ISSN 2965-1557
http://doi.org/10.1590/2965-1557.037.e202532151

Scientific article

Revista de Filosofia Aurora

periodicos.pucpr.br/aurora

PUCPRESS

Uncertainty and community of philosophical inquiry: from thinking locally to acting globally

Incerteza e comunidade de investigação filosófica: do pensamento local à ação global

Claire Cassidy [a]
Strathclyde, Reino Unido
[a] University of Strathclyde

Como citar: CASSIDY, Claire. Uncertainty and Community of Philosophical Inquiry: From thinking locally to acting globally. *Revista de Filosofia Aurora*, Curitiba: Editora PUCPRESS, v. 37, e202532151, 2025. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1590/2965-1557.037.e202532151.

Abstract

There is little of which we can be certain, but the mantra in newspapers and on televisions as we watch political unrest unfold before our eyes, and as climate change marches on apace, is that we live in uncertain times. This statement, that we live in uncertain times, is something of which we can be certain. Unpredictability and lack of control are unsettling for all, but arguably more so for children. This article proposes that uncertainty need not be negative in every instance. It suggests that uncertainty leads to cognitive growth through encountering dissonance and the assimilation and accommodation of new ideas. It posits that classrooms are a microcosm of society, and in this very local context, children may be introduced to practical philosophy in the form of Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CoPI). In the article, it is argued that CoPI might be a useful approach in supporting children not only to encounter

[a] Doutora em Filosofia pela Universidade de Glasgow, e-mail: claire.cassidy@strath.ac.uk

but to welcome uncertainty. The predictable structure afforded by CoPI offers an element of certainty and control for participants. Additionally, it fosters open-mindedness and comfort with disagreement by its very structure. The article highlights the importance of relationships and children's voice and indicates how this is nurtured in CoPI. The article concludes that through encouraging philosophical dialogue with their peers, cognitive growth is facilitated that might be said to breed compassion and a way of being in and with the world. The article sets out the possibility that philosophical, collaborative thinking in the local context of the classroom might lead to global action on the part of participants, but that this requires children and their deliberative participation to be taken seriously.

Keywords: Uncertainty. Cognitive growth. Community of Philosophical Inquiry. Philosophy with Children.

Resumo

Há pouco do que podemos ter a certeza, mas o mantra nos jornais e nas televisões, enquanto assistimos à agitação política a desenrolar-se diante dos nossos olhos, e à medida que as alterações climáticas avançam rapidamente, é que vivemos em tempos de incerteza. Esta afirmação, de que vivemos em tempos incertos, é algo de que podemos ter certeza. A imprevisibilidade e a falta de controlo são perturbadoras para todos, mas provavelmente ainda mais para as crianças. Este artigo propõe que a incerteza não precisa ser negativa em todos os casos. Sugere que a incerteza leva ao crescimento cognitivo através do encontro com a dissonância e da assimilação e acomodação de novas ideias. Ela postula que as salas de aula são um microcosmo da sociedade e, neste contexto muito local, as crianças podem ser apresentadas à filosofia prática na forma de Comunidade de Investigação Filosófica (CoPI). No artigo, argumenta-se que a CoPI pode ser uma abordagem útil para apoiar as crianças não só a enfrentarem, mas também a acolherem a incerteza. A estrutura previsível proporcionada pela CoPI oferece um elemento de certeza e controle para os participantes. Além disso, promove a mente aberta e o conforto com as divergências por meio de sua própria estrutura. O artigo destaca a importância dos relacionamentos e da voz das crianças e indica como isso é nutrido na CoPI. O artigo conclui que, ao encorajar o diálogo filosófico com os seus pares, é facilitado o crescimento cognitivo que pode ser considerado gerador de compaixão e de uma forma de estar no mundo e com o mundo. O artigo expõe a possibilidade de que o pensamento filosófico e colaborativo no contexto local da sala de aula possa levar a uma ação global por parte dos participantes, mas que isso exige que as crianças e a sua participação deliberativa sejam levadas a sério.

Palavras-chave: *Incerteza. Crescimento Cognitivo. Comunidade De Investigação Filosófica. Filosofia Com Crianças.*

Introduction

Every day, I peel myself from my mattress at five o-clock in the morning and go out into the often dark, cold and wet day to enjoy a walk. I take the same walk each time and have become used to the rhythms of the year: the onset of spring and the furious activity of the birds; the changing colours, and then the falling of leaves as autumn takes hold; the frost on the ground in winter, and the spiders' webs caught with dew on early summer mornings. Today, I saw two foxes scurrying home and enjoyed looking up to see Mars and Jupiter just before sunrise. My morning ritual began in March 2020. This was the time when the country in which I live went into lockdown as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic; other countries did likewise.

