the hunter-gatherer tribes) can act as a sample of the entire culture to which the group belonged, including multiple beliefs and value systems. The idea of a microculture came from de Mare's book *Koinonia*, which is about an operational approach to dialogue, culture, and the human mind, in the socio-cultural setting of a larger group. For Bohm the underlying cause of fragmentation can be located at the socio-cultural level, and therefore the dialogue groups "can serve as micro-cultures from which the source of the infirmity of our large civilization can be exposed" (Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991). On this view, dialogue is a form of 'sociotherapy' in which a caring regard can be extended to those outside of emotional connections through trying to understand "the dynamics of how thought conceives such connections" (Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991). From this kind of dialogue an impersonal fellowship can emerge. An impersonal fellowship implies that authentic trust and openness would emerge in a group context, even when the members of the group lack in any personal history whatsoever. Participants may form emotional attachments and want to continue meeting in order to maintain a sense of security and belonging. But the purpose is not to fall into what Bohm calls 'cozy adjustment' but to be persistent "in the process of inquiry and risking re-entry into areas of potentially chaotic or frustrating uncertainty" (Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991).

Bohm's interest in the seemingly incoherent and fragmented human thought also led to his acquaintance with the Indian educator and philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti. He discovered that his ideas on quantum mechanics aligned with the philosophical ideas of Krishnamurti. They shared an interest in: (1) the idea that problems of thought are fundamentally collective, and not individual, and (2) the paradox of the observer and the observed, which implies that introspection and self-improvement are inadequate methods for understanding the nature of the mind and experiences of self. From his countless exchanges of ideas with Krishnamurti his idea of dialogue evolved. Listening was given a central place in his approach to group interaction. If groups of people listen attentively to one another and aspire to come to shared meanings then this would be the touchstone for effective

communication which would have an impact on how humanity perceived itself and how they would conduct their personal, social and political lives.

What Bohm derived from his association with both men can be found in his book, *Thought as a System*, the title of which speaks for itself. Bohm claimed that if thought is a system and it is seen as an instrument for tackling a problem then thought itself is problematic. While Bohm didn't disagree that dialogue and other forms of group processes could be useful as a method for problem-solving, his concern was to develop a method of dialogue for the purpose of becoming aware of how thought works. In this sense Bohmian dialogue is a non-purposive dialogue.

Whereas in Platonic dialogue thought is used as an instrument for tackling a problem, Bohm is of the view that too often thought uses us, and so could be seen as part of the problem. The aim of Bohmian dialogue is therefore not even to try to solve the problem, but to become aware of how thought works, and this is done through the medium of non-purposive discussion. For Bohm, wanting an answer, feeling the need to develop or defend a position, and treating the ideas of others in a judgemental way, are all instruments of obscuration. As soon as we try to accomplish a useful purpose or goal, we will have an assumption behind it as to what is useful, and that assumption is going to limit us. (Curnow, 2001, p.235)

Bohm stressed that non-purposive dialogue also had to be free flowing dialogue without a facilitator to guide discussion. Any guidance, no matter how carefully or sensitively applied, tends to inhibit the free flow of thought.

While Bohm's method of dialogue is not derived from the Socratic Method, his emphasis on the process of dialogue—on examining assumptions, self-reflection, listening and attentiveness, and impersonal fellowship—gives it a philosophical dimension. Curnow (2007), who has compared Bohm's method with other forms of dialogue, is of the same opinion.

The technique of such a kind of dialogue rests much more heavily on listening. Does this have a philosophical dimension? Given that at least part of the exercise involves a bringing of underlying assumptions to the level of awareness, I believe it does. (para. 4)

Moreover, Bohm's techniques have particular implications for the development of Socratic classrooms, especially the cultivation of caring thinking in education. Unlike the Community of Inquiry or Socratic Dialogue, Bohm's main focus is on thought and collaboration. This makes his dialogue invaluable in giving us some insight into caring thinking which is manifest in communal dialogue; in the interpersonal relationships of the group, which is in a process of continual reconstruction, i.e., working together towards a renewed understanding. Bohm, like Krishnamurti and de Mare, shared in the desire to create a society that was self-reflective and dialogical. On this point, his goal was much the same as Lipman's and Nelson's; the cultivation of active citizenship through the practice of dialogue.