It was a peculiar time. In many ways our world shrank. It was a global crisis, yet we were limited to where we could go and what we might do. In Scotland, where I live, we were permitted to walk a distance of two miles (just over three kilometres) from our homes, and we could only mix with people in our own households. Public gatherings were forbidden, schools were closed, working at home became the norm for many, and friends and families embraced Zoom to have some sense of personal contact with the outside world beyond the daily news bulletins up-dating us on the number of deaths and the latest measures to which we had to adhere. As my world shrank physically in terms of the distance I could travel, the global became less conspicuous in my life. Aeroplanes did not fly overhead, cars and their associate fumes disappeared, holidays abroad were not possible, and the news on television was no longer about current affairs of the nature we had previously heard such as wars or earthquakes or political unrest. Our world became more concentrated.

March 2020 and the subsequent two years when my colleagues and I had to work from home, seems a distant memory. Aeroplanes are back in the air, traffic is on the roads, countries are invaded, genocide is evident, political systems and structures are in full swing, with many sadly swinging far to the right. The global is omnipresent. Conditions, political and environmental, in which we live are often unpredictable and the relationship between the local and the global can go unnoticed. We cannot always control the conditions in which we live, and the uncertainty that this brings can be unsettling. If it is unsettling for me as an adult, it is arguably more so for children who have even less control of the world in which they live.

In this article, I present the problem of uncertainty and offer the practice of Philosophy with Children (PwC), specifically Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CoPI) (McCall, 1991, 2009), as one way in which children might be supported to engage with uncertainty positively. Uncertainty is generally seen as negative in children's lives, and in adults' too, for that matter; here, I wish to propose that PwC in the classroom, a contained and local environment, might engender a particular way of being that enables children to cope with uncertainty. The certainty afforded by CoPI in the local classroom may enable them not only to explore the global through their philosophical dialogues, but to engage with some of the uncertainty the world and others in it might present.

Uncertainty

Uncertainty generally tends to be unsettling, unpredictable and unpleasant because it is about not knowing quite what to expect. This unpredictability often means there is a lack of control over the particular situation in which we might find ourselves, which may result in us feeling helpless or even fearful. We experience a range of uncertainties in our lives on a daily, weekly, monthly, annual basis; some of these are

uncertainties that are mild inconveniences while others present more of a threat. These uncertainties may be manifest in a localised way such as: knowing whether to take an umbrella when leaving the house because it might rain; being sure if one has enough money to pay for the week's groceries; being confident that the bus comes as scheduled, meaning we reach work or school on time; or that if an appointment with a doctor or dentist is needed that it will be available and accessible. This latter example may reach beyond the more immediately local because it depends on the health care and services in our associated countries. I know, for example, that living where I do, I am entitled to free healthcare, including free eye examinations, free prescriptions, free dental care, and free treatment regardless of my illness or ailment. Others are less lucky, and less certain, making their lives somewhat more precarious (Butler, 2012; Kirk, 2019), and this is partly because the decisions about such matters are at a further remove than the simple decision to carry an umbrella because it may rain or leaving the house earlier in case the bus is late.

The control we have over our lives is lessened as it becomes less localised. Issues such as health services lie with governments, and this presents some uncertainty in our lives. When governments or those in control at that level engage with others, we are even further at a remove; life, therefore, becomes more uncertain (Burgh; Thornton, 2022), with such as instances like the war in Ukraine or the invasion of Gaza or the arrest of political protestors in Tanzania[1], or the grabbing of power in Venezuela by President Nicolás Maduro[2], resulting in the strangling of democracy in the country. Very few have any form of certainty in situations such as these. And then, there is the environmental crisis. A truly existential catastrophe that is upon us, where today, as I write, there are horrendous floods in central Europe, forest fires rage on the west coast of the United States of America and Brazil is experiencing drought. Generally, weather conditions are more unpredictable and dangerous. It may be true to say that humans cannot control the weather, but it would not be true to say that our behaviour has no bearing on the climate crisis. Political unrest, the climate emergency and other environmental and political issues are much more global in scope than the local examples provided earlier, meaning the control we might have is lessened. If this is true for those reading this article (adults), it is magnified for children.

Children and uncertainty

By and large, we do not wish children to be unsettled or exposed to unpleasant feelings or experiences such as helplessness or fear. However, it may be that uncertainty could be helpful for children – indeed, for all of us – and that welcoming uncertainty may offer possibilities for encountering the global in a manner that may prove beneficial to us and the world beyond the immediate. Butler (2012) is right to suggest that we do not choose with whom we inhabit the world, but that "we are also bound to one another, in passionate and fearful alliance" (p. 150) and that solutions must be sought to reduce the precarity we might experience. Conrad et al. (2015), drawing on the notion of the good life, propose that in ethical terms, doing what is good for others will ultimately also be good for the individual. It might be argued that this cannot be pursued without seriously considering others' quality of life Jónsdóttir (2015). This position seems to start from the global, encouraging us to look to others before ourselves, to be able to abstract ourselves perhaps from our proximal context. It is perhaps difficult to adopt such an objective or abstracted position

[1] https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/tanzania

[2] https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/venezuela

from the outset, particularly when one's encounters with the world and its other inhabitants are somewhat limited. Thinking of cognitive growth might help us begin to consider a way forward.

We have various schemata, ways in which we understand and organise the world in which we live. When we receive new information, we must assimilate it into our current schemata (Piaget, 1952). In other words, it has to fit with and adds to what we already know. We then need to accommodate it by restructuring or modifying what we already know so that the new information articulates with this. To grow cognitively, we require new information, which leads us to adjust the structures we have in place, thereby becoming more complex. While this, according to Piaget (1952) happens as we develop, it could be suggested that a way of navigating the process of assimilation and accommodation might be needed, particularly as the world becomes more complex. Without accepting all that Piaget says about child development (see, for example, Matthews, 1994; Cassidy, 2007; Glaser, 2022), one approach that may support this is Community of Philosophical Inquiry (Cassidy, 2007; McCall, 2009; McCall; WEIJERS, 2017). Before exploring the ways in which Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CoPI) or other approaches to Philosophy with Children (PwC) might facilitate this navigation and support uncertainty, it is important to explain what CoPI is.

Community of Philosophical Inquiry

In the 1970s Matthew Lipman, a philosophy professor in the USA at the time, determined that young people required some help in their critical thinking (Lipman, 2003). To that end, he and colleagues such as Ann Margaret Sharp (Lipman *et al*., 1980) created a programme called Philosophy for Children (P4C) that consisted of a series of stories and exercises designed to foster multidimensional thinking, logic, reasonableness and the enhancement of democracy through philosophical dialogue and exercises related to the stories. Lipman's P4C is practised around the world, but other approaches, grown from Lipman's, have emerged over the years. One such approach is McCall's (1991, 2009) Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CoPI).

CoPI is a practice that is undertaken with people of any age. It is, simply put, a structured philosophical dialogue and is built upon four principles. The first is that as humans, we all have the capacity to reason. Second, that there is an external reality into which we can inquire. Third, as humans we are all fallible, which aligns with the fourth, that because we are fallible, everything is open to question[3]. CoPI is facilitated by someone who does not contribute to the dialogue with their own ideas or suggestions. The facilitator's role is to maintain the philosophical focus of the dialogue and to ensure that the structure is followed, juxtaposing speakers to take the dialogue forward or intervening to ask for a point of clarification, a distinction between terms used by a participant or to request an example to illustrate a point (Cassidy, 2007).

A CoPI session, which tends to last between half an hour and an hour, begins with a stimulus. This may be a short story, an extract from a book, a newspaper article, a poem, a song, and the like; it should have philosophical themes embedded within it. Following the reading of the stimulus, the participants pose questions prompted by the stimulus and the facilitator notes these down verbatim. She then chooses the question for the dialogue and asks the person who offered the question to begin to address the question. Thereafter, if participants wish to speak, they should raise their hand and wait to be called by the facilitator.

[3] There is not enough space here to discuss these four principles in more detail. To explore this further, see McCall, C. (1991). *Stevenson Lectures on Citizenship*. Glasgow: Glasgow University Press; McCall, C. (2009). *Transforming Thinking: Philosophical inquiry in the primary and secondary classroom*. London: Routledge.

In McCall's CoPI, on beginning to speak, participants must make a connection to something that has been said previously, and they do so by using the phrase 'I dis/agree with [person's name] because [give reason]'. In agreeing and/or disagreeing with what has been stated previously, participants are not permitted to use technical language or jargon, the language and terms used should be accessible to others in the group and may need to be explained. Participants may not refer to an authority such as a teacher, a parent, a textbook, or television programme for the reasons they give for their dis/agreement. The contribution should be their own, but they need not offer their own opinion. In CoPI there is no search for consensus or a conclusion, no summarising or final thoughts are aired. When the time allotted to the philosophical inquiry is reached, the dialogue ends. This allows the topic and associated ideas to continue percolating; the topic is not closed (Cassidy, 2007; McCall, 2009).

Community of Philosophical Inquiry and Certainty

There are particular elements of CoPI about which participants can be certain. Regardless of the group, the structure and rules remain the same. Raising questions following the reading of the stimulus is important, not least because neither the facilitator nor the participants will know what questions might arise; the stimulus serves only to provoke questions. This perhaps indicates that in raising questions participants highlight a dissonance or that there is something that requires exploration in order to fit with their schemata. Anyone who wishes to contribute to the dialogue will be able to do so, though remembering that the facilitator works to juxtapose the ideas presented, participants may not be called to speak in the order in which they raise their hand to indicate they have something to say. Participants can be sure that they will be invited to speak, something that has proven to be helpful when working with children and young people who have difficulties with social-emotional behaviour and/or communication (Cassidy *et al*., 2017; Cassidy; Heron, 2018). Participants can also be certain that there will be agreement and disagreement, and often both within the one contribution, because philosophical dialogue would be stunted or even impossible without this (Michalik, 2019). The dis/agreements also indicate that there will be participation and that the participants will make connections across the ideas presented. This supports participants' cognitive growth because throughout the dialogue others' ideas are continually assimilated and therefore accommodated. These ideas have to be measured against each individual's own perspectives. This willingness to explore ideas, to agree and disagree relates, then, to having a disposition that is open.