## THINKING THROUGH DIALOGUE

We now have an understanding of the Community of Inquiry, Socratic Dialogue, and Bohmian Dialogue, three models of dialogue that to varying degrees are recognisably Socratic in their approach to teaching and learning. While not all are grounded in the tradition of the Socratic Method, each has something to contribute to pedagogy and the development of Socratic classrooms. Moreover, all three models go some way to satisfying the aims of the UNESCO study in regard to the liberation of the individual, freedom of thought, and developing and enhancing the social and intellectual abilities needed for active citizenship.

The notion of people coming together in a community of inquiry underpins Lipman's educational theory and practice. Taking his lead from Dewey, it was Lipman's view that engaging in the Community of Inquiry would naturally nurture the dispositions that he identified with democracy, such as social communication, mutual interest and respect for others. Nelson too shared many of Lipman's concerns regarding the education of children, and he believed that being 'partners-in-dialogue' would bring about the necessary dispositions for living a democratic life. Meanwhile, for Bohm, freedom meant becoming aware of how thought works and, like Lipman and Nelson, he had in mind the cultivation of active citizenship through the practice of dialogue.

The UNESCO study recommends that educators and philosophers should find ways to go about cultivating philosophical thinking. The three models of dialogue, although varying in their methods, can make a valuable contribution to the development and articulation of Socratic classrooms for the cultivation of philosophical thinking. The purpose of the next chapter is to explore further how their methods can be articulated in a framework for Socratic pedagogy. The intention is not to map out a detailed taxonomy, but rather to provide a starting point for defining an approach to teaching through dialogue as a collaborative, inquiry-based activity conceived of as multi-dimensional thinking, which is comprised of critical, creative and caring thinking. This will provide a framework for subsequent chapters.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Lipman's Community of Inquiry is indicated through the use of capital letters.
- <sup>2</sup> Lipman developed a series of purpose-written novels with accompanying manuals. Since then other authors have developed materials ranging from children's stories, videos, and manuals to accompany existing children's stories. See de Haan *et al* (1995), Sprod (1993), Wilks (1995), Abbott and Wilks (1997), Cam (1993, 1994, 1997, 2006), Freakley, Burgh and Tilt-MacSporran (2008).
- <sup>3</sup> See Golding (2004).
- <sup>4</sup> Burgh (2003a,b) makes an important distinction between education for democracy and democratic education. I will not explore this further suffice it to say that the distinction cannot be ignored when it comes to the implementation of education reforms.
- <sup>5</sup> Authors interested in the Deweyan aspects of Philosophy for Children have since attempted to 'put the Dewey back in Lipman' by placing an emphasis on democratic education and philosophical inquiry. See: Burgh (2003a), Cam (2000).
- <sup>6</sup> For example, Lou Marinoff's Philosophical Counseling as well as Dilemma and Integrity Training.

## CHAPTER 2

- <sup>7</sup> Boele's article offers a more detailed account than others written in English, and is commonly referred to in the literature on Socratic Dialogue.
- <sup>8</sup> Marinoff uses Socratic Dialogue as a basis for his philosophical practice as it engenders clients with the ability to make meaning from their problems. Another proponent who uses a variant of Socratic dialogue is Oscar Brenifier. Brenifier has his own series of children's stories and conducts workshops in philosophy in education.
- <sup>9</sup> Perhaps this factor explains (partially) why Socratic Dialogue has not been as successful in an educational setting in comparison to the Community of Inquiry.
- <sup>10</sup> See various papers in Shipley and Mason (2004).
- <sup>11</sup> Nelson's theory of knowledge deserves more attention than I can give it here. It is not a matter of brushing aside the logical and epistemological issues, but rather that the main concern and purpose of this book is with the practice of dialogue in educational settings. In other words, my interest is with the process of arriving at truth in dialogical inquiry; with its procedure as a regulative idea, rather than what might be said about the nature of truth when we have arrived at it.
- <sup>12</sup> Some of the comments attributed to Peter Garrett were part of fruitful dialogue I had with him at *The Challenge of Dialogue Conference* in Berlin in 2005. Garrett, who is a main proponent of Dialogue, co-authored *On Dialogue: A Proposal* (1991) with David Bohm. He generously gave me his time to tell me about his discussions on Dialogue with Bohm.