Openness

A willingness to be open is vital when participating in philosophical dialogue (Michalik, 2019). One is open to exploring one's own ideas and, importantly, those of others. The practice ensures that this happens. While questions are important with respect to raising one's uncertainty about something, they also suggest that participants are open to sourcing and receiving new information. In some ways, posing questions is relatively easy; it is in addressing the questions themselves that further uncertainty might be supported by an open-mindedness. As Burgh and Thornton advocate, developing the likes of open-mindedness "could be thought of as necessary for civic engagement and the democratic correction of social and political institutions" (p. 40). If PwC broadly speaking, and CoPI more specifically, is to be seen as a practice that has scope to nurture children's cognitive growth, and that they might move from the local to

the global by transferring thought to action through philosophical dialogue, then an open-minded disposition is key.

Bearing in mind that participants in CoPI need not present their own opinions, they are able to be open about what and how they contribute. CoPI could be seen as a safe space where participants can experiment with ideas and where the ideas are more important than the person who shared them. In other words, the goal in CoPI is to examine the ideas put forward rather than for individuals to hold dearly to them in a way that suggests certainty. Being open to hearing new ideas, to figuring out what one thinks of what is heard and to continue reflecting after the session is important in cultivating openness and a more uncertain disposition, or a disposition that welcomes uncertainty, on some matters. This, in turn, suggests that it is possible to change one's mind about things following consideration and reflection (Bleazby, 2011; Lipman, 2003).

Although participants cannot predict what others in the dialogue will say, because CoPI is a practice, participants become familiar with one another and learn how they might contribute or the perspectives they may adopt. This helps them to understand the kinds of participation likely to be encountered in the dialogue, who may, for instance, dis/agree with whom, who is good at providing helpful examples or clear justifications for their points. Children learn, therefore, how their peers might think and how the contribution relates to their own thinking. It is worth noting that although there is some uncertainty in the direction of the dialogue and who and how participants will contribute, children tend to enjoy listening to others, to making contributions, including agreement *and* disagreement (Cassidy; Heron, 2018).

Disagreement

People are usually polite; they do not wish to provoke others unduly. This might mean that they avoid disagreement when in discussion because it can be uncomfortable. Indeed, it is often discouraged, particularly in situations where there appears to be an accepted hierarchy such as between an adult and a child, an employee and employer, a police officer and a civilian. Children are inducted into these structures and the associated behaviour early. However, in CoPI children come to learn the value of disagreement, and this is practised in the relatively safe space of the classroom. Indeed, the notion of productive disagreement (Ferner; Chetty, 2019) might be seen as necessary in life beyond the classroom, and children have lives outwith the classroom while at school and afterwards.

Coping with disagreement is at the heart of cognitive growth. Disagreement may ordinarily cause an element of discomfort or might even feel threatening. However, in CoPI the threat is diminished somewhat. The structure is easily anticipated, with participants being aware that they are likely to be disagreed with; they understand that to the make the dialogue 'work', there has to be disagreement. The context is such that the activity is designed for encountering others' ideas. One enters into it in a spirit of openness, knowing that one's schemata may be expanded, though perhaps not saying so in this way. Disagreement might be seen, as Burgh and Thornton (2022) suggest, as "contention rather than competition" (p. 133), and this allows them to be flexible in their thinking.

In saying this, it is important to realise that children can and do change their minds in light of what they hear. Indeed, participants may preface their contribution to the dialogue with "I disagree with myself". They accommodate the new information and generate new schemata to take account of what they have heard and their reflection upon it. When encountering uncertainty, a willingness to engage with others'

ideas, to consider them seriously and to take these on board is important. The structure offered by CoPI may be helpfully adopted elsewhere when faced with new ideas or ways of thinking that support openness while offering some security in encountering uncertainty beyond the CoPI sessions in the classroom. Changing one's mind, based on reflection, on reason, is welcome in philosophical dialogue. It may be helpful to think of this as 'mediating judgements' rather than 'culminating judgement', accepting these as, what Golding (2017) calls, inquiry "milestones along the path" (p. 70) where participants make progress in their philosophical inquiry, and where reasoning plays a vital role.

The structure of CoPI, 'I dis/agree with [person's name] *because*…' is important. The agreement or disagreement points to the initial connection, it flags where there may be dissonance or complementarity is what comes next. And it is what comes next that is vital. The 'because' leads participants to go beyond connecting the ideas presented to justifying, to reasoning aloud. In a world of uncertainty, we seek reasonable answers to the questions we have. Being reasonable, of exhibiting sound judgement (Lipman, 2003) is one way to address the uncertainty or the not knowing. Of course, it assumes that those with whom we engage are also open and reasonable, which may be more challenging in some contexts beyond the immediacy of the classroom. However, the suggestion is that CoPI may be a way to foster reasonableness that bleeds out of the classroom. It is important, though, that children learn to cope with disagreement so that they are better able to engage with disagreement when they encounter it.

Coping with disagreement, welcoming it even, whether being disagreed with or in disagreeing with others is to be encouraged. Learning to be disagreed with, though it can be uncomfortable for any of us, breeds resilience. In the wider, uncertain world where we strive to act globally, having a structure on which one can draw affords an element of control in what may otherwise be uncontrollable, unpredictable or uncertain. Indeed, in some studies (Cassidy et al., 2017; Cassidy; Heron, 2018; Heron; Cassidy, 2018) for children who exhibited challenging behaviour, learning to disagree was not a problem; the children were very confident in disagreeing with others. They disagreed with others a lot, but they did not disagree well. Through their participation in CoPI, they learned how to disagree and that being disagreed with did not need to escalate into a fight. The studies showed that the participants' resilience to disagreement seemed to improve, as did their self-regulation in terms of negative behaviours such as physical violence and goading others. Self-regulation, not an uncontested idea, is desirable when people are expected to get on with others in the unpredictable world beyond the school. What is perhaps not conducive to children's encounters with disagreement is that they are not taken seriously, which aligns with ideas such as voice and agency.

Voice and agency

The notion of children's voice really took hold with the introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989). Certainly, the 'new sociology of childhood' that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s drew attention to children and childhood as beings in their own right and contributed to this, but the UNCRC seemed to have made children's voice more visible in practice. With the likes of Jenks (1982, 1996), Qvortrup et al. (1994), James and Prout (1997), James et al. (1998), and the journal *Childhood* (first published in 1993) establishing what might now be referred to as Childhood Studies, children were not long to remain in the shadows; they were seen to be part of society, and an active one at that (at least in the so-called Global North). Being an active member of society, of the

global, suggests participation, and children's participation in "matters that affect them" was enshrined in Article 12 of the UNCRC where the explicit statement is made that the child,

> capable of forming his or her own views [has] the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child,

and Article 13 supporting this to assert that

> The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

Articles 12 and 13 are often considered rights of participation for those under the age of eighteen. Of course, the suggestion that views expressed should be accorded 'due weight' determined by children's age and maturity is another matter, and one for which there is not space enough here to explore. The idea, though, that children should be able to express their views is often aligned with the notion of 'voice'. Voice is more broadly understood than as the expression of views. It may be manifest in diverse ways, through the likes of body language, gaze or art. However, in thinking about CoPI the articulation of views, though not necessarily participants' own opinions, is the focus. This is worth bearing in mind when considering that children might – and do – comment on the world. Voice might be considered a political term, particularly when speaking of children or other marginalised groups. It suggests intention, an expression of one's self (WALL, K. et al., 2019); and this aligns with agency.

Agency is not unproblematic when talking of children. It implies action that is deliberate and deliberated over. It suggests an engagement with the world that is more political. There is much literature focused on children and young people as agents, notably those such listed above and those more recently writing in this area such as Wall, J. (2010) and Spyrou (2019) who align with Childhood Studies, and more recently as activists (Sundhall, 2017; Nissen *et al*., 2021; Thomas, 2023). Indeed, ironically, this activism is increasingly encouraged. It is ironic because often children are not encouraged to voice their views or to express themselves, while at the same time, having child activists is helpful because they are expected to do our (adult) dirty work. They are, when the mood takes us (adults), or when we need to be saved from ourselves and the mess we have made of the global, 'allowed' to speak, to be present, to act, to be agentic.

Jessop (2018) cautions about setting children up as saviours in such a way, noting that it is unfair to burden children with the responsibility of fixing our adult mistakes. In the context of the environmental crisis in which we all find ourselves, it is important that children are not seen as saviours since they are undoubtedly the victims but involving them in finding and enacting a solution is vital. Engaging children in dialogue, recognising their agency as thinking participants in society, fostering deliberative participation (Burgh; Thornton, 2022) perhaps breeds less uncertainty. In philosophising in the classroom, children are inducted into a way of being that welcomes dialogue and that recognises they have voice, and something to say. Agency may arise from their engagement in deliberation. Griffiths (2008) notes that we must at least assume "the theoretical possibility of agency" (p. 7) on the part of children. If we cannot assume this, then the world becomes more uncertain in some ways, while its demise becomes increasingly certain.

If children are presumed to have voice, then it assumes that there is someone who will listen. In CoPI, participants have to listen if they wish to contribute because the rules require that they make connections to the ideas others have presented. Participants learn that they too will be listened to in turn. The structure is such that no-one will speak over them, that their ideas will be taken seriously and that they will receive a considered response. This certainty enables an inclusive approach to participation; all who wish to speak will be able to do so, and in speaking all will be attended to seriously. In taking children seriously as they engage in philosophical dialogue within their classrooms, their participation, their agentic participation, in the wider world is facilitated. The taking of children seriously goes some way to alleviating the epistemic injustice (Kennedy, 2010; Murris, 2013; Cassidy; Mohr Lone, 2020) that drives much of the experiences children have at the local level, and on the global stage. Think, for example, of the way in which Greta Thunberg was received when she dared to exist on a global platform, often derided, patronised and dismissed, and certainly kept in her (child) place, only 'allowed' to speak when she said what adults would not say but wanted someone to say. She was silenced when she called them to account, when she and her followers, often also children, demanded action on the part of adults.

To ensure that children are able to articulate their voice, that they can engage in deliberative participation, they require tools. The likes of CoPI provides these and a structure from which children might benefit when moving from the local classroom to the more global context outwith the classroom walls where encountering a yet wider range of perspectives makes for more uncertainty. Developing a way of being, a disposition to question and to seek understanding, offers a resource upon which children can draw in that globally uncertain context, uncertain because the world is complex and changing, and uncertain because those we encounter, and their views can be unpredictable. This, though, leads us to consider relationships in a world of uncertainty and how the likes of CoPI might prove helpful.

Relationships

Ultimately, how we behave in society is important if we wish to engage with others. We cannot, though, always predict how others will behave, that they will like us or that we will like them. Practising CoPI, though, teaches us that we can disagree with people we like (or do not like), and that we can agree with those we do not like or who are our best friends. In Cassidy and Heron's (2018) study, where tempers often ran high and where behaviour could be extremely unpredictable, the participants in CoPI demonstrated an ability to engage positively with one another and formed healthy relationships. Engaging in dialogue together might be said to breed a level of respect for others and their ideas, which may bleed into life outside the confines of the school.

CoPI involves participants in shared meaning-making. Participants, by necessity, work together; they collaborate to make sense of the problem at hand (Lipman, 2003). It requires a range of perspectives to be presented for understanding to evolve. It could be said that thinking together is an intimate activity where we learn not just *what* people think, but *how* they think. This might lead us to have better insight into others and to be better able to engage empathetically. While we can be empathetic, it need not mean that we are tolerant. Tolerance may be learned through engaging in philosophical dialogue. While not all ideas should be tolerated, it is important that when dissonant ideas are encountered, we have a strategy for dealing with them. This dissonance will likely become even more pronounced the more we move into the global. The relative safety of the classroom with peers with whom children are familiar is supplanted by the more

unfamiliar, more uncertain other of the sports club, the youth group, friends' families, the queue at the bus stop, and those in film, and on social media. That said, tolerance speaks to open-mindedness. It suggests that we are alert and welcoming to others' views, and this perhaps induces an element of respect for the other, though it need not lead to respect for their views. However, as we – including children – do not live in isolation, even at a local level, there is an expectation that we will encounter others, and it is helpful to have this in mind when considering how we support children to embrace those encounters.

In thinking of our communal world, the notion of community is not accidental when speaking of *Community* of Philosophical Inquiry or philosophical communities of inquiry. Certainly, the community is a small one when introduced to the classroom, but the classroom acts as a microcosm of the wider world. The dialogue itself relies on others' participation, seeking both agreement and disagreement. The inter-dependence that emerges in such a community might support children in dealing with uncertainty; they are not alone. It is a communal endeavour; the other is necessary, and necessary to help us move through those milestones Golding (2017) highlights. The sense of the communal, of the shared endeavour, of community, articulates with the earlier point that empathetic interactions with others is desirable. One might go further to suggest that we are cautious of 'passive empathy' (Schertz, 2007), and that we recognise our shared humanity as we aspire to be compassionate in the relationships we build with others (Zembylas, 2013).

Empathy is part of compassion, and it is more than pity, it requires tending. One might pity the families losing their homes through flood or war, feeling sorry for what they have lost and what faces them. It is possible to put oneself in their shoes, though often people say, "I just can't imagine how they must feel". What is perhaps meant in saying this is that one does not want to imagine because it would require something to be done on our part. This is perhaps where there is a move to compassion. By reflecting on the thing about which one is empathetic, through imagining how awful something might be, we may be led to compassion. Compassion is more than the pitying, more than the imagining, it is action in tandem with empathy. It is what Gibson and Cook-Sather (2020) refer to as an "emotional reaction to something or someone… and may result in a state of action" (p. 20). Compassion is about asking questions of ourselves and others, it requires that we seek answers, and that in addressing these questions we are ultimately asking how we should live our lives. Perhaps this reaches beyond cognitive to emotional growth, something that enables us to live reflectively in the world.

If we are compassionate, then this questioning and reflection leads us to act in such a way that we take account of others that inhabit the world alongside us; we exercise 'good judgement' (Lipman, 2003). Garside (2013) proposes that practising Philosophy with Children "should facilitate the formation of judgement as a way of engaging with the world and self" (p. 146). In inducting children into a philosophical way of being, they become equipped to reflect on the lives of those around them and their relationship with those lives, no matter the geographical distance. The goal is to avoid an 'us-them' mentality (Splitter, 2022). In the localised Community of Philosophical Inquiry, children might explore global issues to reflect on the events and what might be done, but in fostering a sense of community in the classroom, it is hoped that it reaches much more broadly into the wider world of the community in which they live, and beyond. Of course, it is a big claim to suggest that practising philosophy with children will move them to action. The question of whether this is possible would suggest that it is better to try than not. The need for a compassionate outlook is certainly better than the alternative.

Concluding remarks

Tomorrow is another day. We can only hope that this is the case; we cannot be certain. Our lives are touched by others. This seems to be something of which we can be sure. When I head out for my morning walk tomorrow, I anticipate the autumn leaves will be falling and that the birds will be singing, that I will go to work and return home to fill my stomach and sleep safely in my bed until the next day when I do it all again. I predict this based on my experiences today and in previous years. I am not living in Florida where a hurricane is about to make landfall or in Gaza or Lebanon where homes are being bombed, or in South Sudan where there is not enough to eat. If I lived in such places, I would be less certain of what tomorrow will hold, or, indeed, that I have a tomorrow. These are dramatic examples, of course, but they illustrate the unpredictability of our lives and the world in which we live. I do not wish to suggest that philosophising with children will enable them to deal with such events.

What can be said is that the world is an uncertain place. This can be difficult, challenging and uncomfortable for us all. However, uncertainty allows for cognitive growth. In our encounters with things that create dissonance, they must be accommodated for us to grow our understanding. In enhancing our understanding of the world and those that inhabit it, our worldview is expanded. Community of Philosophical Inquiry allows children to encounter uncertainty in controlled conditions. The structure offers an element of control for the children on which they can draw in their (local) classroom context and to take it beyond the classroom walls – the global. In supporting children to make connections between ideas, where dissonance is encouraged and where they see others as partners in developing understanding, uncertainty is welcomed and becomes less daunting. Indeed, through uncertainty, CoPI supports them in order that they might grow. In so doing, it is hoped that they, through deliberative participation, through enacting their agency, might move from the local to the global as compassionate people who engage positively in and with the world.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge Roberto Tibaldeo for inviting me to present my work, of which this article is a part, at the *Think Global, Act Local Filosofia, educação e desafios ambientais/ Philosophy, Education, and Environmental Challenges* International Congress in December 2023.

References

BURGH, G.; THORNTON, S. *Teaching democracy in an age of uncertainty*. Abindon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2022.

BUTLER, J. Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, v. 26, n. 2, p. 134-151, 2012.

CASSIDY, C. *Thinking children*. London: Continuum, 2007.

CASSIDY, C.; MARWICK, H.; DEENEY, L.; MCLEAN, G. Philosophy with Children, Self-regulation and Engaged Participation for Children with Emotional-behavioural and Social Communication Difficulties. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties,* v. 23, n. 1, p. 81-96, 2017.

CASSIDY, C.; HERON, G. Breaking into Secure: Introducing Philosophical Discussions to Young People in Secure Accommodation. *Journal of Social Work,* v. 20, n. 3, p. 287-306, 2018.

CASSIDY, C.; MOHR LONE, J. Thinking about Childhood: Being and Becoming in the World. *Analytic Teaching and Philosophical Praxis*, v. 40, n. 1, p. 16-26, 2020.

CONRAD, S-J.; CASSIDY, C.; MATHIS, C. Encouraging and supporting children's voices. *In*: J. Tremmel, J. et al. (eds). *Youth quotas and other efficient forms of youth participation in ageing democracies*. Cham: Springer, 2015. p.109-124.

FERNER, A.; CHETTY, D. *How to disagree: Negotiate difference in a divided world*. White Lion Publishing, 2019.

GARSIDE, D. *Edifying Judgement: Using Rorty to Redescribe Judgement in the Context of Philosophy for Children*. Doctoral thesis, University of Bath, 2013.

GIBSON, S.; COOK-SATHER, A. Politicised Compassion and Pedagogical Partnership: A Discourse and Practice for Social Justice in the Inclusive Academy. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, v. 4, n. 1, p. 16-33, 2020.

GLASER, J. Gareth B. Matthews' philosophy of psychology. *In*: Gregory M.R.; Laverty, M.J. *Gareth B. Matthews, the child's philosopher*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2022. p.165-185.

GOLDING, C. Getting better ideas. A framework for understanding epistemic philosophical progress in Philosophy for Children. *In*: Gregory, M.R; Haynes, J.; Murris, K. (eds.). *The Routledge international handbook of philosophy for children*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017. p. 83-92.

GRIFFITHS, M. Research for Social Justice: Empowerment and Voice. *In*: JOINT GLASGOW/STRATHCLYDE RESEARCH GROUP ON TEACHER EDUCATION AND TEACHERS' WORK SEMINAR, 2008, Glasgow. *Anais [...].* Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2008.

HERON, G.; CASSIDY, C. Using practical philosophy to enhance the self-regulation of children in secure accommodation. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, v. 23, n. 3, p. 254-269, 2018.

JAMES, A.; PROUT, A. (eds.) (1997). *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*. London: Falmer Press.

JAMES, A.; JENKS, C.; PROUT, A. *Theorizing childhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998.

JENKS, C. *The Sociology of Childhood.* London: Batsford, 1982.

JENKS, C. *Childhood*. London: Routledge, 1996.

JESSOP, S. How Modernity's Futurism Puts Children in the Front Line. *Childhood*, v. 25, n. 4, p. 443-457, 2018.

JÓNSDÓTTIR, Á. Teaching and Learning for Sustainability: An Icelandic Practice-based Research. *International Journal of Education Through Art*, v. 11, n. 3, p. 391-406, 2015.

KENNEDY, D. *Philosophical Dialogues with Children: Essays on Theory and Practice*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellin Press, 2010.

KIRK, D. *Precarity, Critical Pedagogy and Physical Education*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019.

LIPMAN, M. *Thinking in Education* (2nd edition). Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

LIPMAN, M.; SHARP, A.M.; OSCANYAN, F.S. *Philosophy in the classroom* (2nd edition). Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980.

MCCALL, C. *Stevenson Lectures on Citizenship*. Glasgow: Glasgow University Press, 1991.

MCCALL, C. *Transforming Thinking: Philosophical Inquiry in the Primary and Secondary Classroom.* London: Routledge, 2009.

MCCALL, C; WEIJERS, E. A philosophical analysis of philosophy in Philosophy with Children. In: Gregory, M.R; Haynes, J.; Murris, K. (eds.). *The Routledge international handbook of philosophy for children*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017. p. 83-92.

MATTHEWS, G. B. *The philosophy of childhood*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1994.

MICHALIK, K. Teacher and Learner Perspectives on Philosophical Discussion – Uncertainty as a Challenge and Opportunity. *Childhood & Philosophy*, v. *15*, p. 1-20, 2019.

MURRIS, K. (2013). The Epistemic Challenge of Hearing Child's Voice. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, v. *32*, p. 245-59, 2013.

NISSEN, S.; WONG, J.H.K.; CARLTON, S. Children and Young People's Climate Crisis Activism – A Perspective on Long-term Effects. *Children's Geographies*, v. 19, n. 3, p. 317-323, 2021.

QVORTRUP, J. et al. (eds.). *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics.* Aldershot: Avebury, 1994.

SCHERTZ, M. Avoiding 'Passive Empathy' with Philosophy for Children. *Journal of Moral Education*, v. 36, n. 2, p. 185-198, 2007.

SPLITTER, L. Enriching the Narratives we Tell about Ourselves and our Identities: An Educational Response to Populism and Extremism. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, v. 54, n. 1, p. 21-36, 2022.

SPRYROU, S. An Ontological Turn for Childhood Studies? *Children & Society*, v. 33, n. 4, p. 316-323, 2019.

SUNDALL, J. A Political Space for Children? The Age Order and Children's Right to Participation. *Social Inclusion*, v. 5, n. 3, p. 164-171, 2017.

THOMAS, C.S. (2023). More Than Mere Child's Play: Youth Activism, Ephebic Appeals, and Environmental Communication. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, v. 53, n. 5, p. 643-656, 2023.

UNITED NATIONS United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Geneva: United Nations, 1989.

WALL, J. *Ethics in Light of Childhood*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010.

WALL, K.; CASSIDY, C.; ROBINSON, C.; HALL, E.; BEATON, M.; KANYAL, M.; MITRA, D. Look Who's Talking: Factors for Considering the Facilitation of Very Young Children's Voices. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, v. 17, n. 4, p. 263-278, 2019.

ZEMBYLAS, M. The 'Crisis of Pity' and the Radicalization of Solidarity: Toward Critical Pedagogies of Compassion. *Educational Studies*, v. 49, n. 6, p. 504-521, 2013.

RECEBIDO: 27/06/2024
APROVADO: 28/08/2024
PUBLICADO: 31/01/2025

RECEIVED: 06/27/2024
APPROVED: 08/28/2024
PUBLISHED: 01/31/2025